



**PLATFORM FOR ACTION
Forum for the Future
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**G8 BMENA Civil Society Dialogue
Transparency and Anti-corruption**

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Platform for Action

This Platform for Action consists of two sections, where part one extracts and expands upon key points from part two.

Section 1: The Core Recommendations

Section 2: Detailed Discussions and Recommendations

Section 1

CORE RECOMMENDATIONS

Table of Contents

<i>Introduction</i>	2
<i>Recommendation No. 1:</i>	3
Ratification and implementation of the United Nations Convention Against Corruption	3
<i>Recommendation No. 2:</i>	4
Implementation of policies and practical measures to ensure transparency in public financial management	4
<i>Recommendation No. 3:</i>	5
Anti-corruption action to address the social deficit	5
<i>Civil society in the reform process</i>	6
<i>Conclusion</i>	7
<i>List of Represented Countries</i>	8
Civil society organisations and the private sector	8

Introduction

We, non-state actors from Transparency International (TI) national chapters, other civil society and private sector bodies, representing a total of twenty five countries (G8, BMENA and Turkey) worked together in a series of Dialogues in Cairo, Amman and Beirut between July and September 2005. These addressed the impact of corruption on the social, political and economic growth of the region, through the preparation of a G8 BMENA Civil Society Dialogue Platform for Action on Transparency and Anti-Corruption, which contains these core recommendations to the Forum for the Future in Bahrain, in November 2005.

We consider that increasing levels, means and forms of corruption constitute serious obstacles to political, economic and social reform processes in the BMENA region. We strongly believe that the collective international efforts of G8 and BMENA are necessary to contain this bane; to raise awareness regarding its nature; and to ratify and implement conventions, in particular the United Nations Convention Against Corruption (UNCAC), which are designed to combat corruption. Just as civil society played a major role in the development of the UNCAC, it should also play a significant role in working alongside governments and the private sector in its implementation.

Taking into account the richly diverse and complex demographic and cultural characteristics and challenges, as well as discrepancies between rich and poor countries juxtaposed within the region, local civil society organisations could play an effective role in the creation of a transparent and corruption resistant environment, which is necessary to facilitate economic growth and political and social reform.

The Core Recommendations for of the G8 BMENA Civil Society Dialogue on Transparency and Anti-Corruption call for the removal of corruption as a major barrier to reform.

The recommendations aim to be practical and, wherever possible, to point to conventions, commitments and global governmental and civil society initiatives already in place. In this regard, it is deemed critically important for the governments of the Region to implement aggressively the transparency requirements of regional and international trade agreements and bilateral investment treaties. The private sector must also play its part by actively promoting integrity in business conduct, closing off both supply and demand sides of bribery.

We recommend actions aimed at attracting both foreign and domestic investment to the Region. We call for the support of the international community in achieving the required political stability and stable governance, drawing predominately from the principles of UNCAC.

We advocate the establishment of long term policies and practices to steer change, monitor progress, report on the degree of successful adherence to the proposed recommendations and to measure progress against goals. Governments of the region (as well as those of the G8) should report publicly on their progress in fulfilling these goals on a yearly basis. The International Anti-corruption Day, annually in December, would provide appropriate reporting dates.

Recommendation No. 1:

Ratification and implementation of the United Nations Convention Against Corruption

The United Nations Convention against Corruption (UNCAC) will come into force on December 14, 2005, two years after it was signed. This will mark an important step in the anti-corruption movement around the world.

The Convention enlists the commitment of all countries to criminalise bribery and other forms of corruption, to establish national institutions to prevent its occurrence, to pursue the perpetrators, to cooperate with each other to recuperate embezzled funds, and to lend one another technical and financial assistance in order to combat corruption, foster integrity and end impunity. The signature and ratification of the UNCAC is a positive and responsible step forward, and above all, a political decision worthy of support. It testifies to a country's credibility, to its respect for commitments, and to the image it wishes to project of itself and its institutions.

