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PRESS RELEASE

Beyond Remittances: Unlocking the Potential of the Diaspora

Mobilizing Middle East and North Africa Diaspora for Regional Integration, Investment, and Knowledge Transfer

Marseille, France, 29 May 2015 – Policy makers, development actors and members of diaspora from the Middle East and North Africa (MENA) region gathered in Marseille to discuss how to best mobilize the MENA diaspora to facilitate regional and global economic integration of their home countries.

“At least 18 million MENA citizens live abroad, and for some countries, they represent a significant share of the population. They are also the source of critical revenues in other countries” says **World Bank Senior Economist Mariem Malouche** who is leading this activity. *“While the benefits arising from remittances have drawn attention of policy makers and development partners, governments should tap into their diaspora to seek their contribution in terms of investment, business creation, trade, knowledge transfer, and professional networking.”*

The workshop “Mobilizing the MENA Diaspora for Global Integration, Investment, and Knowledge Transfer” was jointly organized by the World Bank and the Center for Mediterranean Integration (CMI), and brought together policy makers and diaspora members from six MENA countries (Algeria, Egypt, Lebanon, Morocco, and Tunisia) as well as development actors active on diaspora issues in the MENA region.

“The Middle East and North Africa region is one of the least integrated regions in the world,” says **Mourad Ezzine, Center for Mediterranean Integration Center Manager**. *“With the transformations taking place in countries south of the Mediterranean and the investment climate becoming more favorable, we believe that the diaspora can play a role in the development process of their home countries.”*

Participants discussed mechanisms through which diaspora members can contribute to the globalization of the region such as investment, entrepreneurship, knowledge transfer and networking. Workshop sessions succeeded in:

- Shedding light on MENA diaspora expectations and motivations in light of recent developments in the region;
- Sharing successful and inspiring non-MENA diaspora led initiatives that have contributed to the development of a sector and created businesses and jobs in home country;
- Discussing government programs and the work of development institutions dedicated to mobilize diaspora investments and trade opportunities;
- Identifying country-specific priority areas and what projects/reforms can different stakeholders undertake in each country.

The workshop also presented the findings from an online survey and series of consultations previously held with diaspora members in Paris, New York, and Washington DC.

The Center for Mediterranean Integration (CMI) is a space 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. Through innovative solutions, the CMI aims to help countries achieve transformative reforms and enhance integration in the Mediterranean region. Members of CMI are Egypt, France, Italy, Jordan, Lebanon, Morocco, Palestinian Authority, Tunisia, the City of Marseille, Provence-Alpes-Côte d’Azur Region, the European Investment Bank and the World Bank Group. More on our platforms: Web: www.cmimarseille.org; Facebook: [/cmimarseille](https://www.facebook.com/cmimarseille); Twitter: [@cmimarseille](https://twitter.com/cmimarseille)

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