

## ***A Partnership between G-8 BMENA Governments and Civil Society***

Taking into consideration that the Forum for the Future serves as a vehicle for exchanging views on the issues of concern to the region, and ensuring that the efforts we make collectively respond to those concerns;

Taking into consideration that the Democracy Assistance Dialogue (DAD), under the auspices of the Forum, brings together in a collaborative and transparent environment willing governments, as well as civil society groups from the G8, EU and other democratic partners and countries in the region to enhance existing democracy programs or support new initiatives;

Recognising that non-governmental organisations (NGOs) are essential to the development and success of democratic societies and the promotion of mutual understanding and tolerance, and recognising the commitment of G8 and BMENA countries to support this role;

Recalling the rights of freedom of peaceful assembly, association and expression set out in the UN Universal Declaration of Human Rights, the International Covenant on Civil and Political Rights and the UN Declaration on Human Rights Defenders;

Reaffirming the commitment undertaken by both governments and civil society representatives on political dialogue, including within the framework of the Democracy Assistance Dialogue;

Recognising civil society as a legitimate partner in the democracy building process;

Considering this document as a statement of commitment to constructive partnership to strengthen the interaction, partnerships and improve the environment between BMENA governments, NGOs, G8 governments and other democratic partners to tackle the key challenges that our regions face, in accordance with the purposes and principles of the UN Charter including the sovereign equality of all members in recognition of the rights and protections set forth in the Universal Declaration of Human Rights.

### *Principles for BMENA governments*

Recognise diversity and pluralism as strategic values for societies to guarantee full respect of the rights and democratic principles enshrined in the Universal Declaration of Human Rights; and reject all forms of discrimination, marginalisation and oppression in recognition of equal rights for all;

Provide the necessary legal framework and structure as well as political environment which would enable NGOs to undertake their activities and to operate freely to contribute constructively to the societies within which they undertake their activities;

Deepen partnerships with NGOs to strengthen a practical framework which would enable NGOs to operate in a peaceful, non-violent, legitimate, open, and constructive environment;

Permit all citizens to legally form, join, and participate in NGOs of their choosing, and exercise their rights to freedom of expression, peaceful assembly, and association;

Allow NGOs to legally sustain themselves and seek, receive, manage, and administer financial support, in accordance with transparent non-discriminatory national legislation, from peaceful, non-violent, legitimate, domestic, regional and international sources;

Engage with civil society in the Forum process, including endorsing recommendations and initiatives coming from the Ministerial Forum, thus creating a transparent, consultative environment for civil society organisations to substantively participate and support the implementation of the domestic reform process;

Work with NGOs to promote tolerance and mutual understanding by promoting popular participation in public life and positive citizenship, in particular among young people and women;

Reaffirm the crucial role of civil society in encouraging the growth of active citizen participation to promote the full respect for human rights and fundamental freedoms.

### *Principles for civil society organisations*

Carry out lawful activities in a responsible, peaceful, non-violent manner and do not solicit or accept funding from non-peaceful or violent entities;

Encourage openness of membership in NGOs;

Constructively participate in the Forum process;

Seek opportunities to share best practices with like-minded organisations;

Work with governments to promote tolerance and mutual understanding;

Work with governments and with other NGOs and independently to submit to the annual Forum for the Future ministerial other proposals for action on reform and progress reports and analysis on implementation of previous years' initiatives.

### *Principles for G8 and other democratic partners*

Support and encourage the development of civil society, including through ongoing participation in the Forum process;

Encourage G8 civil society to work with governments and NGOs in the region, including through the BMENA process;

Support peaceful, non-violent BMENA civil society and reaffirm the promotion, protection and realisation of human rights for all, including those rights and protections set forth in the UN Declaration on Human Rights Defenders and monitored by the Special Rapporteur on the situation of human rights defenders;

Respect the cultural diversities of the BMENA region and encourage civil society organisations in the G8 to increase awareness in their respective countries of the BMENA region's cultures, traditions, and history, with a view to develop a better understanding among peoples;

Assist in strengthening civil society cooperation in order to address and advocate for recommendations put forward by the official civil society dialogues. Work to advance and implement recommendations through tangible, in-country programming, including through existing mechanisms. Support BMENA governments in strengthening their cooperation with the civil society within the BMENA process;

Create a clear and appropriate mechanism to follow-up the initiatives made by the BMENA countries and NGOs during the forums annual ministerial meetings;

Engage civil society representatives in the planning of Forum for the Future annual conferences in close cooperation with governments.