We call for each and every country in the region, and all the G8 nations, to ratify the UNCAC with minimum delay, coupled with the introduction of amendments to align each country's legal texts with the Convention's provisions, and subsequent energetic enforcement of new or revised laws. These necessary amendments should considerably strengthen the legal resources at the disposal of countries, particularly those in the region, to combat effectively all forms of corruption.

Seen from the viewpoint of civil society, we who represent the G8 BMENA Civil Society Dialogue on Transparency and Anti-corruption sincerely believe that taking courageous political decisions in the face of corruption that gnaws at the core of many of the region's vital sectors will provide a solid foundation for the whole of the reform process in the region.

We would also respectfully remind the governments that, as World Bank research has shown, the fight against corruption benefits economies and actually generates money, and not the opposite.

Governments should involve civil society in the Good Governance for Development initiative (GfD), particularly in the development of national action plans and evaluation mechanisms; and to include civil society and the media in the development of national anti-corruption strategies to implement fully the provisions of the UNCAC in a way that involves all stakeholders. We ask the governments to agree to the development of follow-up and monitoring mechanisms, the design and operation of which civil society organisations should be empowered and facilitated to make concrete contributions.

References: UNCAC, *Good Governance for Development in the Arab States (GfD)*.

Recommendation No. 2:

Implementation of policies and practical measures to ensure transparency in public financial management

A critical relationship exists between investment and nation-building. It is deemed essential that Governments should create secure, safe investment climates in which regulatory bureaucracy is reduced and corporate risk is limited. An important aspect of this risk reduction will be the prosecution of bribery and full access to the courts to enforce contracts, in accordance with the UNCAC Articles 8, 9, 13 and 32. To improve attractiveness for both domestic and inward investment, the widespread prevalence of corruption needs to be addressed, alongside long-term economic development programs that generate sustainable employment.

We call on governments to establish public consultation processes, involving business and civil society in their design, conduct and reporting, to work through the practical implications and prioritisation of the following initiatives in transparency of both governmental and public sector management, and to take urgent action:

- Establish processes to publish local, regional and national **government** revenues and expenditure budgets in a timely manner, ensuring that the periodic budgetary performance reviews and reports to the legislature are accessible to the public. Being responsible for the approval of fiscal budget, the legislature shall ensure a process of public consultation and debate. The above shall establish policies for transparency in procurement processes and natural resource exploitation, including publication of procurement and bid process data and revenue transparency mechanisms. Transparent procurement will be especially important in the socially vital areas of healthcare and education.
- Require **publicly-owned companies** to publish timely, periodic accounts in accordance with international auditing standards and, where there is privatisation, ensure transparency to counter self-enrichment, conflicts of interest and nepotism; these provisions should include the requirement of declarations of interest by senior government and business officials and the creation of good corporate governance rules and codes of ethics.

Within the monitoring processes civil society should also be enabled to play a meaningful role in the development of the structure and terms of reference of such oversight bodies as Auditors General and Inspectors General, which should be empowered to receive complaints, conduct investigations, scrutinise expenditures and perform audits.

References: *UNCAC Articles 8, 9, 10 and 13; endorsement and implementation throughout the region of the Extractive Industries Transparency Initiative, and the use of Integrity Pacts in public procurement.*

Recommendation No. 3:

Anti-corruption action to address the social deficit

Widespread corruption-generated poverty continues to characterise much of the BMENA region. Some components of social deficit cause corruption; others are aspects of human suffering which are caused or exacerbated by corruption. In other words, some of these feed on poverty; others breed poverty. All need to be addressed urgently.

Reforms are needed to enable the people of the region to lift themselves out of poverty by securing access to better healthcare, guaranteed access to education, and the ability to develop the skills required for gainful employment and independent enterprise.

We call for the Forum to initiate a working group with the task of conducting research on the ways in which corruption is preventing the Millennium Development Goals from being achieved, especially as they relate to three critical elements in the region: poverty, health and education. The working group is to be composed of representatives from governments, the private sector and civil society and make concrete policy recommendations by December 2006.

