Forum for the Future
October 9th, 2011, Paris (France)

Civil Society Closing Meeting

Within the final preparatory works for the 8th Forum for the Future, and after accomplishing three
regional workshops in Kuwait (May 2011), Marseille (June, 2011) and Marrakesh (September 2011),
representatives from Civil society of G8 and BMENA region have met, and after looking at the
recommendations of the regional workshops, we prioritized and consolidated the recommendations in
the present document, which complies with the circumstances in the region under the Arab spring. It
has been assured on the following recommendations.

We, representatives of the civil society institutions present,

- ask the countries of the G8 to undertake effective action to help resolve the Arab-Israeli
  conflict, in accordance with the relevant resolutions of the United Nations and enable the
  Palestinian people to establish its sovereign state on the borders of the 4th of June 1967, in
  order to strengthen stability and increase trust between the G8 and the peoples of the areas
  which will open up new possibilities for economic, social and cultural integration in the region.
- condemn the violations of human rights and express our firm attachment to our right to
  participate in the management of the public space in order to lay the ground for the principals
  of democracy—and the obligations of good governance (accountability, transparency and
  integrity...) in the region,
- recommend to work towards the realization of the aspirations and expectations of BMENA
  peoples, mainly youth and civil society's institutions, in order to further democracy while
  respecting human rights and relevant international charters; to set up legal and administrative
  provisions to guarantee and promote the place and role of civil society organisations and
  youth in the processes of democratizing the States of the BMENA region; to provide regional
  and national support to the organisations representing civil society using the most appropriate
  means therefore.

1. Establishing a follow-up mechanism to the Forum

   a. To evaluate the results and achievements and review the ambitions, the goals and the
      modus operandi of the Forum for the Future in the light of the deep mutations that the
      region is undergoing. To adapt the means and tools necessary to the realisation of the
      said goals, starting by the set up of both a mechanism for the follow up of the
      Forum's resolutions and a multi-actors general secretariat which shall guarantee the
effective position of representative civil society organisations
   b. The States co-chairing the Forum for Future should undertake to publish a report on
      progress achieved in the implementation of recommendations and present such report
      at the following session of the Forum for the Future.
   c. To adopt yearly published performance indicators of the actions undertaken in each
      country and assess thereby the level of the implementation of the Forum's objectives.
2. **Laws and policies:**

   a. To include provisions on equality between women and men within the constitutions of countries of the region, in respect of all rights, all civil liberties and all policies establishing equal citizenship between men and women, in particular by reaffirming the rights to freedom of opinion, freedom of expression, freedom of association and the right to participate in public affairs.

   b. To revise national laws, within the next 2 years, so that they are in conformity with international conventions, in particular CEDAW, taking into consideration recommendations of civil society and thus to amend laws in force and to issue new laws in order to prevent discrimination and violence against women and human trafficking, and in particular:

      - To expressly include the prohibition on discrimination as defined in CEDAW and to sanction such discrimination;
      - To expressly recognise the responsibility of States in the protection of women from discrimination, whether by governmental or non-governmental institutions;
      - To amend personal status laws and codes in order to create commitments and obligations that guarantee the participation of women in public and political life.

3. **Measures and Proceedings**

   To adopt effective measures to guarantee women’s full participation in building their societies, by:

   a. Withdrawing the reservations to CEDAW and ratifying its Optional Protocol

   b. Taking temporary special measures to guarantee women’s participation (CEDAW article 4 and Recommendations 20 and 25) in order to overcome their historical exclusion from public and political life, in the form of quotas greater than 30% at all levels of decision-making (legislative, executive, judicial and administrative).

4. **Gender Institute**

   The creation of the Gender Institute, which was agreed upon by states during the previous ministerial meetings of the Forum for the Future, should be accelerated and its funding, independence and sustainability guaranteed, through the participation of civil society in the management of the Institute.

5. **Civic participation and Economic Opportunities for Youth**

   Implement empowerment strategies that are integrated both „horizontally“ (i.e. covering a range of sectors from education and training to health, etc) in order to ensure sustainability, social cohesion, and return on investment, and „vertically“ (i.e. bottom up) so as to respond to local needs voiced by the youth. Strategies should put in place a participatory and socially-responsible economy and encourage youth participation in local development. Enhance opportunities for the socio-economic mobility of the youth.

6. **Matching Skills and Employment**

   Governments must invest massively in the reform of education systems (most notably post
elementary, higher education and vocational training) to enhance quality by:
   a. Reforming the content and training curricula to increase the employability of graduates and those leaving the educational system without any qualifications; beginning with higher education and vocational training;
   b. Developing, in cooperation with the commercial and responsible enterprise sectors, apprenticeship courses within technical and professional schools as well as selected university branches.
   c. Introducing vocational modules (soft skills) at all levels of education;
   d. A fund must be established to promote the mobility of students of the BMENA region (inspiration drawn for example from the Erasmus program), to encourage exchange, international exposure and employability. The latter could symbolically be given the symbolic title: “Ibn Battuta” program.

7. Building an Open and Fair Economic Environment

The fundamental link between the rule of law and the existence of an economic environment that is both open and fair must be reinforced, in particular as regards: (i) recourse to an independent system of justice, (ii) freedom of expression, (iii) freedom of the press, and (iv) freedom of association. It should also be recalled that corruption, nepotism, undeserved privileges as well as the intertwining and collusion between political power and economic power continue to be serious problems afflicting the BMENA region, problems that obstruct the economic environment and limit opportunities for growth.

8. Corporate Social Responsibility

Adopt a common code of good practices regarding Corporate Social Responsibility (CSR), inspired by existing international standards (UN, OECD, ISO). The State sets an example through the implementation of:
   a. These social responsibility standards within public enterprise and private enterprise engaged in public-private partnership for the production of public goods, in particular regarding transparency and access to information;
   b. Preferential access to public markets for companies having adopted the aforementioned standards;

9. Circular Migration for Development

Governments of the G8 and the BMENA region are urged to take bold steps to open up more possibilities for legal migration, with the long-term view of creating an integrated space of free labour and student mobility in the region.

“Building Democracy: Role and Involvement of Youth and Civil Society”.

10. Youth participation

To promote and encourage the participation of youth to political and civic action in political parties and civil society organisations (associations, unions...) by building their capacity through the elaboration of training tools, in order to guarantee their effective involvement in decision making processes.

11. Freedom of expression

To ensure the independence of the written, audiovisual and electronic media by observing the universal standards and criteria which secure the right and access to information, the freedom of opinion and expression and to promote alternative media.
   a. To set up and consolidate independent national councils entrusted with the mission of regulating the media sector in order to guarantee the diversity of political and cultural opinion.
   b. To adopt legal regulations protecting the right of expression of journalists, bloggers and users of new technologies.