

## **MEDIA NOTE**

### **Forum for the Future and Examples of U.S. Support for Civil Society**

The Forum for the Future is a joint civil society initiative of the countries of the Broader Middle East and North Africa region (BMENA) and the Group of Eight (G8). It brings together leaders from government, civil society and the private sector to exchange ideas and form partnerships to support progress, reform, and expanded opportunities for the people of the region.

BMENA participants are Afghanistan, Algeria, Bahrain, Egypt, Iraq, Jordan, Kuwait, Lebanon, Libya, Morocco, Oman, Pakistan, Qatar, Saudi Arabia, Syria, Tunisia, United Arab Emirates, West Bank and Gaza, and Yemen.

The G8 countries are Canada, France, Germany, Italy, Japan, Russia, the United Kingdom, and the United States.

The BMENA initiative addresses many of the same themes President Obama articulated in his Cairo speech – including public-private partnerships – and it is a natural partner for making progress in key areas – including economic opportunity, education, good governance, human rights, and women’s empowerment. It places particular emphasis on increasing opportunity for the youth of the region.

The United States is a strong supporter of civil society around the world. Civil society activists and organizations work to improve the quality of people’s lives, solve community problems, protect their rights, hold leaders accountable to their constituents, shine light on abuses in both the public and private sectors, and advance the rule of law and social justice. They are key partners for progress.

In her remarks to the Forum for the Future, Secretary Clinton reaffirmed the U.S. commitment to supporting civil society around the world, and announced Civil Society 2.0, an initiative to help grassroots organizations use digital technology to tell their stories, build their memberships and support bases, and connect to their community of peers around the world.

Other examples of U.S.-BMENA partnerships to support civil society follow.

- *2009 BMENA Civil Society Forum for the Future local grants program* -- These specialized local grants are intended for civil society participants to be able to realize goals identified and discussed at the Forum. They will help sustain the momentum and role of civil society in the Forum process.
- *Initial Funding for the BMENA Gender Institute* -- The Institute, based in the region, will make grants, conduct research, and promote scholarship related to gender issues and encourage active participation of diverse groups.
- *Seed Program for a Women's Entrepreneurship Center in the UAE* -- This project trained a core team of Emirati businesswomen on business development practices.

- *Awareness Campaign: Corporate Governance in Tunisia* -- The Arab Institute for Business Leaders worked to develop a corporate governance awareness campaign.
- *Empowering Arab Women through Literacy* -- A non-formal, integrated education kit in Arabic geared towards illiterate and semi-literate women in the Arabic-speaking World.
- *Parent-Teacher Council Reform in Oman* -- Community Links helped to form and activate ten model Parent-Teacher Councils in various regions throughout Oman.

For more information, visit: <http://www.maec.gov.ma/future2009/en/default.htm>