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BOOKLAUNCH REPORT

Baghat Korany - *Arab Human Development in the Twenty-first Century*

On the **13th of October 2017**, the **Euro Gulf Information Centre (EGIC)**, hosted the launch of the book edited by **Professor Baghat Korany** (American University of Cairo, AUC), titled “**Arab Human Development in the Twenty-first Century – The Primacy of Empowerment**”. The audience included diplomats, journalists, researchers and analysts from various Italian and international institutions, military personnel, students and University scholars. Prof. Korany described the background work behind the book and its content and gave the audience interesting insights of his view of future developments in the Arab world.

First of all, Prof. Korany illustrated the main features of how to update and enrich the current definition of *development* and how it is linked to international politics. He stated that gaining a full understanding of the dynamics and status of development is a prerogative for gaining a deep understanding of the wider Middle Easter region. He also emphasized an aspect that he deemed ‘provocative’, that “development it is not about economics, it is about politics”. Prof. Korany further said that the responsibility to achieving development lays in the decisions of policy makers, whom hold the accountability for the positive or negative outcomes that a country experiences. One of the main reflections emerging from the book is that economic variables – such as Per Capita Income – are not explicative indicators of development, which is measurable as well by social aspects such as education or health. According to Prof. Korany’s remarks, this report gives the reader the unique chance to understand the Middle East in this historical moment convulsed by what were the greatest upheavals in generations, known as Arab Springs. He highlighted the importance of having a report covering the entire Arab region, rather than the customary UN reports focusing on single countries. This report is able to give an in-depth overview on how the region is developing in terms of political, economic and legislative reform, education, security (both military and social).

After the speech of Prof. Korany, the audience asked several questions both about the report and about the Professor’s experience in the field of development studies. An aspect that draw a lot of attention from the audience was the issue of religious education in Arab countries and the role it could play in the development processes. Prof. Korany affirmed that religious education is of crucial importance, considering that imams and priests are very influential people in those countries. Religiousness – Korany continued – is an important component in all countries of the region, both when it is about Islam, Christianity or Judaism. Prof. Korany affirmed that rather than emphasizing differences amongst religions, policy makers and religious authorities in the Middle East should emphasize what they have in common, such as values of peace and dialogue.

The EGIC is grateful to Prof. Korany for his visit and his excellent contribution to a debate of crucial importance. The EGIC also thanks the audience for participating to the event and making the debate interesting, intense and energetic.

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