

2012 G8-BMENA INITIATIVE



9TH FORUM FOR THE FUTURE

9ÈME FORUM POUR L'AVENIR



LEAGUE OF
WOMEN VOTERS®





9th Forum for the Future
2012 G8 Broader Middle East and North Africa Initiative (BMENA)





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The United States of America and the Republic of Tunisia, together with their non-governmental partners, League of Women Voters of the United States, Human Resources and Training Managers Association (ARFORGHE), and the Tunisian American Chamber of Commerce (TACC), were proud to serve as the 2012 G-8 Broader Middle East and North Africa (BMENA) Initiative co-chairs. We would like to thank all participants for a very successful year.

With profound changes taking place across the region, we knew that the 2012 G-8 BMENA Initiative had to respond to the evolving roles and relationships among civil society, private sector, and government, while maintaining the Forum for the Future's unique structure and advantages. We sought to increase collaboration and partnership amongst all parties, noting that all are essential in pushing towards positive change. With these goals in mind, we tried to reinvigorate the BMENA process by giving civil society and private sector equal seats at the table with their government counterparts at all BMENA events, including the Forum, and focused the citizen-government dialogue on specific, country-based collective problem-solving. We also brought private sector leaders in larger numbers into the process, not only to tap into their creativity and innovation, but more importantly to serve as reform advocates, particularly on reforms necessary to spur greater economic opportunity and growth. Over the course of two preparatory events, held in Morocco and Jordan, regional government, civil society and private sector representatives sat together by country and identified progress, continuing challenges, and potential solutions, in some cases emerging with shared priorities and roles for all stakeholders in achieving concrete progress. These outcomes laid the foundation for discussions at the Sub-ministerial in Washington D.C., and at the Forum itself.

At the Forum for the Future in Tunisia, we had strong ministerial and other high-level participation from BMENA and G-8 countries, as well as representatives from international organizations and international financial institutions. Forty-five civil society and private sector leaders were selected from over 125 participants to present their platforms and dialogue with ministers. At the Forum, we achieved a historic outcome: a consensus declaration (for only the second time in BMENA's nine-year history) with strong, substantive language and commitments to advance gender equality and greater political, social, and economic rights and opportunities for women; freedom of expression and association and increased operating space for civil society and the private sector to engage their governments; religious tolerance and rejection of violence; and more open and transparent governance and an improved regulatory environment to promote entrepreneurship and economic growth. We also established a pathway to use the Forum to mobilize concrete actions on the part of government, civil society and the private sector to make progress on the commitments made.

Although we achieved important progress this year, there is still much work that can be done. We hope participants will continue to engage with each other around their shared goals within and outside the BMENA process, and build upon the BMENA outcome documents contained in this report to continue the dialogue and achieve further progress. Ultimately, it is such ongoing engagement between citizens and BMENA governments that will ensure that the outcomes reflected in this report become more than words on the page, and result in meaningful changes in citizens' lives and the achievement of their aspirations.

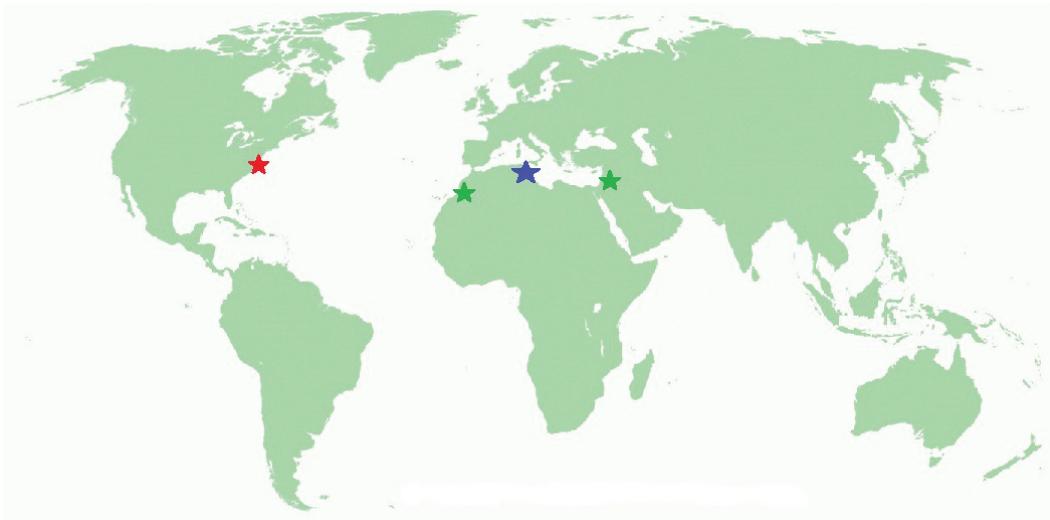
Ambassador Beth Jones
United States of America

Ambassador Faysal Gouia
Republic of Tunisia

Zaida Arguedas
League of Women Voters

Hatem Bacha
*Human Resources and Training
Managers Association*

Amel Bouchamaoui Hammami
*Tunisian-American Chamber
of Commerce*



PREPARATORY WORKSHOPS

- ★ *Women's Empowerment*, El Jadida (Morocco), 3–4 September
- ★ *Economic Governance and Entrepreneurship*, Amman (Jordan), 1–2 October

SUB-MINISTERIAL MEETING

- ★ *Freedom of Expression and Association and Consolidation of Recommendations*, Washington D.C. (United States), 1–2 November

CIVIL SOCIETY AND PRIVATE SECTOR PREPARATORY FORUM

- ★ Tunis (Tunisia), 11–12 December

SENIOR OFFICIALS FORUM

- ★ Tunis (Tunisia), 12 December

9TH FORUM FOR THE FUTURE

- ★ Tunis (Tunisia), 13 December



*2012 G8 BMENA Initiative Foreign Ministers Group Photograph
9th Forum for the Future Tunis, Tunisia – December 13, 2012*



*2012 G8 BMENA Initiative Civil Society and Private Sector Group Photograph
Civil Society and Private Sector Preparatory Forum Tunis, Tunisia – December 11-12, 2012*

9TH FORUM FOR THE FUTURE: FINAL DECLARATION

*Tunis, Tunisia
December 13, 2012*

1. The 9th Forum for the Future, co-chaired by Tunisia and the United States, was convened in Tunis during the period of 11-13 December 2012 with the broad participation of Foreign Ministers and other government representatives of the G8, BMENA, and other partner countries; civil society and private sector representatives; and participants from international organizations. Their efforts, and this Declaration, build upon the foundation established by previous Forums and in particular upon the Declaration from the 8th Forum for the Future in Kuwait.
2. Ministers expressed their thanks to Tunisia and the United States for co-chairing the 2012 BMENA process, including hosting the Forum for the Future and organizing its preparatory work through two civil society workshops and a Sub-Ministerial meeting in cooperation with their NGO partners, the League of Women Voters, the Human Resources and Training Managers Association, and the Tunisian American Chamber of Commerce. They also thanked Morocco and Jordan for supporting the two preparatory workshops in El Jadida and Amman. Participants welcomed the preparatory events, which fostered collaborative discussions among governments, civil society, and the private sector regarding concrete actions to advance women's empowerment, the rights to freedom of expression and association, and economic governance and entrepreneurship, in accordance with national efforts and actions of partners to support them.
3. Since the 8th Forum for the Future in Kuwait, the BMENA region has witnessed important progress and promise. Ministers welcomed the transfer of executive authority to newly democratic elected governments in Egypt, Libya, and Tunisia through credible and transparent elections that reflected the will of the people, a newly elected President and plans for a new constitution and full elections in Yemen, and the comprehensive constitutional changes in Morocco resulting in a democratically elected government. However, the past year was also marked by challenges and crises. Ministers expressed serious concern about the unrelenting violence, massacres, and human rights violations perpetrated against the Syrian people that followed the regime crackdown on peaceful protests beginning in March 2011 and that should be stopped immediately. They also expressed serious concern about the human rights situation in Iran and called on the Government of Iran to fully abide by its international obligations in this regard.
4. Recent developments in the region have underscored that governments, the G8 countries, civil society, the private sector, and multilateral partners all must expand their collaboration to meet the region's challenges; promote economic growth and stability; reject violence; advance women's full participation in society; achieve sustained progress on economic, political, and social concerns; and advance the values of democracy, human rights, and participation of all citizens in political and public affairs. The long-standing focus of the BMENA Initiative on government-citizen dialogue has never been more relevant or necessary in the region.
5. Consistent with this focus, Ministers reaffirmed their commitment to nationally-based dialogues between governments and their citizens. While each country determines its own form of dialogue, Ministers agreed to strengthen the respect for the rights to peacefully assemble, to

