Ministers of the countries of the Broader Middle East and North Africa (BMENA) together with their G8 counterparts and other partners met together in Bahrain for the second Forum for the Future, to review progress made since the inaugural meeting in Rabat in December 2004, and to reaffirm our determination to work closely together to achieve our shared goals.

Ministers gathered on the eve of the Forum for the Future to discuss a broad range of issues of particular importance to the region;

Ministers were appalled by the horrendous attacks against innocent people in Jordan on 9 November. They strongly condemned terrorism in all its forms and manifestations and reaffirmed that terrorist acts cannot be justified or legitimised by any cause or grievance. They agreed on the importance of unity, cooperation, and the promotion of peace and understanding as a means to counter those who seek to sow division and terror or incite hatred and degrade symbols of faiths and culture. They, therefore, welcome efforts within the region to promote the true image of Islam and its message of moderation and tolerance, such as the International Islamic Conference held in Amman in July 2005.

Ministers welcomed the Israeli withdrawal from the Gaza strip as a first step toward implementation of the Road Map and would welcome further steps by both sides, including implementation of the Sharm al-Shaikh Agreement and the UN Resolutions 242 and 338, as well as an end both to continued settlement activity and to the construction of the separation barrier. Ministers urged both Israel and the Palestinian
Authority to refrain from any act that contravenes the Road Map and prejudices the outcome of a negotiated settlement whose goal is two states, Israel and a sovereign, independent, viable, democratic, and territorially contiguous Palestine, living side by side in peace and security.

Ministers recalled the successful national elections that took place in Iraq on 30 January 2005 and the setting up of the democratic transitional government in April 2005. They applauded the adoption of a new national constitution as marking a major milestone in the development of a secure, democratic, federal and united Iraq at peace with its neighbours. They underlined the necessity of maintaining the sovereignty, independence and territorial integrity of Iraq and of the participation of all Iraqi elements in the political process, including in the elections scheduled for December.

Ministers expressed continuing concern for the plight of the victims of the earthquake in Pakistan. They were determined to strengthen their cooperation to assist those affected and called upon all participating countries to attend and support the international donor's conference on the 19th November in Islamabad.

Throughout 12 November, Ministers held wide ranging discussions with representatives of civil society on issues concerning education and knowledge, the Democracy Assistance Dialogue and Civil Society Dialogue. Ministers recognized that reforms in the region will differ in pace and scope from country to country. They understand that reform will emerge from within the societies of the region. They agreed on a range of measures to be implemented over the course of the next twelve months. In particular;

The Forum stressed the potential of education to boost the region’s development, not least by providing youth with the skills needed for a modern economy, reducing social exclusion and promoting tolerance and understanding. Participants welcomed continuing work on the Framework of Action agreed at the Education Ministerial Meeting in Jordan in May, particularly efforts to increase literacy, to enhance access to education and to improve the quality of education and its relevance. They encouraged the work of the Education Task Force set up under the partnership to support and monitor this work, including developing the outcomes from the literacy meetings in Algeria and Egypt and plans for a regional resource facility.
The Forum appreciated the initiatives and longstanding experiences of Jordan, Japan, Egypt and Germany to assist vocational education and skills in the region. The Forum welcomed the continuing work of the Workshop of TVET (Technical and Vocational Education and Training) co-chaired by Japan and Jordan and welcomed Germany's offer to host the next meeting of the Task Force on TVET.

The Forum welcomed the UK’s offer to support a conference on IT in education next year. They expressed interest in Russia's consideration of launching an "Education for the Future Programme" in their G8 presidency that would include students from BMENA countries. The Forum welcomed Egypt’s offer to host the next Education Ministerial in 2006 to further develop a mutually-supportive, quality-led approach to education.

The Forum highlighted the importance of assisting the region’s youth to gain the business skills and expertise necessary to contribute to global economic development. Participants welcomed the establishment in Bahrain and Morocco of regional entrepreneur centres and, with further support from partners, their aim of training up to 5,000 young business people.

The Forum supported the inclusion of youth as an additional topic in the civil society thematic dialogues for next year. They welcomed the support of the government of Kuwait in this initiative.

