

Neda Mansouri  
2005-12-12

## **REPORT**

### **Section 1: Forum for the Future in Bahrain**

The Steering Committee: Jasim Al-Ajmi (TI Bahrain), Anita Davis (TI-Canada), Kamal Mesbani (TI Morocco), Badri El Meouchi (TI Lebanon), Samira Trad (Frontiers Lebanon).

Nidal Hasan (TI Palestine) could unfortunately not attend the meeting, as he was in Jordan when the Hotel bombings took place and was not allowed to exit the country.

Working Group representatives: David Murray (TI-UK) and Shirley van Buiren (TI-Germany). Not present in Bahrain, but active participants in the subsequent work following the Beirut conference.

Date: Friday, 11 and Saturday, 12 November.

Venue: Manama, Bahrain, Ritz Carlton Hotel

#### Forum for the Future

The two-day Forum for the Future meeting gathered Senior Officials, Ambassadors, Foreign Ministers as part of the official delegations and seven civil society delegations as part of the non-official delegations. In addition, delegations from international organizations such as the World Bank and the OECD attended the meetings. All the civil society representatives were given the opportunity to make two presentations, the first one before the senior officials on Friday 11th and the second one before the ministers on Saturday 12th. The second day was attended by Foreign Ministers such as Condoleezza Rice, Jack Straw from the G8 and Aboul Gheit from Egypt, Prince Saud Al-Faisal from Saudi Arabia, and Mohamed Benaissa from Morocco, to mention a few.

As the representatives of civil societies, we had the unique opportunity of making a direct presentation of our recommendations to the Foreign Ministers of the G8, BMENA and partner countries as well as international organisations. The quality of the presented recommendations varied considerably, positioning our Platform for Action and particularly the concrete formulation of the recommendations favourably. Representatives of the World Bank specifically approached us and commended the recommendations for their concrete design and measurability.

The presentation on Friday was made to senior public officials, by Anita in English, while Saturday's presentation was made by Jasim in Arabic, to the Foreign Ministers of G8 and BMENA countries. A number of countries such as France, Canada and

Italy had sent other representatives instead of their Foreign Ministers. We had been instructed that after our ten minute presentation there would be an opportunity to hold open plenary discussions on our recommendations. However, neither our group nor any other had the opportunity to discuss their recommendations. This lack of dialogue was unfortunate as it could have been helpful to receive some feedback on our recommendations – particularly for the possible follow-up of the project.

Aside from the made presentations, we approached and sought the support from various G8 and BMENA official delegations, maintaining our focus on the first recommendation on the ratification of the UNCAC. The list of approached delegations consisted of Canada, France, Germany, Italian, Turkey, US, UK, Russia, Lebanon and Iraq. Although only some of these made official comments on our recommendations, all of them expressed positive interest to various degrees.

The delegations were in overall positive towards our recommendations, particularly the first referring to the UNCAC and the last one referring to the working group on social deficit. As a result, on the second day, the French delegations took the floor after our presentation, starting by supporting our recommendations and asking others to follow their example in ratifying the UNCAC. Unfortunately, they continued for another ten minutes, focusing on France's position in relation to and engagement with the BMENA region, expressing their scepticism about the G8 BMENA initiative and highlighting the importance of other initiatives such as the Barcelona process. Therefore, no space was left for other countries to comment. At the end, the Italians, the Lebanese and Iraqis spoke of the positive impact of ratifying UNCAC. Both Germany and USA contacted their respective ministries and made enquiries regarding the UNCAC and why it had not been ratified.

#### The Media

Due to the very late notice from the organisers to the Media - only one week ahead of the meeting – the Forum failed to gather much of the international media such as CNN, BBC and others. I was told that many prominent newspapers such as the Guardian, the independent and others had expressed frustration when asked to attend the meeting with such a short notice, as they had wished to follow the event. It is also worth mentioning that CNN started a week long coverage of “Reform in the Middle East” approximately five days after the Forum for the Future, They would have had a particular interest in reporting on this meeting. Meanwhile, we succeeded in arranging interviews with local, national, regional and international press about our particular Civil Society Dialogue and its Platform for Action.

#### No Declaration

Unfortunately, there was no agreement on a Bahrain declaration, due to a veto from the Egyptian delegation. The rationale of the Egyptian delegation, headed by its Foreign Minister Mr. Gheit, and as it was expressed at the plenary sessions, concerned the possible risk of conflict between the positions of CSOs and those of the government. They insisted on including a reference to groups that operate “in

accordance with legally registered laws of the country.”, but this was not deemed as appropriate by other delegations.

The ambition of the Forum is to try to adopt a similar declaration at its next meeting session in Jordan in end 2006.

