



OUTCOMES

**2nd National Dialogues
Lebanon, Morocco, Egypt, Jordan, Palestine, Algeria,
Tunisia**

**Gender Regional Platform
ENI/2015/364-084
1/1/2017 – 30/04/2017**

*“The Gender Regional Platform is an effective tool to lift up women’s rights in Jordan and in the whole region”
Dr. Wafa Al Khadra, Researcher in the American University in Madaba, participant at the dialogue process*

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LEBANON

2nd National Dialogue

6 April 2017, Beirut

OUTCOMES

2nd National Dialogue

“From the Ministerial Conclusions to Gender Equality Policy Making in the Euro-Med Region”

6th of April 2017, Beirut

The national roundtable “From Ministerial Conclusions to gender equality policy making in the Euro-Med region” was organised by the Lebanese Women’s Democratic Gathering and Association Najdeh in partnership with the Euromed Feminist Initiative under the patronage of the Minister of State for Women’s Affairs H.E. Jean Ogasapian with the support of the European Union.

The one-day event gathered representatives from civil society and stakeholders and discussed the policy recommendations for improving the status of gender equality in the Euro-Med region, that have been developed during one year dialogue process in the frame of the project “Gender Regional Platform” funded by the European Union. This national dialogue was part of the process to prepare for the 4th UfM Ministerial Meeting on women’s rights, scheduled to take place in Egypt in the fall this year.

The roundtable was opened by H.E. Jean Ogasapian, Minister of State for Women’s Affairs, Ms. Julia Koch, Head of Political Section EU Delegation Lebanon and Mr. Samy Gemayel, Member of the Lebanese Parliament. Mr Ogasapian and Mr Gemayel underlined the constraints of the regional context that have imposed new restrictions and suffering for women. They highlighted the importance of taking concrete steps towards ending violence against women and enhancing women’s political participation, as for example adopting gender quota. They also emphasized the responsibility of the decision makers in annulling legislative discrimination against women, adopting legislation that criminalize violence against women. Ms. Julia Koch underlined the commitment of the European Union to women’s participation and gender equality, and stressed the importance of women’s participation in the upcoming parliamentary elections not only as voters in large numbers, but also as candidates in large numbers.

The speakers at the first panel presented the Gender Regional Platform and the policy recommendations in the four identified priority areas:

- Ending discrimination against women and strengthening women’s participation
- Reform education, changing gender stereotypes and attitudes towards gender equality
- Ending violence against women, wars and occupation
- Ensuring freedom and independent action of the civil society as well as support to women’s rights organizations

During the second session experts from relevant governmental institutions, civil society and political sphere discussed ways to turn these recommendations into concrete actions in order to improve women’s lives. It was seen as imperative to approach the recommendations in a comprehensive manner, without putting hierarchy among them, as radical improvements are needed in all the four areas. It was also noted that discriminative social culture cannot be changed without annulling legal discrimination. Representatives from local municipalities underlined that women’s economic dependency and poverty are the major problems on local level. Domestic violence against women was seen as a major hindrance for women’s participation in the political sphere. Therefore, it was emphasized that a cross-sectoral approach should be used when designing measures to enable women’s equal access to decision making, labor market and education. These measures should be coupled with broader awareness raising on discrimination in law and in practice, in order to raise and widen social knowledge on women’s rights.

Due to the need of multiple and multi-layered interventions for the implementation of the recommendations it was proposed to dedicate this whole decade to women’s rights, empowerment and gender equality, in order to keep pressure, momentum and accumulate political will, and make progress in achieving Goal 5 of the Sustainable Development Goals. National and regional campaigning was recommended as one of the effective tools to achieve changes on the ground.

Furthermore, it was underlined that the decision makers should demonstrate stronger commitment to gender equality during the upcoming UfM Ministerial Conference in order to make the Ministerial Conclusions more concrete and policy oriented. The rate of change was assessed as slow and unsatisfactory, independently of the noted progress. Therefore, expectations were expressed that the 4th UfM Ministerial Conference on women's rights will speed up improvements in the above areas.

Participants emphasized the importance of this roundtable and expressed their expectation that this dialogue would contribute to the process of transforming the recommendations into practical measures, which is priority and the next step to take.

Outcomes – Next Steps

- Mainstream gender equality and universal human rights of women with clear text in all constitutions of the countries in the region.
- Annul all legislative texts that discriminate against women and constitutionalize elimination of discrimination against women. This action contributes to the change of social culture discrimination.
- Mainstream gender equality and women's participation in all ministries and at all levels, including in police and general security sections and departments.
- Maintain the structured dialogue between women CSOs, decision makers and relevant stakeholder.
- Advocate and promote the recommendations of GRP in a comprehensive manner, without putting hierarchy among them, as radical improvements are needed in all the four areas.
- Provide special attention and raise awareness on women's economic dependency and poverty.
- Produce and adopt optional civil law, that helps the unification of judicial references.
- Develop gender equality legislation and mainstream equality in all laws.
- Take actions and executive measures curbing violence against women, along with training relevant personal on providing protection
- Establish specialized units in the general security forces for providing protection to women victims of violence and trafficking.
- Combine legislative changes with monitoring tools and measures.
- Strengthen the cooperation mechanisms between national institutions working on women's rights and representations from women's rights NGOs
- Adhere to political solutions of crises, conflicts and wars in the region, including the ending of the occupation of Palestine. Uncover the impact of wars and occupation on women.



