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<u>The Secretary's Participation in the Forum for the Future</u> <u>Tuesday, November 3, 2009</u>

CONTEXT

You will participate in the Sixth Annual Forum for the Future and deliver a speech that will highlight the importance of partnership within and across societies to address common issues and elaborate on the steps the United States has taken to enact the President's Cairo vision. This year's co-chairs, Italy and Morocco, and civil-society groups selected political, economic, and social themes for discussion, the latter of which includes issues such as education and the empowerment of women. Your participation in the Forum shows continued U.S. support for indigenous efforts of reform and development, and reinforces the importance the U.S. attaches to greater cooperation between Broader Middle East and North Africa (BMENA) governments and civil-society organizations in the region.

KEY OBJECTIVES/ANNOTATED AGENDA:

I. Opening Session

The Forum's co-chairs, Moroccan Foreign Minister Fassi Fihri and Italian Foreign Minister Frattini, will deliver opening remarks. You will then deliver remarks for approximately 15-20 minutes.

II. Theme 1 – Political Reform / Local Governance and Democracy

The key to advancing and sustaining progress is action on the local level; civil society groups and governments must develop effective working relationships to benefit their citizens. While expanding the role of civil society is a long-term effort between the citizens of the BMENA countries and their governments, we see progress in some areas, including increased women's political participation, such as in Morocco and Kuwait. The region's civil society continues to work toward broadening the space for citizens to participate actively in public affairs, particularly at the local level. Regrettably, some governments in the region have sought to curtail the essential freedoms of expression and association. The United States supports opening the political space for civil society to contribute ideas and priorities to government policy-makers in shaping the future of the BMENA countries.

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III. Theme 2 – Economic Reform / The Impact of the Financial Crisis on the Economics of the BMENA Region

Sustainable progress requires opening spaces for innovation and creativity, particularly for young people and women. Expanding opportunities for entrepreneurs is key to addressing job creation, supporting economic development, and furthering civic engagement. By assisting the growth of small and medium enterprises (SMEs) through easing business regulations, enhancing transparency and accountability, and improving access to financing, countries foster economic growth and give society new sources of resilience. Additionally, educational systems need to be responsive to labor-market needs. The United States supports employment-focused approaches to education, as well as engagement with the private sector to tackle comprehensively the obstacles that hinder economic growth and development in the region.

IV. Theme 3 – Social Development: A New Perspective on Human Security

The United States supports sustainable development in all sectors of society. Women's empowerment – political, economic, social, and cultural – is a prerequisite for progress. Women across the region have been breaking silence around many controversial issues, from breast cancer to domestic violence. We applaud these efforts and will continue to support women who are working to raise the levels of education, health, rights, and opportunity in their countries.

V. Closing Session

Concluding remarks will be delivered by the 2009 civil-society co-partners, the Moroccan Organization for Human Rights and Italy's No Peace Without Justice. Canada, as the next G8 president and Forum co-host in 2010, and the next BMENA co-host will discuss plans and priorities for the 2010 Forum. After Foreign Minister Frattini's closing remarks, Foreign Minister Fassi-Fihri will present the Chair's Summary. The summary is traditionally drafted by the regional co-chair and is not subject to negotiations, to avoid being bogged down in conflict.

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