Within the framework of the Forum for the Future, the second civil society workshop was held in Marseille, on 6-7 June 2011, on the theme of Transformation and Integration in the Broader MENA Region. Civil society organizations from the Broader Middle East and North Africa (BMENA), participating in the workshop, came up with 36 recommendations, which fall under three broad themes, namely: Empowerment, Employment and Entrepreneurship, and Regional Integration.

Civil Society representatives express their support to the Arab Democratic Spring emphasizing the necessity to safeguard freedom, human rights and democracy. They ask the G8 countries to give equal, unbiased and consistent support to the Arab democratic transitions. They urge inclusive economic strategies that create jobs and contribute to the fight against poverty. Civil society welcomes the Deauville Partnership and voices the wish that it embody a break with past practices. It particularly urges governments of the G8 and BMENA region to engage in this partnership on the basis of democracy, the fight against corruption, transparency and accountability.

Civil society organizations from the Broader Middle East and North Africa (BMENA) issue the following recommendations:

**Empowerment**

**Civic participation and Economic Opportunities for Youth**

1. **Engage civil society in empowerment processes as fully-fledged partners rather than participants.** Allow them to set the tone and have them take an active role in designing policy. To do so, create an enabling environment whereby they can obtain sufficient leadership skills and financial means.

2. **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.
3. **Set up functioning democracies that ensure youth’s enjoyment of the right to dignity**, a right whose lack was the root cause of the Arab Spring uprisings. Spread transparency and accountability thanks to the use of new technologies (notably Web 2.0), which give youth open access to information within the decision-making process. Share knowledge on successful democratic transitions to sharpen citizens’ understanding of how to build successful democracies.

4. **Allow youth to actively participate in decision-making**, for example by having a youth representative help draft youth-related policies within the current socio-economic transformation processes, and have the civil society train him/her to take up that role.

**Women’s Empowerment and the Way Forward**

5. **Implement the recommendations made during the last G8 workshop in Kuwait on “Gender Equality”**.

6. **Reconfirm women’s rights**, notably those embodied in international conventions that stress the equality between men and women and the prohibition of violence against women, and make sure that they are integrated into national legislations. Set up call centers for women who suffer physical abuse.

7. **Promote women’s participation in decision-making** at all levels (notably legislative, executive, civil society, media) and give them the tools- such as scholarships for high-quality education and research in Science & Technology- to be active and financially autonomous economic actors. Build women-friendly infrastructure, such as nurseries, that facilitate her role as a mother and free up her time for work-oriented purposes. In rural areas, free up women’s time by, for example, making energy readily accessible to them. Impose a quota of 40-50% for employment of women in the private sector.

8. **Unleash women’s entrepreneurial potential** by giving them access to various mechanisms (cooperatives, microfinance initiatives, etc) and the capacity and tools to use them.

9. **Promote a mentality change** in the way communities may view women’s roles, starting ‘young’- when raising children. Through new media, raise awareness about women’s rights throughout society.

10. **Set up international networks** of bodies that work on gender-related issues, so that they can link up and work as a vehicle for implementing these recommendations.

**Strengthening Local Communities for Sustainable Development**

11. **Promote an “inclusive process” for local economic development**, mobilizing civil society organizations along with other local actors within an adapted legislative framework that guarantees these actors the provision of sufficient competencies and financial resources. Build capacity of local actors so that they may be able to effectively undertake local development initiatives. Coordinate the local-level projects and actions of international organisms to ensure harmony with national and local initiatives. Set up performance indicators. Give priority to the most vulnerable groups.

12. **Base decentralization on coherent socio-economic considerations and administrative divisions** rather than along religious and ethnic lines.

13. **Ensure that certain preliminary conditions are in place for decentralization to be possible and successful**: a governance system based on the rule of law and having a transparent budgeting process, strong anti-corruption strategy and transparency in the disbursement process of foreign funds. Decentralization must be promoted within a more comprehensive development strategy of the central government.

14. **Adopt a “top down bottom up approach” whereby information is shared mutually** between local communities and central government level, so that they may better understand the challenges facing different actors and mechanisms of action.

15. **Provide funds to scale-up local programs** developed by local actors that have been shown to work through pilot projects (“evidence-based programs”). Concrete projects could include giving incentives to members of local communities to change their behavior and that of those around them towards healthier
orientations that allow them to improve their standard of living and respond to local needs. Design financial tools that support sustainable livelihoods in sectors such as agriculture and manufacturing.

