

“The potential of African Students in the light of recent events in Tunisia, Egypt and Libya.”

University of Stellenbosch, August 26 2011

Mr Thabo Mbeki

Chairperson of the SRC,

Chairperson of SASCO,

Vice Chancellor, leaders, staff, students and workers of Stellenbosch University,

Ladies and gentlemen:

I would like to thank you for inviting me to return to this important centre of learning to reflect on what is obviously an important and relevant topic.

In its invitation letter to me the SRC said the Council had *“identified as some of (its) goals to stimulate dialogue, encourage critical thinking and reach for a more transformed campus.”*

I would like to commend the SRC and the student body as a whole for setting these important goals. I hope that indeed that you have given yourselves time critically to assess the historic events in North Africa to come to some conclusions about what they mean for Africa and for the African Students.

What can we say about these events, restricting ourselves, for now, to Egypt and Tunisia?

We will return later to the case of Libya.

With regard to everything we will say, please remember that the youth constitute the overwhelming majority of the population in all the countries we are discussing. In Egypt, for instance, two-thirds of the population is under 30, while youth unemployment stands at least at 25%.

Given the topic you have asked us to address, I hope you will agree that necessarily we will have to spend some time reflecting on the events in North Africa so that together we are better able to assess the potential role of the African students in this regard.

There is no doubt that what we saw in Egypt and Tunisia were genuinely popular and peaceful Uprisings aimed at the democratic transformation of these two African countries, starting with the overthrow of the ruling groups.

Accordingly, the Uprisings aimed to achieve the fundamental transformation of their societies, and not only their political systems.

It is also clear that in both instances the youth and students exercised leadership by being the first to take to the streets and by their persistence until the first objective of the Uprising, the overthrow of the ruling groups, was achieved.

It is also important to understand that this objective was achieved because the people as a whole joined the youth and students, transforming the rebellion of the youth and students into a National Uprising, which more or less guaranteed its success.

Equally we have to understand that what also facilitated this success was that the Armed Forces in both countries refused to suppress the Uprising and therefore to protect the governments of the day. On their own, the Police and other security organs could not defeat the Uprisings, regardless of the amount of force they used.

It is also clear that the Uprisings were an indigenous affair, carried out without any significant interference by foreign powers to help direct what were authentic African endeavours.

It is also significant that the governments of both Tunisia and Egypt collapsed within a very short time after the start of the Uprisings, marked in particular by the resignation of the Heads of State, Zine El Abidine Ben Ali and Hosni Mubarak respectively.

This could only mean that such was the degree of social rot over which these Heads of State presided, and such was the isolation of their governments from the masses of the people that it would not take too much pressure to topple them, as actually happened.

The *April 6 Movement* was one of the most prominent of the youth and student formations which played a critical role in the Egyptian Uprising, which incidentally named itself after a brutally suppressed workers' strike which had started on April 6, 2008.

In a Statement this Movement issued on February 6, 2011, and reflecting the extent to which the Mubarak regime had lost the confidence of the people, it said:

"We will complete what we started on the 25th of January. We the Egyptian youth will not be deceived by Mubarak's talk, which aimed to manipulate the emotions of the Egyptian people and under-estimated their intelligence as he has become accustomed to doing for thirty years in speeches, false promises, and mock election programs that were never meant to be implemented. Mubarak resorted to this misleading talk, thinking that Egyptian people could be deceived yet again."

The youth and students and the people of Tunisia took exactly the same position with regard to their then President, Abidine Ben Ali.

By the time he was forced to leave office, Ben Ali had served as President of Tunisia for just over 23 years. Hosni Mubarak of Egypt had served in the same position for 29 years.

Again as all of you know, both of them held onto these positions through what were described as democratic elections.

The reality, however, is that these elections were not democratic by any stretch of the imagination, and therefore that both Presidents and the groups they led clung to power depending not on the will of the people, but resort to other means which deliberately sought to frustrate the will of the people.

These were fraudulent elections and the maintenance of an extensive machinery of repression. Many in the Arab world claim that Tunisia had the most repressive state machinery of all countries in the region, making it what is correctly described as a police state.

In addition to the monopolisation of political power by a few, this meant that this tiny minority, as in Egypt, had every possibility to abuse its illegitimate power to enrich itself by corrupt means.

