



Improving gender equality and democratic governance in Jordan

OUTCOMES of the Jordanian national process From the Ministerial Conclusions to Gender Equality Policy Making 2015-2016, Amman

The Euro-Med Ministerial Process on “Strengthening the Role of Women in Society” is a major tool for promoting and supporting women’s rights and gender equality both regionally and nationally. The third Ministerial Conference 2013 in Paris reaffirmed this, especially in the context of the ongoing political transformations in the Southern Mediterranean, recognizing the important role played by women.

The 3rd Ministerial Conference in Paris took place under the co-presidency of the Jordanian Minister of Social Development, Reem Abu Hassan together with the Minister of Women’s Rights and Gender Equality, Najat Vallaud-Belkacem and Catherine Ashton, European Union High Representative and Vice-President of the European Commission. As a co-chair of the Union for Mediterranean, Jordan’s role is of utmost importance to the process.

In order to follow up on the implementation of the Paris Ministerial Conclusions in Jordan, many different events took place in the frame of the project: “Improving gender equality and democratic governance in Jordan” under the program of the Ministry of Political and Parliamentary Affairs (MOPPA) “Support to Democratic Governance in Jordan” funded by the EU and implemented by the Euromed Feminist Initiative. In the frame of this project Euromed Feminist Initiative made a study on the impact of the Ministerial Conclusions in Jordan. The major findings were discussed during multi-sector discussions on local and national level, raising awareness and engaging women’s organizations and local decision makers in a structural dialogue. Six workshops, followed by roundtable discussions were organized across Jordan, gathering representatives from the civil society, local political leaders and self-governments from the 12 governorates.

On the 23rd of March 2016 a national conference organized in partnership with MOPPA gathered over 90 participants of the process. On the 24th, members from the civil society, local government and national stakeholders held a national dialogue, hosted by the Ministry of Political and Parliamentary Affairs.

Furthermore, a roundtable discussion took place on 28th of March 2016 in the Jordanian Parliament, under the patronage of the H.E. Speaker of the parliament, gathering major actors on national and local level in a dialogue with decision makers who work towards strengthening the position of women in the society.

The participants in the process noted that a progress in women’s rights has been made. However, the rate of change is very slow. They identified political, legislative, and cultural obstacles to women’s rights. Emphasis was put on the changing context and the impact of the refugee crisis. However, they reaffirmed that the Ministerial Conclusions and Ministerial Process provide opportunities to make qualitative changes and improvement of women’s status. They adopted the output of the study on the impact of Euro-Med Ministerial Conclusions in Jordan and suggested recommendations to strengthen and advance gender policy dialogue among civil society, decision-makers and State actors, underlying the importance of involving grassroots organizations across Jordan. The following are the major points that have been raised throughout the process:

- In the context of raising of religious extremism and social conservatism decision makers need to make women’s rights a political priority.
- Women’s increased participation in the economic, political and social spheres is an important step to make, as gender equality is an issue of social justice, democracy and progress.
- The Euro-Med Ministerial Conclusions as well as the Ministerial Process as a whole are an essential tool to raise awareness, build capacity, strengthen cooperation among stakeholders and lead to gender equality policy making.

The following recommendations for the implementation of the Ministerial Conclusions and improving gender equality policy-making in Jordan were issued:



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RECOMMENDATIONS FOR IMPROVING GENDER EQUALITY AND DEMOCRATIC GOVERNANCE IN JORDAN THROUGH IMPLEMENTING THE EURO-MED MINISTERIAL CONCLUSIONS

1. Establish follow up mechanisms such as a *Follow up Committee* consisting of women's rights activists, State actors, political decision makers, media and academia. The *Follow up Committee* should create an action plan for the implementation of the Ministerial Conclusions to be supervised by the Inter-Ministerial Committee.
2. Women's committee in the parliament, in cooperation with the women's rights organizations should identify, analyze and propose amendments to the discriminative legislation for women.
3. Increase gender quota both nationally and locally to ensure women's' meaningful participation at decision making level.
4. Intensify the efforts of the civil society to lobby and advocate for the amendment of discriminative legislation such as inheritance, citizenship, and strengthening legislation regarding violence against women.
5. Build strong coalitions and alliances that use the Ministerial Conclusions as a tool to bridge the gap between international and national level, and urban and rural areas.
6. Strengthen the cooperation between the civil society, political sphere, State actors, academia and media in order to raise awareness of and counteract the gender stereotypes that hinder women's human rights enjoyment.
7. The Ministry of Education is requested to develop curricula and textbooks free of stereotypical representation of women. The *Follow up Committee* in cooperation with the Inter-Ministerial Committee could assist in this work with recommendations and expertise.
8. Include the study on the impact of the Ministerial Conclusions, as well as studies on violence against women, citizenship among others, as references in the educational curricula.
9. Address all cultural and legislative barriers hindering women's' participation in the labor market through large scale awareness raising programs.
10. Synchronize the main national development strategies with the Ministerial Conclusions.
11. Implement the recommendations from the Amman Regional Dialogue, 3 February 2016, and organize broader cross-sector discussions and awareness raising workshops on how to promote and implement the Ministerial Conclusions.
12. Hold the 4th Euro-Med Ministerial Conference on strengthening the role of women in society in Jordan under the patronage of H.M Queen Rania.

