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Policy Recommendations

Reconfiguring the Arab Region and its Global Space beyond Political Economy and Security Threats

Beirut Institute Summit
Abu Dhabi

Introduction

Document Purpose: In late 2015, Beirut Institute convened a highly select group of senior government officials, public and private sector luminaries and next generation leaders in Abu Dhabi to develop specific policy proposals for “Reconfiguring the Arab Region and its Global Space beyond Political Economy and Security Threats.” This document summarizes the key policy recommendations that came out of the deliberations all of which are oriented by the intent to generate a virtuous cycle of change in the Arab region towards a better future. By convening leaders from both traditional national security and economic domains as well as next generation social and technology entrepreneurs, Beirut Institute Summit sought to ignite something new and potent. The intent was to enable the creation of strategic approaches that both address the traditional components of the challenge and harness the power of emerging innovative solutions and the new generation of leaders driving them.

Despite the diversity of the participants, the Summit yielded a core set of ideas that emerged with remarkable consistency across the two days of sessions. While the recommendations outlined here represent the specific proposals around which there was greatest agreement, they do not represent an agreed upon consensus of the entire group. Instead, they are offered here as the distilled, practical proposed courses of action that emerged with greatest salience from this remarkable gathering in the hope that these ideas will be a useful input to policymakers at this critical moment in the history of the region.

Strategic Context—An Intensifying Vicious Cycle: The Middle East has a long history of dynamic change, but even in that context, the present moment is remarkably tumultuous. The region has reached an inflection point in which three fundamental, global forces are converging to exert tremendous evolutionary pressure on its national and regional institutions. As in all intense evolutionary periods, both challenges and opportunities are proliferating simultaneously. First, the rapidly shifting distribution of global power has unleashed active conflict and intensifying security competition across the region. This geopolitical entropy is beyond the power of any single actor to stop. At the same time, it is driving uncertainty, insecurity and an apparent divergence of interests that makes collective action exceptionally difficult. Second, the digital revolution and accelerating innovation (including unrelenting technological advance, individual empowerment and new forms of economic competition) are creating both transformative opportunities and new threats. At present, these forces are reinforcing one another negatively. Violence and instability are deepening uncertainty, destroying hope and undermining growth and investment in a vicious cycle of increasing gravity such that even innovation is strengthening the hand of those who seek to deepen the chaos. Finally, the steady decline of the financial resources available to key actors in the Middle East from hydrocarbon exports will continue with the ongoing transformation of global energy markets by the proliferation of supply sources and the slowing of demand. Thus, the Arab region finds itself in what is arguably its greatest structural crisis since the end of World War II.

Overarching Strategic Intent – Reversing the Spiral: In response to this extremely challenging environment, participants raised and collaboratively refined a wide-ranging set of ideas that, taken together, form a future-oriented project for the Arab region centered on an overarching strategic concept within which the specific policy recommendations fit. This concept acknowledges the fundamental importance of three factors too often disregarded in policy proposals: sequence, perception and momentum. The intent is to lay out a practical, forward-looking strategic roadmap to which people of the region and key stakeholders can commit. This roadmap of policy recommendations consists of five core elements as follows.

Overview of the Recommendations

1. Stop the Bleeding

Create the foundational security necessary for comprehensive progress in the region

- 1.1. De-escalate active conflicts with all possible urgency
- 1.2. Fund and implement a regional stabilization and reconstruction plan
- 1.3. Intensify, deepen and communicate humanitarian assistance to refugees across the region
- 1.4. Systematically intensify military, financial and strategic communication efforts to defeat Daesh

2. Align and Reinforce the Core

Accelerate institutionalization of Arab strategic and operational integration

- 2.1. Create a cohesive strategic plan and vision for the Arab region
- 2.2. Comprehensively strengthen the resilience of key Arab states
- 2.3. Rapidly finalize formation of the joint Arab military force

3. Unleash Transformative Growth

Enable increased intra-regional economic exchange and next-generation, innovation-driven growth

- 3.1. Advance substantive Arab economic integration
- 3.2. Systematically enable and ignite next generation economic growth

4. Strengthen Societal Cohesion

Improve the pillars of good governance across the Arab region

- 4.1. Strengthen governance and the rule of law based on agreed norms grounded in local legitimacy
- 4.2. Institutionalize accountability and anti-corruption mechanisms across the region
- 4.3. Empower Women Economically, Politically and Socially
- 4.4. Engage Youth in Building the Regional Future
- 4.5. Encourage, protect and enable progressive Muslim scholars

5. Build a Regional Security Architecture

Drive evolutionary progress towards an inclusive, stabilizing regional security institution

- 5.1. Re-intensify efforts to resolve the question of Palestine on the basis of a two-state solution
- 5.2. Regularize Track II discussions between Saudi Arabia and Iran
- 5.3. Actively lead formation of a regional security institution for the wider Middle East

1. Stop the Bleeding

Create the foundational security necessary for comprehensive progress in the region