associate, and to express oneself freely in accordance with their commitments to universally recognized human rights. They agreed on the need to foster meaningful avenues for all to communicate their interests and concerns to their governments and to have a voice in decisions that affect their lives. Ministers agreed on the importance of supporting civil society at this crucial juncture in the history of the region and expressed support for establishing, or strengthening existing, regular and routine national mechanisms for government and civil society dialogue, promoting inclusivity and transparency in political processes, and basic freedoms for all. Ministers acknowledged the importance of sound national legal frameworks that are consistent with the Universal Declaration of Human Rights and international human rights law and that support a vibrant and unfettered civil society and the enjoyment of universal human rights and fundamental freedoms for all. Ministers affirmed the importance of the continuation of informal dialogue, which has developed within and outside the Forum, including between representatives of civil society, as it provides an important opportunity to exchange views in a constructive environment that builds confidence. They expressed the view that work undertaken within the Forum for the Future will, as much as possible, be reflected at national and international levels, and they reaffirmed their joint understanding of pursuing economic, political, and social development.

6. Ministers reaffirmed the importance of respecting the rule of law, rejecting violence, and protecting all persons living within their territory without distinction as to race, sex, language, or religion, and protecting diplomatic missions and personnel. Ministers expressed concern that incidents of racial and religious intolerance, discrimination, and related violence, as well as of negative racial and religious stereotyping, continue to rise around the world, and condemned any advocacy of national, racial, or religious hatred that constitutes incitement to discrimination, hostility, or violence. Ministers affirmed that violence in response to speech is never acceptable; stressed the need for States to take positive concrete steps to combat intolerance, negative stereotyping, discrimination, and incitement to violence such as encouraging political leaders and civil society to speak out against intolerance, creating networks to build mutual understanding, training government officials in effective outreach, and encouraging representation of individuals irrespective of their religion in all sectors of society; and reaffirmed their commitment to promote tolerance and pluralism, to uphold the rule of law, and to protect freedom of religion and belief. They further reaffirmed the positive role that the exercise of the right to freedom of opinion and expression and the full respect for the freedom to seek, receive, and impart information can play in strengthening democracy and combating intolerance. Ministers acknowledged important steps that have been taken toward these goals since the last Forum, but expressed the continued need for further progress.
7. Ministers agreed that the full and equal participation of all people regardless of race, sex, or religion is critical for political and economic development. Ministers, in particular, recognized the critical role that women play in the transformations underway in the BMENA region, and underscored the importance of progress on long-standing BMENA objectives related to gender equality, with a view to achieving women's full political, social, and economic empowerment. New legislation and electoral procedures in the past year have led to increased women's political representation and participation in several BMENA countries, which Ministers recognized as an important step. They also reaffirmed the ongoing need for further progress in addressing a range of issues affecting the condition of women throughout the countries participating in the Forum,

including gender-based discrimination and violence; forced and early forced marriage; low rates of women's participation in economies, public service, and decision-making institutions including parliaments; and barriers to women's access to education. Ministers welcomed the commitment by several BMENA countries to advance the opportunities for women to the benefit of their societies as a whole. Important examples include establishing new or reinforcing existing legal and constitutional frameworks that guarantee women's equality and support women's increased political representation and economic participation, including through the provision of guarantees for equal opportunities or the use of preferences in the public and private sector when appropriate; expanding women's economic opportunities through education, training, including vocational training, mentorship, and other support; combating all forms of violence against women; and increasing education and awareness of human rights with a particular focus on women. Ministers welcomed in principle the call by the Government of Tunisia for the creation of a regional network of shelters and research center for women victims of violence. Ministers also acknowledged the importance of integrating international commitments into their national laws, including comprehensive national family policies to encourage women's participation in public life.

8. Ministers agreed on the urgent need for increased economic opportunity, job creation, and broad-based, private sector-led growth in the region that focuses in particular on youth and women, who are overrepresented among the unemployed population. They also acknowledged the inter-linkages between domestic and global economic governance and the implications of the latter on the BMENA economic reform agenda. Ministers noted the importance of domestic-led reform efforts in collaboration with the private sector, civil society, and international organizations, including international financial institutions, to improve the business climate, facilitate public-private partnerships, and foster an environment conducive to entrepreneurship and business development for all citizens. Ministers cited as necessary goals greater openness and transparency in economic decision-making; the establishment of fair, clear, and efficient legal and regulatory environments for business; effective whistle-blower protection laws; establishment of independent accountability institutions; e-commerce; and an active, independent, professional, and free media in ensuring the transparency and integrity of public institutions. Ministers welcomed the commitments that a number of Governments had undertaken in these areas, including by streamlining the business registration process, reforming commercial codes, creating dedicated support for small and medium enterprises (SMEs), establishing independent accountability institutions, and increasing access to capital. They took note of the best practice, implemented by a number of countries, of public-private entities facilitating discussion of and informing decision-making on economic and business matters, and the private sector's recommendation to support the establishment and development of public-private SME institutions to provide support for entrepreneurs and SMEs, including entrepreneurship education, apprenticeship and vocational programs, debt and equity funding, banking services, innovation and knowledge-transfer, mentorship, incubation, and government procurement preference mechanisms.
9. Ministers welcomed the important work being undertaken under the Deauville Partnership with Arab Countries in Transition in promoting SME development, open government and anticorruption, and asset recovery, and expressed their appreciation for the contributions of the regional partners. They noted the development by Deauville countries of plans for near-term actions that will bolster the development and sustainability of entrepreneurial activity and SMEs,

and encouraged countries to share and publish their near-term action plans, and to work with partner governments and institutions, including international financial institutions, in support of their implementation. Ministers welcomed the cooperation between the Arab Fund for Economic and Social Development, which is managing the SME initiative of the Emir of Kuwait and the World Bank, as trustee of the Deauville Transition Fund, to further investments in SMEs across the region. Ministers also acknowledged the need to improve practices in public financial management, and recognized the potential for technical assistance rendered through the Deauville Partnership's Transition Fund and Financial Services Advisory Corps. They stressed the importance of ensuring increased synergy and complementarity between BMENA and the Deauville Partnership as two distinct and mutually reinforcing work streams and emphasized the importance of the G8's support regarding ongoing reforms in the region. In this context, they welcomed the United Kingdom's intention in 2013 to prioritize asset recovery, women's participation and support for SMEs as part of their presidency of the Deauville Partnership.

