

Nobel laureates outline priorities for

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By Mahmoud Al Abed

PETRA — Nobel laureates and key world figures wrapped up their meeting here on Thursday by agreeing to reconvene in this an-

cient seat of civilisation on a regular basis to follow up on recommendations to provide hope to the world's poor and oppressed.

The official declaration of the Petra conference will be

announced today, the opening day of the World Economic Forum at the Dead Sea, by the forum's founder, Klaus Schwab, who took part in the two-day Petra conference.

His Majesty King Abdul-

lah, the meeting's host, urged delegates to reach out to the youth of the Middle East, where half of the population are below the age of 18.

The King called on the Nobel laureates to guide the

youth to a future of opportunity, peace and security.

He stressed that the youth in this part of the world would not "accept empty words and promises. They want to make a difference; to

share in the fruits of modern knowledge... And we must make a beginning now."

The meeting underscored the role of the private sector in promoting peace through economic investment and the need to strengthen democratic institutions and civil society organisations "to address inequity and injustice, which are the root causes of terrorism."

Individuals, according to the prize winners, should be encouraged "to become agents for peace by cultivating a sense of individual responsibility based on universal values."

Conference participants included peace prize winners the Dalai Lama, Northern Ireland's David Trimble, Israel's Shimon Peres and Elie Wiesel from the US, among others. Prime Minister Adnan Badran and Prince Ghazi also attended the conference.

Former US President Bill Clinton outlined the main challenges facing the world including security, social justice and the environment.

He said a key factor in the world today was the issue of global inter-dependency, which has had both positive and negative consequences. Clinton said this notion was under trial when the Sept. 11 attacks took place because of slack immigration policies and open borders. He added that the Internet and new technologies helped the terrorists execute the attacks.

However, he pointed out



Photo by Youssef Alkan

His Majesty King Abdullah with participants of the Petra Conference of Nobel Laureates on Thursday

world's future

that these same elements helped the Asian tsunami victims as information access and the media created a wave of world sympathy, which led to popular fundraising campaigns.

Clinton called for a commitment to global peace to "create a world of more friends and fewer enemies." He also said that world countries should work "hand-in-hand" to protect the environment.

Participants agreed to enhance the prospects of peace by linking conflict mitigation strategies to economic development and education, especially efforts to promote literacy.

In his concluding remarks, Wiesel, co-host of the conference, pinpointed education as the key to solving the many of the world's problems. "We owe our hope and commitment to our children," said Wiesel, whose US-based Eli Wiesel Foundation for Humanity launched the Nobel Laureates' meetings in Paris seven years ago.

According to a statement issued after the meetings, educational progress will involve promoting access to information and also envisions connecting "every classroom worldwide to the Internet."

The education, media and culture panel highlighted the need to enhance press freedoms and diversification of media ownership.

Delegates cited good governance, consultation, capital access through microfi-

nance initiatives and women's economic empowerment as key elements of progress and economic prosperity.

The conference called on world leaders to take note of the hazards of over-reliance on hydrocarbons and focus on diversifying energy supplies with an emphasis on renewable energy sources to help alleviate global warming.

They also called for more scientific research in the developing world and bilateral and regional agreements on scientific exchange in the Middle East.

Referring to economic opportunities, Schwab said 80 million jobs needed to be created by 2020.

Participants rounded off the meeting by saying they would consider establishing a Nobel laureates group as part of their follow-up activities to "assist communication, cooperation and collaborative endeavours."

Meanwhile, the Jordan News Agency, Petra, reported that Their Majesties King Abdullah and Queen Rania on Thursday met with Clinton.

Also on the sidelines of conference, the Monarch met separately with Tanzanian President Benjamin William Mkapa and Thai Foreign Minister Surakiart Sathirathai.

King Abdullah also met with Japan International Cooperation Agency (JICA) President Sadako Ogata yesterday.