#### The Foundation and the Fund for the Future

The Forum for the Future launched the Foundation for the Future, which holds a starting budget of \$ 54 million, supported by \$ 35 million from the US government. To date, other financial supporters of the Foundation for the Future include Bahrain, Denmark, the European Commission, Greece, Hungary, Italy, Morocco, Jordan, the Netherlands, Spain, Switzerland, Turkey, Qatar, Yemen and the UK. The Foundation is to be managed by a board of civil society representatives from the BMENA region. The \$100 million Fund for the Future will provide equity investments and technical assistance to small and medium-sized enterprises in the region in an effort to stimulate economic growth and job creation. The Fund for the Future, underwritten by \$50 million from the United States, \$20 million from Egypt, \$20 million from Morocco and \$1 million from Denmark. The fund is apparently modelled on enterprise funds that the United States established in the Central and Eastern Europe in the 1990s.

The Fund will not have any government representation, and its Board is expected to be elected by the first quarter of next year. Private sector boards of directors headed by chairs from the Broader Middle East and North Africa region will manage this fund.

## **Section 2:** **Post Bahrain Forum**

### Meeting in Jordan

A small senior officials meeting in Jordan will be held 15 December in Jordan, gathering the donor countries to the Fund and the Foundation. The meeting will also include civil society partners to the Democracy Assistance Dialogue (DAD) process (Italy, Yemen and Turkey), based on the argument that the idea for the Foundation derived from the DAD process and its CSO partners. The purpose of this meeting is restricted to discussions on the charter and structure of the Foundation. Eventually, a chairperson will be appointed in mid January, who is then to select the board members. This will be followed by an approval process of the board, and the adoption of a charter and bylaws of the Foundation. In April, the foundation should be ready to receive project application and provide grants in June. It should be noted that all these dates are tentative. This information was gradually gained last week, through various informal channels, and has not been provided by the Forum as such. During the last conversations with the FCO at the end of last week, they provided a similar version, and confirmed that they will attend the upcoming meeting in Jordan. The FCO representative also informed us that they would stress the importance of the role of

CSOs in next year's Forum for the Future. Since Russia will hold the G8 presidency in 2006, important challenges have been foreseen regarding civil societies, particularly in the context of the restrictive regulations that are in the process of being adopted. However, Jordan will host next year's Forum and have officially prioritised the fight against corruption in the national agenda.

You will receive further information about the follow up on the meeting in Jordan, particularly, in terms of the procedures for nominating a chair for the Foundation and board members. Since our dialogue gathered a significant group of organisations, it is relevant for you to be kept in the loop, and if possible, have the opportunity to make suggestions for nominations. It should also be mentioned that once informed about this week's meeting, I inquired about the possibilities of taking part of it, but was told that the number of CSO has been restricted only to include the DAD partners, referring to the argument above. Having said this, you are welcome to make your own inquiries about this meeting either with the Jordanian government or any of the donor countries (to the Foundation) as listed above.

#### Steering Committee and ideas for the Follow-up

In discussing the routes for the follow-up, at the last meeting with the Steering Committee in November, it was suggested that primarily TI National Chapter should lobby their governments to ratify the UNCAC. Secondly, the Secretariat should provide technical support to national chapters to develop national strategies on how to implement the provisions of the UNCAC, as a parallel process of engagement to the lengthy processes of ratification. In this way, both countries from the G8 (as well as "best practices" countries) and the BMENA could be engaged in a partnership sharing experiences, exchanging expertise and providing supporting if and when needed.

Also, during the discussions on a follow-up process and possible models of inspiration, reference was made to the OECD ANC, the Anti-Corruption Network for Transition Economies (ACN), which is a regional anti-corruption initiative that was established in 1998 by national governments, civil society organisations, and international donor agencies to promote knowledge sharing, donor co-ordination and policy dialogue in the transition economies in Central, Eastern, and South Eastern Europe and the Newly Independent States.

The main objective of the ACN is to assist the participating countries to strengthen their capacity to tackle anti-corruption reform and to move closer to international standards. The Organisation for Economic Co-operation and Development (OECD) hosts the Network Secretariat within its Anti-Corruption Division. The Anti-Corruption Division is supporting the monitoring of the implementation of the OECD Anti-Bribery Convention and outreach to non-member countries. The website address is: [www.anticorruptionnet.org](http://www.anticorruptionnet.org)

Our next step forward will be to formulate an appropriate concept for the follow-up and search for possible donors, starting with the UK Foreign Commonwealth Office which has been the sole financier of this project to date. In this context, we would also welcome any ideas that you might have both in terms of relevant themes of follow-up but also donors. In order to make most use of your suggestion and better integrating them in the preparation of the next steps, we would kindly ask of you to provide your inputs, suggestions or concrete ideas until the end of December.