10. Ministers affirmed their resolve to make fighting corruption a priority at all levels and called for continued cooperation to pursue effective asset recovery, including through follow-up action on the elements of the Asset Recovery resolution of the UN Convention against Corruption (UNCAC) 4th Conference of States Parties in Marrakesh. They called upon both requested and requesting States to work together in accordance with their obligations under Chapters IV and V of UNCAC to act together to recover the proceeds of corruption and other illicit financial outflows, and to take a proactive approach to international cooperation in asset recovery. Ministers noted with appreciation the Stolen Assets Recovery Initiative of the World Bank Group and the United Nations Office on Drugs and Crime. Ministers also welcomed the Asset Recovery Action Plan of the Deauville Partnership, including the Arab Forum on Asset Recovery in Doha September 11-13, 2012, and encouraged further progress on its elements and further coordination among existing initiatives, in order to enhance case cooperation to trace, freeze, confiscate, and return proceeds of corruption, strengthen legislative frameworks, simplify processes to facilitate this progress, and foster capacity building, in accordance with the principles of the rule of law and judicial independence.
11. Ministers took note of U.N. General Assembly resolution 67/19 regarding Palestinian status as an observer state. At the same time while dealing with the aspirations of the peoples of the region, the Ministers reaffirmed their support for the efforts to achieve a just, comprehensive, and lasting peace in the Middle East through negotiations within a specific timeframe and clear terms of reference based on the two-state solution as stated in the Arab Peace Initiative, the Road Map, the Madrid principles, on the basis of land for peace, the relevant resolutions of the United Nations, and the Quartet Statement of 23 September 2011 leading to the establishment of an independent, contiguous, viable, sovereign, democratic, peaceful state of Palestine, living side by side with Israel in peace and security.
12. Ministers welcomed the announcement at the Forum of several new initiatives to support civil society, women's empowerment, and the private sector in the BMENA region, including Milan's Chamber of Commerce Euro-Med Center for the Development of Medium, Small, Micro Enterprises. They welcomed the information offered by some BMENA countries on their national plans and priorities to advance women's empowerment, freedom of expression and association,

and economic governance and entrepreneurship, and noted that such information provided a means for governments, regional and multilateral institutions, and civil society to focus their efforts and assistance. In this context, Ministers reaffirmed the importance of full implementation of the Paris Declaration, Accra Agenda for Action, and the Busan Partnership for Effective Development Cooperation. Ministers welcomed in principle the proposal by the Government of Tunisia for a regional Women's Enterprise Fund.

13. Ministers expressed their sincere thanks to the Government of Tunisia and the Tunisian people for their warm reception and hospitality in hosting the 9th Forum for the Future, which ensured the event's success. They also expressed their support for the next joint chairmanship of the United Kingdom and Egypt.



9TH FORUM FOR THE FUTURE: *SUPPLEMENT TO FINAL DECLARATION*

*Tunis, Tunisia
December 13, 2012*

The following list identifies voluntary actions, best practices, and plans by participating G8 and BMENA countries to support BMENA objectives and advance this year's themes of women's empowerment, freedom of expression and association, and economic governance and entrepreneurship.

Canada

- Canada launched an Action Plan on women, peace, and security, which emphasizes participation by women in peace processes, the protection of human rights of women and girls, and seeks to ensure their equal access to humanitarian and development assistance.
- Canada also supports Violence Against Women initiatives in multilateral arenas, and is the lead voice on the violence against women resolution at the Human Rights Council.
- Canada provided technical support to promote women's political participation in the democratic transition in Libya, particularly in civil society and political spheres.
- Canada supported freedom of expression online, including, for example, with a project in Egypt that trained over 120 political bloggers on citizen journalism and independent journalists on social media skills.
- Canada is strengthening the business and employment skills of Egypt's marginalized groups, especially women and youth, to help small and medium-sized businesses grow.
- In Morocco and Jordan, Canada is working with partners to strengthen entrepreneurship and improve access to education and training.
- In Jordan, Canada's development assistance is supporting projects that generate new jobs and improve access to education and training programs, especially for women.
- As part of Canada's engagement in the G8 Deauville Partnership process, Canada's contribution to the Deauville Partnership Transition Fund will provide grants and technical assistance to help accelerate economic and democratic reform efforts in Egypt, Jordan, Libya, Morocco, Tunisia and Yemen.
- In Egypt, Canada, through its partners, will provide skills training and expertise aimed at helping young people secure jobs and start businesses in sectors such as tourism and manufacturing.
- Canada is helping increase employment and other opportunities for young women and men in Jordan by making skills training and education programs more accessible to young people.
- In Morocco, Canada is supporting efforts to address youth unemployment and establish greater social and economic stability.
- In Morocco, Algeria, Tunisia, Egypt and Jordan, Canada will help engage and develop the capacity of local trade development service providers, trade associations, chambers of commerce and the like by improving and expanding the range and the quality of the services these agencies render to

existing or emerging exporters.

Italy

- Italy's main current initiative for the region on SME is the "Euro-Mediterranean Development Center (EMDC) for Micro, Small and Medium Enterprises," a project proposed by PROMOS (a vehicle of Milan's Chamber of Commerce), in cooperation with the Italian Government and EIB. The EMDC is an international public-private initiative supporting economic cooperation between MSMEs; promoting the start-up of innovative business ventures; and favoring access to markets, finance and human capital development for MSMEs as well as technical and financial operators. The objectives are to favor the development of collaborative relations between Governments, public agencies, enterprises, and financial institutions; promote economic integration in the Euro-Mediterranean Region; advance economic relations between MSMEs on both shores of the Mediterranean and the national and international aggregation of enterprises; promote access to the European market for South Mediterranean Rim MSMEs and vice versa; support human capital development, through training, exchange and secondment programs; further the circulation of young professionals within the Euro-Mediterranean Region, as well as through technical support for the recruitment of professionals by MSMEs and financial operators; promote investments by MSMEs in the region, strengthening Euro-Mediterranean joint-ventures; and facilitate access to credit and risk-capital financing for MSMEs operative in the Mediterranean Region.
- In the context of a continuous engagement to promote intercultural dialogue between the Mediterranean States, the Italian Foreign Ministry, in cooperation with the UN Alliance of Civilization (UNAOC) and the Cassa di Risparmio di Torino Foundation (CRT), is implementing a pilot project whose aim is the training of young business entrepreneurs in order to develop their enterprises to get national and international investments and to manage intercultural challenges caused by localization in the Euro-Mediterranean area. To further this objective Italy is planning a five-day training course in Torino in February for 20 young entrepreneurs from the Mediterranean area.
- The Italian Government has put SME development at the forefront of its bilateral assistance program for the MENA region through concessional credit lines (especially in Tunisia), and debt swap programs with Egypt, Jordan and Morocco.
- At the July meeting of the MENA-OECD Working Group on SME's Policy, Entrepreneurship and Human Capital Development (organized in Rome by the Italian Ministry of Foreign Affairs) Italy promoted – together with Tunisia – an in-depth discussion on supporting high growth enterprises; encouraging women-led enterprises; and identifying capacity building measures for SME policy development.
- Also in July, the United States (as president of the G8) and Italy hosted a Deauville Partnership meeting in Rome focused on near-term measures to support SMEs and entrepreneurs in Egypt, Jordan, Libya, Morocco, Tunisia, and now also Yemen.
- In September the Italian School of Public Administration and the OECD set up in Caserta the MENA-OECD Governance Training Centre to support capacity building programs for public entities involved in SME support, such as Chambers of Commerce or SME development agencies.
- As co-chair of the MENA-OECD International Network on Public Procurement, CONSIP (the central purchasing body of the Italian Public Administration) stands ready to share its best practices on e-procurement and SMEs access to public tenders.
- Italy has provided Egypt with a credit line for small and medium enterprises – the Social Fund for

Development (SFD) – worth about €13 million. In 2012 the Protocol, signed on June 14, 2001, was amended in order to simplify the agreement, in particular regarding the mechanisms and conditions of the credit. The Agreement aims at supporting the recovery of small and medium enterprises, especially after the recent events of the Arab Spring.

