



مؤسسة نساء الأورو-متوسط
Euro-Mediterranean Women's Foundation
Fondation des Femmes de l'Euro-Méditerranée



EURO-MEDITERRANEAN REGIONAL DIALOGUE ON ADVOCACY IN THE FIELD OF GENDER EQUALITY

Casablanca, Morocco, 24-26 October 2017

Introduction

Gender equality is a crucial, urgent issue for those who want to establish peace, democracy and human rights in the Euro-Mediterranean region. In this field, the role of civil society is essential. Thanks to the mobilization of associations committed to women's rights, great successes have been achieved, such as the approval of a law criminalizing sexual harassment in Egypt, an amendment to the criminal code in Algeria to better protect women from violence and the adoption of measures to ensure stronger women's representation in political parties and in parliament (Jordan, Morocco, Tunisia and others).

The Euro-Mediterranean dialogue on advocacy in the field of gender equality has allowed 50 associations to exchange practices concerning the programming, implementation and monitoring of equality policies. It has also contributed to analysing the advocacy and policy-monitoring actions carried out by associations in order to correct gender-based inequalities at all levels (political, professional, legal, family, and so on).



This document presents the vision, priorities, challenges and recommendations to political authorities following three days of debate and analysis in the presence of experts and representatives of universities, the media and international bodies active in the Euro-Mediterranean region (the European Union – EU, the Union for the Mediterranean – UfM, UN Women, the UN Population Fund – UNFPA –, States like Morocco and France, etc.).

These contributions from civil society to political decisions and commitments are particularly important on the eve of the Fourth UfM Ministerial Conference on women's issues (Cairo, 27 November 2017).

The associations that have taken part in the Euro-Mediterranean dialogue on advocacy work in 12 different countries, but share common principles:

- The will to promote successful experiences involving advocacy in favour of equality and to take inspiration from the Euro-Mediterranean context.
- The importance of sharing knowledge generated in the field to optimize learning in the field and coordinate future advocacy actions.
- The need to promote joint work between different academic, political and operational institutions to obtain a real impact on political decisions. The struggle to combat violence against women (VAW), in particular, requires the commitment of all political agents.

CIVIL SOCIETY DIALOGUE

The dialogue was opened by Ms. **Fouzia Assouli**, on behalf of the Federation of Women's Rights Leagues (FLDF) and the Euro-Mediterranean Women's Foundation (FFEM). Assouli called on the participants to construct a common vision of gender and human rights to work together for equality. This dialogue is the opportunity to work on a common advocacy roadmap for the future. Ms. **Maria-Àngels Roque** then spoke on behalf of the European Institute of the Mediterranean (IEMed), the coorganizer of the event together with the FLDF. Roque welcomed the commitment, enthusiasm and efforts already made in the advocacy campaigns held in seven countries in the southern Mediterranean during the CSO WINS project.

Ms. **Zeinab Arteil** and Ms. **Aicha Sakmassi** (Voix de Femmes marocaines) designed a fun icebreaking game with participants. After placing the flags of the countries represented in the dialogue on the tables, they asked participants to regroup according to their country of origin. The participants were then invited to travel outside their "country" and choose one of the other 12 destinations present. Having done this, they were asked to make a portrait of the travellers on each table using identity photos or drawings. This exercise created a climate encouraging empathy and listening.

Identifying priorities for advocacy on women's access to political responsibilities

- Ms. **Saloua Ghrissa** presented several advocacy campaigns led by the Association pour la promotion du droit à la différence (Association to Promote the Right to be Different) in Tunisia, including her involvement in a coalition of 35 NGOs that managed to achieve a vote on the Parity Act of 15 June 2016 relating to municipal elections which established a horizontal

and vertical parity. The associations carrying out media campaigns and events throughout the country for the gender approach to be applied in political parties' action plans.