The escalating violence in Syria, Yemen, Libya and Iraq is currently the most significant source of suffering and instability in the Middle East. De-escalating these conflicts is therefore both a moral and strategic imperative. The moral dimension is self-evident given the tragic scale of human suffering. The strategic argument hinges on the fact that a rapid reduction of violence in these theatres is a key condition for meaningful progress on the critical political, economic and social fronts across the region. For that reason, the strategic roadmap starts here with the following policy recommendations:

1.1. De-escalate active conflicts with all possible urgency

Arab leaders and the international community must accelerate comprehensive efforts toward the de-escalation of violence across the region focusing on the active conflicts in Syria, Libya, Yemen and Iraq:

- **Syria:** Regional leaders in partnership with the United States and other key extra-regional actors must continue to advance by all possible means the Vienna process and progress toward a ceasefire to create space for political and economic progress to unfold in parallel. Achieving, enforcing and sustaining the ceasefire will require rebalancing military power through the placement of a significant, unambiguously legitimate multi-lateral force on the ground in Syria. Although a foundational level of security is essential for progress on the political, economic and social fronts, the creation of a stable military context does not generate transformation and progress by itself. Visible progress in these other areas must occur in parallel with even relatively small security gains. The effort in Syria must also include the following:
 - **Establish secure humanitarian safe-havens/enclaves:** Despite the significant diplomatic difficulty of doing so, the Coalition must establish safe-havens/enclaves in Syria protected by coalition airpower for refugees and moderate opposition forces. These enclaves will provide stable space within which the Syrian opposition can organize and internally displaced people can find refuge.
 - **Orchestrate a Legitimate Syrian Conference:** Ultimate resolution of the Syrian crisis requires an approach that places the Syrian people at the center of the transition process. This conference, the design of which could be informed by the Ta'if Conference, should systematically convene representatives of all key structures (e.g., village councils, tribal structures, etc.) of Syrian society as part of the Vienna Process to ensure that the Syrian people themselves are the authors of their national future.
- **Libya:** Regional leaders, the United States and the European Union must provide the strongest possible political support for the restart of UN-brokered negotiations on the composition of a unity government. In addition, they must provide significant and sustained military and economic support to the Government of National Accord (GNA) once it is formed.
- **Yemen:** Regional leaders must provide strong support for the efforts of the UN Secretary-General's Special Envoy for Yemen to resolve the political crisis on the basis of Security Council resolution 2216. There must be an urgent focus on resuming the ceasefire and initiating a new round of mediated talks.

- **Iraq:** In addition to intensifying efforts to push Daesh further back and liberate key cities, it is imperative that the international community support those in Baghdad who have demonstrated a commitment to the path of political inclusion.

1.2. Fund and implement a regional stabilization and reconstruction plan

Arab leaders and key international partners should drive the design, funding and implementation of a compelling, inclusive plan for Syria, Libya, Yemen and Iraq. Two imperatives must orient the plan across two phases of activity. First, during the conflict, a decisive effort must be made to stabilize the zones of greatest suffering and rebuild the human infrastructure (e.g., food and water supply chains, shelter, etc.) in order to meet the desperate, immediate needs of the people on the ground. Next, the plan must drive the post-conflict reconstruction of the economic infrastructure, social services, and the foundational elements of the state that have been destroyed by the years of conflict. This plan should be underwritten by a GCC-led¹ and internationally supported fund.

- **Pre-Staged Logistical and Resource Plans:** To be effective, a post-conflict stabilization and reconstruction plan must be fully prepared and resourced as far in advance of the cessation of conflict as possible. Otherwise, the risk of a security vacuum will be extremely high. Post-conflict plans are needed for Syria, Libya, Yemen and Iraq to ensure stability, progress and the restoration of hope. While the GCC must lead the planning and funding effort, this initiative must be supported by the international community.

1.3. Intensify, deepen and communicate humanitarian assistance to refugees across the region

Arab leaders must urgently, visibly and decisively increase support to refugees, including through the rapid creation of a new “trilateral” institution explicitly focused on coordinating refugee aid and relocation policy among Arab States, Europe and North America. This organization must be granted sufficient power and autonomy to design and execute a comprehensive approach to the refugee crisis. This effort must feature:

- **Deepened Support for Host Countries:** Increased support for key host countries in the region, including technical assistance in converting their refugee challenge into a long-term opportunity by facilitating a process whereby the government and private sector can invest in small concrete projects that address refugee needs, create near-term jobs and improve the long-term infrastructure of the country. Such a rapid increase in programmes to provide explicit skills and jobs for refugees remaining in the Middle East can help reduce the tension between giving refugees something productive to do and raising concerns in host countries regarding rising strains on the employment market. Doing this requires harmonizing fresh approaches with the good work and training already being done in Jordan, Lebanon, Turkey and elsewhere.
- **Educational Services:** Delivery of educational services to the children of the refugees, including aggressive intensification of programmes to provide explicit skills and jobs for refugees remaining in the Middle East.
- **Psychological Assistance:** This must include both an immediate effort to provide psychological support to those in critical need across the region and, in the longer-term, the establishment of a new institute to train Arabic-speaking psychological professionals who can address the future costs of the traumas the region is undergoing today.

¹ The Cooperation Council for the Arab States of the Gulf (“Gulf Cooperation Council” or “GCC”) consists of six member states: The United Arab Emirates, The Kingdom of Bahrain, The Kingdom of Saudi Arabia, The Sultanate of Oman, Qatar and Kuwait.