- Italy has established a credit line for small and medium enterprises, worth €73 million. The initiative is focused on the development of the private sector, providing SMEs resources with a low interest rate.
- For women's empowerment, Italy has a project named "Project Welod," worth €1.7 million, which promotes the socio-economic empowerment of Palestinian women with a particular focus on using new information and communications technologies.
- Italy is developing a program worth €1.5 million for the promotion of children's rights and the empowerment of the family in the El Fayoum Governorate of Egypt. The project aims at creating a model of integrated services for children and families to facilitate the implementation of the National Plan for Children.
- Italy is developing a program for social and health in Tunisia, worth about €7 million. The initiative aims at supporting the policy of the Government of Tunisia in the healthcare sector, improving maternal and child health, integration of the disabled, and reducing the social vulnerability of children and the elderly.

Japan

- Japan, as a running mate who accompanies a marathon of democratic process, offers long-term assistance tailored to each country's needs, and has focused on the following three spheres: (a) fair political process and government; (b) human resources development; and (c) job creation and fostering of industries. Japan will continue to provide assistance in the abovementioned focus areas of economic governance and entrepreneurship as well as for women's empowerment.
- At the launch of the Deauville Partnership in 2011, Prime Minister Noda of Japan pledged to provide economic assistance of \$1 billion. Since then, Japan has developed loan aid projects totaling around \$1.4 billion in Egypt, Jordan, Morocco, and Tunisia.
- Japan has implemented a Youth Employment Generation Program in Algeria, Tunisia, Morocco, Egypt, Yemen, Jordan and Iraq.
- To achieve MDGs and promote gender equality, Japan has implemented the following projects: Project for Improvement of Livelihood for Palestinian Refugees; Poverty Reduction for Chronically Poor Women in Afghanistan; Project on Improvement of Literacy Education Management in Afghanistan; and Japan Arab Women's Exchange Program.

Turkey

- Law no. 6284 on the Protection of Family and the Prevention of Violence Against Women was put into effect on March 20, 2012. The Circular on the Implementation of the Law was published on April 19, 2012.
- The capacity of Women's Guesthouses, where women who are or likely to be victims of violence are sheltered, was increased to 1180 in 53 guesthouses as of October 2012.
- Work on the establishment of Violence Prevention and Monitoring Centers continued in 2012.

These centers will operate 24/7 to provide fast and effective services for women under the threat of violence, focusing on the economic, physiological, legal and social encouragement of women.

- The “National Action Plan to Combat Violence Against Women for the period of 2012-2015,” which was prepared with participation of and contributions from public institutions, NGOs and woman research centers in universities, was put into force on July 10, 2012.
- A “Social Gender and Media Workshop” was held on July 2-6, 2012 with 30 future media professionals at Anadolu University in order to raise awareness on gender equality. A workshop on “The Role of Local Media Professionals in Combating Violence Against Women and Drafting News Releases” was held on July 5, 2012 in Eskişehir.
- Training programs on gender equality and social gender continued in 2012 for social workers serving in provincial directorates for family and social policies.
- A Circular on Press Announcements was issued in 2012, laying down the procedures and principles to be followed in press announcement activities. The Circular clearly defines the scope, duration and limit of press announcements, taking a more liberal approach to which acts and activities fall within its context.
- The Ministry of the Interior conducted awareness-raising activities for promoting and protecting human rights in peaceful protests. In accordance with the “Regulation on the Establishment, Duties and Operation of the Central and Provincial Units of the Department of Security, Ministry of the Interior,” revised in 2007, the security of assembly and protest marches, is ensured through relevant negotiation strategies. The officers in charge of this process receive training on law, human rights and issues regarding strategy and tactics.
- The “Directive on the Procedure and Principles To Be Followed In Appointing Negotiators In Riots” has been drafted concerning the appointment, duties, responsibilities and training of negotiators who shall work as mediators for preventing incidents which might arise in legal and illegal assembly and protest marches and sports events, with the aim of avoiding having them to turn into large scale incidents, securing public order and security, and preventing crime.
- Turkey is providing political and economic support, as well as economic and technical aid, to countries in transition with a view toward helping the new administrations consolidate themselves internally and externally. More specifically, Turkey is providing direct loans, export credits and technical assistance to the governments in transition. Through loans, public infrastructure investments have been encouraged.
- Turkish authorities responsible for SMEs signed cooperation agreements with their counterparts in the region.
- Turkey extended support to developing and supporting entrepreneurship in certain countries in transition.
- On June 4, 2012 Turkey and Libya signed a Memorandum of Understanding on strengthening cooperation in the fields of science, technology, industry and entrepreneurship.
- Pursuant to the Agreement of Friendship and Cooperation between Turkey and Morocco signed on September 15, 2011, a training program for Moroccan officials aimed at establishing a new

investment encouragement system and investment environment was held in Ankara on August 27-29, 2012. In addition, a Workshop on the Enhancement of Morocco's Investment Climate and Creation of the Capacity and Awareness in Morocco was held in Ankara on October 2-4, 2012.

- Turkey is providing technical assistance to facilitate the implementation of free trade agreements, including training on WTO issues.
- Turkey has established bilateral working groups to promote cooperation and development in areas ranging from justice and human rights to capacity building, education and scientific research.

United Kingdom

- This year the United Kingdom has committed to regional projects worth a total of £5,142,074, which all focus on defending the right to freedom of expression. For example, the U.K. has financed Community Media Solution's MENA £750,380 project entitled 'Media Pluralism and Public Voice'. This scheme stretches across Algeria, Bahrain, Egypt, Jordan, Libya, Morocco, Palestinian Territories, Tunisia and finally Yemen. The project aims to enhance freedom of expression, media freedom and public voice through support for civil society organizations engaged in media reform advocacy and media development.
- In addition, the U.K. has put forward £1,559,834 towards schemes which run in individual BMENA countries. In Tunisia, for example, £549,000 was given to fund National Youth Observatory (NOY)'s Local dialogue and freedom of expression initiative. The purpose of the project is to create an associative community radio to provide young people in overcrowded and underprivileged neighborhoods with the opportunity to express themselves.
- The U.K. has supported a wide range of regional projects worth a total of £1,610,279 which aim to strengthen women's participation in BMENA countries. The British Council's 'Women Participating in public Life' scheme aims to build the capacity of women and broad-based support for their active involvement in public life including national and local political processes. It is worth £1,174,960 and covers Egypt, Libya, Morocco and Tunisia.
- Further to this, the U.K. has pledged £2,957,265 towards individual projects which are being implemented in BMENA countries such as Egypt, Libya, and Algeria. The Dan Church Aid project in Libya, for example, is worth a total £1,317,424. It aims to enable women to form networks and common platforms and advocate at a national and local level in order to empower women to achieve greater social, economic and political inclusion and influence.
- In 2012 the U.K. has provided £19.5 million's assistance towards regional schemes working on SMEs and entrepreneurship. For instance, £6.8 million has been put aside for the World Bank and International Finance Corporation's new Technical Assistance Facility. This new facility is expected to improve access to finance for more than 250,000 micro, small and medium sized enterprises in Egypt, Tunisia, Morocco, Jordan, Libya and Lebanon. The Facility will: help improve legal, regulatory and institutional frameworks for enterprise finance; support banks and other financial institutions to better service enterprises; and assist enterprises through mentoring, incubator services and business networks.
- In terms of individual country projects, the U.K. has put forward £3,562,392 to support and bolster SMEs. In Jordan, the U.K. has provided £500,000 under the Business Development Assistance Facility, which is in partnership with the Shell Foundation and GroFin. The project will establish a business development assistance facility that provides skills and networking support to SMEs, and facilitates the establishment of a medium-term risk capital Fund. By 2017, it is expected

that at least 600 SMEs will benefit from business skills support, of which at least 75 SMEs will be financed with risk capital.

