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PRESS RELEASE BETTER SKILLS AND MORE JOBS ARE NEEDED TO ADDRESS YOUTH UNEMPLOYMENT IN THE MIDDLE EAST AND NORTH AFRICA

Cairo, July 10, 2017 – Youth unemployment in the Middle East and North Africa (MENA) is the highest worldwide. Young graduates have difficulty finding jobs yet more than one-third of employers identify skills shortages as a major constraint to business operation and firm growth.

Today more than ever, increasing the employability of youth in MENA is needed. This requires a new vision for education, innovation and entrepreneurship.

This was the objective of a two-day conference held in Cairo, Egypt (July 9-10, 2017) and gathering representatives of MENA governments, private sector, international organizations and youth entrepreneurs. Participants worked on identifying concrete solutions that can help youth connect to jobs, start new businesses, and build their skills. Participants agreed on the below priorities:

- **Working on human capital and linking education to employability.** Revising the educational systems and curricula in order to build 21st Century Skills, through an education that encourages critical thinking and strategic planning, and provides students with career guidance to match the private sector's needs.
- **Involving with the private sector:** to provide youth with opportunities for paid and volunteer internships, mentoring, and training on entrepreneurial skills. A dialogue between the private sector on one hand and the educational system and the government on the other, can help inform the educational system on labor market needs and can also advise on public policies that foster start-ups and SMEs.
- **Access to quality education for all:** Beyond the mere linkage of the educational systems to the labor market, mainstreaming this quality education across one country, and involving rural and/or underprivileged areas, is a necessary step for youth employment and inclusion.
- **An enabling business climate and labor policies:** Governments and large companies are unable to generate the jobs needed in MENA, and young people need to create their own startups. Labor market regulations and the private sector have to therefore favor the hiring of youth with competitive salaries and social security. They should also encourage more young people to become entrepreneurs.
- **Multi-stakeholders dialogue:** Labor policies promoting job creation for youth require the involvement of a myriad of government and non-government actors across different sectors. Inter-institutional dialogue contributes to scale up solutions to fight unemployment.

“Youth and Employability in MENA: Better Skills, More Jobs” regional conference was organized by the Egyptian Ministry of Investment and International Cooperation, the Center for Mediterranean Integration (CMI), the Agence Française de Développement (AFD), Anna Lindh Foundation and the United Mediterranean Universities (UNIMED) and the World Bank Group.

More details:

- More info on the conference and discussions [here](http://bit.ly/2s2dSNG): <http://bit.ly/2s2dSNG>

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The Center for Mediterranean Integration (CMI) is a multi-partner platform where development agencies, Governments, local authorities and civil society from around the Mediterranean convene in order to exchange knowledge, discuss public policies, and identify the solutions needed to address key challenges facing the Mediterranean region. Members of the CMI include Egypt, France, Greece, Italy, Jordan, Lebanon, Morocco, Palestinian Authority, Tunisia, Provence-Alpes-Côte d'Azur Region, City of Marseille, the European Investment Bank and the World Bank Group, and the European External Action Service (EEAS) as an observer. Web: www.cmimarseille.org; Facebook: CMI Marseille; Twitter: @cmimarseille