- Ms. **Ghenwa El Jurdy** of Women in Front has seen the difficulty of launching a public debate on quotas at parliamentary level in Lebanon. Her association has established a political network of independent women and those affiliated to political parties to train them in the advantages of the quota as a necessary measure without which there will be no increase in female representation in political life.
- For Ms. **Safaa Ali** of the National Association for the Defense of Rights and Freedoms, the law establishing a quota of 25% of seats for women on local councils represents an opportunity to improve women's participation at local level in Egypt. Her association has sought to understand the factors limiting the role of women by questioning the media, political and religious leaders and local associations in Luxor. Patriarchal traditions and customs, the fear of harassment and a lack of confidence in their own capabilities discourage women from becoming involved in politics.
- Mr. **Jamal Benabbi** shared the analysis of the Tamaynut association: why are women members of associations, trade unions and political parties not getting into positions of responsibility? Workshops with women in the Souss-Massa region in Morocco analysed the obstacles blocking their access to these posts. These obstacles are legal, sociocultural



(interpretation of religious texts) and are linked to the perception of women as incompetent for taking on positions of power, leading them to internalize a negative image of themselves. Following this diagnosis, Tamaynut will train 25 women leaders in leadership, advocacy and the understanding of legal texts with a view to increasing their chances of accessing positions of responsibility.



- Ms. **Wafa Elloumi** explained how the Mouwatinet association mobilized more than 1,250 people (political parties, parliamentarians, associations and the general public) in Sfax (Tunisia) on the importance of women being represented on municipal councils. Women were trained to become candidates and the idea of submitting citizens' lists has been widely publicized and debated.

- Ms. **Roza Dimova** of the Center of Women's Studies and Policies in Bulgaria, deplored the fact that the participation rate in political decision-making among women remains limited (the rate dropped following the fall of the Berlin Wall and improved a little during the 2000s). No legal measures are planned to promote parity in electoral law or political party rules. Moreover, the parties, like the general public which is suspicious of the quota system, show little interest in the need to integrate women. Dimova shared her experience of training members of parties of all political tendencies and advocating in favour of laws imposing parity in electoral lists.

- Ms. **Nariman El Chamaa** of Donia for Sustainable Development noted that in Lebanon many women refused to go into politics - this was the case during the municipal elections of 2016 - and that it is difficult to find women wanting to head electoral lists. One of the reasons for this is that the electoral expenditure ceiling is very high, which favours the established political parties. Women, often dependent on their husbands, are rarely in a position to undertake a successful campaign, particularly if they are independents. Work must be done to adopt a law to reduce the authorized electoral expenditure ceiling.

- Ms. **Iman Abdelrahmane** presented the campaign undertaken by the Hiwar Center for Youth and Women's Empowerment association in three municipalities in Palestine to raise awareness of electoral law among the population, including students. By mobilizing well known women in high places as models, Hiwar showed that the presence of women on municipal councils is imperative with a view to altering the conservative mentality that maintains traditional gender roles and grants all rights to men.

- Ms. **Imen Gzara** stressed that, despite Tunisian legislation recognizing gender equality, few women reach positions of responsibility. Change must come from the bottom, which is why the association Voix de la femme (Women's Voice) in Jemmel has undertaken to consult local agents to identify the obstacles preventing women becoming involved in political life. To do this, it mobilized various components of civil society, the regional authorities and the media in Monastir and Sousse and then trained women with the potential to become leaders in their local areas.

- Ms. **Nada Nader** shared the experience of the Euro-Med Feminist Initiative which, since 2015, has organized multi-agent consultations in many countries in the southern Mediterranean to draw up political action plans in the area of gender equality. This regional platform process has contributed to preparing recommendations for the Fourth UfM Ministerial Conference on gender equality.

Local testimonies

- Ms. **Fouzia Assouli** introduced 3 activists from the host country that are actively combating VAW in Morocco.
- Ms. **Aicha Ech-Chenna** of Solidarité Féminine (Female Solidarity), explained what drove her to create an aid association for single women: a young woman being thrown out of her home by her parents when she had just had a baby outside marriage. Beyond this narrative, Ech-Chenna stressed the difficulty of talking about sex education in modern society amid claims that it negatively affects children's ethics.
- Ms. **Fatiha Chtatou** of the Network of the Democratic League of Women's Rights-LDDF/Injad gave the example of a girl who was raped in a bus station and then picked up by a man who took her to a friend's house, where she was raped once again. The girl's mother did not want to look after her for fear that her brother would kill her. In Morocco, Act 113.13 is insufficient because it does not solve the problems of children born outside marriage (including in case of rape) and child marriage.
- Ms. **Fatim-Zohra Chaoui** of the Association marocaine de lutte contre la violence à l'égard des femmes (Moroccan Association to Combat Violence Against Women) focused on rape, which she said was associated with traditional religious thinking and heritage. The provisions of Moroccan law dealing with rape are unclear. The punishments are tougher if woman raped is a virgin or married. Judges' decisions are influenced by principles from religious dogma and tradition. The biggest problem remains education in schools which, instead of promoting respect, encourages girls to control their behaviour so as not to arouse desire among boys.