United States

- The United States stands firmly with all those seeking to secure reform, democratic transitions, and widespread economic growth. Over the past two years, the United States provided over \$1 billion in assistance to governments, civil society, and the private sector in the Middle East and North Africa to support the core goals and principles of the BMENA Initiative.
- Approximately \$400 million in assistance went to non-governmental groups to operate and advocate effectively, serve their communities, and ensure a fair and effective process for citizens in shaping their political, economic, and legal systems, including support for freedom of expression and association and women's empowerment.
- The remaining \$650 million supported economic reform and entrepreneurship. These reforms helped build a stronger and more effective environment for conducting business, including respect for labor rights; training and education for entrepreneurs, especially women and youth; and improving the business climate to increase inclusive opportunities for growth.
- In partnership with domestic efforts to improve economic governance, the United States met commitments to the G-8's Deauville Partnership with Arab Countries in Transition, assisting the transition countries to regain access to international capital markets; launching a transition fund to support technical assistance on governance reforms; spurring economic growth through the support of Small and Medium Enterprises; launching the Arab Forum on Asset Recovery; increasing financial support for regional anti-corruption programs; funding the Financial Services Advisory Corps to provide technical assistance in public financial management; and hosting an exchange program for legislative leaders.
- To galvanize international political will around women's empowerment, the United States launched the Equal Futures Partnership to expand women's political and economic participation world-wide. At the 67th U.N. General Assembly the United States joined 12 other like-minded governments from across the globe – including Jordan and Tunisia – in taking domestic actions to improve the status of women, with other countries joining the initiative in the coming months.
- We advocated for women's participation as decision-makers in the prevention, management, and resolution of conflicts. As part of our obligations under U.N. Security Council Resolution 1325, the United States issued our National Action Plan on Women, Peace, and Security that spelled out the inclusion of women as a key policy goal across multiple U.S. Agencies.
- The U.S. Administration has requested \$770 million from Congress to create a new Middle East and North Africa Incentive Fund (MENA IF). The goal of the MENA IF is to support effective, democratic governance, vibrant civil societies, inclusive economic growth and regional trade, and security sector reforms.
- The United States plans to support the launch of a new Partnership for Democracy and Development. To support indigenous reform efforts in the Middle East and North Africa, the U.S. government plans to support the establishment of an independent, multilateral Trust that would provide a wide range of services to those in the region striving for reform and transition -- including civil society organizations, advocacy groups, business associations, and public institutions. Funded by public and private donations and run by an independent board and secretariat, the Trust would provide an international clearinghouse of service providers, experts, and experienced

practitioners upon which beneficiaries can draw to meet their specific needs.

- In collaboration with Tunisia, the United States proposes the creation of the Arab Women's Entrepreneurship Alliance, a region-wide partnership to address the structural, policy, and financing barriers faced by women-owned and -operated businesses (WOBs). The Alliance will bring together governments, companies, and civil society to increase WOB's access to training, networks, and leadership opportunities, as well as access to markets and capital. The initiative would include a proposed Leadership Academy run by the regional AmCham network to support WOBs and women entrepreneurs.
- The United States will launch a new Freedom of Association Index, a new, easy-to-understand tool that measures the ease of forming and operating an NGO in countries around the world, comparable to the World Bank's ease of "Doing Business" report. The Index will incorporate a range of criteria that assess various barriers to entry and operation, including the ease of, or impediments to, registration, costs, and other bureaucratic hurdles that NGOs might face that could inhibit their success. This tool will help NGOs advocate for legal changes and will help countries enact new rules to benefit the health of civil society.
- The United States will establish a new "Journalist Response Fund" to provide training to at-risk journalists, bloggers, and citizen journalists to help them conduct their work as safely and securely as possible. The United States will also provide emergency assistance to journalists when they face difficulties and repression, and we will also increase training to support the professionalization of the media in the region.
- In honor of Ambassador Christopher Stevens, the United States will create a new youth exchange program that promotes peace, conflict resolution, and community building in the Middle and North Africa. The Christopher Stevens Youth Network will enable high school students and educators in the region to connect with their peers in the United States on these critical themes, with the goal of reaching approximately 10,000 students and 400 educators in 20 countries. The program will also include an opportunity for students to take part in exchanges that will focus on peace-building, civil society, and conflict resolution.

CIVIL SOCIETY AND PRIVATE SECTOR PREPARATORY FORUM: RECOMMENDATIONS

*Tunis, Tunisia
December 11-12, 2012*

Civil society representatives from the G8 and Broader Middle East and North Africa (“BMENA”) countries met in Tunis, Tunisia (December 2012) for the Civil Society Preparatory Forum of the 9th Forum for the Future. Delegates reviewed the results of two preparatory workshops in El Jadida, Morocco (September 2012) and Amman, Jordan (October 2012); and a Sub-Ministerial Meeting in Washington, DC (November 2012). Delegates reviewed all summary documents and agreed on the following recommendations.

These recommendations are framed within the three overarching themes of the 2012 G8-BMENA Initiative: Women’s Empowerment; Economic Governance and Entrepreneurship; and Freedom of Expression and Association.

WOMEN’S EMPOWERMENT

1. FOLLOW-UP MECHANISMS

A. Civil society stressed the need to follow up on recommendations from the Forum for the Future process (2004-2012). There is also a need for a body, made up of activists from across the region, to monitor, evaluate, and create accountability for the implementation of recommendations. Implementation mechanisms should include building capacity of CSOs so they can play a more effective role.

B. In each country, NGOs should cooperate to form a national movement to assess the implementation of Forum for the Future recommendations and follow up with their own governments.

C. In countries where it is very difficult to separate government and civil society, a follow-up mechanism from outside civil society is needed to oversee and monitor the implementation of Forum for the Future recommendations.

2. EDUCATION

A. The role of rural women is critical to the success of women's empowerment in a given country. Women must be better educated generally, and specifically must be made aware of their rights.

B. Civil society stressed the need to educate both women and men about women's rights. Men must be recruited to work with and support women's empowerment issues.

C. The media must do its part to educate women about their rights, and to portray women positively, limiting stereotyping.

3. NGO CAPACITY

A. Civil society suffers from lack of resources and, sometimes, government harassment. It needs more support to do its work on behalf of women.

Tunis, Tunisia ■ December 11-12, 2012

**CIVIL SOCIETY AND PRIVATE SECTOR PREPARATORY
FORUM: RECOMMENDATIONS**

B. Women's associations must be trained using specific criteria on human and political rights in order to keep up with democratic transitions in the region and maintain the gains of the Arab Spring.