MOROCCO

2nd National Dialogue

21 April 2017, Rabat

OUTCOMES

2nd National Dialogue

“From the Ministerial Conclusions to Gender Equality Policy Making in the Euro-Med Region”

21st of April 2017, Rabat

The national roundtable “From Ministerial Conclusions to gender equality policy making in the Euro-Med region”, took place on 21st of April 2017 at Golden Tulip Farah Hotel, Rabat. It was organised by the Union of Feminist Action UFA in partnership with Euromed Feminist Initiative, with the support of the European Union. The one-day event gathered representatives from civil society, members of parliament and stakeholders and discussed the policy recommendations for improving the status of gender equality, that have been developed during one year in the frame of the project “Gender Regional Platform” funded by the European Union. This national dialogue was part of the process to prepare for the 4th UfM Ministerial conference on women’s rights, scheduled to take place in Egypt in the fall this year.

During the opening session, the Head of Governance and Human Rights Section EU Delegation to Morocco emphasized the commitment of the European Union to women’s participation and gender equality through its new Gender Action Plan 2016-2020, as well as through the partnerships agreements between EU and Mediterranean countries. The Head of the Observatory for the improvement women's image in the media at the Ministry of Solidarity, Women, Family and Social Development and the former MP and President of UAF, stressed the importance of making the necessary amendments to align the law on violence against women and the gender parity law with the Constitution and the international conventions ratified by Morocco. They also underlined the importance of governmental monitoring mechanisms that include representatives of the ministry, civil society, professionals and academics.

The roundtable was an essential action to prepare for the upcoming 4th UfM ministerial meeting as well as for the promotion of gender equality in the region. It was also seen as an opportunity to structure the dialogue of the women’s and human rights CSO, and CBOs with decision makers and stakeholders. It provided the space to analyse and follow up the national policy, underlining as well the achievement and challenges in the implementation of gender equality at regional level.

Gender Regional Platform policy recommendations of the four identified priority areas were presented:

- Ending discrimination against women and strengthening women’s participation
- Reform education, changing gender stereotypes and attitudes towards gender equality
- Ending violence against women, wars and occupation.
- Ensuring freedom and independent action of the civil society as well as support to women’s rights organizations

During the following session, experts from the civil society, political sphere and the judiciary discussed ways to turn these recommendations into concrete actions in the Moroccan context. Even if progress has been made, it was noted that improvements are urgently needed in all the four spheres. Legislation and violence against women were in particular tackled. The connection was made between constitutional principles and their application in the laws. Even if Morocco is a signatory of all international women’s rights conventions, the allowance of interference of religion in legislation makes the implementation of these conventions impossible. It was also noted that discriminative social culture cannot be changed without fully annulling legal discrimination.

In discussing the draft project of law on violence against women, the role of the women’s movement was emphasized. The urgent need to redraft the law was raised, grounded in the Morocco commitment to the international framework for women’s rights. Representatives from women's rights and human rights organizations stated that the government's achievements in the area of equality did not live up to the ambitions of the women's movement. They also deplored the marginalization of civil society, which was not consulted in the preparation of a great number of laws. This has jeopardized the possibility to establish a genuine dialogue on equality. In addition, the lack of coherence in policies adopted by various government

sectors in terms of women's rights and equality was highlighted.

The connection was made between the policy recommendations and the need to exercise pressure to accumulate political will, and make progress in achieving Goal 5 of the Sustainable Development Goals - gender equality. Improved national coordination and dialogue among all relevant parties was recommended as one of the effective and needed tools to improved policy making and achieve changes on the ground.

In the end, the participants expressed their expectations that during the upcoming 4th UfM Ministerial Conference the ministers will adopt more concrete and policy oriented conclusions in order to speed up improvements in the above areas.

Outcomes – Next Steps

- Take concrete steps towards the implementation of government commitments to the UN women's rights instruments, the SDGs, and regional mechanisms as UfM Ministerial Process on women's rights.
- Adhere to political solutions of crises, conflicts and wars in the region, including the ending of the occupation of Palestine, as the only way to confront political extremism, violence and the consequences of wars and occupation on women.
- Give priority to women economic empowerment programs and projects with equal opportunities and working conditions.
- Develop monitoring mechanisms that ensures filling the gap between texts and practices in regards to applying national legislation.
- Reform the curricula and mainstream women's human rights in textbooks to counteract gender stereotyping of women.
- Raise awareness on gender stereotypes as an entry point to promote women's rights at the community level.
- Review the draft laws on the Equality and Combating all Forms of Discrimination against Women, and form a joint committee from relevant governmental institutions, women's rights organizations, National Council for Human Rights and Economic and Social Council, to reformulate these laws. Formulate a comprehensive law on equality, as well as a law on violence against women in the frame of the provisions of Constitution and Paris Principles.
- Review and adjust the family code, especially in the aspects related to the financial relations between spouses and the family, and conduct a comprehensive review of the inheritance system.
- Revise the structure of the observatory committee established by the Ministry of Social Development and establish an independent body to develop a national strategy on combat stereotypes of women in the media and educational system.
- Develop a national strategy and action plan to eliminate discrimination against women in various fields to ensure equal economic, social, cultural and political rights.
- Integrate all monitoring mechanisms within the structure of the Commission to combat all forms of discrimination after revising its bylaws.
- Review and adjust all regulatory laws that hinder civil society participation in decision-making and legislative processes, monitoring and evaluating of the implementation of national policies.
- Adopt a communication plan by the government for the dissemination of information and national follow up and monitoring reports.
- Adopt coherent and integral policy on women's rights by all governmental sectors, and initiate coordination mechanism among them.



EGYPT

2nd National Dialogue

24 April 2017, Cairo

OUTCOMES

2nd National Dialogue

“From the Ministerial Conclusions to Gender Equality Policy Making in the Euro-Med Region”

24th of April 2017, Cairo

The Egyptian Association for Community Participation Enhancement (EACPE) held the second national roundtable on the 24th of April 2017, at the headquarters of EACPE in Cairo. The event was organized in partnership with Euromed Feminist Initiative and supported by the EU in the framework of the “Gender Regional Platform” contract of Euromed Feminist Initiative with the EU, which aims to provide a space for dialogue with stakeholders in the Southern Neighborhood (Morocco, Algeria, Tunisia, Egypt, Palestine, Lebanon and Jordan), on gender equality policy making on both national and regional levels.

