

The Broader Middle East and North Africa Initiative (BMENA)

“The Middle East is brimming with talent. It is blessed with resources, enriched by strong traditions of faith and family. This rising generation of young people has the potential to achieve so much, and we need to give them the chance to do so.”

*-Secretary of State Hillary Rodham Clinton
Forum for the Future 2011, Doha, Qatar*

In 2004, under the U.S. presidency, the leaders of the G-8 nations and countries of the Broader Middle East and North Africa (BMENA) launched the BMENA Initiative as a vehicle to bring together governments and civil society groups from the G-8 states and the Broader Middle East and North Africa region to work together to achieve political, social, and economic reform.

One of the great successes of the BMENA Initiative is that it creates a unique space for dialogue between civil society, private sector, and government. The BMENA Initiative has aimed to promote collaboration amongst all the parties that have a role in making a prosperous and stable society.

The centerpiece of the BMENA Initiative is the Forum for the Future, an annual gathering of G-8 and BMENA Foreign Ministers with civil society and the private sector representatives to promote cooperation and advance BMENA reform goals throughout the Broader Middle East and North Africa.



Plenary panel at the BMENA Sub-Ministerial meeting in Washington DC

Left to right: U.S. Deputy Secretary of State William J. Burns, Tunisian Secretary of State for American Hédi Ben Abbas, LWV Deputy Executive Director Zaida Arguedas, President of the Tunisian-American Chamber of Commerce Amel Bouchamaoui



The United States, as G-8 president, and the Republic of Tunisia are co-chairing the 2012 BMENA Initiative. The government co-chairs selected two civil society partners, the League of Women Voters and the Human Resources and Training Managers Association (known by its French acronym “ARFORGHE”) and one private sector partner, the Tunisian American Chamber of Commerce (TACC). These three partners play an important role in mobilizing and supporting civil society and the private sector throughout the year. The Governments of Tunisia and the United States worked together to outline three themes for the Forum of the Future: women’s empowerment; economic governance and entrepreneurship; and freedom of expression and association.

In preparation of the Forum, which is being held in Tunis, Tunisia on December 11-13, the BMENA nongovernmental partners, the United States, and Tunisia organized two preparatory workshops and a sub-ministerial meeting. The first took place in El Jadida, Morocco on September 3-4 and focused on women’s empowerment. The second workshop was held in Amman, Jordan on October 1-2 and addressed issues of economic governance and entrepreneurship. The sub-ministerial meeting, which took place on November 1-2 in Washington D.C., brought government, civil society, and private sector representatives together to develop a shared agenda for the Forum and discuss the draft Forum Declaration.

This is the first year that government, civil society, and private sector representatives actively participated in all BMENA events as equals – reflecting the goals of the U.S. and Tunisian co-chairs to foster meaningful dialogue and generate reform-oriented discussions. This year’s Ministerial meeting at the Forum will include about 50 civil society and private sector representatives who will participate directly in discussion alongside governments.