

HE Ambassador Mr. Ivan Surkoš, Head of the Delegation, Delegation of the European Union to Egypt

HE Mr. Ivan commenced his speech by expressing his sincere thanks to be in such a distinguished assembly, he continued: "it is events like these that provide unique opportunities for networking and matchmaking, for exchange of ideas, cooperation in education, research and innovation, and for new cooperation prospects between Arab States and also Europe. Your distinguished conference this year chose "Education, Science and Innovation" as the main theme for your 7th round. Fundamental changes have occurred both in the EU and in the Arab countries over the last few years. It seems to me that, despite the tormented evolution of our regions, and maybe precisely because of that evolution, a constant remains to persist, and this is scientific."

HE Mr. Ivan highlighted that the European Union strongly believe that education, research and innovation are crucial in addressing the most urgent challenges the region is facing.

The South-Neighborhood is a strategic partner with which the EU entertains a long-standing relationship. Fundamental changes have occurred in the region in the last few years and I feel that precisely because of this rate of change scientific collaboration can provide consistent common ground. Scientific research has the ultimate goal of increasing knowledge and promoting sustainable development in the region at large; research can provide answers to major societal challenges, which affect all of us directly such as food security or water resources management.

In line with the EU Global Strategy, EU cooperation with the Southern Neighborhood countries takes place in the framework of the European Neighborhood Policy (ENP), which was reviewed in 2015 to respond to the new challenges of an evolving neighborhood. The review refocused the ENP to ensure a differentiated approach to partners, recognizing the different aspirations of each country, joint ownership, based on both partners' needs and EU interests, and more flexibility in the use of EU instruments. The EU is investing a lot in economic development, resilience, security, democracy and the rule of law under the revised ENP. By using a tailor made approach of the ENP with each and every country, we seek to ensure it addresses most effectively the real needs and interests.

The new approach has been crucial in reenergizing the EU's relations with the ENP partner countries, including through the negotiation and adoption of new Partnership Priorities, where education, research and innovation cooperation was beyond doubt highlighted in the adopted PP as an area of mutual interest.

We strongly believe that research and innovation could be crucial in addressing the most urgent challenges the Arab States and well as Europe are facing. However, we need to work together and we need to create the enabling environment and tools for that to happen. There is a need for a reinforced interaction between all innovation stakeholders in the region-academia, public authorities, NGOs, and private sector.

HE Dr. Ivan concluded his speech by wishing a successful event and further collaboration under the EU programs and beyond.