In a January 28 article this year, *The Washington Post* reported that:

“The Ben Ali and Trabelsi families, (Leila Trabelsi being his wife), controlled a vast number of companies and real estate, sometimes taken by force. Even distant relatives seemed above the law. Tunisia was their personal treasure chest.”

It is said that the Ben Ali and Trabelsi families controlled between 30% and 40% of the Tunisian economy.

One commentator, Professor Juan Cole, said *“the U.S. leaked cables from WikiLeaks suggest that 50 percent of the economic elite of (Tunisia) was related in one way or another to the president or to the first lady, Leila Ben Ali, and her Trabelsi clan.”*

We must expect that in time credible information will also come out which will also demonstrate that the Mubarak family and its associates also accumulated a great deal of wealth by corrupt means.

At the same time as the ruling groups in Egypt and Tunisia were enriching themselves, millions among their people faced challenging socio-economic conditions, characterised by high rates of poverty, unemployment, and an unaffordable cost of living.

This meant that not only were millions languishing in poverty, but also that the situation was made worse by glaring disparities in standards of living between the rich at the top and the poor at the bottom of the proverbial pyramid.

But what about the students and the intelligentsia?

In an article headed, *“Students Spark Tunisian Uprising”*, and published on January 18, Toufik Bougaada wrote:

“After four weeks of street protests in Tunisia, triggered by angry unemployed university graduates, Tunisians have ousted President Zine al-Abidine Ben Ali, who ruled for nearly a quarter of a century.

“The protests started on 18 December 2010 when Mohamed Bouazizi, an unemployed university graduate working as a street vendor, committed self-immolation in protest after police confiscated his stock of fruits and vegetables.

“This sent ripples through society, with many academics decrying day-to-day life, which is rife with corruption, unemployment and hikes in food prices...

“Unemployment is even higher amongst university graduates, with almost 25% of graduates failing to find work...Despite having a better education system than its North African neighbours, the high rate of graduate unemployment in Tunisia means many young people shun third-level (tertiary) education.”

As you know, and as we have just mentioned, the Tunisian Uprising was sparked by the disturbing event when an unemployed graduate, who made a living by selling fruit and vegetables as a street hawker, burnt himself to death.

In this context we should also note that even in Egypt, in part the Uprising was sparked by the death of yet another university graduate, Khaled Said, who was killed by the police in Alexandria.

Early last month, in an article entitled *"Brains unused"*, Rania Khallaf of Al Ahram reported on a sit-in by university graduates at the Academy of Scientific Research in Cairo. These were unemployed graduates who were demanding to be taken on as lecturers in the Egyptian universities, with some of them, including PhD's, having been unemployed for seven years after they had graduated.

So acute is the problem that Khallaf's article concluded with the words; *"What is needed is an in-depth review of the problems facing higher education in Egyptian universities and an ambitious plan to make use of Egypt's brainpower. Again, if there are not enough job vacancies in Egyptian universities, it is high time for the government to find ways to benefit from this brilliant, highly promising manpower."*

Responding to this situation, a February 4 Communiqué of the January 25th Youth (Movement), named after the day the Uprising began, said:

"Egypt's youth went out on the 25th of January with a strength, courage, boldness and heroism that had been unprecedented for the people of Egypt and completely unexpected;

"So that there would be no difference between the graduates of professional schools and those with lesser degrees;

"To confront the unemployment that has destroyed the lives of Egyptian youth;

"So that 472 youth no longer drown weekly in the Mediterranean Sea, their only crime (being) that they seek work and food to lessen the burden their families bear;

"We came out to protest the lines for (even) propane (gas) bottles and bread;

"We came out to demand an education that allows us to compete among the nations of the world, not an education that allows the world to mock us;

"We came out for the sake of the 52% of our people that are illiterate;

"We came out for the sake of national goals that unite all of us and would allow us to dispense with idling our time in cafes..."

I hope that what I have said so far is sufficient to indicate, among others, the principal objectives of the Uprisings in Tunisia and Egypt, including issues relating to the students and the intelligentsia.

As I said earlier, it is clear that these Uprisings had as their fundamental objective the victory of the democratic revolution in both countries. However, as the people who constituted the heart of the Uprisings admit every day, the democratic revolutions have not as yet emerged victorious.

It was therefore always a misnomer to describe the Uprisings as Revolutions.

