The Rabat Workshop on Democracy and Local Governance in the BMENA Region was organised on 5-6 October 2009 by the Moroccan Organisation for Human Right (OMDH) and No Peace Without Justice (NPWJ), in cooperation with the Governments of Italy and Morocco, co-chairs of the 2009 Forum for the Future;

The Rabat Workshop falls within the framework of the 2009 Forum for the Future activities aimed at ensuring that the Sixth Ministerial Meeting discussions and outcomes are the result of a process of continuous interaction between and among Governments and civil society;

The Rabat Workshop offered a further opportunity to promote productive dialogue between civil society and governments of the Broader Middle East and North Africa (BMENA), G8 and their democratic partners, on issues relating to the coordination among governments, civil society and local institutions and how this reflects on political development, democracy and human rights;

The Rabat Workshop was an important component of the 2009 Forum for the Future and of the Democracy Assistance Dialogue (DAD) partnership and developed the principles of partnership and cooperation between governments and civil society enshrined in the "Partnership between G-8 BMENA Governments and Civil Society" document;

Participants of the four Thematic Commissions, “Freedom of association and manifestation”, “Freedom of expression and opinion”, “Transparency of Elections” and “Reconciliation and Peace”, emphasized the importance of broad representation and active participation of citizens in public life and reaffirmed that political development is a long and demanding process;

They stressed the importance of initiatives aimed at reinforcing local governance as a means to promote democratic societies characterized by pluralism and unity, encouraging closer cooperation between local and national institutions in view of strengthening democratic capacities, promoting best practices and enhancing inclusiveness in public life, particularly for women and youth;

During these exchanges, the participants focused on the relevance of the independence of the judiciary systems, as well as the importance of the role of civil society in the observation of electoral processes in the region. Particular attention was also given to issues of social justice and reconciliation. In this sense, participants underlined the significance of sharing experiences and best practices among G8, BMENA and partner countries and recognized this as a vital step in the reform process;

This document will be presented to the sub-Ministerial Meeting of the Forum for the Future 2009, to contribute constructive proposals and recommendations that could fruitfully feed the discussion between government and civil society representatives and provide momentum for meaningful cooperation between G8 and BMENA countries with the participation of civil society and private sector;

- Recalling the commitment of the countries of the region to strengthen the foundations of democracy and to broaden citizen participation in public affairs, and the commitment of the G8 and BMENA countries and other international partners to accompany and support these reforms, in a spirit of partnership and mutual respect;
- Reaffirming the sovereign right of each country freely to choose and develop its political, economic and social system and to promote reforms accordingly and in harmony with its national pace, potential and specificities, consistent with the UN International Declaration of Human Rights, the International Covenant on Civil and Political Rights and the UN Declaration on Human Rights Defenders;

- Emphasising the role of civil society as legitimate counterparts of dialogue in the reform process, sharing an important responsibility together with Governments;

**The participants**

1. **Express** their satisfaction at the constructive nature of the Rabat Workshop and at the spirit of cooperation and of mutual respect that characterised the discussion;

2. **Emphasise** that initiatives aimed at supporting and reinforcing local democracy and broadening the spaces for citizens must be considered a strategic choice that allows for the creation of a democratic societies characterised by pluralism and unity, while rejecting all forms of discrimination, marginalisation and oppression in all sectors of society;

3. **Recall** that a strong partnership between civil society and public institutions is crucial, for it can play a constructive role in promoting citizens' participation and strengthening the elaboration of practical plans for the benefit of the whole society. In particular, cooperation from the BMENA and G8 countries can play a significant role in benefiting local institutions, in favour of the citizens, particularly women and youth;

4. **Underline** the need for accountability mechanisms and good governance to guarantee transparency and social responsibility. Local institutions, parliaments, governments and civil society from the Region should further continue to work together in order to foster the necessary legislative and administrative reforms which can represent useful tools to address social justice, inclusiveness and the Rule of Law;

5. **Underline** that a free and open society is essential for fostering open and pluralist societies as well as genuine and home-grown processes of reform and offers an important tool for enhancing the inclusion of all sectors of society, in particular women and youth, in public life;

6. **Underline** that inclusive processes of democratic reforms, such as direct elective representation at local level and initiatives aimed at reinforcing regional integration processes and fostering the basis for peace, reinforce the political participation of citizens as well as political, economic and social reform within the Region;

7. **Recall** that reconciliation's processes are premise and means to guarantee the participation of all citizens in the political process and for the creation of mutual trust among the various components of the society;

8. **Recognise** that the respect of the Rule of Law is an instrument for power sharing solutions, expanding the principle of equal opportunities to all sectors of the society. Political reforms and expansion of political representation at local level offer the tools and means for developing, through the Rule of Law, democratically innovative solutions;

9. **Recall** that free circulation of people, information and ideas constitutes a prospect for
individuals to seize political and socio-economic opportunities which deserve to be encouraged in support of the achievement of the Millennium Development Goals, also as they are made possible by the increased development on Internet-based technologies;

10. **Emphasise** that local governance means a participatory and comprehensive approach that involves all components of society, thus contributing to the strengthening of regional integration processes;

11. **Call on** Governments, local institutions and civil society to assess the effectiveness of their interaction and implementation of partnership and mutual understanding, in responding to the needs of society, taking into account the principles of partnership between Governments and civil society;

12. **Call on** all parties, governments, civil society, private sector and local elected bodies, to work in a spirit of shared responsibility to improve the management of local affairs and promote democracy;

13. **Recommend** that governments and civil society coordinate at the national level to establish processes of consultation in order to create bridges between public institutions, NGOs and citizens at the local and national level on issues of democracy, human rights and local governance;

14. **Call for** concrete cooperation between G8 and BMENA government and civil society in the areas of local and good governance, which represent important facets of democracy and require significant efforts in political, economic, financial and cultural areas, with a view to providing support to strengthen their efforts to expand and apply local and good governance;

15. **Express** their gratitude to the Governments of Morocco and Italy as co-chairs, for taking the initiative of this Workshop and to the Moroccan Organisation for Human Right (OMDH) and No Peace Without Justice (NPWJ) for the effective conduct of the proceedings;

16. **Congratulates** participants for the quality of the discussions in the Plenary and in the four Thematic Commissions of the Workshop and request the co-chairs of the Rabat workshop (OMDH and NPWJ) to prepare a report to be submitted to the Sub-Ministerial meeting in Rome, prior to its submission to the Ministerial Meeting;

17. **Request** that the organizers of the Rabat Workshop transmit these recommendations to the Sixth meeting of the Forum for the Future (Marrakech, 2–3 November 2009) as a result of peer-to-peer interaction between Governments and civil society.