The working group should make recommendations on how to make health services more available and accessible, especially to low-income groups, including the introduction of measures to prevent fraud and bribery. Furthermore, it should make recommendations on transparent rules and procedures for the purchase, production and distribution of pharmaceuticals according to international standards to limit the opportunity for corrupt practices. The TI Global Corruption Report 2006 will be launched in February. It focuses on corruption and health, and could serve as a useful resource in this endeavour.

The working group should also propose how governments and civil society bodies together, might conduct regular in-depth, objective research on the prevalence of corruption in education. It should publish findings and provide recommendations to remove corruption from the education system.

References: *UN Millennium Development Goals, UNDP's Arab Human Development Report 2004, UNESCO's "Education for All".*

Civil society in the reform process

Civil society's involvement through advocacy on issues of concern, monitoring of development activities, and the offering of support to authorities during implementation is an important component in the process of democratic reform. Identifying problems as they arise, offering solutions and using the media to bring issues to the attention of the public, are valuable contributions to the processes of development and reform. Many governments greatly value civil society bodies that share professional and technical research and reports with the authorities and with the public, maintain contact with the authorities on key issues, participate in the drafting of laws, and oversee the implementation of policies for a corruption-free society.

For civil society to be capable of playing a meaningful role, working constructively alongside and in support of effective and good governance, there is a need for *Governments to take action* to guarantee freedom of expression, freedom of association, the right to stand for public office and the right to participate in, review and comment on legal and political processes. Governments in the region should work to formalise and encourage the participation of civil society in legal and economic reform initiatives. In particular, everyone in a society should have the right to report corruption and to seek redress on behalf of society at large without suffering retaliation. Media organisations, including state-owned media, should be granted editorial independence and the ability to scrutinise and criticise government and government officials without punishment or retaliation. No person should be held criminally liable or imprisoned for the expression of an opinion.

In addition, however, we acknowledge that *Civil Society bodies themselves* need to advance in a variety of ways. They need to be highly professional in their activities, and transparent as to whom they represent, how they are funded, how their policies are established, how their research is conducted and how their various critiques and recommendations are developed. Furthermore, civil society bodies need support in developing advocacy skills, which makes it possible for them to work alongside governments in a constructive, rather than over-confrontational, manner for the good of the nation - including when offering critique of policies or practices.

With the above points in mind, **it would be highly desirable** for the Forum for the Future to initiate and fund a "root-cause" study of factors that limit the current ability of governments and civil society in the region to work together effectively. On the basis of its findings the Forum should then adopt recommendations for policy and capacity developments aimed at enhancing collaboration in current and future reform processes.

Such recommendations could include initiatives along the following line:

- Setting up a foundation for CSOs in the region, which is accessible, involves minimal bureaucracy, and is managed in a transparent and accountable manner.
- Providing for the development of a CSO-Private Sector-State coordination program on anti-corruption and transparency, to build upon the fruitful collaboration between countries in the G8 and the BMENA region.
- Establishing an e-network/forum to exchange information, ideas and expertise in the field of anti-corruption and transparency as it particularly affects the BMENA region.

Conclusion

As representatives of civil society and the private sector from the G8 and BMENA countries, we are committed to improving governance and cooperation between and among our nations and commend the governments of the Group of Eight (G8) and Broader Middle East/North Africa (BMENA) on the Forum for the Future initiative, which has created an unprecedented partnership to advance political, economic, and social reform in the region.

The Forum for the Future dialogue, currently in its infancy, signals the potential for positive engagement across multiple sectors of our societies, and we urge that it be used positively as a force for fundamental, real and sustainable change in the region.

Any movement for reform must necessarily address the severe and endemic problem of corruption. The goals of the Forum for the Future cannot be accomplished without addressing the need for transparency and accountability in all aspects of government, economic management and social development. A practical and context-sensitive tool to guide the development of effective National Integrity Systems, is the recently published TI Sourcebook of the Arab world, which elaborates comprehensively on the themes covered by this document.