To indicate the challenges facing the democratic forces in Egypt, concerning the fundamental changes for which they fought and are fighting, I will present to you observations made by some Egyptians, which comments speak for themselves.

What I will present to you henceforth will include relatively extensive quotations by various individuals and institutions. I must confess that I chose to rely on these citations to avoid the accusation that I have sought only to convey my partisan views.

In an article published at the beginning of this month, entitled *"Time to get serious"*,

Salama A. Salama of Egypt says:

"The brief honeymoon that followed the 25 January Revolution, when the army and the people were said to be "one hand," has ended in mistrust and misunderstanding that the recent reshuffle of the Essam Sharaf government failed to address...

"As it turned out, Sharaf is now catching flak from all sides, with people blaming him for slowing down the revolution, failing to address security, or failing to speed up the trials of former officials..."

"Turning to the revolutionaries, we have to admit that they are still a motley crew of well-intentioned but disunited groups and alliances, hard to enumerate or figure out. They have no leadership to negotiate on their behalf or a set of suggested policies to follow. But what this country needs right now is policies that take domestic as well as external considerations into account. We need a government that knows how to tend to economic and social demands while keeping at bay those powers, Arab and non-Arab, that do not wish to see democracy take root in Egypt."

Towards the end of May this year, Khalil El-Anani published an article entitled *"Egyptian Revolution Reconsidered"*. He said:

"Although the Egyptian revolution succeeded in ousting the Mubarak regime, it has not yet managed to uproot the ills of its culture, value system and prevailing modes of behaviour. In this sense, therefore, it remains "half a revolution", or more precisely, a "revolutionary act" that still needs follow-through towards completion...The "heart", or foundation, of (the Egyptian) state remains unchanged...Change at both levels - the political system and society - is a prerequisite for the completion of any revolution.

"Of course, there is no denying that the Egyptian revolutionary act was sudden and very powerful. However, its major thrust emanated from and remained largely restricted to a particular stratum of society, namely the middle to upper- middle class. It has yet to spread to other strata of society, which remain essentially the same as they were before the revolution. This phenomenon is not peculiar to Egypt. Other countries have experienced similar popular uprisings that succeeded in overturning regimes but did not go as far as to engender radical change in the prevailing values, culture and structures of society..."

"The Egyptian revolution can, therefore, be described so far as a minimal revolution - it achieved the minimal level of the dream of the majority of Egyptians, which was the overthrow of the old regime and the prosecution of its leaders and most prominent figures. However, it remains a considerable way off from the upper level, which involves the transformation of social and institutional structures and value and behavioural systems so as to enable society to regain its health and proceed towards the realisation of human development and prosperity..."

"Not every outburst of collective anger and frustration is a revolution. Not every defiance and overthrow of an old regime and its legal edifice is proof of a successful revolutionary act. The sole guarantor of the success of a revolution is society itself. Herein lies the crux of the dilemma: the performer of the

revolutionary act (the agent) needs a revolution so that the act and the agent can be brought into harmony, and so that the results are consistent with the beginnings.”

Let me conclude these quotations with one from Fatma Khafagy, a women's rights activist and a board member of the Alliance for Arab Women, extracted from a February article headed “*Now for the Gender Revolution*”.

She wrote: “I want to see the opposite of what has always happened after revolutions take place, now in Egypt. History tells us that women stand side by side with men, fight with men, get killed defending themselves and others along with men, and then nurse the wounded, lament the dead, chant and dance when the struggle is victorious and help to manage the aftermath when it is not. However, history also indicates that after the success of a political struggle, women are too often forced to go back to their traditional gender roles and do not benefit from the harvest of revolution.

“I am sure the Egyptian revolution will not allow this to happen...

“The Egyptian revolution, as I witnessed every day and night in Tahrir Square, was not only about getting rid of a political system. It was also about creating another more beautiful and just Egypt that would guarantee human rights to all its citizens. I saw young women discussing with young men what kind of life they wanted to achieve for Egypt. I feel sure that the gender equality that was witnessed in Tahrir Square and elsewhere in Egypt will now prevail because we need it to create a better Egypt.”

I am certain that the observations made by the three Egyptian commentators I have just quoted would apply in similar manner to Tunisia.

Libya was and is of course a completely different kettle of fish.

In this case, it is obvious that the major Western powers decide to intervene to advance their selfish interests, using the instrumentality of the UN Security Council.