Ministers and representatives from civil society jointly discussed how governments and civil society could work together to achieve a number of objectives that would strengthen regionally-led political, social and economic development. Ministers thanked the University of Bahrain, Transparency International, the American Bar Association and the Qatar National Human Rights Commission, and sponsors, for their work on the four themes of women’s economic empowerment, transparency and corruption, the rule of law and human rights. They highlighted the importance of governments working in partnership with civil society on these issues and on pursuing follow up to the recommendations presented by civil society representatives.
In particular the Forum agreed to pursue ratification and implementation of the United Nations Convention against Corruption and to develop practical measures to improve transparency in public financial management that would assist our common goal of achieving the UN Millennium Development Goals. Delegations agreed to explore with civil society groups, as appropriate, legal frameworks within which civil society can best operate, together with further steps that might be taken to preserve judicial independence. Recognising the importance and benefits of supporting women’s economic empowerment, the Forum encouraged the development of projects that help achieve this objective, including sharing good practice on ensuring a conducive legal framework to underpin it. They noted Japan's initiative to intensify cooperation on human resources development, including the empowerment of women under the banner of "People Oriented". Finally, Ministers and civil society agreed to support campaigns that raise public awareness of human rights and reform and mobilize public opinion in this respect.

The Forum welcomed a proposal from Egypt on the establishment of a study consortium of independent research institutions and academic centres across the partnership to offer advice on regional development, particularly on issues dealt with in the Forum for the Future. Equitable geographical representation of all partners should be observed in the formation of G-8 MENASCO Board.

The Forum commended the work of the Italian, Turkish, and Yemeni governments and partner NGOs (No Peace Without Justice, Turkish Economic and Social Studies Foundation, and Human Rights Information and Training Centre) in co-sponsoring the Democracy Assistance Dialogue and organizing activities within this framework. The Forum welcomed the work of the DAD programme to promote the principle that dialogue and cooperation between Governments and civil society is an important component of the democratic reform processes. Having discussed the recommendations from the DAD meetings in Istanbul, Venice, and Sana’a as well as the Rabat Colloquium, held in cooperation with the Moroccan Government, they encouraged further work on these proposals, including the monitoring of the implementation of the Convention on the Elimination of All Forms of Discrimination Against Women (CEDAW) in the region in those countries that have ratified it.
The Forum welcomed the commitment of the DAD Co-sponsors and their NGO partners to continue their engagement within the DAD framework and to expand the scope of their activities. In response to the DAD partners, the Forum discussed several areas of further cooperation that could be addressed within the DAD framework. It was decided that the process of consultation will continue between the Forum members and the DAD Co-sponsors in order to develop further joint and cooperative work in these areas in the future.

The Forum heard from non-governmental organisations, both within the DAD framework and elsewhere, of the need for a facility to support civil society and their work on reform, consistent with respective national laws. Participants therefore welcomed the commitments made by a number of partners to establishing a Foundation to support civil society organizations and democratic processes in the region, including the offer of Hungary to make the International Centre for Democratic Transition available to advise and assist the Foundation in its activities, as necessary. They welcomed the announcement of the establishment of the Foundation and thanked those who have pledged to support it. They also agreed to hold a senior officials meeting in Jordan next month, which would also include members of civil society, and would further discuss the charter and structure of the Foundation.

Complementary to the regional entrepreneur centres, the Forum applauded the launch by a number of partners of a $100m Fund for the Future that would further assist in the development of profitable small and medium sized enterprises in the region through the provision of grants and loans. The Forum warmly thanked those who had made pledges to support this initiative and encouraged contributions from other partners.

Ministers agreed to further promote exchanges of people, especially youth, and to activate cultural exchanges and dialogue between G8 and BMENA partners with a view to promoting tolerance and respect for shared values.

Participants at the Forum noted the continued strengthening and development of the G8-BMENA partnership. Ministers expressed deep appreciation to the Government
of the Kingdom of Bahrain for organising the Forum for the Future and for facilitating the attendance of the participants. They also expressed thanks to those governments and civil society groups that hosted, supported and organised activities over the course of this year. Ministers looked forward to continuing their cooperation across the full range of the Plan of Support and welcomed Jordan’s commitment to hosting the next Forum for the Future in 2006 during Russia’s G8 Presidency. The first preparatory meeting for next year’s Forum is to be held in February 2006 in Jordan.