

Declaration

***The G8/ BMENA 2nd Meeting of Ministers of Education
Sharm El- Sheikh
23-24 May 2006.***

The Second Meeting of the Education Ministers of the Broader Middle East and North Africa (BMENA) and the Group of Eight (G8) was held in Sharm El-Sheikh, Egypt on 23-24 May 2006. After a report from the Education Reform Task Force on progress to date and plans for the coming year, discussions focused on the themes of: Information and Communications Technology (ICT) in education; Quality and Relevance; Technical and Vocational Education and Training (TVET); Literacy.

Participants RECOGNISED that:

- The Education Reform Task Force, and the Literacy and TVET Working Groups have achieved progress on the workplan adopted in the 2005 Dead Sea Ministerial.
- A stronger multilateral partnership must be forged between BMENA countries and G8 countries to assist the former in education reform for supporting concrete action in support of this reform.
- More action is needed on monitoring and evaluation, social inclusion and the empowerment of women.
- Sector-wide educational reform for lifelong learning and Education for All should be a national priority. For any reform to be effective, it must reflect local needs and should strike a balance between national identity and best practice.
- Widening the base of participation in this forum to include international and regional organizations, all multilateral donors, the private sector and civil society will help in the design of credible reform plans and solidify public-private partnerships in the region.
- The EC and UNESCO are key partners helping with networking in G8/BMENA.

Participants AGREED:

In regard to maintaining progress and momentum:

- To emphasise the role of public private partnerships (PPP) and stakeholder participation in all aspects of sector wide reform.
- To extend the sharing of information on best practices at a regional and wider level, including the effective use of ICT and e-networks, such as the Global Learning Portal.
- To continue exploring means of making more effective use of existing technical and financial support to educational reform in the region through respective bilateral and multilateral instruments including the G8/BMENA Forum.
- To approve the action plan proposed by the Task Force for 2006.
- To convene a third G8/BMENA Ministerial Meeting on Education in 2007.
- To rotate the Task Force co-chairs, noting that the Task Force comprises G8-BMENA, UNESCO and EC representatives:
 - the BMENA chair to be the host country for the Ministerial until the next Ministerial,
 - on the G8 side to be the G8-Presidency (UK will continue to co-chair to end 2006);
- To retain the current working groups, TVET co-chaired by Japan and Jordan, Literacy by Egypt and USA, and continue supporting the working group action plans taking into account appropriate mechanisms, resources and issues of accountability, and to authorise the Task Force to create new working groups as and when required;

- To promote the sustainability of the Task Force by investigating means of supporting the co-chairs.

In the area of ICT:

- To build on existing and expected success stories in the region including the Jordanian, Palestinian and Egyptian Education Initiatives and his Majesty the King of Bahrain School of the Future Initiative.
- To take forward ICT in education within each country taking due account of:
 - Leadership at all levels in regard to policies, strategies and management.
 - Clear educational and management goals, a solid institutional framework and a set of policies which can be implemented in support of those goals.
 - Capacity Building, deployment of educational data and information systems and the provision of resources at the school level
 - Sustained investment in technical infrastructure, professional development and technical support.

In the area of Quality and Relevance of Education:

- To encourage an independent, open-minded approach, leadership, teamwork, critical thinking, entrepreneurship, language and practical problem solving skills through student-centred learning environments supported by improved curricula and better trained and motivated teachers.
- That providing cost-effective education geared to the needs of the economy, society and the individual, and able to adapt to the changing local and global context is essential.
- That increasing emphasis on accountability and result-oriented education systems that involve the school and its local community in planning and quality assurance are critical.
- Recognizing other important factors such as parental literacy, student health and nutrition, including school feeding programs can be vital to student success.

In the area of TVET:

- To identify effective initiatives across the region, building on, monitoring and updating the outcome of the UNESCO mapping exercise.
- The importance of addressing the informal economy, its employability and training potentials in the longer term.
- On the value of developing TVET training qualifications, practices, quality assurance systems and national training and labour market information systems, and encouraging regional networking in these areas in due course.

In the area of Literacy:

- To monitor and evaluate the outcome of the meeting of Literacy Experts held in Cairo 25-27 September 2005.
- On the shared goal of enhancing available resources for literacy, especially for women, by ensuring its inclusion in basic education reform and social development programs and raising its level of priority within the budget and in negotiations with donors.
- Encouraging the enhancement of co-ordination on literacy between Ministries and non-governmental providers, and across the region, building on international initiatives such as the UNESCO Literacy for Empowerment and Literacy Assessment and Monitoring Program.