I am certain that many of us here will at least have heard of the independent non-governmental organisation, headquartered in Brussels, the International Crisis Group, the ICG, which focuses on conflict resolution.

Its current President and CEO is the Canadian Judge Louise Arbour, former UN High Commissioner for Human Rights and former UN Chief Prosecutor for the International Criminal Tribunals for the former Yugoslavia and Rwanda.

I mention all this to make the point that neither the ICG nor its President and CEO were, or are, or can justly be accused of being in any way sympathetic to the Libyan Gaddafi regime.

But yet, in a Report on Libya issued on June 6 this year, the ICG said:

“Much Western media coverage has from the outset presented a very one-sided view of the logic of events, portraying the protest movement as entirely peaceful and repeatedly suggesting that the (Libyan) regime’s security forces were unaccountably massacring unarmed demonstrators who presented no real security challenge. This version would appear to ignore evidence that the protest movement exhibited a violent aspect from very early on...

“Likewise, there are grounds for questioning the more sensational reports that the regime was using its air force to slaughter demonstrators, let alone engaging in anything remotely warranting use of the term “genocide”. That said, the repression was real enough, - and I would, as an aside, add, as was the case in Tunisia and Egypt - and its brutality shocked even Libyans. It may also have backfired, prompting a growing number of people to take to the streets.”

Similar observations had been made earlier by Alan K. Kuperman on April 14, writing in the US newspaper, *The Boston Globe*. In an article headed *“False pretense for war in Libya”*, he wrote:

“Evidence is now in that President Barack Obama grossly exaggerated the humanitarian threat to justify military action in Libya. The president claimed that intervention was necessary to prevent a “bloodbath” in Benghazi, Libya’s second-largest city and last rebel stronghold...

“Obama insisted that prospects were grim without intervention... Thus, the president concluded, “preventing genocide” justified US military action.

“But intervention did not prevent genocide, because no such bloodbath was in the offing. To the contrary, by emboldening rebellion, US interference has prolonged Libya’s civil war and the resultant suffering of innocents...”

Later in its Report, the ICG said:

“The prospect for Libya, but also North Africa as a whole, is increasingly ominous, unless some way can be found to induce the two sides in the armed conflict to negotiate a compromise allowing for an orderly transition to a post-Qaddafi, post-Jamahiriya state that has legitimacy in the eyes of the Libyan people. A political breakthrough is by far the best way out of the costly situation created by the military impasse...

“Instead of stubbornly maintaining the present policy and running the risk that its consequence will be dangerous chaos, (the international community) should act now to facilitate a negotiated end to the civil war and a new beginning for Libya’s political life...

“To insist that, ultimately, (Qaddafi) can have no role in the post-Jamahiriya political order is one thing, and almost certainly reflects the opinion of a majority of Libyans as well as of the outside world.

*“But to insist that he must go now, as the **precondition** for any negotiation, including that of a ceasefire, is to render a ceasefire all but impossible and so to maximise the prospect of continued armed conflict.*

“To insist that he both leave the country and face trial in the International Criminal Court is virtually to ensure that he will stay in Libya to the bitter end and go down fighting.”

Bitter facts on the ground, showing the loss of African lives and the destruction of property in Libya, demonstrate that the ICG was absolutely correct.

The naked reality is not that the Western powers did not hear what the ICG said. Rather, they heard but did not want to listen to anything informed by the objective to address the real interests of the African people of Libya.

They were and are bent on regime-change in Libya, regardless of the cost to this African country, intent to produce a political outcome which would serve their interests.

Earlier this year, on March 2, a senior journalist on the London *Guardian* newspaper, Seumas Milne, said:

"The "responsibility to protect" invoked by those demanding intervention in Libya is applied so selectively that the word hypocrisy doesn't do it justice. And the idea that states which are themselves responsible for the deaths of hundreds of thousands in illegal wars, occupations and interventions in the last decade, along with mass imprisonment without trial, torture and kidnapping, should be authorised by international institutions to prevent killings in other countries is simply preposterous..."

"The reality is that the Western powers which have backed authoritarian kleptocrats across the Middle East for decades now face a loss of power in the most strategically sensitive region of the world as a result of the Arab uprisings and the prospect of representative governments. They are evidently determined to appropriate the revolutionary process wherever possible, limiting it to cosmetic change that allows continued control of the region..."