C. Civil society expresses the need to form more associations to defend and advocate on behalf of women.

4. PARTICIPATION

A. In addition to increasing the representation of women in government and the private sector, we must also focus on increasing representation in religious institutions.

B. There is need to recruit religious scholars to support women's empowerment in Islamic societies to ensure its success. There is also a need for religious leaders to interpret the Quran with an enlightened understanding of women's role in Islam.

C. Quotas are critical to political participation and must be more widely implemented. Quotas should be expanded beyond legislatures and should include the executive branch, foreign ambassadors, and provincial-level positions.

D. Civil society stresses the importance of women's inclusion in constitution-drafting.

E. A comprehensive gender mainstreaming strategy should be adopted at all decision-making levels of government.

5. INTERNATIONAL CONVENTIONS

A. Civil society emphasizes the need for countries to lift their reservations to CEDAW.

B. Judges must honor the pre-eminence of international law over domestic law. They also must be trained to fairly implement these applicable laws.

6. ECONOMY

A. Participants emphasized the importance of creating an enabling environment for women using legislation, such as by creating regulations requiring daycare centers near large workplaces.

B. Participants want to focus on making maternity leave and family leave mainstream and ratifying applicable international conventions.

C. There is a need for public-private partnerships that support women. For example, this could include an effort to unify retirement rights among the three sectors (civil society, private sector, public sector) to allow for equal pensions. The three sectors should work hand-in-hand.

D. The private sector must lead the way, committing to supporting women in its policies, such as in its family leave provisions, even when the law does not require such support.

E. There is a need to reform inheritance laws to ensure that women are not discriminated against in that context.

F. Gender budgeting and banking mechanisms, especially at local levels, are important indications of the political will for women's advancement. Civil society must promote these practices.

7. SECURITY

A. Participants insist on banning representations of violence against women, and better punishing violence against women.

B. There is a need to ensure the security of women in armed conflicts. Participants emphasized the importance of declaring solidarity with Syrian women.

8. MINORITY GROUPS

A. Disabled women's rights must be addressed.

B. There is a need to guarantee the political and economic participation of youth using constitutional and legal frameworks.

ECONOMIC GOVERNANCE AND ENTREPRENEURSHIP

1. PUBLIC-PRIVATE PARTNERSHIPS

A. Civil society called for a charter that defines a development model that would serve as a roadmap to reach consensus between trade unions, civil society, private sector, and the government on short-term strategies as well as long-term sustainable development approaches. This would include a discussion on the:

i. role of trade unions, employers, and entrepreneurs and how they can support the economic situation of women and youth during democratic transitional periods, and

ii. the need to place more women in leadership positions.

B. Delegates also recommended the creation of high-level joint public-private and labor union-civil society committees, which would elaborate guidelines for financing and incentivizing the different economic sectors.

C. There is also a need for the development of public-private partnerships to specifically address poverty.

2. ECONOMIC ENVIRONMENT

A. Associations should be empowered to advocate for better entrepreneurship, transparency, and integrity in the private sector.

B. Delegates also highlighted the importance of the media and freedom of the press to support freedom of expression and its impact on the private sector and economic development.

C. Civil society also stressed the need to include civil society in economic decisions in a timely manner.

3. LEGISLATIVE REFORMS

- A. Civil society and the private sector emphasized the need for legislation requiring corporate social responsibility for private companies.
- B. Participants mentioned the need for requirements to update existing legislation on economic development and entrepreneurship.
- C. There is a need for mechanisms for good governance and transparency, especially at the level of procurement and the selling of national wealth.
- D. Participants reiterated the importance of implementation mechanisms.

4. ECONOMIC EMPOWERMENT

- A. Participants highlighted the need to economically empower women and discussed the barriers they face (with an emphasis on violence against women).
- B. Participants urged that human trafficking be reduced.
- C. Participants stressed the need for funding of small and medium sized projects that can build economies in business in remote areas.
- D. Civil society and the private sector brought up the importance of empowering minority groups, especially those that have been displaced.
- E. Participants emphasized their support of human rights (and human rights defenders), as well as the freedom and empowerment of associations.

FREEDOM OF EXPRESSION AND ASSOCIATION

1. LEGISLATIVE REFORM

- A. Civil society reiterates the importance of the creation and implementation of clear legislation and human rights frameworks that respect international conventions. They also stressed the need to clarify current laws that are subject to interpretation.
- B. Freedom of expression, association, and access to information should be enshrined in new constitutional laws that respect international covenants and conventions on human rights. In addition, laws that are related to these freedoms should be prioritized in national political discussions and agendas.
- C. All NGO laws should regulate the civil society structure. When there is a law that regulates one sector, there is no way for this sector to advocate for better legislation and conditions. Thus, laws inherited from dictatorships that disrespect international human rights conventions should be banned. This effort should address the amendment of NGO laws that hinder civil society activity.
- D. Civil society advocated for legislation that would hold all corrupt individuals accountable and the implementation of a legal framework for transparency in the media, which would monitor the funding of media organizations.

2. FREEDOM OF ASSOCIATION

- A. There is a need to mobilize existing NGOs to challenge threats to freedom of expression and association. These organizations must also include women and youth.
- B. It was noted that legal and financial constraints hamper civil society activity.
- C. Participants emphasized the need to put pressure on governments that abuse human rights by detaining civil society activists for organizing and expressing their opinions.
- D. The main challenge to the right of peaceful association is the absence of conduct codes for these organizations.
- E. It was agreed that the private sector also has a social responsibility to enable freedom of expression.

3. FREEDOM OF EXPRESSION

- A. Civil society stressed the need to implement ICCPR Article 19.1, which protects an individual's right to hold an opinion. This article protects people against inquisition.
- B. In the absence of an active civil society, academic institutions may serve as an important platform to train people for organizing and to allow freedom of expression in the classroom.
- C. Government censorship of artistic expression should be reduced or eliminated.
- D. Access to information was deemed crucial for the effective participation of civil society.

4. ACCOUNTABILITY

- A. The issue of accountability, especially in the case of transitioning countries, was identified as crucial. It is important to create a mechanism that punishes governments or organizations that violate human rights. Civil society must take into account those who can impose those sanctions on governments and function as an accountability mechanism.
- B. There is a need to improve media integrity, especially in the case of organizations that incite discrimination or demonstrate an agenda. Thus, participants suggested the creation of an alternative media managed by the civil society that guarantees the right to free expression.

First Preparatory Workshop on Women's Empowerment

El Jadida, Morocco ■ September 3-4, 2012



First Preparatory Workshop on Women's Empowerment

SUMMARY NOTES

El Jadida, Morocco

September 3-4, 2012

Government officials and civil society representatives from the Broader Middle East and North Africa (BMENA) countries held productive discussions focused on advancing women's economic, political, and social progress along the themes of women's political participation, gender equality under law, economic empowerment of women, cooperation between civil society and government, enhanced civil society capacity, and increased awareness of women's rights. Participants identified best practices and in some cases concrete steps to empower women in the BMENA region and to achieve these goals. These notes consist of highlights from these discussions and are not an official record of proceedings. These notes will inform the preparation for the Forum for the Future in Tunis in December 2012.

Participants requested an implementation mechanism to translate select recommendations into action plans for each country and track the status of priorities set by this and previous BMENA conferences.