The national dialogue started with a review of the process made by Dr. Majdi Abdel Hamid, President of EACPE and a board member at EFI, who also reminded that one of the purposes was to bring women’s rights and human rights civil society organizations together with relevant stakeholders and policy makers, in order to discuss the Gender Regional Platform and to bring the support for more concrete and policy oriented conclusions during the UfM Ministerial Conference scheduled to take place in Egypt in autumn 2017.

The meeting was attended by representatives of the Egyptian Foreign Ministry - Ms. Shireen Moawad the third secretary of the Assistant Foreign Minister for Human Rights Office. She pointed out how important the issues of human rights are to the Office, and women's rights in particular, and stressed the importance of cooperation between governmental and non-governmental sectors to bring about effective change. Representatives of relevant national councils also attended the roundtable (The National Council for Human Rights and The National Council for Women). They were joined as well by gender experts, human rights and legal experts, and representatives of feminist and human rights organizations.

The participants were reminded the policy recommendations under the four identified areas of the GRP and discussed a number of urgent issues related to the status of women's rights:

1- Ending discrimination against women and enhancing their political participation in decision making positions:

The participants emphasized the enormous gap between the Constitution of 2014 and the various laws dealing with women's rights and gender equality should be closed and that gender-based discrimination should be eliminated from every field by among others:

- Amendment of family law
- Issuing a law for local councils, that ensures the participation of women
- Reform the laws of trade and labor unions
- Issue a new law to establish Committee on Equal Opportunities and Elimination of Discrimination

Regarding the issue of women's political participation, participants stressed that Egyptian women played a significant role in the January 2011 revolution, and in all the demonstrations and protest movements that followed. But this level participation was not reflected adequately in the elected councils. During the 2012 House of Representatives elections, women obtained 11 seats (2% of the total), two of which were by appointment, not election. In the Parliament of 2015 there were 89 women MPs, 75 of whom were elected and 14 appointed, representing 14.9% of the total number of seats in Parliament. However, despite this number of women in the parliament, attention to women's issues is not subject to sufficient discussion, as a large number of those women were ignorant of the work in the field of women’s rights.

Furthermore, Article 11 of the Egyptian Constitution stipulates that: "The State shall take measures to ensure the proper representation of women in parliamentary assemblies, as determined by law"; Article 180

stipulates that a quarter of the seats in the local councils shall be allocated to youth under the age of 35; a quarter for women, provided that the representation of workers and peasants shall not be less than 50% of the total number of seats, and shall include a suitable representation for Christians and persons with disabilities. However, the constitutional provisions are yet not in force on the ground.

2- Education

Dr. Azza Kamel, chairperson of Appropriate Communication and Media Center for Development (ACT), pointed out that women and girls in Egypt and the Arab region suffer more from lack of access to education, care and employment, which resulted on higher level of poverty and unemployment among them. The Arab League Educational, Culture and Sciences Organization (ALECSO) called for addressing the stereotypes of women in Arab schools' curricula, and for the elimination of discrimination and gender inequalities represented in it. In a study on the mechanisms for enhancing the image of women in Arab schools' curricula, the organization concluded that Arab curricula and textbooks provide a stereotypical image of women that is in line with the traditional patterns prevalent in Arab societies.

The study showed that this manifests through the roles assigned to each sex, where males are given more important and positive roles, which adds to the already existing quantitative imbalance in the presence of male and female characters in textbooks. It criticized the "lack of female presence at the committees in charge of preparation and development of educational curricula at ministries of education, as well among the authors of the textbooks". The study noted that the culture of discrimination in gender roles is linked to not effectively involving women in the economic cycle.

Dr. Azza presented some statistics on girls and women in Egypt, showing that "1 in 10 schoolgirls feel that they are more vulnerable to harassment and violence and are less safe and suffer from gender discrimination in schools."

3- Ending violence against women, wars and occupation

Dr. Mozn Hassan, executive director of Nazra for Feminist Studies, said that it is difficult to talk about ending violence, but it's rather possible to discuss fighting it and trying to reduce it, pointing out that there are different forms of violence practiced against women in Egypt: Sexual violence, psychological violence, political violence, physical violence, domestic violence, noting that in MENA region only two countries out of ten (Morocco and Jordan) actually have laws to combat domestic violence.

She reminded that gender-based violence and especially sexual violence against women is prevalent in both States in war and peace, linked to the absence of security and the presence of social tolerance, and emphasized that the majority of Arab penal laws do not contain specific articles for the protection of women victims of armed conflict. The proliferation of crime, violent conflicts and the proliferation of weapons create a climate of insecurity and many women no longer feel safe enough to move or even be in public. Many women suffer from a violation of their personal freedoms, inability to visit relatives or travel safely to work.

4- Ensuring freedom and independent action of the civil society as well as support to women's rights organizations.

Ms. Azza Soliman, director of Center for Egyptian Women's Legal Assistance, shed light on the growing crackdown on civil society in Egypt, which stirred the question of whether the government wishes the presence of civil society at all or not, and whether the State supports the concept of funding civil society organization or not, and if it also supports CSOs involvement and interaction with the international mechanisms of human right. Stressing that this trend in Egypt is part of an international trend to stifle civil society, an example to which is what's happening globally, as in China, India. This, is in addition to the fact that the state is only interested in organizations that provide "services" to citizens and not those who play their role of monitoring of the government.

Ms. Soliman mentioned two events that took place in Egypt proving this state of crackdown. The first was in 2014 after CSOs submitted their reports on the situation of human rights to the International Council for

Human Rights in Geneva, where back then, the Egyptian media deliberately distorted the image of the organizations participating in the UPR meetings, describing the representatives of these organizations as "agents", "traitors" and "receivers of funds", while the State was aware of this.