"(Foreign) military intervention wouldn't just be a threat to Libya and its people, but to the ownership of what has been until now an entirely organic, homegrown democratic movement across the region..."

"The Arab revolution will be made by Arabs, or it won't be a revolution at all."

Later, on March 23, he wrote: *"As in Iraq and Afghanistan, (with regard to Libya, the Western powers) insist humanitarian motives are crucial. And as in both previous interventions, the media are baying for the blood of a pantomime villain leader, while regime change is quickly starting to displace the stated mission. Only a Western solipsism that regards it as normal to be routinely invading other people's countries in the name of human rights protects NATO governments from serious challenge..."*

"For the Western powers, knocked off balance by the revolutionary Arab tide, intervention in the Libyan conflict offers both the chance to put themselves on the "right side of history" and to secure their oil interests in a deeply uncertain environment."

Seumas Milne's colleague in the same newspaper, Simon Jenkins, wrote only three days ago, on August 23:

"If (British Prime Minister) Cameron wants to take credit for the removal of Gaddafi, then he cannot avoid responsibility for the aftermath. Yet that responsibility strips a new regime of homegrown legitimacy and strength. This is the classic paradox of liberal interventionism..."

"Britain remains enmeshed in the Muslim world. It made a mess of Iraq and is trapped in Afghanistan. It hardly needs another costly and embarrassing client state to look after in this surge of neo-imperial do-goodery. We may applaud the chance of freedom about to be granted to a lucky group of oppressed people, but that doesn't justify the means by which it is achieved, in another fury of great-power aggression. The truth is that Gaddafi's downfall, like his earlier propping up, will have been Britain's doing. A new Libyan regime will be less legitimate and less secure as a result."

In this regard, four days ago, on August 22, the veteran *Guardian* correspondent, Jonathan Steele, had said: *"Thanks to its crucial role in tipping the military scales in Libya, Nato and the rebels are inextricably linked. Gaddafi had few supporters in the Arab world but there is a justified perception on the Arab street that the rebels are over-reliant on Western support and that the overriding Western motive is access to Libya's oil..."*

“The best revolutions are homegrown as they were in Tunisia and Egypt. Those who took to the streets in Tunis and Cairo’s Tahrir Square wanted to regain their country’s national dignity after decades of seeing their rulers doing the bidding of France and the United States...”

“The new rulers in Libya face a long road ahead in establishing their legitimacy on the Arab and African stage.”

And indeed they do!

At the end of everything I have said, relating to Tunisia, Egypt and Libya, what should the African students do, including you, students at Stellenbosch University!

I am certain that the totality of my comments will have confirmed the reality of which you are aware, that the recent and contemporary processes in North Africa are indeed truly complex.

The **first** suggestion I would therefore like to convey to you is that in order for you to play a meaningful role in this regard, and indeed in the context of all other significant developments in Africa, you must make the effort to study and understand these developments.

You have the unique advantage that you are students. As a former university student, I know that your principal task is to study. If you do not do this, it would be incorrect to describe, respect and honour you as students!

Further, as my **second** suggestion, I would like to believe that you will seek to understand African reality not for the pleasure merely of knowing, but because you would want to do what you can to help change our Continent for the better.

In this regard you would, of course, be inspired by what your peers have done in Tunisia and Egypt, who took the lead in the popular Uprisings in their countries, which have served to advance the African democratic revolution.

At the same time you will have been motivated to follow the heroic example set by your South Africans predecessors, such as those who participated in the 1976 Soweto Uprising, and others of our students, before and since.

Quite correctly, you see yourselves as part of the greater family of the millions of students in Africa, determined to act together with your colleagues to reshape our Continent into the kind of homeland you wish to inherit.

In this context, and as my **third** suggestion, I would like to propose that you make a determined effort to study various documents which constitute all-Africa policy by virtue of having been adopted by the OAU, the Organisation of African Unity, and its successor, the African Union, the AU.

In the context of the topic the SRC asked me to address this afternoon, I would suggest that you give yourselves time to study and debate, among others:

- the Constitutive Act of the African Union;
- the African Charter on Human and Peoples’ Rights;

- the Protocol to the African Charter on Human and People’s Rights on the Rights of Women in Africa;
- the African Union Convention on Preventing and Combating Corruption;
- the Protocol Relating to the Establishment of the Peace and Security Council of the African Union;
- the African Charter on Democracy, Elections and Governance;
- the African Youth Charter;
- the Charter for African Cultural Renaissance;
- the various documents on Human Resources, Science and Technology;
- the NEPAD Founding Document (2001); and,
- the African Peer Review Mechanism.