Women's Political Participation

Participants noted that women have played an active role in the transitions in the Middle East and continue to play a vital role as agents of change. Unfortunately, women have often found themselves marginalized by post-transition environments and women's political representation lags far behind that of men. Increasing women's participation in politics and decision-making processes is necessary across all branches of government - including executive, judicial, legislative, administrative, and security bodies - at the national and local levels. Participants suggested increasing women's political representation by enhancing their role in political parties, semi-governmental bodies such as commissions and committees, and state-owned enterprises. Women's full and equal participation in constitution drafting and other transition processes is especially urgent. Women also have a vital role to play as conflict mediators and at the negotiating table as various countries seek to bridge political divisions.

Suggestions to increase women's political participation and representation include changing electoral laws, implementing quotas, increasing registration of women voters, providing training to female candidates, and forming women's caucuses in legislative bodies.

Gender Equality under the Law

Participants emphasized that some countries continue to have laws that discriminate based on gender that need to be repealed or replaced. Other countries have laws that are not explicitly applied equally to men and women, which allow some jurists and government officials to interpret the law using traditional cultural practices that discriminate against women. Participants emphasized the need to apply international standards like the Convention to Eliminate Discrimination Against Women, and to include gender equality clauses in constitutions, and reform citizenship laws, family/personal codes, and penal codes. Participants proposed the criminalization of domestic violence, spousal rape, "honor" crimes, and child marriage. Laws that need more effective enforcement include those pertaining to gender-based violence, protecting victims of violence, and prosecuting perpetrators. Participants also noted the need to enable women to achieve equal access to health care, education, pensions and other government benefits, in law as well as in practice.

Economic Empowerment of Women

Participants noted that economic independence is often a precursor to other forms of women's empowerment. They agreed on the need for explicit recognition of the vital role that labor unions and women workers play in any society and advocacy for equal pay and "decent work" workplace practices that respect human dignity. Higher rates of women participating in the formal economy and government bodies are important but insufficient; it is critical that women also have roles with decision-making authority. Significant methods to promote women's economic independence should focus on education, entrepreneurship, and supporting women's entry into the formal labor force. There is a need to eliminate women's illiteracy and reform school curriculums to eliminate gender stereotypes. Increasing women's access to finance and senior management positions will increase entrepreneurship.

Barriers to women's access to the labor force that could be reformed include inadequate maternity leave, childcare, and safe public transport. Remedies include reforming the labor code to require equal pay for equal work and equal employment opportunities for women. Participants also recognized the need to bring informal and unpaid women workers – including those in rural areas – into the formal economy.

Cooperation between Civil Society and Government

The BMENA initiative was founded on the principle of building relationships between government and civil society. Noting the opportunities arising from BMENA, participants expressed a desire for additional opportunities for dialogue between civil society and government. Participants expressed a strong desire to institutionalize regular and substantive discussions between their governments and civil society. Areas of potential cooperation and best practices include establishing specific offices within key ministries dedicated to civil society outreach and engagement, regular and routine means for civil society to comment on draft legislation and policy through broad consultative practices, and bringing together government and civil society on key issues to conduct joint assessments and agree on solutions. In addition, participants noted that access to information is key to enabling productive cooperation, including regular and routine practices for sharing government proceedings and proposals, statistics and data, budgets, and strategies to advance women's empowerment issues and implement related reforms.

Enhanced Civil Society Capacity

Civil society participants expressed a strong desire for their governments to respect freedom of expression, assembly, and association – not only as a core human rights value – but also as a means to increase women's participation in public life. Frequent attacks against women activists and human rights defenders discourage their advocacy efforts. Regional governments should adopt new laws that provide protections for NGOs and eliminate restrictive provisions and other regulatory practices that fail to meet international standards and constrain civil society's ability to do their work. Participants discussed a variety of methods to increase the effectiveness of civil society organizations including exchanges among BMENA countries and between BMENA countries and G8/post-transition countries, formation of regional networks, and the sharing of gender-specific data and best and worst practices. Participants also expressed a desire to increase ties between the private sector and civil society to support and resource efforts to empower women.

Increased Awareness of Women's Rights

Participants emphasized the importance of educating women of their rights, as well as educating men on women's rights. Without basic knowledge of their rights, many women live under oppression and are



unable to realize their potential. This education must occur across society – at all socioeconomic levels. Participants highlighted the need for women to have greater access to and prominence in media coverage, and the need for governments and civil society to counter negative stereotypes of women in the media, as well as messages in some media that promote hatred or discrimination against women. Planners should design public awareness and education campaigns around specific target audiences – tailored to the audience's literacy, class, and technological prowess. Specific ideas included establishing national centers to promote awareness of women's rights, encouraging celebrities to serve as spokespeople for women's empowerment in advertising materials, appointing government officials mandated to work on and speak publicly about women's empowerment issues, and devoting additional financial resources toward education.

SECOND PREPARATORY WORKSHOP: ECONOMIC GOVERNANCE AND ENTREPRENEURSHIP SUMMARY NOTES

*Amman, Jordan
October 1-2, 2012*

Government officials, private sector, and civil society representatives from the Broader Middle East and North Africa (BMENA) and G8 countries held productive discussions on economic governance focused on improving the rule of law, transparency/public institution integrity, economic inclusiveness, and entrepreneurship, with a particular focus on small and medium-sized enterprises (SMEs) and women's business empowerment. Participants discussed best practices and recent successes on these issues. They identified concrete steps to improve economic governance in the BMENA region and ways to achieve these goals. Participants noted that the multilateral support for these matters, including through the Deauville Partnership with Arab Countries in Transition, should be implemented. These notes consist of highlights from these discussions and are not an official record of proceedings. These notes will inform the preparation for this year's Forum for the Future.

Rule of Law

Participants noted the importance of a clear legal framework to enable and encourage entrepreneurship and SME development in the economies of the Middle East and North Africa. Participants discussed how current commercial, business, and investment codes should be more responsive to the full range of business activity in countries – including a clear definition of SMEs and an understanding of their particular needs. Specifically, the regulations and laws governing business formalization and formation should be streamlined to make starting, growing, formalizing, and closing a business faster and less expensive. Several countries noted the need to reform bankruptcy laws in order to make business failure less onerous, especially the elimination of criminal bankruptcy and the creation of better limited liability vehicles. The complexity of labor and tax laws is an additional barrier to business formation and expansion; SMEs often lack the capacity and resources to comply with these laws. Some participants suggested the creation of specialized courts to handle commercial matters more efficiently and the need for international technical assistance and exchanges with parliaments and regulators to create a better enabling environment.

Transparency and Integrity of Public Institutions

Participants emphasized the importance of transparency and integrity of public institutions. The publication of budgets, public tenders, and the creation of independent accountability institutions are precursors to wide-spread transparency and integrity. Participants agreed on the need for technology to improve governance, including the use of the internet to conduct and publicize governments' economic activities. Best practices include public-private anti-corruption commissions, enshrining the independence of accountability and transparency bodies in constitutions, and the publication of public support to private companies and the results of government procurement. There is a need in some countries for the creation or enforcement of laws protecting whistle-blowing, including immunity and protection for those who identify the misuse of public or corporate funds. Active and independent media for economic issues is necessary for the free flow of information and the proper functioning of markets.