Identifying priorities for advocacy in the field of VAW and gender stereotypes

- Ms. **Nermeen El Bahtiti** explained the achievements of the Life Foundation for Development and Community Reintegration campaign against “tourist” marriages, which are generally entered into for a short period. Thanks to awareness-raising and information activities in villages in three Egyptian provinces, marriages of this kind are detected in many cases and legal, health and psychological support is provided to the victims. A climate encouraging the absolute elimination of this crime has been created and Life Foundation has put pressure on the local, regional and national authorities to criminalize this type of marriage.
- Ms. **Amina Byouz** presented the Anaouat pour femme et enfant's campaign against child marriage in three municipalities in Chichaoua (Morocco). Byouz highlighted the main results obtained: raising the awareness of the population of the consequences of early marriages; the signing of an ethical charter by judges and the president of the provincial religious council; and the reduction in child marriages in the target municipalities (no marriage of this kind was recorded during the campaign). Beyond this, people who assist the authorities in the villages, known as aide-autorités, were involved to oppose all kinds of traditional marriage. The association also actively works for the reintegration of girls at risk through education and family support.
- Ms. **Milena Kadieva** mentioned the work of the Gender Alternative Foundation to combat sexual and domestic violence and trafficking in human beings in Bulgaria. Among the main obstacles, she observed a lack of sensitivity among the police and services for protecting and looking after victims, poor receptiveness in the courts responsible for trying the aggressors and a lack of information and support services for the survivors of violence.
- Mr. **Lotfi Adjabi**, of the Association de l'information et de communication en milieu de jeunes de Guelma (Association for Information and Communication in Youth Environments in Guelma), shared the results of the campaign carried out in Guelma to publicize the Algerian criminal code as amended on 30 December 2015. In fact, articles 333 b 1.2 and 341 criminalize violence in marriage, harassment in the street and the seizure of a woman's goods by her husband. The association has managed to set up a dynamic local group to promote women's rights and to combat violence by mobilizing those in charge of local sporting and cultural associations and educational establishments, elected representatives and the media.

Identifying priorities for advocacy in favour of the economic empowerment of women

- Ms. **Intisar Saed** mentioned the decline in the economy, inflation and the current uncertainty in Egypt, a country that has undergone a revolution and several changes of government over the last few years. In fact, many women are locked into a vicious circle of poverty and ignorance: they get married very young, which makes them economically dependent on their families. To make up for this lack of education, the Cairo Center for Development establishes income-generating activities (crafts, baking, making clothes from recycled materials, etc.). The population is often unaware of the importance of women forming part of the job market. Saed also mentioned the interest of associations working



in the area of the empowerment of women acting in partnership with other NGOs, particularly from Eastern Europe, because these countries have been through transitional phases similar to the one Egypt is experiencing.

- The contribution of Mr. **Mohamed Yousri** of Badr Altawael Association, concerned the right of women to inheritance. This is often flouted in Egypt, despite the fact that the law establishes that men and women enjoy the same rights. Badr's campaign has targeted local associations in Sohag, parliamentarians, judges, lawyers, the general public and the media with a view to reducing a practice justified by some on the basis of custom and religion. Muslim and Christian religious leaders pledged to preach in favour of women's rights to inheritance. In addition, a juridical committee aimed at resolving disputes linked to women's rights to inheritance has been set up and has dealt with many cases, either amicably or by beginning legal action.
- On the same topic, Mrs **Iqbal Hamad** gave an insight on the Jordanian Hashemite Fund for Human Development (JOHUD)'s Women and Gender Empowerment Program which focuses, among other areas, on economic empowerment. Thus, depriving women of their right to inheritance is one of the types of violence against women economically and socially. To address this phenomenon, they have used a number of mechanisms such as studying the context, reaching the clerics, Judges, and influential leaders and decision makers, conducting training and awareness sessions, and targeting the public by using the audio and visual media. JOHUD took part in the CSO WINS project though exchanging and transferring its knowledge and experiences to its tandem partner the Badr Altawael Association. Mrs Hamad followed up their campaign's activities in support of women's right to inheritance and realized a field visit to Sohag (Egypt) in July 2017.
- Ms. **Bouchra El Zemouri** provided examples of activities which the Association Tawaza pour le plaidoyer de la femme (Tawaza Association for Women's Advocacy) is undertaking in working class areas in towns and in the countryside to support women's economic rights. These initiatives are varied, including literacy, training young women in management and marketing, supporting entrepreneurial projects and setting up cooperatives. The association is also focused on women's social, political and cultural rights, balancing family and working life, and alternatives to the informal and submerged economy.
- Ms. **Noura Mounim** presented the advocacy actions undertaken by the FLDF of Beni Mellal-Khenifra to ensure Sulaliyat women's rights to enjoy their lands in the same way as men are respected. The association referred to the international charters signed by Morocco, notably the Convention on the Elimination of All Forms of Discrimination Against Women (CEDAW) and chapter 19 of the Moroccan Constitution, to advocate in favour of women's rights to possess these lands. From this point of view, it has undertaken awareness-raising actions, political dialogue and the reinforcement of Sulaliyat women's capacities.
- Ms. **Rasha Raslan** explained the approach adopted by the Association for the Development & Empowerment of Women (ADEW) in favour of the emancipation of female heads of families at economic, social and educational level. ADEW was one of the first NGOs to provide female heads of families with access to microcredits guaranteed only by