I mention these particular documents, all of which have been adopted by all the African governments, because they address directly the many political, economic, security and social issues which have arisen in the context of the North African struggles we have convened to discuss, and which, if implemented, would have addressed the concerns of our North African brothers and sisters.

As you study and debate these documents, as my **fourth** proposal, I would suggest that you ask yourselves and strive to answer two important questions:

- what should be done to position the African Union so that it has the ability to help ensure that all our Member States actually respect the objectives defined in these documents; and,
- what should the African student movement do to help achieve this outcome?

The **fifth** suggestion I would like to make relates to what has happened in Côte d’Ivoire and what is happening in Libya.

Specifically, in this regard, you should debate what Africa should do, and what Africa’s students should contribute in this regard, to defend and advance our right as Africans truly to determine our destiny, as a sovereign people.

I have been told that some of the intellectuals at our Universities reject the claim we make regularly – to find African solutions to African problems!

The only way I can explain this very strange posture is that these are Africans who have lost respect for and confidence in themselves, as Africans, and who therefore feel obliged to adopt positions which question ours and their right and capacity to solve our problems.

Certainly I have never come across any Europeans or Americans or Asians who would even so much as find it odd that they should assert that they have every right to find solutions to their problems!

I am also convinced, and as I said earlier, that the Stellenbosch University SRC was correct to set as one of its tasks the achievement of what it called “a more transformed campus”.

As a member of the Convocation of this University, I know that certainly under the leadership of our Principal and Vice-Chancellor, Professor Russell Botman, you have been discussing what this means.

Placed within the larger African context, this must surely mean that we strive to ensure that this University does its best not to produce the “*Unused brains*” to which an Egyptian commentator referred, and that our country, as well, “*finds ways to benefit from (the) brilliant (and) highly promising human power*” of those who graduate from Stellenbosch University.

Thus should you, the students, together with the rest of the University community, which is my **sixth** suggestion, continue to engage the critically important issue of how the University should persist in the effort to transform itself so that as an African centre of learning, teaching and research, it also serves as a vital intellectual centre for the progressive fundamental transformation of our Continent, and therefore its renaissance.

I am also very pleased that as students here at Stellenbosch you see yourselves as having shared obligations towards our Continent with the larger collective of other African students.

As my **seventh** suggestion, I would therefore like to suggest that through formations such as SASCO and other societies, and indeed through the SRC, you should do everything you can to strengthen your links with your African peers, including through a strengthened and more active and correctly focused All-Africa Students Union.

The recent and current events in North Africa have confirmed that Africa’s students remain one of the most vital and courageous forces for the progressive transformation of our Continent, which entirely healthy reality we also know from our own history.

To conclude, and as my **eighth** proposal, I would like to appeal to you always to remember that you have an obligation to take advantage of the opportunity you have as university students, and therefore Africa’s nascent intelligentsia:

- to empower yourselves to become the quality intelligentsia our Continent needs, by diligently applying yourselves to the exciting task of studying;
- to act to ensure that as you inherit the future as leaders of the peoples of Africa, you will have done your best to help build a better Continent;
- always to honour the truth, to respect ‘the great unwashed’ who are our mothers and fathers, and to have the courage fearlessly to stand up for what is right and just, ready to present reasoned arguments in this regard;
- always to question and challenge even what is conveyed to you by all and sundry as established truths, including what I have said today, acting both as young people and as students who have the opportunity to re-discover anew all truths about the human and material worlds we inhabit;
- never to abuse the fact of your greater access to knowledge to position yourselves as a corrupt and parasitic segment of African society; and,
- never to be tempted to use your learning to sugar-coat a deadly virus of false knowledge you can impart to the Africans, in what our Nigerian fellow Africans would describe as giving poisoned kola nuts you offer to friends, pretending that these were but the traditional African gifts of friendship.

The eminent Irish playwright, George Bernard Shaw, once said – *Youth is a wonderful thing. What a crime to waste it on children!*

By their actions, your peers, comrades and friends, the youth and students of North Africa, have challenged this provocative observation.

Through your own bold and principled actions, please continue to challenge it!

Thank you.