1.4. Systematically intensify military, financial and strategic communication efforts to defeat Daesh

Once the Syrian transition process is defined and progressing, including an agreed approach to the departure of President Bashar Hafez al-Assad, the Coalition will be in a position to defeat Daesh by aligning its efforts with Sunni opposition forces. Arab leaders must seize that opportunity, including through the following means:

- **Ground Forces:** Deploying multi-national ground forces to intensify military pressure on Daesh and—as outlined above—support the de-escalation of active conflict and protect the safe-havens. It is crucial not to over-rely on Kurdish forces that will be unable to hold territory that is not ethnically Kurdish.
- **Disruption of Finances:** Simultaneously redoubling efforts to disrupt Daesh’s sources of funding—building on the unanimously adopted U.S. and Russian-drafted U.N. Security Council resolution that intends to integrate existing measures. This must include the aggressive toughening by Arab leaders of rules targeting individuals that are providing financial support to terrorist networks.
- **De-legitimization of the Daesh Narrative:** Comprehensively deconstructing and de-legitimizing the Daesh narrative by orchestrating a multi-dimensional attack on Daesh’s appeal that aligns and integrates the efforts of next generation Arab media leaders, religious authorities and social media experts.

2. Align and Reinforce the Core

Accelerate institutionalization of Arab strategic and operational integration

A root cause of the instability in the Arab region is the lack of an aligned Arab strategic perspective, diplomatic voice and military capability—and the internal weaknesses of many Arab states. Arab disunity stands in stark contrast to Iran’s steady, disciplined progress toward the achievement of its long-term strategic objectives. While it remains critical that Arab states continue to adhere to the principle of unequivocal respect for each other’s national sovereignty, they must also move to institutionalize greater Arab strategic alignment. Until they do so, Arab interests will fall prey to the strategies of other actors.

2.1. Create a cohesive strategic plan and vision for the Arab region

The lack of a shared Arab grand strategy has become unacceptably costly. First, it places the Arab region at a clear disadvantage relative to other more coherent strategic actors in the region and beyond it. In addition, it deprives citizens of a vision of the future that can inspire their allegiance and investment. Creating such a shared strategy, as well as defining and widely, accessibly communicating a corresponding vision, is thus a vital first step toward establishing meaningful intra-Arab strategic alignment.

- **Arab 2030 Strategic Plan:** The League of Arab States and the GCC should collaboratively orchestrate an official, strategic process convening an appropriate core group of members to develop a comprehensive and aligned strategic plan through 2030 for the Arab region. To support this effort, the members should task a group of experts to develop a scenario-based perspective on the strategic challenges and opportunities facing the Middle East through 2030 and a provisional set of proactive joint, regional goals and objectives to address them. Once agreed, the policies to achieve these goals and objectives will be collaboratively developed.
- **Toward a Formal Institutional Framework:** Critical to the planning process will be analysis and determination of the ideal integrating institutional framework to achieve the strategic and operational alignment required. This framework could include creation of an official mutual defence pact and full formal institutionalization of the Joint Arab Defence Force. In doing so, it must build upon, integrate and rationalize the various layers of strategic alignment currently in place including the Saudi-led Arab coalition operating in Yemen and Saudi Arabia’s recently announced anti-terrorism coalition. However, the framework must extend beyond defence to include the equally vital economic, financial and diplomatic components.
- **A Compelling Vision for the People of the Region:** As part of the official strategic plan and the institutionalization of Arab strategic alignment outlined above, Arab leaders must create a shared, comprehensive and inspiring outward-facing vision for the future of the Arab region that is compelling and comprehensible to citizens. The vision must be sufficiently credible, inclusive and inspiring to earn the allegiance of citizens across the region. It must celebrate the diversity of the region and unambiguously affirm equal rights for all citizens. It must clearly define the desired end state: a region that is secure, safe, prosperous, and that extends prosperity to the people. It must also specify the collective mechanisms necessary to achieve that, including the institutional framework described above. This plan will include the stabilization and reconstruction fund for Syria, Libya, Yemen and Iraq outlined above, but will go far beyond it to include the political, economic and social components described below.

- **Renewing Our Global Engagement:** This vision for the people of the region must include a renewed spirit of active engagement with the wider world. It should include an agenda for proactive and positive participation in the dynamics of globalization and clear acceptance of the universal value of human civilization. Leaders in the region must enable their citizens to overcome the perennial resistance to the oneness of human destiny and accept the indivisibility of the well-being of mankind. This will necessarily include building open bridges of exchange with the international community based on global standards. The vision must include ever deepening economic linkages with the global community and the rapid acceleration of efforts to enhance the region's attractiveness as a destination for foreign investment. Finally, the vision must address head-on the issues of climate change, environmental degradation and food and water security. The Arab region is likely to suffer first and most from continued deterioration in these areas. As a result, Arab leaders must deepen their participation in international forums and initiatives to address these critical issues.
- **A Tangible Roadmap:** The 2030 strategic plan and vision must include a concrete, results-oriented roadmap for a series of programmes that align the efforts and resources of Arab countries in executing a focused set of core initiatives. Successful execution of a series of practical, tangible near-term objectives will establish the credibility of the effort and demonstrate its value to citizens. These initiatives should be chosen based on their ability to unite people from across the region by delivering widespread and unambiguous benefit.

