

**Statement by
Ambassador GENNADY TARASOV,
Head of the Russian delegation at the Forum for the Future
Doha, January 13, 2011**

Distinguished Co-Chairs, Ministers and representatives of the Group of Eight and BMENA countries, as well as the civil society organizations and business community,

Ladies and Gentlemen,

I would like to thank our hosts – the Qatari and Canadian Co-Chairs – for the exemplary and innovative organization of our today’s session and the preceding meetings within the framework of the G8-BMENA Partnership Initiative in 2010.

Summing up what has been done over the past year, I’d like to point out to the collective and fairly substantial work carried out within the Forum for the Future. The formation period of the Partnership Initiative has been all but completed, its main principles and mechanisms have been adopted. The Initiative is entering a new more mature stage.

The parameters of a dialogue between the governments and the civil society in the BMENA countries have been set on a generally constructive and productive basis. It is essential that the dialogue retain this character in the future. Only through cooperation one can foster real progress towards political, social and economic modernization, ensuring higher level of education, medical services and adequate quality of life for the people of the BMENA countries.

It is important that non-governmental organizations feel their relevance on the one hand, and responsibility towards their societies, on the other. This is the basis on which further movement to realize necessary reforms can be maintained, the reforms dictated by the interests of the BMENA countries with a constructive cooperation between governments and civil society, and, last but not the least, taking into account specific features of the Middle East region – its rich cultural, historic and spiritual legacy.

Cooperation with the Middle East countries in various spheres, including the Partnership Initiative, has been among Russia's priorities. We believe that a special role in providing effective support to the countries of the region belongs to education and professional training. Given their need in high-skilled professionals, Russia is focusing on cooperation with the BMENA countries in the area of education.

Over the last six years more than 10 000 students from the BMENA region passed all forms of education in Russia (professional, higher and postgraduate studies). We intend to continue providing a significant number of grants for students from the BMENA countries, promote our assistance to education, without prejudice to our cooperation in other areas.

Regretably, the Middle East is still far from stability, which also hampers its movement towards the goals fixed in the Partnership Initiative. The region abounds in tensions and hotspots, the key regional problem remaining the Arab-Israeli conflict.

The resolution of the Palestinian problem on the internationally recognized legal basis, – the relevant UN Security Council resolutions, Madrid Principles and Arab Peace Initiative, leading to the creation of a viable and contiguous Palestinian State living side by side with Israel in peace and security, can lay a cornerstone for a general stabilization of the region and produce a new, more positive and constructive atmosphere in the Middle East and beyond.

The achievement of this goal requires intense and coordinated efforts by the international community, as well as a constructive attitude and political will of the parties concerned. Russia as a permanent member of the UN Security Council and the Quartet, will continue its efforts with a view of attaining the comprehensive settlement of the Middle East conflict.

Given the current situation, BMENA region needs a new vision as to the ways of ensuring its security and stability. A few years ago Russia proposed its draft Concept of Security in the Gulf area. It is based on the principles of equality, primacy of political solutions, priority of international law, which serve the

interests of all the states in the region. They also provide a firm foundation for the future.

Judging by our today's discussions, the participants of the Forum clearly see the connection between the resolution of the destabilizing conflicts in the area and the urgent task of comprehensive modernization.

We believe that the Forum will further contribute to the achievement of a fundamental task, i.e. to ensure progressive and sustained development of the region under conditions of peace and security. An optimal way to this is through promoting a positive and democratic dialogue between governments and civil society, business-communities, non-governmental organizations, by closer interaction of various confessions and cultures, thus enhancing mutual understanding, tolerance and cooperation.

Thank you for your attention.