

Gamal Mubarak vows response to attacks by opposition

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Gamal Mubarak, head of the ruling National Democratic Party's (NDP's) authoritative Policies Secretariat, said the party would respond to recent attacks on it by some members of Egypt's political opposition.

"But we're also ready for dialogue," he added.

In a speech delivered at the NDP's annual party congress on Sunday, Mubarak -- son of President Hosni Mubarak -- refuted remarks by "some" opposition figures, stressing that not all opposition groups had engaged in attacks on the ruling party.

He pointed out that the NDP had debated several draft laws with the opposition in the past, such as the social insurance bill and the constitutional amendments bill. He went on to describe attacks on the party as "a sign of Egypt's democratic advancement."

Mubarak denied that the NDP had "manipulated" the political arena, rejecting the notion that the NDP was "the businessmen's party." "It's a party that encourages all investors -- investors who create more job opportunities for the people," he said.

"The party was first criticized for not having young leaders," the younger Mubarak said, going on to deny that the NDP was controlled by his Policies Secretariat. "Now we hear talk about a so-called old vs. new guard, when disagreement within the party simply means it is active and strong."

He noted that the government had spent 60 percent of the annual state budget on public services, pointing in particular to one development project for rural Egyptian villages and another for increasing pensions by 25 percent as of next year. He also declared that the party would stand by Egypt's farmers "as it always has."

"We will run in the next parliamentary elections as one unified entity," Mubarak said. "Because we've learnt from our mistakes and will not allow any attempts to sow internal divisions."

On the subject of political reform, Mubarak said: "Reform needs courage, but it also has a price." He vowed to continue presenting the party's achievements in an honest and transparent fashion.

"Today, Egypt is witnessing an unprecedented degree of freedom and political debate, thanks to NDP policies," Mubarak said. As proof of this assertion, he pointed to recent constitutional amendments, the abolition of a social prosecutor, the granting of more authority to parliament and the cabinet and the boosting of female representation in the national assembly.

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