2.2. Comprehensively strengthen the resilience of key Arab states

Strengthening the resilience of key Arab states in the region is a critical and immediate strategic priority for two reasons. First, buttressing potentially vulnerable states is essential to ensuring that the destabilizing dynamics at work in the region do not spread. Second, investing in these states is an ideal means of reducing the obstacles to deeper regional integration. Therefore, as part of the larger project to institutionalize deeper intra-Arab strategic integration and despite rising budget constraints, GCC leaders and key international partners must:

- **Buttress Core States:** Increase comprehensive financial, technical and military support to Egypt, Tunisia, Jordan, Lebanon and Iraq (to that extent that the new government of Prime Minister Abadi continues to demonstrate commitment to inclusive governance)
- **Stabilize the Most Fragile States:** Provide decisive immediate international political and military support to advance progress toward the cessation of active conflicts in Syria, Libya and Yemen. These states also require long-term commitments to support national reconstruction. This support should take the form of a fund (see Recommendation 1.2) underwritten by the GCC and the international community to fund the rebuilding of infrastructure, social services, and the critical elements of the state that have been destroyed by the years of conflict.
- **Drive Structural Economic Reform:** As part of the direct support provided, recipient states should be required to and assisted technically in designing and implementing the structural economic reforms necessary to enable sustainable economic growth and national competitiveness.
- **Strengthen Civil Society:** Support to these core states must include investment in strengthening civil society within them.
- **Align Assistance:** Synchronize development assistance by donor countries and organizations to recipient countries in the Arab region to minimize overlap and gaps. Arab leaders should create a collaborative institutional mechanism among donors and recipients to determine priorities and optimize impact.

2.3. Rapidly finalize formation of the joint Arab military force

Sustainably defending Arab interests and stabilizing the region requires that Arab states finally fully institutionalize and activate the joint military force that they have discussed for decades. Diplomatic obstacles to the formation of the force must be urgently tackled and resolved so that an official military alliance can be formally established through the signing of a mutual defence pact and then stood-up and integrated operationally.

3. Unleash Transformative Growth

Enable increased intra-regional economic exchange and next-generation, innovation-driven growth

Stagnant economic growth is a root cause of many of the most significant challenges facing the Arab region. As a result, there is no more significant imperative for Arab leaders than creating job-generating economic growth. The changing global dynamics of the hydrocarbon economy make this imperative more urgent than it has ever been. Shifting the long-term growth curve requires both removing unproductive barriers to intra-regional economic activity and enabling the region to harness the emerging engines of next generation economic growth. Failure to do either of these would increasingly consign the region to economic irrelevance and the social and political chaos that inevitably results from persistent economic disenfranchisement of emerging generations.

3.1. Advance substantive Arab economic integration

Arab leaders must finally take decisive steps to create the conditions for rapid increases in intra-regional economic exchange. Notwithstanding decades of effort, the Arab region remains one of the least economically integrated regions in the world. This is true despite the fundamental complementarity within the region between those countries with large pools of human capital and those with significant natural resources and wealth. Integration will allow this complementarity to become a source of growth rather than a source of division and instability. Over time, economic interdependence will drive an ever-deeper alignment of broader strategic interests. The following recommendations are increasingly urgent as global economic competition with other major economic blocs will continue to intensify relentlessly:

- **Establish a true Arab Common Market by 2020:** The path towards pan-Arab economic integration started in the early 1950s, but has advanced at a stunningly slow pace. Nevertheless, these efforts have led to the establishment of the Greater Arab Free Trade Zone, the GCC, as well as accession to the World Trade Organization by 13 Arab countries. Despite this apparent progress, actual economic integration in the Arab region remains exceptionally low. Therefore, the region should decisively follow through on the decision of the Arab members of the Greater Arab Free Trade Zone (“GAFTA”) to create a customs union and establish an Arab common market. This can be accomplished by the creation of an independent organization (Arab Common Market Organization) starting with a core group of those 13 countries. These countries should rigorously implement within the region the commitments they made when they joined WTO.
- **Fully Implement GAFTA:** Completion and substantive implementation and monitoring of the Greater Arab Free Trade Zone (“GAFTA”) agreement remains a critical priority.
- **Liberalize Trade in Services:** Arab states must urgently move beyond the focus on trade in goods and aggressively liberalize trade in services given the large and growing importance of the services sector to the region and its importance for job creation.
- **Fully Establish the Arab Customs Union:** Implementation of the customs union must centrally feature creation of a corresponding mechanism to distribute customs income fairly as well as a fund to compensate and support countries and sectors receiving least benefit from the Union.
- **Reduce of Non-Tariff Barriers:** Systematic reduction of non-tariff barriers to trade, including permit and burdensome procedural requirements, taxes, etc. is imperative.