We urge the nations of the Forum for the Future to act upon these recommendations – establishing a set of goals for each nation that will ensure that reform is deep and lasting. None of these actions are new or surprising – they are basic reforms that countries around the world need to adopt in order to build free, fair, transparent, and accountable societies.

We welcome the inclusion of civil society in this important process and as the Forum moves forward, we urge participating nations to continue their active engagement of civil society in keeping with the Tunis Declaration. It is in the spirit of partnership, dialogue and transparency that we hope the implementation of the actions described above will create a brighter future for the people of the BMENA region.

List of Represented Countries

Civil society organisations and the private sector

<u>G8</u>	<u>BMENA</u>	<u>OTHER</u>
Canada	Afghanistan	Turkey
France	Algeria	
Germany	Bahrain	
Italy	Egypt	
Japan	Iran	
Russia	Iraq	
United Kingdom	Jordan	
United States	Kuwait	
	Lebanon	
	Morocco	
	Pakistan	
	Palestine	
	Qatar	
	Saudi Arabia	
	Sudan	
	Yemen	

Section 2

DETAILED DISCUSSIONS AND RECOMMENDATIONS

Table of contents

1. Good Governance and Accountable Public Institutions	2
A. The Democratic Framework	2
B. The Executive.....	3
C. The Judiciary	3
D. The Legislature.....	4
E. Civil Society	4
2. The Economy and its Key Actors	6
A. Role of Government in the Economy.....	6
B. Sound Public Financial Management.....	7
C. Government Role in Financial Systems and Markets.....	7
D. Private Sector	7
E. Micro-credit.....	8
3. Social Capacity Building	9
A. Health Care.....	9
B. Education *.....	10
Civil Society in the Reform Process.....	11

1. Good Governance and Accountable Public Institutions

The most fundamental element of government is accountability to its people. This requires a pluralistic, multi-party democracy founded on genuine political competition and participation, respect for human rights, and separation of the executive, judicial, and legislative powers of government. Constitutions and international conventions cannot be mere pieces of paper, but must be fully implemented and respected by all branches of government, whether they be national, regional, or local. A free media and active civil society with full freedom of association are all critical components of a just and fair society.

Executive branch institutions must be characterised by transparency, public participation, full access to information, and a culture of public service. Judiciaries should be genuinely independent and judges must not only be competent and effective, but should also hold themselves to the highest standards of integrity. Legislatures too must be independent, and the executive has a duty to implement and swiftly and fully enforce those laws and regulations promulgated by lawmakers. No member of government, regardless of the branch, should be held above the law.

Civil society is critical to the effective functioning of government and should be encouraged to participate fully in the reform process whenever and wherever possible.

A. The Democratic Framework

1.A.1 Government, Civil Society including the Media, and the Private Sector should convene to develop a national anti-corruption strategy involving all stakeholders. As a matter of priority governments should ratify the United Nations Convention Against Corruption and agree to participate in a follow-up process, which involves civil society organisations. Similarly, governments should provide for a civil society participation in the Good Governance for Development in the Arab States initiative (GfD), particularly in the development of National Action Plans and evaluation mechanisms.

1.A.2 For the sake of building stable, transparent, accountable and democratic societies, Governments and all civil society stakeholders shall ensure the existence and implementation of democratic constitutions agreed upon by the people. In the fight against corruption it is vital that constitutions enshrine that government authority is derived from the people, and that government leaders are accountable to the people and must guarantee the rights to freedom of expression and information, association and to petition the government.

1.A.3 Recognising the adverse impact of corruption on the democratic process, Governments shall enact laws and create independent oversight bodies to guarantee free, fair and transparent electoral processes, including public participation in the selection of candidates and multi-party representation, accept election monitoring by civil society, and the need for rotation of power.

Every person shall have the right to stand for public office, and be encouraged to participate in its nation's political processes.

B. The Executive

1.B.1 To enhance accountability of the Executive, Governments shall guarantee independent and sufficiently funded oversight bodies including Auditors General, Inspectors General, Ombudsman and anti-corruption bodies at local, municipal and national level that shall receive complaints, conduct investigations, scrutinise expenditure, and perform audits of the executive branch. The reports of such oversight bodies shall be available to the public.