**Employment and Entrepreneurship**

**Matching Skills and Employment**

16. **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;

17. **Enterprise must be involved** (through representative employers’ and business-supporting organizations, especially in sectors of the economy) in the education system to contribute to improving the employability of graduates. This can be achieved through systematic and institutionalized consultation of the private sector for the improvement of content, curricula and modules proposed in universities, higher education schools and vocational training.

18. **An investment 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.

**Building an Open and Fair Economic Environment**

19. **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.

20. **The rule of law must be the focal point in the economic strategy** of regional governments, and that the State’s obligation to uphold its regulation role as well as the rule of law is an essential guarantee of a fair and competitive economic environment.

21. **International development aid to Arab countries must come with the precondition that the State uphold the rule of law, transparency, accountability, free access to information, freedom of expression and ongoing efforts to fight corruption and nepotism.** The mechanisms driving this aid should respond to the same principles of transparency and accountability. In this framework, the participants remind the G8 countries of their responsibility to eliminate tax havens and any other forms of illegal transaction in order to fight against corruption at regional and international levels.

22. **Support (through public financing and capacity building measures) the development of a strong, independent media** in Arab countries that can act as safeguards in upholding the rule of law. In conjunction with these efforts, independent media regulatory agencies must be created in these countries. Transparency and access to information both by the media and civil society should be legally guaranteed.
Corporate Social Responsibility

23. **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;

24. **Develop policies for education, information and awareness-raising to establish a culture of societal responsibility.**

25. **Develop support mechanisms for companies seeking to establish CSR best practices.** The latter could include tax credits or subsidies to support the investment necessary to comply with CSR in specific sectors (e.g. environmental conformity). Aid for CSR activities supporting youth employability, underprivileged categories, and specific training to CSR standards could be implemented.

26. **Provide incentives for compliance with specific standards in industries** that are high consumers or deplete non-renewable resources (e.g. mining industries, high water consumers, etc.) beyond and above that which international laws and conventions already impose upon these sectors.

Regional Integration

Towards Convergence: How to Facilitate Greater Regional Integration?

27. **Participants 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.

28. **Private sector must be the driving force of economic growth.** To achieve this end, the governments of the region must implement reforms to boost investments and prevent any form of collusion with the economic sector, in particular by eliminating trade barriers, unfair competition and to grow transparency. Similarly, the behaviour of the private sector should be ethical, and supported by strong and independent institutions that are able to implement the necessary reforms.

29. **Barriers to trade, financial exchanges and labour in the Arab region are a serious obstacle** to development of the countries of the region and to its international integration, specifically within the Euro-Mediterranean region. The countries of the region should engage in an enhanced process of regional integration that goes beyond a free trade area in order to become a customs union, with the long term objective of becoming an economic and monetary union.

Innovation and Transition towards the Knowledge Economy

30. **A guarantee fund**, financed by the G8 and the BMENA countries, must be created to support and encourage investment in technological and industrial projects at both international and local levels in the BMENA countries and also to promote the transfer of technology within the framework of a transparent process regarding contracts between beneficiary enterprise and the public sector.

31. Building on the framework of PISA (Programme for International Student Assessment), extend international educational standards involving the assessment of students’ learning achievements and the quality of teaching.
Circular Migration for Development

32. **Encourage governments of both sending and receiving countries of the G8 and the Broader MENA Region to support the efforts of immigrant diasporas** to promote development in their countries of origin, on their own terms, under their leadership and in coordination with national and regional development strategies.

33. **Governments must strengthen their links with diasporas abroad** (e.g. by considering the possibility of multiple citizenship and external voting rights for citizens abroad); host-governments are to encourage the integration of diasporas (e.g. by granting local voting rights for permanent residents).

34. **Governments should organise a mutually beneficial skills flow** across the countries of our region, with improved possibilities for the highly skilled both to work abroad and to return to their countries of origin.

35. **Governments should address the lack of skilled workforce** by providing greater incentives for the highly skilled to work in deprived areas (e.g. pay and promotion opportunities), and through multi-lateral or bi-lateral co-operation programmes, including twinning and out-sourcing of education institutions.

36. **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.

**Conclusion**

The above recommendations clearly reflect the importance, timeliness, depth, as well as diversity of views for transformative reform held by civil society actors in the BMENA region. The representatives of the civil society present ask the Governments of France and Kuwait to do their utmost to ensure that the above-mentioned recommendations will be taken into account. These will be presented at the G8 BMENA Ministerial meeting on November 21-22 in Kuwait and used to feed the diverse initiatives present in the region (EuroMed, G8, national agendas, and so on). It is crucial to note that these reforms are of a medium-term nature and hence they must be followed up, notably by the CMI, which we recommend coordinate this follow-up for this G8 BMENA initiative.