- **Maximize the Mobility of the Arab Workforce:** Meaningful economic integration of the Arab region requires decisive action to facilitate the mobility of Arab citizens within the region. The free flow of people is critical to accelerating regional economic growth. While security concerns must be carefully managed, all Arab countries should maximize the expedited provision of visas to citizens of Arab countries on terms at least as favorable as those provided to citizens of “most-favoured-nations.” In addition, the passports of all Arab countries should be updated with digital technology supported by an integrated system to expedite legitimate movement across borders.
- **Begin Joint Design of an Arab Economic Union:** Preparation should begin now for the ultimate creation of an Arab Economic Union as the natural phase to follow successful implementation of the common market. This would involve integrating currency and monetary systems and coordinating fiscal policy, and would thereby increase the combined economic power of the Arab region significantly.
- **Investment in Connective Regional Economic Infrastructure:** The physical, digital and financial infrastructure connecting the Arab region requires largescale investment. Such investment will not only increase long-term integration and growth, but also represents a unique opportunity to create high-end, capacity-growing employment.

3.2. Systematically enable and ignite next generation economic growth

The global economy is in the midst of a fundamental transformation driven by technological innovation. As a result, for countries around the world, creating job-generating economic growth in the future will require wholly new approaches. This is particularly true for countries dependent on hydrocarbon exports. Therefore, the Arab region must invest now in building the conditions for and engines of next generation economic growth.

- **Accelerate Growth-Oriented Economic Reform:** The Arab region must intensify its efforts to improve the business climate comprehensively with specific focus on creating conditions in which innovation, entrepreneurship and small and medium sized enterprises can flourish. This reform package should include strong intellectual property protection enhancements, tax incentives, strengthened social safety nets, and regulatory adjustments to de-risk and streamline the process of launching new ventures. It should also maximize the attractiveness and openness of the region to venture capital flows.
- **Deepen Private Sector Engagement and Responsibility:** Private and public sector leaders in the region must intensify their efforts to collaborate substantively in accelerating economic growth. Government leaders must bring private sector leaders much more deeply into the policy-making process. Their knowledge, resources and operational capacity make them indispensable partners in transforming the region in general, and with respect to economic growth in particular. At the same time, private sector leaders must significantly and proactively increase their engagement in solving the many challenges facing the region. The urgency of these challenges demands that the private sector do more than fund standard corporate social responsibility initiatives. They must reach out to their partners in government and civil society, and work with them to create innovative solutions that harness market forces in the service of public goods, including job-generating economic growth.
- **Increase Investment in Research and Development Institutions:** The region must both increase and more strategically target its portfolio of investments in R&D in ways that maximize the return on that investment in terms of economic growth and job creation. As part of this

effort, leaders in the region should jointly design, fund and implement a systematic programme to create a world-class ecosystem of innovative thinking institutions, including universities, government and private sector research centres and think-tanks.

- **Public-Private Innovation Funds:** Arab leaders should implement next generation, public-private innovation funds through which the government subsidizes investments in ways that encourage productive risk-taking. Funds of this kind represent an increasingly established practice. Their investments are governed by carefully constructed review boards including scientists, policymakers and experts from other sectors whose mandate is to optimize the portfolio of investments given specific economic goals according to objective and transparent criteria and evaluation processes.
- **Strengthen Defence Offset Programmes:** The GCC alone invests approximately \$80 billion annually in defence spending.² Arab leaders should enforce a 35% offset requirement, by which foreign contractors are required to contribute to the local economy through capital expenditures. By some estimates, this could create as many as 280,000 advanced jobs in the region through 2025.
- **Radically Improve the Enabling Environment for Entrepreneurship:** Arab leaders must jointly create a comprehensive plan for creating optimal conditions for entrepreneurial ecosystems. This will include improving the funding environment for start-ups, reducing the stigma associated with start-up failure, cultivating economic clusters, etc. This effort may also include the establishment of government-backed centers of excellence for entrepreneurs. These centers encourage innovation, reduce financial risk, and serve as a platform to engage with academia, drive research to test new ideas and bring new solutions to the market.
- **Drive Innovation-centered Educational Reform:** Curricula at all levels must be revised to include training not just in science, technology, engineering and mathematics (“STEM”) disciplines, but also in the disciplines of entrepreneurship and innovation. These curricula should be developed in partnership with the private sector and combined with training and apprenticeship programmes as appropriate with the objective of maximizing the employability of graduates in the emerging knowledge-based economy.
- **Create a Regional Network of Science-based Business Accelerators:** Establish in the region new forms of innovation accelerators in which scientists, entrepreneurs, policymakers and investors are brought together to identify specific opportunities to bring science-based innovation to bear in addressing key challenges in economically viable ways.

² “GCC Defence Offset Programs: The Trillion-Dollar Opportunity,” A.T. Kearney, 2014.

4. Strengthen Societal Cohesion

Improve the pillars of good governance across the Arab region

Two-thirds of the Arab people are under the age of 30, and are increasingly well-educated and connected to their global peers and international media. Thus, as we look to the future, it is clear that citizen expectations of their governments will continue to rise even as budgetary constraints in many Arab countries intensify. These inescapable realities imply a strategic imperative for Arab states: We must renew and deepen the legitimacy of our social contract with citizens by driving evolutionary progress in the rule of law, accountability and inclusive governance.