Cooperation between Civil Society, Private Sector, and Government

The BMENA initiative was founded on the principle of building equal relationships between government and civil society. Noting the opportunities arising from BMENA, several countries highlighted best practices in bringing the private sector and civil society into economic governance, such as the creation of high-level public-private committees with real authority over finance, trade, and regulation. Many participants underscored the need for regular, concrete, and institutionalized

dialogue between government and business in order to ensure that regulations and policies are appropriately reviewed and responsive to dynamic business challenges. The private sector could be more effective in economic governance with better organization and better advocacy training. Civil society should play a role by developing innovative ideas for partnership, addressing market failures, and monitoring compliance by both government and private sector with transparency and accountability laws. Best practices that could be areas of potential cooperation include creating and empowering ombudsmen offices within key ministries dedicated to economic matters and establishing regular and routine means to comment on draft legislation, regulation, and policy.

Economic Inclusiveness

Economic reform must address the exclusion of disenfranchised groups and ensure that economic opportunity is expanded throughout society. Participants reiterated many of suggestions from the first BMENA preparatory conference in El-Jadida, specifically calling for tangible measures to increase the rates of women and youth participating in the formal economy and entrepreneurship. These should focus on marketplace and labor force preparation, education, vocational training, and improved access to finance. The elimination of women's illiteracy and business skills deficits is prerequisite for their full and equal participation in the economy. Several participants suggested government intervention, either through quotas or incentives, to improve women's representation in senior management positions in the public sector, state-owned enterprises, and publicly-traded companies. Public-private partnerships should address the additional barriers that women entrepreneurs face in accessing capital. Participants shared several best practices for addressing barriers to women's access to finance, including initiatives in which governments provided the capital and commercial banks administered the funds, and where international institutions used risk subsidies to encourage banks to lend.

Entrepreneurship

Participants emphasized the importance of integrating education on entrepreneurship as early as possible into national curricula as well as the need to affect a deeper cultural shift. Many countries do not have a well-developed business incubation infrastructure and participants suggested governments create institutions focused on service delivery to SMEs, similar to the European and American models. Mentoring, coaching, and technical assistance are especially needed. Participants underscored matching support to the appropriate stage of enterprise-development, including the need to decrease financial support as businesses mature. Across the region, the labor force lacks the educated human capital with specialty skills necessary for business development - a possible area of cooperation between the private sector, government, and educational institutions. Access to finance for entrepreneurs and SMEs is an overriding issue, including hesitations by commercial banks to lend to women or youth entrepreneurs.

Conservative banking cultures, cumbersome regulatory environments, and cultural aversion to failure were highlighted as significant barriers to entry and expansion.

Suggested solutions included set-asides for SMEs in government procurement and foreign direct investment, streamlining and clarifying commercial codes, and media campaigns. Participants recognized government, education providers, civil society, and private sector will all need to work together as partners in order to realize the full economic potential of their societies.

SUB-MINISTERIAL MEETING: CIVIL SOCIETY AND PRIVATE SECTOR WORKSHOP RECOMMENDATIONS

Washington, DC
November 1-2, 2012

WOMEN'S EMPOWERMENT

Areas of Focus

1. *Women's Political and Economic Participation*
2. *Gender Equality Under the Law*

1. *Women's Political and Economic Participation*

To increase women's political and economic participation, we must focus on establishing the legal and constitutional framework to support it.

We recommend that the representation of women in government, such as in Parliament, and in the private sector, such as on corporate boards, be written into law.

In countries with legislative support for parity, we recommend that government and civil society work together to write these quotas—taking particularly into account the alternation of men and women on lists—into their constitutions. Once established, political parties must respect these requirements and government must enforce them. NGOs will support the proposal by working in coalition to help draft the measures, and to monitor and evaluate compliance with and enforcement of the parity laws once established. NGOs will also assist by taking legal actions against violators of the laws as needed, engaging in advocacy campaigns to promote the laws' observance, and using media campaigns to celebrate those parties that comply and call out those who do not comply.

In other countries in the region, women's representation can be increased if government, the private sector, and civil society work together to increase education and awareness about the democratic and corporate processes, increase training for women entering vocations or politics; and increase support networks for women interested in these pathways. NGOs offer to take a leading role, working on behalf of governments and corporations by serving as training and support centers for women interested in serving, as well as linking governments to qualified women. A previous Forum for the Future commitment—the Gender Institute—is also a possibility for filling this role, and needs government follow-up. In turn, government must work with civil society and the private sector to support these women in the media.

2. *Gender Equality Under the Law*

To increase gender equality under the law, government, private sector, and civil society must work together to emphasize women's rights as human rights in national codes and constitutions. The legal terms concerning equality need to be precise and clear, without room for interpretation. Furthermore, more women judges and attorneys are needed to help fairly implement the law.

For those countries that have ratified applicable international conventions, such as CEDAW, government, private sector, and civil society must work together to fully implement their provisions, and to monitor compliance through mechanisms such as watchdog NGOs and constitutional courts. NGOs and private sector corporate social responsibility leaders will serve an important function in



raising awareness of the provisions of ratified conventions and why they benefit the public. NGOs will also be available to act as “implementers” of specific provisions that are relevant to their missions. Some countries will choose to emphasize the priority of international conventions over national legislation.

ECONOMIC GOVERNANCE AND ENTREPRENEURSHIP

Areas of Focus

- 1. Rule of Law*
- 2. Entrepreneurship*
- 3. Transparency and Integrity of Public Institutions*

1. Rule of Law

Need for a clear legal framework to enable and encourage entrepreneurship, SMEs and all businesses, including regulations that are streamlined to assist starting, growing, formalizing and closing businesses.

2. Entrepreneurship

The establishment and development of a public-private SME institution to provide support mechanisms for entrepreneurs and SMEs with a focus on women and youth, including the development of entrepreneurship education, apprenticeship and vocational programs, debt and equity funding, banking services, mentorship, incubation and government procurement preference mechanisms.

3. Transparency and Integrity of Public Institutions

To ensure the transparency and integrity of public institutions, we recommend the establishment of an independent accountability and anti-corruption institution, using e-governance, whistleblower protection laws, and an active media reporting on these issues.

FREEDOM OF EXPRESSION AND ASSOCIATION

Areas of Focus

- 1. Legal Framework*
- 2. International Covenant on Civil and Political Rights (ICCPR)*
- 3. Reprisals*

Civil society would like for ministers to reaffirm their commitment to protect basic freedoms: freedom of opinion, expression, association and assembly, judicial independence, accountability, transparency, and freedom of religion.

Civil society would also like for ministers to stress that media has an important role in the process of democratic transition and that a strong legal framework must be developed to guarantee freedom of expression and free access to information in close collaboration with all stakeholders.

1. Legal Framework

Governments shall guarantee the freedom of expression, the freedom of peaceful assembly, and of association; shall work on abolishing all restrictive legislation; shall guarantee the protection of all these rights as well as the establishment of a mechanism for judicial measures against any governmental or non-governmental violations of the above freedoms. Governments shall guarantee all individuals the right to own, operate, and participate in any form of media.

2. International Covenant on Civil and Political Rights (ICCPR)

Government shall not use Article 19(3) of the International Covenant on Civil and Political Rights (ICCPR) as a pretext to restrict freedom of expression.

3. Reprisals

Governments shall work on eliminating all reprisals against human rights defenders and democracy activists. Governments shall release all prisoners of conscience, human rights defenders, and democracy activists including as outlined in the UN Secretary General's report of July 21, 2011 on cooperation with the UN mechanisms.

ACCOUNTABILITY RECOMMENDATION ACROSS THE THREE THEMES

Civil society organizations (CSOs) recommend that within each thematic workshop, there be a pre-meeting with BMENA CSOs and government officials to evaluate accomplishments, progress, and items left to be addressed on this year's declaration to follow up on those commitments.

