

**RELEASE IN FULL**UNCLASSIFIED**IP 23: BACKGROUND ON FORUM FOR THE FUTURE**

From an idea of partnership to a growing reality, the Broader Middle East and North Africa (BMENA) Initiative represents genuine cooperation between the G8 and European nations and the governments, business, and civil society of the region to expand opportunities and prosperity for all.

- The leaders of the G8 industrialized nations and BMENA countries launched the Partnership for Progress and a Common Future – a blueprint for how G8 and Middle Eastern countries could best work together to support indigenous calls for reform – at the G8 Sea Island, Georgia, summit in June 2004.
- The centerpiece of BMENA is the Forum for the Future, an annual gathering of G8, European, and BMENA Foreign Ministers with civil society to discuss and advance the reform agenda.
- The Forum for the Future provides a unique venue for BMENA civil society organizations to meet with their government ministers as equal participants. The Forum fosters constructive government-civil society interaction to solve complex political, economic, and social problems of participating countries.
- This year's Forum will include approximately 40 civil society representatives who participate directly alongside governments. Civil society participation in the Forum has risen considerably every year since the first Forum in Morocco in 2004, when only five leaders participated.
- Foreign ministers from across the BMENA region, the G8, and other partner countries now work with these organizations to further progress and development in the areas of good governance, civil society, economic prosperity, and education.
- This year, civil society organizations coordinated three preparatory meetings involving governments of the region with a cross-section of civil society leaders to outline priorities and develop recommendations for the Forum ministerial.

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