1.B.2 Governments shall develop and implement programs to enhance the integrity, impartiality and independence of civil servants, including merit-based employment standards and codes of conduct and ethics.

1.B.3 Governments shall adopt transparent processes, including disclosure of assets, to prevent both elected and appointed officials, from engaging in conflicts of interest or embezzlement during their tenure.

1.B.4 Government employees shall have the means to report corruption or other abuse in government bodies. Governments shall adopt mechanisms that encourage reporting of corruption and shall further ensure that those who choose to report are protected from retaliation.

1.B.5 Given the importance of ensuring that public funds are used for the purpose intended, governments shall enact laws providing for transparency in public procurement in conformity with internationally accepted standards.

C. The Judiciary

1.C.1 All judicial processes shall be fair, effective, accessible and transparent in accordance with international standards.

1.C.2 Governments shall guarantee the independence of the judiciary from political interference and pressure, including through a number of measures. Examples of these are extended or guaranteed tenure (salary protection, suitable working conditions, training, and education for judges and judicial personnel); implementation of codes of ethics; transparent and merit-based appointment processes; and recognition of the right of judges to associate.

1.C.3 The Judiciary should take steps to ensure the highest standards of judicial integrity; by transparent selection procedures, based on merit. Judges should adhere to all necessary measures to prevent corruption in the judicial system, including codes of conduct, which prevent conflicts of interest and require disclosure of assets. The judiciary shall permit public allegations to be put forward, and provide for disciplinary action.

1.C.4 Constitutional courts should be independent and accessible to the public and should ensure that laws are in conformity with the constitution. Courts of exception or declaration of state of emergency shall only be established in accordance with the constitution.

1.C.5 Recognising the critical role of the legal profession, governments shall at all times recognise their independence, and ensure that they are able to perform their professional functions without intimidation, hindrance, harassment or improper interference. They shall not suffer, or be threatened with, sanctions for any action taken in accordance with recognised professional duties, standards, and ethics. At the same time lawyers shall ensure that they abide by the highest standards of integrity in rendering professional advice.

Platform for Action

1.C.6 No individual, public or private, shall have absolute immunity from judicial processes. Where immunity exists, transparent processes shall be implemented for lifting that immunity in appropriate circumstances.

1.C.7 Judgments of the Judiciary shall be upheld and enforced without delay.

1.C.8 Transnational judicial co-operation should be established, as provided in the UNCAC, including the recovery of stolen or ill-acquired assets.

D. The Legislature

1.D.1 Transparency is fundamental to accountability. Therefore the Legislature shall adopt laws which requires publication of government information, including draft laws, regulations, judicial decisions, budget, procurement, and legislative calendars in a timely manner.

1.D.2 The Legislature shall adopt laws, which guarantee the right of access to information by the public in a readily accessible fashion, including e-government. The law will establish an independent mechanism to ensure prompt response with penalties for failure to comply. Exceptions should be limited and publicly justified.

1.D.3 Legislatures shall have all powers necessary to monitor the executive arm of government and the security sector to hold them accountable. In order to achieve this objective, appropriate committees should be created, funded, trained and staffed, and capacity-building programs should be developed to promote this monitoring function.

1.D.4 The Legislature shall require that budgets, including those security and defence services, be presented with sufficient transparency to permit parliamentary oversight.

1.D.5 Legislatures shall engage in public consultation through public hearings, e-government, petitions and other means, in development of laws and regulations and other decision-making. All parliamentary proceedings should be open to the media, other than in exceptional circumstances.

1.D.6 Legislatures shall adopt codes of ethics and transparent processes for acting on public complaints, and disciplining their members or lifting their immunity from prosecution when ethical codes or laws are violated. They shall disclose assets and outside interests to the public.