The second incident was in late 2015 when the notorious case # 173-2015 of 'foreign funding' took place. This file keeps getting opened from time to time to add new organizations and individuals from civil society. All individuals working at civil society organization in Egypt are at risk of this.

Major developments and challenges:

As participants agreed that there are many problems faced by women in Egypt, the most pressing developments at the present time included:

- According to recent studies and reports, the level of violence against women has increased, especially domestic violence
- The increase in the level of terrorism worldwide, and in return the decline of respect for human rights in general and women's rights in particular

Outcomes – Next Steps

Representatives of civil society, decision-makers and representatives of the State made a number of recommendations and asks:

- Develop mechanisms, tools and mandatory forms to compel government to implement laws and decisions pertaining to the rights of women in Egypt.
- The government should stay committed to human rights standards and principles and shall not link the 'fight against terrorism' with restricting human rights in general and women's rights in particular.
- Take measures to increase women's participation in regional and international conferences.
- Activate national strategies on women's issues.
- Demand greater cooperation between government agencies and specialized national councils on the one hand, and civil society organizations on the other, in order to promote the rights of women.
- Remove restrictions on the civil society organizations in order to support their role in protecting and promoting rights and freedoms in general, and the rights of women in particular.
- Ensure freedoms and the right to organize and assemble, and develop a democratic law for non-governmental organizations that is in line with international human rights standards.
- Strengthen and finance Equal Opportunities units in the ministries. This is a condition for proper gender mainstreaming.
- The National Council for Women in cooperation with and involvement of civil society organizations, to implement the national strategy for combating violence against women.
- Provide periodic data and statistics on all forms of violence against women in Egypt and the Arab region. Provide the necessary services: legal aid, health services, shelters and else for victims of violence.
- Draft a law that criminalizes and penalizes violence against women and defines it clearly, with mechanisms to enforce it.
- Draft a law that ensures easy access to information for all citizens.
- Activate laws and legislation pertaining to women's rights.
- Involve civil society, including teachers and their unions, in the decision-making process on education and at all levels.

- Advocate for reforming the policies of the International Monetary Fund and the World Bank to ensure that they support rather than undermine free public education.
- Provide fair and stable wages for teachers, in addition to properly equipped classrooms and quality textbooks, and services in an inclusive, none-discriminative manner.
- Mobilize political will and provide new resources to support national education plans for achieving the EFA goals (Education for All), including adequate public expenditure of at least 6% of the GNP, and significantly increase aid, relieving poorer countries from debt.
- Establish a mechanism to review all national policies, to ensure that they are gender mainstreamed and that their implementation does not result in any form of gender-based discrimination.



JORDAN

2nd National Dialogue

26 April 2017, Amman

OUTCOMES
2nd National Dialogue
“From the Ministerial Conclusions to Gender Equality Policy Making”
26th of April 2017, Amman

The national roundtable “From Ministerial Conclusions to gender equality policy making in the Euro-Med region”, organised by Euromed Feminist Initiative in partnership with the Coalition of Women’s MPs from the Arab Countries to Combat Violence Against Women, and the Arab Women’s Organization, under the patronage of H.E. Mr. Atef Tarawneh, the Speaker of the Parliament of the Hashemite Kingdom of Jordan, and the support of the European Union, took place on 26th of April 2017 at the Jordanian Parliament.

The one-day event gathered civil society partners, members of parliament, senators, representatives of concerned ministries, experts and academics, who discussed the policy recommendations for improving the status of gender equality, that have been developed during a one year process in the frame of the project “Gender Regional Platform” funded by the European Union. This national dialogue was part of the process to prepare for the 4th UfM Ministerial Conference on women’s rights, scheduled to take place in Egypt in the fall this year.

The opening session gave the tone of the whole event. H.E. Minister of Political and Parliamentary Affairs, H.E. Minister of Social Development, and H.E. Speaker of the Parliament, underlined the commitment of Jordan to women’s rights, not least demonstrated in the importance of the governmental proposition to annul article 308 from the Penal Law, and in the support to civil society organisations. H.E. Ambassador of the European Union to Jordan underlined the commitment of the European Union to continue supporting women’s participation and gender equality as a main priority for the European Union in Jordan.

Holding a series of two national dialogue on women’s rights in the Parliament, at the presence of both the concerned decision-makers and the civil society, was seen as opening the road for participation of all concerned actors in policy-making favouring women’s rights and gender equality.

During the first session, speakers presented and discussed the Gender Regional Platform with policy recommendations in the four identified priority areas:

- Ending discrimination against women and strengthening women’s participation
- Reform education, changing gender stereotypes and attitudes towards gender equality
- Ending violence against women, wars and occupation.
- Ensuring freedom and independent action of the civil society as well as support to women’s rights organizations

During the followed open discussion, it was underlined that this roundtable urges for forging new partnerships and expanding existing coalitions in order to improve the opportunities for change.

During the second session, experts from the civil society, political sphere and relevant ministries discussed ways to turn the GRP recommendations into concrete actions, closing the existing gap between legislation and implementation. The participants underlined the need to institutionalize the process between adopting and implementing policies.

During the rich and high quality discussion, two major issues were raised as urgent: legislative and education reform, and the situation with the Syrian refugees. In this regard, several challenges were pointed out: the gender gap in wage and the need of comprehensive economic empowerment policies.

