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## Report on Improving Civil Society Engagement at the League of Arab States

A major report on Improving Civil Society Engagement at the League of Arab States was launched in English and Arabic today by the Centre for Law and Democracy (CLD) (Canada), Transparency Maroc (TM), Palestinian Center for Development and Media Freedoms (MADA) and Maharat Foundation (Lebanon). The report looks at transparency and consultation opportunities at the League of Arab States (LAS) and compares them to opportunities at other inter-governmental organisations – such as the <https://www.coe.int/en/web/ingo/overview>, the [https://www.oas.org/en/ser/dia/civil\\_society/index.shtml](https://www.oas.org/en/ser/dia/civil_society/index.shtml) } and the <https://www.worldbank.org> } – finding that the LAS is significantly less open to civil society engagement in its work.

The report notes that civil society engagement is more important today than ever before, including to address the democratic deficit that plagues most inter-governmental organisations, to harness the ideas and links to local populations that civil society offers, and to bolster credibility and hence effectiveness. All of these are key needs for the LAS, which currently largely excludes civil society from most of its work.

The four main recommendations for reform are set out in the report as follows:

- **Consulting about Consulting:** the LAS should reach out to Arab civil society to discuss what steps need to be taken to improve engagement opportunities.
- **Access to Information:** the LAS should commit to far greater levels of transparency than in the past and, over time, adopt a dedicated information disclosure policy.
- **Accreditation:** the current observer status system should be transformed into a consultative status approach which is far more accessible to civil society organisations and which grants those with status not just the right to listen but also the right to participate.
- **Other Issues:** the LAS should also support engagement in other ways such as by offering concrete support, including funding, and by creating specific forums for engagement.

The report can be accessed in English and Arabic at: [ADD URL].

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