4.1. Strengthen governance and the rule of law based on agreed norms grounded in local legitimacy

Arab leaders must invest in strengthening the rule of law across the region, including by jointly funding systematic research and analysis to identify a regional set of norms and practices in this area that are grounded in local legitimacy and values, but remain responsive to international law. This analysis can then serve as the basis for an agreed regional framework that can be used as the foundation for an evolutionary institutional reform agenda to buttress the rule of law across the region.

- **Conditioning Development Aid:** An important tool supporting this agenda is development aid, which donors can condition based on performance against an agreed set of governance performance metrics derived from the regional framework. In addition, development programmes can be reoriented to support public policies that will directly and indirectly support strengthened governance, including education and civil society development.
- **Leadership Development:** Establish an institutional programme of leadership development for the entire region as part of a long-term effort to strengthen the culture of leadership at all levels.
- **Training and Exchanges:** Arab governments should also sponsor a systematic programme of training exchanges for young policymakers, diplomats and entrepreneurs between Arab countries and key partner countries around the world.
- **Investment in Civil Society:** Expanding and deepening investment in Arab civil society represents another critical priority in the effort to improve governance, including through greater support of existing civil society organizations in the region. In particular, the private and public sectors must work together to cultivate a dynamic culture of innovative thinking institutions across the region focused on the full range of challenges and opportunities before us. There is much catching up to do. For example, according to the latest analysis,³ there are 39 think-tanks in the six countries of the GCC, which have a total population of 53 million, compared with 58 think-tanks in Israel—a country of only 8 million people. The GCC number translates into approximately 1.2 think-tanks for every one million people. In the Middle East and North Africa region (“MENA”), there are approximately 1.5 per million. By comparison, there are 4.5 and 5.7 think-tanks per million citizens in the United Kingdom and United States respectively. These gaps must be closed. Think-tanks are vital to the process of strengthening governance. They are crucial components of an institutional culture that enables social and political evolution by cultivating a diversity of points of view, a continuous flow of policy alternatives and the skills of critical thinking. Strengthening of this culture in the region is critical to its progress.

³ 2015 Global Go To Think Tank Index Report, University of Pennsylvania

4.2. Institutionalize accountability and anti-corruption mechanisms across the region

Arab governments should lead an effort to establish new, standardized and transparent accountability mechanisms focused on reducing corruption and making the performance of leaders visible to citizens across the region. In addition, the Arab region, and the wider Middle East, should play its rightful role in promoting accountability for atrocity crimes nationally, regionally, and internationally. Ending impunity for atrocity crimes is a challenge that no state or institution can face alone. In addition, Arab leaders should advance the following:

- **Expanded ICC Membership:** Encourage wider Arab membership in the International Criminal Court and raise awareness and understanding of international criminal law and the ICC in the region.
- **Condemnation of Atrocities:** Strongly condemn atrocity crimes, including sexual and gender based crimes, crimes against children and deliberate destruction of historic monuments and other protected property under international law, and take meaningful action to address this criminality.
- **Implementing Domestic Legislation:** Increasingly adopt implementing legislation in line with the Rome Statute and incorporate atrocity crimes into domestic law; document crimes and preserve evidence where atrocity crimes do occur; and, investigate and prosecute perpetrators domestically, seeking international support as needed.

4.3. Empower women economically, politically and socially

The leadership of the Arab region should move decisively to empower women as crucial economic, political and social leaders—and as natural agents against extremism. The exclusion of women from the Arab labour force and political institutions represents a tremendous and unnecessary sacrifice of human potential. Empowering women in the Arab region will require a sustained, long-term effort including, but not limited to the following elements:

- **Labour Force Participation:** Undertake comprehensive efforts to increase women's participation in the labour force as one means of advancing their economic independence and harnessing their vast economic potential.
- **Legislative Change:** Continue to advance legislation that secures gender equality and the legal rights of women. This must take the form of a genuine constitutional commitment to end gender discrimination and gender-based violence.
- **Women's Parliamentarian Association:** Establish a women's parliamentarians association to monitor and advance women's issues including:
 - Political participation and representation in the region;
 - Advancement on gender-related legislation; and,
 - Documentation of violations of women's rights in the region.
- **Gender Education Reform:** Transform educational curricula to support empowerment of women:
 - Build the concept of gender equality into educational curricula starting at the primary level; and,
 - Encourage and fund research to provide insights into how gender equality can be achieved, including through gender studies scholarships in the region in partnership with international academic institutions and managed by independent scholars.