The impact of the extreme religious fundamentalism was seen as a major obstacle to address these challenges. In order to address the raising fundamentalism not only in Jordan but in the whole Euro-Med region, two main strategies were emphasized: draw on the ratified provisions of the UN international women’s rights conventions and regional, and national women’s rights framework and strategies, and support large awareness raising programs explaining women’s discrimination, violence and exclusion, in order to support changes on cultural level. In parallel with these, education and legislative reform should be initiated. The participants hailed the decision to annul article 308 from the Penal Law, as an ice-breaking in the “taboo” to

demand change in women's rights areas and as a positive example of addressing security concerns of women. Moreover, it was underlined that security concerns cannot stay on the way of improving women's rights; they should incorporate and protect them.

The participants emphasised the urgent need to support the civil society, and in particular women's organizations, which "are losing ground due to the rise of extremism, nationalism, far rights political parties and populism world-wide".

The Gender Regional Platform was seen as a base to lift human rights in general and women's rights in particular, and as a support in aligning national legislations with international conventions.

In the end the participants expressed their optimism that the upcoming 4th UfM Ministerial Conference will take into consideration the Gender Regional Platform as it is an "effective tool to lift up women's rights in Jordan and in the whole region", as Dr. Wafa Al Khadra, Researcher in The American University in Madaba concluded.

Outcomes – Next Steps

- International women's rights instruments are the most important tools for achieving a real progress. Take concrete steps to harmonize national legislation with the ratified UN women's rights conventions, the SDGs, and regional instruments as UfM Ministerial Process on women's rights.
- For this purpose, conduct studies on discriminative legislation, regulatory framework, policies and behaviors to foreground and acknowledge all forms of discrimination and marginalization of women, in order to come up with preventive procedures, to close the knowledge gap between the legislators and academics, and to raise awareness in the society in general.
- Allocate financial support to activities for large scale national awareness-raising campaigns uncovering discrimination against women in law and its impact on women's lived realities. Encourage a national debate explaining discriminatory laws (as with article 308); give alternative legislation and solutions.
- Strengthen advocacy demanding a reform of national legislation to eradicate all forms of violence against women and designate preventive framework; to this end, exchange of experiences on legislation on criminalizing violence against women is necessitated.
- Focus on participatory approach to reform of the educational system and the curricula from a gender perspective, creating a body/space where exchange and collaboration among academics, decision-makers, gender experts and civil society women's rights experts are enabled.
- Endorse the National Action Plan on implementation of UNSCR 1325 on women, peace and security as a tool for social change; CSOs follow up on the government's implementation and commitment.
- Adhere to political solutions of crises, conflicts and wars in the region, including the ending of the occupation of Palestine. Uncover the impact of wars and occupation on women.
- Provide gender sensitive support to the refugees in the region until they all get the opportunity to a dignified and safe return to their homes; lift up the burden inflicted on hosting countries.
- The ministries may cooperate with academics and civil society women's rights activists to design programs on building the capacity of their gender focal points and units.
- Support civil society, in particular in the present context of rising of extremism and of nationalistic right-wings political parties, world-wide.
- Mainstream the Gender Regional Platform as a supportive mechanism and a tool to organize gender equality policymaking process, and roadmap its institutionalizing at the ministerial level.



PALESTINE

2nd National Dialogue

26 April 2017, Ramallah

OUTCOMES

2nd National Dialogue

“From the Ministerial Conclusions to Gender Equality Policy Making”

26th of April 2017, Ramallah

The second national roundtable in Palestine to follow up on the UfM Ministerial process on women’s rights took place on 26 April 2017 in the Grand Park Hotel at Ramallah- Palestine. The National dialogue was organized by Palestinian Working Woman Society for Development (PWWSD), the Federation of Women's Action Committees (PFWAC) in partnership with Euromed Feminist Initiative IFE-EFI in the frame of the contract “Gender Regional Platform” funded by the European Union.

The purpose of the second national table was to deepen and enrich the dialogue between the civil society and in particular women’s’ rights CSOs and policy makers, State actors and political parties on the implementation of the UfM Ministerial conclusions (Paris in 2013) and to prepare for the upcoming UfM ministerial conference in Cairo 2017. The 2nd national dialogue provided a safe space for all participants to strengthen the dialogue in Palestine in the context of the Israeli occupation.

The participants included 52 representatives from women’s and human rights CSOs and CBOs, ministers and representatives from ministries, as well as political leaders and MPs, together with the EU representative in Jerusalem, the Norwegian Representative to the PNA and the Special Representative of UN Women in Palestine.

I. The context

The participants provided in depth analyses of the context within which the status of women’s rights in Palestine should be considered. Some achievements in this field have been highlighted, as the creation of Palestinian Civil Society Coalition on the implementation of the UNSCR 1325, as well as forming of a National Commission to implement UNSCR 1325. Palestine is considered as the second Arab State which endorsed a national plan of action on 1325. Related to the combating gender based violence efforts, the Palestinian civil society with the formal governmental institutions had drafted the law for family protection from violence. The drafted law is ready to be ratified within months. However, the discussion focused on the absence of political will to change the stereotypical cultural discourse and school curriculum in order to create social awareness on gender equality. The participants highlighted the importance of women’s engagement in democracy building and indicated that the local elections lists had 26% of female candidates which indicates progress on women’s political participation.

In spite of the fact that PNA had ratified CEDAW, it did not publish it yet in the official newspaper to ensure the harmonization of national laws and legislation structures in Palestine with CEDAW. Penal and Family Laws are very old and have open discriminations against women; the Laws do not meet the principles of CEDAW which creates deep contradiction between the endorsement of CEDAW and the operational laws. Furthermore, the participants emphasized that the upcoming Palestinian constitution should be of high priority. The civil society should participate in the whole constitution process and debates in order to make sure that gender equality and respects of all women rights in private and public spheres are taken into consideration.

a) External factors:

- The Israeli military occupation: It has enormous consequences on the daily lives of Palestinian people and weakens the social, political and economic base as well as resistance of the Palestinian people, denying their fundamental human rights, including the right to return to their homeland and the rights to human security, contributing to social exclusion, radicalization and political division.