E. Civil Society

1.E.1 Freedom of expression and association must be guaranteed in order for civil society to perform its necessary oversight functions. Existing legal and regulatory systems should be reviewed to ensure that they foster free expression and association, and do not discriminate on the basis of political or religious views. Licenses for the establishment of associations shall not be required.

1.E.2 State-owned media outlets shall be limited in number, editorially independent from the government and any other political interests, permit the expression of diverse views and serve the public interest by educating them about causes and damaging effects of corruption. Governments shall prohibit media monopolies, and should not abuse state owned media for propaganda and partisan purposes.

Platform for Action

1.E.3 Governments should seek to foster an independent, accessible media, print, broadcast, including state-owned media, by enacting laws that protect the media's ability to scrutinise and criticise government corruption and other malfeasants, and to report allegations against government officials without punishment or retaliation. No person shall be held criminally liable for the expression of an opinion or imprisoned for defamation.

1.E.4 Governments shall ensure that everyone has the right to report corruption, that those who have been victims of corruption have the right to seek redress and that those who report corruption do not suffer retaliation.

References

UNCAC, Good Governance for Development in the Arab States initiative (GfD).

2. The Economy and its Key Actors

A critical relationship exists between major investment and economic infrastructure growth, yet growth in the BMENA region has been inhibited, and even prevented due to the existence of widespread grand corruption in governments as well as petty corruption at all levels of society. The region's share in global foreign direct investment is low due to an unstable legal, political and economic climate.

To encourage investment, both foreign and domestic, the systemic corruption must be eradicated, so creating a safe and more predictable environment for business and increased confidence in regional financial markets.

By co-operating through Public-Private Partnerships (PPPs) and social capacity building, the private sector, government and civil society can do much to work towards the reduction of systemic corruption, which would significantly improve the investment climate in the region.

A. Role of Government in the Economy

2.A.1 Implement anti-monopoly policy to open up competitive markets for good and services and establish effective monitoring to ensure effective compliance with regulations.

2.A.2 Institute transparent procurement processes for government purchases, incorporating Integrity Pacts, covering all stages from qualification of bidders through to the award of contracts; these processes should include award criteria based on greatest economic value for citizens, and should also provide the right for contractors to petition government decisions.

2.A.3 Governments shall require publicly-owned companies to publish timely, periodic, social (the creation of wealth, jobs and sustainability), financial and environmental reports in accordance with international auditing and accounting standards.

2.A.4 Where privatisation takes place, establish a process of transparency that allows open, fair competition. Privatisation should be based on the best economic value to citizens and disclosure should include, but not be limited to, material information on the financial and operating results of the company. Information should be prepared, audited and disclosed in accordance with high quality standards of accounting. An independent overseeing Agency should be established, accountable to the legislature.

2.A.5 Adopt provisions to counter conflicts of interest, nepotism and cronyism, including the requirement for declarations of interest by senior government and business officials and creation of good corporate governance rules and codes of ethics. Officials should be required to publish their assets (wealth) and declare family dependents and associations at the time of appointment, and when there is significant change at the end of the appointment.

2.A.6 Create a secure, safe investment climate in which regulatory bureaucracy is reduced, and in which rights of investors are protected by an independent judiciary enforcing property, asset and copyright protection laws.

2.A.7 Implement the transparency requirements of regional and international trade agreements and bilateral investment treaties.

2.A.8 Governments of all countries whose economies are heavily dependent on exploitation of natural resources, such as oil, gas or solid minerals, should endorse and implement the principles and criteria of the Extractive Industries Transparent Initiative (EITI).

B. Sound Public Financial Management

2.B.1 Ensure that revenues and expenditures of all government ministries, departments and agencies, including state owned companies and their subsidiaries, are transparently audited, and published in accordance with international audited standards, and submitted to the legislature.

2.B.2 Publish local, regional and national government revenue and expenditure budgets in a timely manner, establishing e-government for dissemination of information in easily readable format.

2.B.3 The approval process for budget expenditure estimates should be the responsibility of the legislature, which should provide a forum for consultation and debate including public hearings and commissions.

2.B.4 Governments should provide periodic budgetary performance reviews and timely, publicly published reports to the Legislature.

