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An ecosystem for entrepreneurship

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In the MENA region, youth unemployment stands at 30%, increasing to 40% among women. This situation is due to the rigidity of our economic models, along with the immobility of our governments, who do not foster a better ecosystem for entrepreneurship.

As a social entrepreneur, my main aim is to solve local issues that impact the lives of millions of people. Unlike other entrepreneurs, I am unable to delocalize my enterprise, meaning that I have to deal with local constraints. However, these constraints are manifold, and like other entrepreneurs, I face big challenges:

- Infrastructure - how can value be created in rural areas when the government cannot provide us with equal access to water, and when there is even a complete lack of water during the summer? How can we talk about digital integration when we do not have access to high-speed internet connections and can instead only use 3G?
- Human resources departments - it costs a lot of money and time to train human resources. However, human resources don't have the skills to offer a competitive level to enterprises.
- Reluctance to innovate - unfortunately, there is a gap between the international entrepreneurial spirit and what our administrations can offer and support. There is a reluctance to innovate due to a misunderstanding around high value innovative projects that don't fit with traditional business plans. Also, administrations need to allow for new and easy ways of creating businesses to empower more entrepreneurs.
- Lack of resources - there is no seed funding to support the development of startups, and a fear of financing new projects due to the lack of will to take risks with entrepreneurs.

If we want to build a strong partnership to foster youth employment in the MENA region, we, the countries of the G7 and those in the MENA region have to work together to solve these major issues. G7 countries can support Arab countries through funding for the reform of education systems. This is necessary to ensure that market needs and education programmes match. Funding to support enterprises who employ youth so they can train them to get competitive skills is equally important. Further fields of support include seed funding and investments for entrepreneurs, as well as training programs for administrations of Arab countries on innovation that focus on how to foster innovation and welcome innovators in their respective countries.

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