- The escalation of Israeli aggression: It is exemplified by increasing extra-judicial executions of civilians, expansion of colonies/illegal settlements, further confiscation of land and control over natural resources, continuous house demolitions, to mention few, where tens of thousands of women and men are still displaced.
- Palestinian prisoners: The Israeli occupation violates the rights of Palestinian prisoners which are guaranteed by the International Humanitarian Law and the Human Rights Law.
- The dead-lock of peace negotiations: after two decades of meaningless negotiations there is a lot of pressure on the Palestinian authority and the Arab countries to accept direct negotiations without legal and political frame based on UN resolution on the Palestinian-Israeli conflict under the auspices of UN.
- The double standards of the international community: While addressing the occupation as Israeli-Arab Conflict, the international powers make no difference between the occupying forces and the occupied people.
- The ongoing arm trade with Israel: The international community supports human rights on the one hand, and on the other hand is involved in the ongoing arm trade that contributes to the perpetuating of the occupation.
- The lack of international political will to hold Israel accountable: Even if the international community issues statements of condemnation, concrete measures to hold Israel accountable for the occupation and violation of International Human rights Law and International Humanitarian Law are lacking. This status encourages Israel to ignore the Security Council resolution that considered the Israeli settlements illegal action in regards of 2334.

b) Internal factors:

- Internal political division and geographic segregation: Division impacts the status of women's rights by constantly deprioritising them from political agendas and diverting political will to other "more important issues."
- Increasing power of the patriarchal structures: The social patriarchal structure perpetuates discrimination of women in the society and prevents them access to protection, livelihood, services and justice.
- Discrimination against women: Direct and indirect discrimination of women prevents them from participation in decision-making process and thereof strengthening the national instruments of gender equality.
- Lack of a unified national legal system: Palestinian women are still subject to several legal systems: Jordanian, Egyptian, Ottoman, British Mandate and the Israeli military law.
- Lack of alignment of legislation with international women's rights instruments: Even if PNA ratified CEDAW without reservations, national legislation, in particular personal status law and penal code, are not yet harmonised with CEDAW and legal discrimination contributes to perpetuating inequality between women and men.

The interplay between the external and internal factors affects negatively and violates the human rights of women in particular at the security level, contributing to increasing insecurity for women in occupied West Bank, besieged Gaza and occupied Jerusalem and hindering them to invest on addressing patriarchal gender power structures in their own society.

II. Topics of discussion

- The current political, social and economic context: A deeper analysis of the current context is needed, including the broader responsibility of international community, arms trade and who profits from this trade. In this sense, it was underlined the difference between the conflicts in the region and the occupation of Palestine. It was emphasized that the occupation of Palestine and the aggressive settlers' policies of Israel remain central issues and sources of violence in the whole region.
- The high rate of poverty and exclusion, exacerbated by the occupation forces and polices, the implementation of Paris Protocol that imposed liberal economic practices led to weakened social protection infrastructure and increased unemployment, whereby women compose the highest rate of unemployed persons.
- The failure of UN to implement UNSCR 1325 and its mandate for Palestine, coupled with the lack of political will from the international community and manifesting double standards in the compromises made by the States, instead of utilizing international instruments for justice to hold Israel accountable, resulting in the inability to protect Palestinian women.
- The role of the Ministry of Women's Affairs which has been seen by the participants as developing policies and procedures to achieve substantial gender equality. The development of gender agenda in combating GBV through the National Watch Dog.
- The interplay between patriarchy and religion and the need to separate religion from legislation and public sphere as a framework to improve the status of women's rights and gender equality, which in turn will enhance the democratic principles and practices in all aspects of women's lives.
- The demand towards the Palestinian Authority to comply with the international women's rights instruments and harmonise the legislation, in particular the Personal Status Law and the Penal Code with international human rights standards, especially CEDAW.
- The importance of the role of the political parties in promoting women's participation and women's rights agenda.

III. Challenges

- The Israeli occupation, in all its manifestation, is the main challenge.
- The lack of political will to achieve gender equality in alignment with international conventions and laws.
- The lack of International will to protect and secure the Palestinian women by holding Israel accountable and to stop violence against Palestinian women.
- The emerging of different forms of fundamentalism and extremism, in the whole region.
- The flow of arms to Israel and the ignorance of the arm trade agreement principles in accordance to the ATT.
- The patriarchal norms and structures that prevent women to access justice.
- The high level of poverty and lack of social protection for women, especially working women.
- The lack of networking and dialogue between the women movement and the Palestinian Cabinet.

IV. Priorities

- Ending the Israeli military occupation, enabling the Palestinian people to exercise their right to self-determination, and recognizing the independent, sovereign Palestinian State. To guarantee this priority, it is time to hold an international conference that focuses on the implementation of all the UN resolutions related to the Palestinian cause to build a just durable peace.
- Taking concrete measures to hold Israeli accountable to IHL and IHRL.

- Taking measures and procedures to guarantee the protection and safety of Palestinian women, firstly lifting the siege of Gaza, ending the colonial activities (settlements), releasing Palestinian political prisoners;
- Taking measures enhancing political will to guarantee gender equality in private and public spheres.
- Enhancing and deepening regional and international solidarity with Palestinian women.

