

**YOUTH IN THE MIDDLE EAST AND NORTH AFRICA:
EXPANDING ECONOMIC PROSPECTS IN URBAN AREAS**
Highlighting Global Lessons, Creating Local Solutions
4- 6 December, 2006, Rabat, Morocco

RABAT DECLARATION

The capital city of Morocco, Rabat, hosted a conference on Youth in the Middle East and North Africa from December 4-6, 2006. The conference explored ways and means to expand economic prospects for youth in urban areas while examining international experiences in the field and creating home-based solutions.

The conference was jointly organized by the Municipality of Rabat, the Moroccan National School of Architecture, the Arab Urban Development Institute (AUDI), the World Bank, in collaboration with the MENA Child Protection Initiative (CPI) and MedChild Institute.

The conference witnessed the participation of 500 attendees from the MENA Region as well as from around the world. It also recorded the delivery of 56 papers and presentations and was well attended by youth from Arab countries.

The Conference Participants stated the following:

1. Considering that development is a community-based process with the goal of upgrading human resources skills in various fields of endeavors, such as the knowledge-based, social, cultural, and economic sectors, youth are considered to be the most important resource which underpins economic development.
2. Considering that the period of youth-hood is a period during which youth transition from school to work, securing a job will make it easier for him/her to become independent and to have the necessary tools for achieving economic and social stability.
3. Taking into consideration the fact that enhancing youth qualifications goes through creating the necessary conditions whereby youth are able to receive appropriate education, instruction, and training to meet the requirements of every day life, not overlooking of course upgrading their spirit of initiative in addition to nurturing the values pertaining to citizenship and likely to enhance creativity, inventiveness, and self-reliance in everyone, we consider it appropriate and necessary that youth should be given equal opportunities in the field of labor without discrimination or exclusion based on ethnic, social, cultural, or religious criteria while emphasizing at the same time the principles of transparency and combating all forms of favoritism.
4. Youth being the genuine and basic capital of a society and the guarantor of its continuity, constitute the corner stone in any initiative intended to improve the conditions of our Arab societies. This certainly requires the backing of home-grown solutions as well as drawing inspirations from international success stories which have proven their worth in responding positively to the expectations of the youth and allowing for their effective participation in the various fields of endeavor.

5. Providing an architecturally appropriate urban environment suitable for youth (such as ensuring their right for using the city and its various components, their right for mobility) and a social environment likely to guarantee sustainable human development through its various indicators pertaining to providing good quality services while focusing on strengthening religious, spiritual, and national identity values is critical.
6. Expanding economic opportunities for youth is linked to the expansion of their participation and the provision of genuine opportunities for them to enrich their intellectual skills and their cognitive abilities. Expanding economic opportunities for youth is also linked to the provision of an education that meets the requirements of the labor market and is founded on a participatory citizenship that endeavors to provide second chances such as reintegration into formal education, non formal education, training programs, on skills and qualifications of youth with the prospect of streamlining them into the social fabric and therefore strengthening their social cohesion reducing their vulnerability, marginalization, and exclusion factors.
7. Calling for the continuation of the MENA Child Protection Initiative (CPI) launched in Amman, and for its backing both technically and financially, so that it can achieve the programs it has already started in a number of Arab cities, along with expanding the participation of experts from various countries of the region to enrich the policies and methodologies of the Initiative.
8. Establishing a national fund for the purpose of supporting projects relating to youth employment and projects of productive families with the backing from municipalities, central governments, as well as regional and international organizations.
9. Setting up an organization/institution with a view to keeping track of youth conditions and policies to be called the International Observatory for Youth and Development, and hosted by the National School of Architecture in Rabat. The Observatory will be established by the Municipality of Rabat, the National School of Architecture, and the Arab Urban Development Institute (AUDI), with the support and backing of international and regional organizations. The three parties will agree on the membership of its Governing Board.

The organizers and participants would like to take this opportunity to convey a motion of gratitude and appreciation to His Majesty King Mohamed VI, to his government and people for the generous hospitality extended to them.

Rabat, Morocco, 8th December 2006