Opening Remarks: Doha Workshop
Bob Paquin, Government of Canada

- Excellencies, colleagues, honoured guests,

- I would like to convey Canada’s thanks to Qatar’s National Human Rights Committee, the Arab Democracy Foundation and the International Development Research Centre for organizing this event.

- We are grateful for the diligent work which has gone into preparing this meeting.

- It is an honour for me to represent Canada in the distinguished company of representatives from governments of the Broader Middle East and North Africa Region and of the G8 countries, as well as the representatives of the many civil society organizations present.

- Canada strongly reaffirms our commitment to supporting a partnership between the G8 and BMENA countries to share experiences and best practices on governance issues.

- Canada supports the goals of BMENA, and its role in providing a basis for improving consultation between participant governments and civil society.

- The key to the success of the Forum is to ensure that the regional participants, both governments and civil society, are full partners, and that is why Canada will continue to pursue dialogue with the countries of the region.

- We have the opportunity to work together, allowing us to share areas of excellence and lessons learned.

- On democratic governance, the Canadian government has made it a priority to support the development of democratic institutions, justice, and free and fair electoral processes, and to
promote security in the region, in a frequently complex regional context.

- Canada’s foreign-policy priorities are also about people and values. The values that Canadians share have taken my country to the far corners of the earth, where we have worked hard to promote freedom, democracy, human rights and the rule of law.

- Discussions on issues democratic governance and conflict resolution are of central concern to Canada, and so we greatly look forward to this workshop’s outcomes, and on how it can help inform our conversation during the Forum for the Future later this Fall.

- In conclusion, Canada sees BMENA as an important forum for G8 cooperation with Middle East and North African partners. This ongoing global financial crisis has highlighted the need for this kind of collaboration.

- Indeed, we have learned that we have no choice but to work together in order to move forward. I am pleased to have this opportunity to share Canada’s views with you, and I am looking forward to further exchanges with all of you during this workshop.