C. Government Role in Financial Systems and Markets

2.C.1 Institute, through financial intelligence units and otherwise, intensive and comprehensive attacks on money laundering as specified in international standards, such as those developed by the FATF (Financial Action Task Force).

2.C.2 Ensure that central banks or independent supervisory authorities and capital market regulators establish an adequate auditory oversight of the banking and capital market systems, in keeping with international standards, including public reporting.

2.C.3 Empower the banking system to provide adequate access to a range of banking services to serve the needs of small and medium size businesses.

2.C.4 Develop transparent capital and stock market structures with effective supervisory controls and enforcement.

2.C.5 Ensure that there are banking control systems that enforce the banking secrecy mechanisms, and where necessary reformulate the system, to ensure it is not used as a shield for illicit, corrupt or money laundering practices.

2.C.6 Strengthen corporate accountability to multiple stakeholders (including suppliers, customers and local communities), beyond shareholders alone.

D. Private Sector

2.D.1 Ensure that the private sector complies with the principles of good corporate governance and that compliance systems based on international best practice are rigorously applied.

2.D.2 Ensure that private sector corporations comply with international accounting standards, with timely and accurate disclosure on all material matters regarding the corporation, including the financial situation, performance, ownership and governance.

2.D.3 Establish effective economic conflict resolution mechanisms for investors.

E. Micro-credit

2.E.1 Poverty, marginalisation of poorer communities are often made worse by corruption. It is recommended that civil society bodies, banks, the private sector, Governments encourage and jointly develop corruption resistant and gender-sensitive micro-credit programs. Experience indicates that micro-enterprise development among women can have a significant poverty reducing and empowering impact.

2.E.2 Governments should provide a facilitating corrupt free environment for the development of micro-businesses into medium sized enterprises (SMEs), so as to promote the economic and social progress of poorer citizens and local communities.

References

United Nations Convention on Corruption (UNCAC), Extractive Industries Transparency Initiative, Wolfsberg Principles, Lyon-Roma Group, World Bank Guidelines from its CGAP (The Consultative Group to Assist the Poor), OECD Financial Action Task Force Standards (FATF), OECD Convention on the Bribery of Foreign Public Officials, OECD Guidelines for Multinational Enterprises.

3. Social Capacity Building

Widespread poverty continues to characterise much of the BMENA region. Reforms are needed to enable the people of the region to lift themselves out of poverty by securing better health, guaranteed access to education, and the skills required for gainful employment and independent enterprise. Through “Social Capacity Building” we mean to ensure that disadvantaged and disempowered gain the skills, space and self-worth to participate actively in the development of equitable, transparent, democratic societies. Among the subjects discussed later in this section some are causes of corruption; others are aspects of human suffering which are caused or exacerbated by corruption. In other words, some of these feed on poverty; others breed poverty. All need to be addressed urgently.

Poverty reduction requires a broad spectrum of approaches in the fields of health, education, planning, housing and employment development amongst others. Limited public services, highly restricted access to information and to justice (all of them often distorted by corruption), damage the poor not only at the level of national policy but particularly in the smaller towns and villages. To give focus to these recommendations, we have chosen to concentrate on the most crucial areas of health and education.

There is also insufficient supply of micro-credit to stimulate the economic activity necessary to secure livelihoods for poor populations and, in the rare occasion where micro-credit is in principle available, over-regulation and opaque systems too often encourage corruption and a further reduction of the actual volume of funds available to those who need it most. We therefore emphasise here the strategic importance of well-managed micro-finance provision.

BMENA governments in collaboration with local, national and international organisations, the private sector and G8 governments should cooperate, mobilise their resources and take responsibility for reform in the proposed areas of health and education.

A. Health Care

The low level or total absence of health care provision and other social security systems intensifies the problem of poverty. Insufficient funding and inadequate delivery systems are exacerbated further by acts of corruption, such as the diversion of public funds from basic health units and hospital infrastructure to all citizens. The low income of physicians and other medical personnel in many public health systems leads to demands for bribes in order to access health care. Also, corruption in the pharmaceutical industry jeopardises quality and availability of necessary medication for the poor.

