



FORUM FOR THE FUTURE: ADVANCING POLITICAL AND ECONOMIC REFORM IN THE MIDDLE EAST

The Dead Sea, Jordan, December 2006

“Our goal is to help others find their own voice, attain their own freedom, and make their own way.”

– President George W. Bush

What is the Forum for the Future?

The Forum for the Future is a cooperative effort by countries of the broader Middle East and North Africa (BMENA), the Group of Eight (G8) industrialized nations, and other democratic partners to promote and develop political, economic, and social reform in the region. Jordan is the host of the 2006 Forum for the Future at the Dead Sea on November 30 and December 1, together with Russia as the current G8 president.

The Forum is a unique place for regional civil society and business groups to express their reform goals and ideas to governments at the highest levels. The annual gathering brings pioneering men and women from across the broader Middle East together with their governments, and governments from around the world, to actively promote greater freedom and opportunity for people in the region.

The Forum is one response to what the U.N. Arab Human Development Reports have described as the region’s lack of democratic freedom, closed economic systems, education deficits, and limitation on women’s participation. These obstacles which threaten the region with continued stagnation and frustration have added urgency to the work of the Forum for the Future.

U.S. Participation

Secretary of State Condoleezza Rice joins foreign ministers from around the world at this year’s Forum in renewing the U.S. commitment to the men and women of the region who are leading the way to genuine reform.

The 2006 Forum

The theme of this year’s Forum for the Future is political and economic empowerment, with a focus on young people and women. Topics to be addressed include:

- Political participation, elections, and media
- Independent judiciary
- Legal environment for civil society
- Transparency and corruption
- Women’s empowerment
- Youth engagement
- Educational and economic opportunity

Background

The Forum for the Future grew out of the 2004 G8 Summit in the United States, where President Bush and his broader Middle Eastern, Canadian, Japanese and European counterparts launched the Broader Middle East and North Africa Initiative to support greater freedom, democracy, and prosperity for the people of the Middle East.

The previous two forums were held in Manama, Bahrain, and Rabat, Morocco. Themes included reform in the areas of democracy, civil society, education, transparency of governance, women in the workplace, legal reform and human rights.

Six civil society organizations participated in the first Forum in 2004. More than 50 umbrella groups representing hundreds of non-governmental organizations and thousands of men and women working for reform are taking part this year.

Between the annual meetings of the Forum, the G8 and regional partners engage with civil society groups to nurture progress and carry out reform action plans.