

**THIRD MINISTERIAL MEETING ON EDUCATION OF THE BROADER MIDDLE EAST
AND NORTH AFRICA (BMENA) COUNTRIES AND THE GROUP OF EIGHT (G8)
BONN/PETERSBERG 20-22 NOVEMBER 2007**

SENIOR OFFICIALS AND TASK FORCE MEETING

EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

Senior officials met on 20th November 2007 to prepare the documentation for the Ministerial Meeting. General discussions on the overall theme of relevance of education, focused on quality and partnership with industry and commerce and other stakeholders. Working sessions looked at, respectively:

- Schools education;
- Technical and Vocational Education and Training;
- Literacy;
- Tertiary Education.

Senior Officials agreed a series of recommendations, both on general issues and on the four levels of education. There was general agreement on the content of the background papers relating to cross-cutting issues and the technical papers for working groups.

The Education Task Force met on 21st November, endorsed the recommendations from the Senior Officials Meeting and discussed its future role, the programme of work for the existing working groups and the Fourth Education Ministerial Meeting.

The Task Force agreed that the co-chairs should summarise the outcomes of the Ministerial Meeting and present the results and recommendations to the Forum for the Future on 4-5 December in Sana'a, Yemen.

The Task Force will meet in January/February 2008 in Oman. The agenda will be:

- Revisiting the role of the Task Force;
- Discussing the programmes of work for Literacy and TVET working groups, based on proposals from these groups;
- Amending the activities on Basic Education and Tertiary Education;
- Preparing for the 2008 Education Ministerial.

The Task Force proposes that the next Education Ministerial will take place in Muscat, Oman in October 2008 on the continuing of the relevance of education.

Ministers are asked to consider the recommendations from the Senior Officials' Meeting and Task Force.

RECOMMENDATIONS FROM SENIOR OFFICIALS WORKING GROUPS

General recommendations

1. Increase emphasis on the quality and relevance of education to tackle the challenges of high unemployment and illiteracy, low female participation in the workforce, demographic constraints, and other issues raised in the background paper on relevance and quality.
2. Improve mechanisms for communication between G8 and BMENA. Both the literacy and technical/vocational working groups have been effective and should continue. Before creating a new working group on tertiary education, hold a series of workshops on central topics for both regions over the next year.
3. Request the Forum for the Future to secure greater cross-government support to education, and greater involvement of commerce and industry, notably through systems for social accountability.
4. Improve the balance between meeting the needs of growing numbers of students, challenging the most gifted, promoting the disadvantaged and ensuring equity.

Recommendations on School Education

1. The priority for basic education is the achievement of the Education for All and Millennium Development Goals. Secondary education should lay emphasis on labour market needs.
2. Adopt a comprehensive approach to improving the quality and relevance of school education based on a regional competences and standards framework. Base national plans on effective evaluation systems and research evidence and attention to human resources.
3. Give schools more autonomy, with school principals in leadership role, backed by the development and improvement of quality assurance systems.
4. Encourage public-private partnerships to improve relevance of education.

Recommendations on Technical and Vocational Education and Training (TVET)

1. Ensure coherence between ministries involved in TVET.
2. Adopt a demand-led approach based on labour market analysis. Involve employers at national, regional and local levels in developing occupational standards, quality assurance systems, skills assessment and curriculum development focusing on cognitive/thinking and problem solving skills as well as entrepreneurial skills
3. Invite employers to any future G8/BMENA meetings on TVET.
4. Provide a continuum of opportunity through a national qualifications framework. This should include training and continuous development of trainers and teachers;
5. Provide career guidance systems using trained counsellors with understanding of the labour market at all levels of education.
6. Encourage BMENA participation in WorldSkills 2009. This uses achievement awards to promote the status of vocational learning.

Recommendations on Literacy

1. Encourage non-traditional sources of funding for literacy programmes, particularly philanthropy. Promote corporate social responsibility and the development of links between BMENA based foundations and between G8 and BMENA funding agencies and foundations.

2. Increase social marketing, using celebrities and religious leaders in mass media and providing special recognition to NGOs and communities for innovations in literacy, particularly in regard to the status of women.
3. Employ community-based solutions which are the most effective in combating illiteracy. Promote decentralisation as this will lead to stronger links to decent work, and combat school drop-outs.

Recommendations on Tertiary Education

1. Establish funding mechanisms to support research (basic and applied), scholarship and knowledge transfer. These contribute to the quality and currency of staff and engage them in meaningful external activities. Encourage international exchange to develop staff through joint research programmes and the achievement of postgraduate degrees.
2. Establish effective relationships between universities and other tertiary institutions including effective progression routes.
3. Enhance participation in science and technology provision and entrepreneurship, given the high unemployment of humanities graduates in many countries. Universities should recognise that for many areas self-employment and own businesses are the natural career route for graduates in particular sectors, notably the creative arts and innovative technologies.
4. Give tertiary education institutions the freedom to be enterprising and autonomous and respond to global trends, within national quality assurance (internationally recognised) and accountability systems. Universities seeking such autonomy and accountability need to recognise and be prepared to demonstrate the ability to manage the process of change towards quality, relevance, responsible governance and leadership themselves.
5. Encourage recognition and partnership between G8 and BMENA countries through comparable quality assurance systems uniformly applied to both public and private tertiary institutions.