4.4. Engage youth in building the regional future

The burgeoning youth population of the Arab region represents a vast, dynamic source of innovation, economic growth and social transformation. Realizing their positive potential and creating the future that they deserve requires engaging and empowering them deeply in political, economic, cultural and social domains. Failure to do so is likely to lead to widespread disenfranchisement and the profound risks to social and political stability that go with it. Therefore, Arab states should comprehensively engage youth, including through the following initiatives:

- **Support Substantive Inter-generational Dialogue:** Forums that facilitate improved inter-generational dialogue need to be established both online and in communities around the Arab region. The diversity of success stories to date demonstrates the extent to which active public forums are a potent means of ensuring that both Arab youth and Arab political leaders understand the issues of generational justice. Safe, participatory communities such as these in which contested ideas can be discussed openly will aid the development of regional norms with respect to the rule of law and inclusive development.
- **Include Youth Representation in Strategic and Policy Planning:** Arab states should enhance the design of key institutional structures to ensure that young people have a voice in the national decision-making process. The rationale for doing so is two-fold. First, it is vital means of deepening inter-generational cohesion and national unity. Second, it provides a means of capturing the unique insight of young thought leaders into the forces of change (e.g., technological innovation) with which older generations are necessarily less familiar. This effort can include a systematic effort to incorporate young generations of scholars and researchers in the social sciences and international relations into existing formal processes. It can also feature the establishment of new policy dialogue formats to institutionalize the capture of their perspectives on key issues that will affect their future even more than that of the generation currently in power.
- **Convene Annual Arab Youth Summits:** Establish an annual Arab Youth Summit convening young people from across the region to discuss and debate youth-focused solutions to pressing public policy challenges facing the Arab region. The European Youth Parliament is an example of the power of an active youth engagement strategy by regional institutions. In addition, other types of regional youth conferences and cultural, artistic and sport-centered exchanges can contribute to giving to Arab youth exposure to their rich diversity and a wider range of opportunities for cross-border social connection.
- **Drive Economic Inclusion of Arab Youth:** Intensively drive economic inclusion of Arab youth through new, technology-enabled approaches to job creation and entrepreneurship that leverage social media and other emerging technologies. Implement training programmes and apprenticeships to address the skill level gap of new graduates and maximize the employability of graduates in the rapidly evolving global economy.
- **Aggressively Attack Illiteracy:** Leaders across the region must re-double their efforts to eradicate illiteracy, which is perhaps the single greatest obstacle to the engagement and empowerment of the region's youth. The illiteracy rate in the Arab World is approximately 36% compared with a global average of 18% according to the Arab League Educational, Cultural and Scientific Organisation (ALESCO). This critical challenge represents a clear and urgent opportunity for innovative private-public sector collaboration.
- **Expand Access to Higher Education:** Arab states must significantly expand youth access to higher education through the development of affordable, relevant and scalable online learning communities. The proliferation of Massive Open Online Courses ("MOOCs") argues for significant

investment in relevant content to guarantee educational opportunities, in both Arabic and English, for young people in the Arab region. To prevent a lost generation of learners, the many thousands of Arab youth who are currently displaced due to conflict should be given access to free online training platforms and mentoring opportunities. Universities and multinational corporations around the globe can help realize the vast potential of Arab youth by donating academic content and providing technology support to the many progressive initiatives, of which iPlatform is one example.

- **Develop and Implement Youth Empowerment Strategies:** Governments throughout the region should study and replicate the UAE's Youth Empowerment Strategy, by which a cadre of young people is selected and trained to reach out to their peers across the country and engage them in face-to-face conversation to understand their values, priorities and concerns. From this, the core team synthesizes coherent recommendations for leadership to address those things that most matter to young people.
- **Support and Leverage the Next Generation of Content Creators:** Engaging younger generations effectively requires leveraging the content creators who represent and speak to them. Only in this way, can leaders ensure that their messages resonate with citizens in these age cohorts. The Arab region already has a thriving community of next generation content creators, but many of them have left the region in search of more welcoming environments for their work. Regional leaders should seek to reverse this dynamic for many reasons, notably including the invaluable role these artists can play in countering the Daesh narrative. Film, in particular, is becoming an increasingly central vehicle of cultural transmission. Cultivating a thriving community of young film-makers in the region is a potent means of engaging our burgeoning population of young people in a culture that honors diversity of perspective.

4.5. Encourage, protect and enable progressive Muslim scholars

Critical to strengthening the societal cohesion of the Arab region is the support of moderate, progressive Muslim religious leaders. In particular, they can play a critical role in establishing a genuine, compelling Islamic narrative that counters Daesh's tragically attractive marketing machine.

- **Support Legitimate, Proven Institutions:** Arab leaders must launch an effort to strengthen the role of moderate religious institutions in consolidating symmetry between Islam and modernity and halting the stigmatization of the advocates of enlightened society by religious zealots. In particular, leaders in the region should significantly increase financial and political support, after many years of neglect, to proven institutions such as Al-Azhar in Egypt, al-Qarawiyyin in Morocco and Al-Zaytuna in Tunisia – among the most respected schools of Islamic jurisprudence. Institutionally supporting the advancement of the values of pluralism, human rights, and respect for minorities and women is crucial given the extent to which fundamentalists are challenging these values in increasingly sophisticated ways.
- **Establish a New Private Sector Foundation:** Establish a transparently governed private sector foundation to invest in courageous moderates in order to help convey compelling alternatives to the Daesh narrative. Moderates should be supported by access to world-class social media platforms and enabled to give voice to contemporary, egalitarian interpretations of Islam that close the gap between Islamic law and the universal human rights declaration.