Outcomes – Next Steps

- ☐ The implementation of the policy recommendation to the fourth Euro-Mediterranean Ministerial Conference 2017 to adopt a mechanism through establishing a commission for UNSCR 1325 to provide for the protection of women in the Arab region especially within countries in conflict and wars and provide platforms to present live testimonies for Palestinian women in the European Union in Brussels and Human Rights Council in Geneva to highlight the impact of the Israeli colonial occupation on Palestinian women and urge the Human Rights Council to take all necessary measure to hold Israel accountable under IHL and HRL.
- ☐ Women movements should integrate their struggle for gender equality with the holistic democratic struggle that aims to build a Palestinian democratic civil state.
 - Address the roots of the Palestinian women’s discrimination under occupation and how the different factors interplay in sustaining this discrimination, including arm-trade with Israel and its impact on the increased militarisation of the conflict and occupation itself.
- ☐ Call upon EU to send fact finding mission to the OPT to examine the impact of the occupation on the daily lives of women.
 - Convene international conference on the Palestine–Israel that focuses on the implementation of UN resolutions, mainly, the right of the Palestinians to return in accordance to UN Resolution 194 in order to end the Israeli occupation, implementing the right to self-determination and build a just durable peace that supports the improving of the status of women’s rights and gender equality.
- ☐ Make necessary urgent intervention to lift the siege of Gaza and stop colonial settlement activities.
- ☐ Take action towards full implementation of the UNSCR 1325 by UN and PA towards enabling women’s rights defenders’ participation in all negotiation processes.
- ☐ Internationalize the Palestinian cause through increased networking and international advocacy strengthening the connection between the ministerial process and the implementation of all international agreements signed by the Palestinian Authority notably UNSCR 1325 and CEDAW.
 - Give priority to women’s rights through adopting quotas of minimum 30% as a step towards parity and inserting women’s rights and gender equality in the political parties’ agendas.
- ☐ Change educational curricula as it is the pillar for social transformation, to include the concept of citizenship, women’s rights, human rights and gender equality.
 - Issue Penal, Family-Protection Law, and Family Status Laws based on gender equality and integrated policies based on international women’s rights standards and incorporating the Ministerial Conclusions.

Implementation of these recommendations is connected with political will and the Ministerial Process can be a space where this political will be exercised.



ALGERIA

2nd National Dialogue

28 April 2017, Algeria

OUTCOMES

2nd National Dialogue

“From the Ministerial Conclusions to Gender Equality Policy Making”

28th of April 2017, Algiers

The second Algerian national roundtable “From Ministerial Conclusions to gender equality policy making in the Euro-Med region” took place on the 25th of April 2017, at the Soltane Hotel in Algiers. It was organized by the Foundation for Equality (CIDDEF), and funded by the EU. The roundtable reported on the Gender Regional Platform developed with the participation of the Euro-Mediterranean civil society to support women’s rights and gender equality policy making the framework of the UfM ministerial process.

The round table was attended by thirty participants, including representatives of UN agencies (UN Women, UNFPA, UNDP, ILO), donors, the Fredrich Ebert Foundation, elected officials, professors, representatives of the civil society and consultants.

The audience was reminded of the genesis of the regional process undertaken over the past year and a half, leading to the development and adoption of the Gender Regional Platform; a process which began in Jordan, passed through Cairo and ended in Lebanon.

Emphasis was put on the adoption of gender equality policies in the Euro-Med region, on the establishment of a dialogue on gender equality between institutions and the civil society and on the importance of women’s rights in democracy-building.

Speakers came from diverse professional backgrounds: Ms. Nadia Ait-Zai, President of the Foundation for Equality and other gender consultants, economists and political activists simultaneously took the floor. Throughout the speeches, the audience was reminded how Euromed Feminist Initiative, its partners and gender experts carried out an extensive process rethinking effective adoption of policies that respect equality in the Euro-Med region.

One of the main questions discussed was: How to effectively enforce the conclusions of the UfM ministerial process? What mechanisms could make equality effective?

The Gender Regional Platform outlined in its policy recommendations an approach that our States could adopt to make equality effective. Four main points were raised by the gender-platform:

- Ending discrimination against women and strengthening women’s participation
- Reform education, changing gender stereotypes and attitudes towards gender equality
- Ending violence against women, wars and occupation.
- Ensuring freedom and independent action of the civil society as well as support to women’s rights organizations

A fruitful debate ensued and the need for a wider dissemination of the ministerial conclusions and the Gender Regional Platform was retained. The present associations, and especially the local and ministerial representatives, showed commitment to use the recommendations as a tool for the development of policies at local and national level.

The second part of the day was focused on the situation of women in the labor market and in decision-making positions globally and in Algeria. The ILO representative gave the results of a survey undertaken by them at the global level. He highlighted the barriers that women face in the workplace and the limited number of women in managerial and decision-making positions. In Algeria, 11% of management positions are taken by women but it is difficult to estimate as the available data are not gender-specific. The lack of statistics on women in management and decision-making positions was highlighted. To address this lack, concrete proposal was made to undertake a study on the situation of female managers in the administration. It would support

the adoption of a law to set a quota for women representation in positions of responsibility in administrations and enterprises, as provided for in Article 36 of the Algerian Constitution, which enshrines parity in the labor market.

This work is done in the wake of the policy recommendations of the Gender Regional Platform, which guides us how to make equality more effective in the light of the upcoming 4th UfM Ministerial Conference.



TUNISIA

2nd National Dialogue

28 April 2017, Tunis

OUTCOMES

2nd National Dialogue

“From the Ministerial Conclusions to Gender Equality Policy Making”

28th of April 2017, Tunis

The national roundtable “From Ministerial Conclusions to gender equality policy making in the Euro-Med region”, took place on 28th of April 2017 at Golden Tulip El Mechtel Hotel Tunisia. It was organized by the Association of Tunisian Women for Research and Development (AFTURD) in partnership with Euromed Feminist Initiative, with the support of the European Union.

The roundtable was attended by representatives of the concerned ministries: Ministry of Women’s Affairs, Family and Children, Ministry of Justice, Ministry of Human Rights and Relations with Constitutional Bodies, Ministry of Interior, as well as representatives of political parties, members of parliament, civil society and experts in gender and education.

