

For Immediate Release
Office of the Press Secretary
May 9, 2003

Fact Sheet

Proposed Middle East Initiatives

Promoting Economic Growth

"Across the globe, free markets and trade have helped defeat poverty, and taught men and women the habits of liberty. So I propose the establishment of a U.S.-Middle East free trade area within a decade, to bring the Middle East into an expanding circle of opportunity, to provide hope for the people who live in that region."

President Bush
May 9, 2003

To re-ignite economic growth and expand opportunity in the Middle East, the President outlined proposals to:

Establish a U.S.-Middle East Free Trade Area within a decade. Building on our free trade agreements (FTAs) with Israel and Jordan, the United States will take a series of graduated steps:

- Help reforming countries become members of the World Trade Organization;
- Negotiate Bilateral Investment Treaties and Trade and Investment Framework Agreements with governments determined to improve their trade and investment regimes;
- Complete our negotiations on a free trade agreement with Morocco by the end of this year;
- Launch, in consultation with Congress, new bilateral free trade agreements with governments committed to high standards and comprehensive trade liberalization; and
- Provide assistance to build trade capacity and expansion so countries can benefit from integration into the global trading system.

Work with our partners in the region to:

- Establish a Middle East finance facility to help small- and medium-sized businesses gain access to capital and generate jobs;
- Reform commercial codes, improve the climate for trade and investment, and strengthen property rights through a new initiative for commercial law in cooperation with U.S. and Middle Eastern law schools and jurists, and business-to-business contacts; and
- Promote transparency in public finances, help countries fight corruption, and support financial sector reforms based on international best practices.

Promoting Education and Knowledge

"Making the most of economic opportunities will require broader and better education, especially among women who have faced the greatest disadvantages."

President Bush
May 9, 2003

The President outlined proposals to:

Grow our successful partnership with Morocco and Yemen to expand their girls' and women's literacy programs to other interested countries. Partner with countries to help empower parents and local communities to give them a greater voice in how their children are educated. Expand a successful program in Alexandria, Egypt, to other Egyptian cities and other interested countries in the region. Partner with countries to provide incentives, such as vouchers, to families that send their girls to school, building on successful programs in Morocco and Egypt.

- Secretary of Education Paige will be hosting the Egyptian Minister of Education and four governors in Washington next week to discuss the success of this project.

Promoting Freedom and Justice

"The history of the modern world offers a lesson for the skeptics: do not bet against the success of

freedom. Freedom has advanced because the desire for liberty and justice is found in every human heart. And the men and women of the Muslim world, one-fifth of all humanity, share this hope of liberty."

President Bush
May 9, 2003

The United States proposes to work with partners in the region to:

- Establish a regional forum on judicial reform. Supreme Court Justice Sandra Day O'Connor has agreed to head a team of American jurists to Bahrain to help launch this effort this fall.
- Establish regional campaign schools to provide training in leadership and organizational skills for women seeking elective office across the region. The first of these will be held this fall in Qatar.
- Begin media training and media law projects that include participants initially from Algeria, Bahrain, Egypt, Lebanon, Morocco, Saudi Arabia, and Tunisia.
- Provide training for new parliamentarians and support for civil society organizations through groups like the National Democratic Institute and International Republican Institute in partnership with organizations in the region.

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