3.A.1 Systems should be established to ensure availability of health services, especially for low-income groups, and measures introduced to prevent fraud and bribery.

3.A.2 Governments shall publish information about planned and actual expenditure on public health care and the social security system, distributed according to local communities and recipient groups.

3.A.3 The health profession and the legislature should implement ethical codes and establish independent multi-stakeholder oversight bodies for medical services and health professionals that are empowered to set standards, receive public complaints, and develop and apply sanctions.

3.A.4 Civil society organisations should be assisted to carry out research and provide public information on the nature and extent of bribery and corruption in health care and social security systems, and to establish hotlines to enable anonymous complaints.

3.A.5 Transparent rules and procedures should be developed and implemented for the purchase, production, and distribution of pharmaceuticals according to international standards such that opportunities for corruption are eliminated.

B. Education *

Lack of educational opportunities ensures that the problem of poverty will continue for future generations. In much of the BMENA region, concerted efforts to combat illiteracy are conspicuously lacking. Funds allocated for expanding and improving infrastructure of primary, vocational, and higher education are too often diverted to other purposes. Similarly, the selection criteria for the hiring of teaching and management staff are frequently unrelated to merit and ability. Women suffer from serious discrimination in access to all levels of education.

3.B.1 Establish national independent multi-stakeholder bodies to oversee the integrity of the education system, especially the allocation of funds.

3.B.2 Governments, with active participation of civil society, should conduct regular in-depth, objective research on the system of corruption in education and publish its results, on the basis of which they should implement recommendations to remove corruption in the education system.

3.B.3 Governments shall increase funds for teacher training, salaries and improved working conditions.

3.B.4 Governments and civil society organisations should work together to develop community-based schools and learning centres for children and adults in a manner which builds local ownership of the education process.

3.B.5 Develop educational curricula for all to instil universal democratic values, citizenship, and a culture of honesty and integrity.

3.B.6 In societies where there is gender disparity of educational opportunity, governments, supported by civil society and appropriate international organisations, should take intensive and immediate measures to correct this at all stages of education.

References

UN Millennium Development Goals, UNDP's Arab Human Development Report 2004, UNESCO's "Education for All".

Civil Society in the Reform Process

By Civil Society we mean not only specialised advocacy groups but also include such bodies as professional institutions and associations, media organisations, education and training bodies, academic research units, “think-tanks”, political parties, faith-based advocacy organisations, non-governmental relief and development agencies, and private-sector industry associations.

The role of such organisations in the reform process cannot be ignored. As important players in the fabric of society they are vital partners in the development of a corruption free environment, supporting and influencing Government in promoting economic, social and institutional reform.

Earlier in this paper (especially in 1.E) we called for the development of more constructive and productive relationships between civil society bodies and governments in the process of reform. We believe this to be of such fundamental importance. Each of the three main sections of the platform could have justified a separate treatment of this theme.

Earlier sections have called for:

- Freedom of expression and association
- Editorially independent media free to express diversity of views and to critique government policy and practice without fear of punishment
- General public freedom to report corruption

In order to be effective, civil society bodies must develop high standards of professionalism, including the ability to communicate with governments in a constructive and pro-active manner that encourages productive public debate. They must also be transparent as to whom they represent, how they are funded, how their policies are established, how their research is conducted and how their various critiques and recommendations are developed.

Governments, on the other hand, need to be willing to accept that civil society bodies have a bona fide role in society and public life, and to establish formal mechanisms that encourage effective co-operation (e.g. the creation of commissions) through which civil society can channel their ideas and suggestions. They should ensure the freedom of civil society bodies to organise to address quality of life and liberty issues. Many governments greatly value the efforts of civil society which, in the interests of promoting development, share their professional and technical research and reports with the authorities and with the public, maintain contact with the authorities on key issues, participate in the drafting of laws, and oversee the implementation of policies for a corruption-free society.