The national and regional process of developing Gender Regional Platform was reminded and the importance of bringing together civil society and the stakeholders to discuss the development of gender equality policy was underlined. The participants emphasized the advantage of the project, namely, dialogue, exchange of views and integration of community approaches into policy making. The work of the Association of Tunisian Women for Research and Development and the relationship between the European Union delegation and the Tunisian civil society was also discussed.

Points that were furthermore highlighted:

- ② The importance of implementing the recommendations that come out during this dialogue process.
- ② The importance of supporting civil society organizations in initiating and maintaining this dialogue.
- ② The importance of partnership between civil society and public institutions in developing of gender equality policies.
- ② The need to identify the successful experiences of civil society in the frameworks of its partnership with State institutions.
- ② The need to further advocate for institutionalizing gender equality in order to reach a substantive equality between women and men.

Recommendations from the Ministry of Women’s Affairs, Family and Children:

- ② Activate operational mechanisms to implement the existing laws related to women's rights and equality.
- ② Emphasize the negative consequences of violence against women in public and private sphere and engage in defense of indivisibility of the human rights of women and men.
- ② Advocate among civil society and members of parliament for the support of the law on violence against women in order to accelerate its ratification.
- ② Emphasize the importance of cooperation among the different State institutions in monitoring the implementation of policies.
- ② Emphasize the importance of cooperation and partnership with civil society in the process of policy making

The participants furthermore discussed and elaborated the importance of undertaking following actions in the GRP areas for intervention:

Gender approach and law on violence against women:

- ☐ Develop an advocacy strategy spreading awareness on gender-based violence, considering both the legal aspects, and the social gender power system that produce violence.
- ☐ Pressure to institutionalize gender mainstreaming.
- ☐ Raise public awareness on the meaning of "gender" and gender mainstreaming, and on the law on violence against women.

Elimination of all forms of violence against women:

Strengthen legal aspects, community vigilance and interventions to eliminate violence against women:

- ☐ Strengthen advocacy to pressure for ratification of the law on elimination of violence against women.
- ☐ Take measures to improve the cooperation and coordination among all involved actors: among State structures and institutions themselves and between them and civil society.
- ☐ Strengthen the exchange of information between different parties and raise the awareness of the importance of legal tracking.
- Strengthen the work of the women's CSOs with state institutions on improving women's rights.
- ☐ Involve civil society in the drafting of laws (such as the law of violence) and in monitoring of their implementation.

Procedural Acton:

- ☐ Establish a training system for security personnel (a basic and advance ongoing training on the subject of violence against women)
- ☐ Make use of and promote academic research and regular exchange of experience internationally.
- ☐ Develop clear protocols on dealing with cases of violence against children (especially sexual violence) with relevant government parties such as the Ministry of Health.
- ☐ Conduct awareness workshops showing the aggravation of the phenomenon of violence against children and its current and future negative effects.
- ☐ Conduct studies to examine the relationship between level of violence against women and the economic empowerment of women.
- ☐ Conduct studies on the cost of violence in Tunisia to know not only the psychological and physical consequences of violence but also its negative consequences on the economic aspects.
- ☐ Conduct studies on violence against women in order to establish mechanisms of action.
- ☐ Intensify the support and knowledge of the listening centers in addition to the shelters.
- ☐ Develop the appropriate programs, especially monitoring of the necessary resources to resist violence.

Changing gender stereotypes at school

- ☐ Commit to change the textbooks that reproduce gender based stereotypes.
- ☐ Train teachers to identify and expose gender based stereotypes.
- ☐ Include human rights and gender equality values in the education material.

Combat discrimination against women and support women's participation in public life

Recommendations related to women's political participation:

- ☐ Criminalize all gender based attacks in public space, especially the issue of verbal abuse of women.

- ☐ Incorporate political violence into forms of violence against women.
- ☐ Conduct awareness campaigns to support the participation of women in political affairs.
- Conduct advocacy campaigns at the level of ministries and public institutions to support and encourage the women's participation in public affairs.

Recommendations related to the judiciary:

- ☐ Develop a manual with standardize good practices for family judges to curb discrimination during implementation of laws.
- Train judges on human rights and in particular women's rights, not only in the legal aspects of these rights. This will provide a rich jurisprudence reflecting women's rights in reality.
- ☐ Create spaces for sensitization, training and exchange between the Ministry of Justice and civil society.

Support civil society and ensure its independence

On the level of challenges:

- People responsible for trainings and workshops sometimes reproduce stereotypes rather than fight them: form teams in coordination with the CSOs, that have knowledge of international women's rights instruments. (e.g. the Ministry of Women, Family and Children formed facilitators that in fact do not believe in women's rights)
- ☐ Funding, especially for new associations, has threatened the independence of civil society.
- ☐ Working with and attracting youth is a challenge that must be seriously considered for associations.
- ☐ The weak presence of women in the media, which has been proven statistically.

On the level of mechanisms of organization and work:

- Strengthen networking and alliance building among independent entities to advocate for women's rights based on common interest.
- ☐ Work in the framework of school and cultural associations.
- ☐ Participatory democracy and democratic monitoring are among the points that must be strongly available in the activities and mechanisms of civil society.
- ☐ Strengthen the advocacy work in support of women's issues with progressive political parties.
- ☐ Pay attention to the agendas of the financial institutions and monitor the negotiations with them

On the level of activities:

- ☐ Pressure the State to develop a clear plan of action that does not change with the change of staff.
- ☐ Work in parallel on changing culture as it is the way to eliminate the stereotypes based on gender.
- ☐ Adopt a gender approach in observatories.
- ☐ Work with the media in order to promote the role of civil society and its work in the period before, during and after the Tunisian revolution. The media, especially the private ones, may serve their own agendas.
- ☐ Prepare women and encourage them to participate in TV debates so that they can communicate messages.
- ☐ Invite different people during the training workshops and not just the same group, with the aim of influencing a broadening the base and ensuring the dissemination.