



PRESS RELEASE

PRESENTATION OF « MARSAD.TN », LAUNCHING OF ITS NEW ONLINE PLATFORM

Transparency and vitality of democratic debate
Questions-Answers with elected representatives

CONTEXT: DRAFTING OF THE NEW TUNISIAN CONSTITUTION

The election of the constituent assembly was held on 23 October 2011 following the revolution, and marked the beginning of the Tunisian democratic transition. This democratization process represents a huge challenge for elected representatives, civil society and citizens.

However, the writing of the new constitution is not participative and many citizens are kept away from the drafting process. The website « Marsad.tn » and its new platform were set up with the aim of fostering transparency and citizen participation.

The current situation is characterized by several uncertainties. It seems difficult to meet the deadline initially set on 23 October for ratifying the new constitution. Immediately after the end of the parliamentary holidays in September, the coordination committee will hold a meeting in order to update the Constituent Assembly's calendar and present the final draft of the constitution in the following days.

« Marsad.tn » has one main objective: acting as an efficient promoter of transparency and democratic debate throughout this process.

OCTOBER 2011

Election of the constituent assembly

Creation of Al Bawsala

FEBRUARY 2012

Launching of *Marsad.tn*

Monitoring of the Constituent Assembly

SEPTEMBER 2012

Launching of the new version of *Marsad.tn*

Platform of questions-answers with elected representatives

MARCH 2013 ?

Parliamentary and presidential elections

« MARSAD.TN»: MONITORING OF THE PARLIAMENT AND ACCESS TO INFORMATION

The project «Marsad.tn» is the Observatory of the National Constituent Assembly. The objective of « Marsad.tn» is to provide citizens, through an online platform, with an easier and free access to information related to their elected representatives and the redaction of the new constitution thanks to:

- List of elected representatives including their biography, mail address, political affiliation, constituency, political stances etc.
- Updated information on their political activities, propositions, votes in the Constituent Assembly (vote tracking system).
- Free access to all documents, briefs, minutes issued by constituent, legislative, special and joint committees. 170 documents have been already published on the website Marsad.tn
- The rough draft of the new constitution translated from Arabic to French.

LAUNCHING OF THE SECOND VERSION OF MARSAD.TN: REINFORCING TRANSPARENCY AND VITALITY OF THE DEMOCRATIC DEBATE

The second version of Marsad.tn that will be launched in October 2012 is set up as a new platform of questions-answers allowing citizens to ask questions and participate to a democratic dialogue with their elected representatives:

- The citizen will be able to question publicly his elected representatives about his matters of concern; participate to democratic debate; and take decisions on the basis of reliable information.
- The elected representative will be able to set out his points of view; explain/justify his votes; communicate about his activities; and show his ability to listen to and dialogue with citizens about their problems and preoccupations.

- For the mass media, it will make available to them an important database on elected representatives, their communication with citizens, and represent a potential source for articles, interviews and analysis.

HOW DOES THE NEW ONLINE PLATFORM WORK?

Each citizen will be able to identify his elected representatives; to access to information about their activities; and to ask them one or several questions.

All questions and answers will be validated by a member of the moderation team of Marsad.tn before its publication on the online platform. The moderation team, which works on the basis of strict rules of moderation, will make sure that all debates are lawful, respectful and comprehensible.

PARTNERSHIPS WITH *PARLIAMENT WATCH* AND *MICT*

Al Bawsala has signed a partnership with the German organization *Parliament Watch* (<http://www.abgeordnetenwatch.de>) for the development of the new online platform of Marsad.tn.

The project *Parliament Watch* was launched in Germany in 2004 on Gregor Hackmack and Boris Hekele's initiative, awarded in 2008 by the Association Ashoka, in 2010 by the "Fairness Initiative Award" and in 2011 by the "German Prize for Civic Engagement". The German platform, that received 3 million of visits in 2011, currently covers the elected representatives of the two chambers of the federal parliament of Germany (Bundestag and Bundesrat), 8 state parliaments and 20 municipal councils.

«Marsad.tn » is a project financed by « Media In Corporation and Transition » (MICT), a German organization supported by the German ministry of foreign affairs.

MARSAD'S ADVISORY BOARD

The project Marsad.tn is chaperoned by an Advisory Board made up of distinguished, honorable and unbiased personalities that do not have any political affiliation.

The Board's members are regularly consulted to determine whether or not the questions asked online comply with the code of moderation in case of disagreement between the moderators of Marsad.tn.

The Board consists of the following members:

- **Pr. Salsabil Klibi:** Born on 5th June 1964, Pr. Salsabil Klibi completed a master in public law at the Faculty of Law and Political Sciences of Tunis. She currently teaches constitutional law and philosophy of law at the faculty of Juridical, Political and Social Sciences of Tunis. Professor Klibi is also a member of the Tunisian Association of Constitutional Law; the Association of research on democracy and development (AR2D) and she is the executive secretary of the International Academy of Constitutional Law.
- **Sami Ben Gharbia:** Born in Bizerte in 1967, Sami Ben Gharbia campaigned against censorship and repression and fled from Tunisia in 1998 to the Netherlands as political refugee. He couldn't return home in Tunisia before the 2011 revolution. He published the first Tunisian e-book Borj Erroumi XL that tells the story of the escapade that he was forced to, crossing Africa and the Middle East, to reach Europe and get asylum. He was the Director of Global Voices Advocacy and co-founded the independent website Nawaat.org. He was listed in 2011 as one of Foreign Policy's Top 100 Global Thinkers.
- **Lotfi Saibi:** Born in 1960 in Jelma, Gouvernorate of Sidi Bouzid, Lotfi Saibi studied at the Faculty of Sciences of Tunis, where he got involved in the UGET at the age of 17. Lotfi was arrested twice, in January 1978 and March 1979 by the police for "inciting" public disorder. The physical and emotional scars he suffered propelled him to leave for the U.S where he got a Master's Degree in Management and Leadership from Harvard University. Mr. Saibi has been involved in executive leadership of many organizations, as well as lectures about his favorite subjects: leadership and effective communications using new technologies. He returned permanently to his native country after the 2011 revolution and he is now involved in several projects and initiatives.

QUOTE BY AMIRA YAHYAOU

« Several months after the launching of our first project Marsad.tn, many elected representatives sent us, every day, information and documents on the work of the Constituent Assembly. Some of them do it without asking for anything in return and it would be good that all deputies do the same. We are still confronted with an opaque assembly in spite of the transparency of several elected representatives.

With the new platform of Marsad.tn, we want to involve our elected representatives in dialogue with citizens who, contrary to what we may think, want to be informed and participate in the constitutional process. »

QUOTE BY GREGOR, CO-FOUNDER OF PARLIAMENT WATCH

« ParliamentWatch encouraged millions of citizens to engage with their members of parliament in Germany. Thus we helped to build trust in parliament and strengthened democracy. We are very excited to cooperate with Al Bawsala and share our experience »