5. Build a Regional Security Architecture

Drive evolutionary progress towards an inclusive, stabilizing regional security institution

As the Arab states solidify their internal strategic, political and military integration, they will be increasingly able to lead the reformulation of the comprehensive security architecture of the Middle East. Doing so represents the most promising means of sustainably improving the long-term security, stability and prosperity of the region. Generating substantive diplomatic momentum on the core issues of Palestine and the Saudi Arabia-Iran bilateral relationship will help create conditions favorable to the achievement of this ambitious institutional objective.

5.1. Re-intensify efforts to resolve the question of Palestine on the basis of a two state solution

The Arab Peace Initiative,⁴ unanimously supported by the 22 nations of the Arab League and widely embraced internationally, represents a powerfully clear pathway to bringing genuine, sustainable stability to the region. The issue of Palestine continues to represent the core infected wound weakening the region. Resolving it remains crucial as a matter of justice and as a part of our efforts to counter and prevent violence across region. Doing so will be challenging given Israel's apparent comfort with the status quo, despite its manifest unsustainability in the long-run, and the rising chorus of challenges to the prospect of a two-state solution. Therefore, solving the Arab-Israeli conflict will require unambiguous Arab strategic alignment. Doing so represents a critical step in creating a positive cycle of change in the region.

- **Decisively Advance the Arab Peace Initiative:** The Arab Peace Initiative is the clear solution to the Arab-Israeli conflict and should be advanced by regional leaders with all possible energy and commitment. This effort should be supported by confidence building measures that can ratchet up over time and should unfold as a parallel track to other critical diplomatic processes in the region. Progress on the core Israel/Palestine issue will create space on other fronts. Israeli opponents to the two-state solution must be reminded that a legitimate one-state solution consistent with democratic values would necessarily involve all Palestinians becoming citizens of Israel with full voting rights and a proportionate say in the future of the country.
- **Nuclear Free Middle East:** There must be an urgent acceleration of international and regional discussions of the action plan for achieving the ultimate objective of a Middle East free of nuclear weapons on all sides. Achieving this before the fifteen-year termination of the joint comprehensive plan of action with Iran is a critical priority.

5.2. Regularize Track II discussions between Saudi Arabia and Iran

The bilateral relationship between Saudi Arabia and Iran arguably represents the single most important driver of the evolution of the Middle East geopolitically, economically and socially. Therefore, a disciplined, energetic effort to regularize dialogue between these two powers is a critical imperative for the region and the world.

- **Build Momentum Gradually:** The effort to regularize Track II discussions should include an evolving sequence of confidence building measures, joint strategic dialogue with Europeans at the ministerial level, and selection of issues on which rapid progress may be possible, such as

⁴ The Beirut Declaration (also known as the Arab Peace Initiative) was first adopted by the Arab League in 2002 at the Beirut Summit and re-endorsed at the Riyadh Summit in 2007.

facilitating the presidential elections in Lebanon. Cultivating this type of initial, regular dialogue will be a critical precursor to establishing an expanded, inclusive and sustainable regional security architecture.

5.3. Actively lead the evolutionary formation of a regional security institution for the wider Middle East

In partnership with regional actors, key external powers and the international community, the Arab countries should lead the institutionalization of a strengthened regional security architecture for the Middle East that builds on the structures already in place to increase confidence and stability sustainably over time.

- **Leverage Global Best Practices:** In designing and advancing towards the evolutionary implementation of an inclusive regional security institution, the region can learn much from other regional institutions, including the GCC and the Association of Southeast Asian Nations (“ASEAN”). Successful regional security institutions increase security by simplifying strategic dynamics and establishing agreed upon processes for preventing and ending conflict. The model that may be of greatest relevance to the Middle East strategic environment is the Commission on Security and Cooperation in Europe (“CSCE”), which was the predecessor of the OSCE. The CSCE brought together all members of both NATO and the Warsaw Pact as well as neutral states to discuss security concerns. The “CSCE model” features a gradual movement from regular meetings to established processes and ultimately can lead to an established institution.
- **Purpose and Scope:** This body would serve to provide a forum to address the region's myriad political, security, and economic challenges. It would unite the region around a broad set of principles under which states and peoples who are currently in conflict could address the region's manifold crises.
- **Comprehensive Inclusion:** Critical to the value of such a regional architecture is that it preserve and build upon the existing foundation formed by the GCC and the League of Arab States and include all relevant states on the basis of mutual respect for territorial sovereignty and strict adherence to the principle of non-interference. Established on these founding principles, membership should include Iran, Turkey, and members of the UN Security Council.
- **Key Priorities:** The initial focus of such an organization should be to drive an evolutionary sequence of confidence building measures and establish defined mechanisms for preventing and resolving conflict with the intent of reducing security competition steadily over time.

* * *

At the core of the discussions throughout the Summit and underpinning all of the policy recommendations in this document is the assertion of a fundamental principle: We can only create a positive, virtuous spiral of progress in the Middle East through a new synthesis of traditional security and economic policy approaches with emerging innovative, next generation engines of inclusive growth. We must not wait for regional security before beginning the work of creating the future to which we aspire. Both efforts must move forward together, with mutually reinforcing alignment, unwavering commitment and an unrelenting focus on creating real, visible results on the ground for the people of the region every day. Only in this way, can we restore the hope that will drive us towards the realization of our vision.

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