five other women entrepreneurs. Along the same lines, ADEW published a manual aimed at civil society agents working in the field of microcredits, notably in Egypt.

Drawing up advocacy strategies for women's access to political life

The human rights consultant Mr. **Mustapha Chafiai** was in charge of collecting ideas and moderating the discussion.

Although constitutional and regulatory reforms have allowed progress to be made in women's participation in positions of political responsibility, they are still not effective enough. There is no clear vision of gender equality or measures to ensure it is established in institutional, economic, social and cultural areas. In addition, the empowerment of women in society is generally symbolized by results in different types of elections and also through appointments to the council of ministers or even senior positions of responsibility in the services of the public authorities.

This kind of promotion not only allows women to share power and decision-making with men, it also contributes to transforming their image and eliminating sexist stereotypes for the benefit of future generations. As a result, the application of parity (despite the different quantitative meanings and characteristics depending on the country) requires a proactive political will. This will must be shown through the establishment of institutional mechanisms for parity in a quantitative and qualitative sense, as well as with the financial resources to meet the targets set.

Several observations emerged:

- Several constitutions recognize gender parity and equality;
- Institutional agents are aware that women's access to positions of responsibility has a positive impact on economic growth. For example, municipalities that have women on their municipal councils record, on average, better results than the others;
- Legislative and administrative mechanisms have been established to promote women's access to positions of responsibility and public life (for example, election law);
- The affiliation rate of women in politics and their role in managing public affairs is expanding;
- There are many agents running projects to promote women's access to positions of political responsibility.

Despite these positive trends, it was also reported that:

- Stereotypes of women's capacities to exercise power prevail. This is why laws and measures must be adopted promoting their access to decision-making positions, including impositions on political parties with a view to rebalancing the inequalities.
- The political culture is male and based on gender discrimination. Equality cannot be achieved without men. They must therefore be engaged and their awareness of gender equality and women's access to decision-making positions must be raised.
- The economic and unemployment factor is a major obstacle to the promotion of women in politics and their participation in elections as candidates and electors.

Some specific recommendations emerged from the discussion (see p. 13).



Drawing up advocacy strategies against VAW

Mrs. **Naima Chikhaoui** of the University of Rabat was in charge of collecting ideas and moderating the discussion.

The prevailing view throughout the workshop was that gender-based violence (GBV) is an issue of public policy cutting across disciplines. GBV is a responsibility of the State – a question of human rights and democracy. It is also a question of social peace and sustainable development. Moreover, GBV is on government agendas in most of the States of the Euro-Mediterranean region, and it increasingly involves the public. An overall statement covering the different forms of violence is that GBV is the “violation of life/ اغتصاب (Arab connotation), a “shattered life” experience. The prevalence of GBV and its resurgence over the last few years is becoming very worrying, particularly in the form of “rape”, a crime very often not called and not recognized for what it is. The stress was therefore placed on sexual violence and child marriage. The participants concluded that action against sexual violence was an urgent top priority.

The case of women on migratory journeys was also raised. Women survivors of violence in political and armed conflicts, whether settled, travelling on migration, or in political, climatic or discriminatory exile due to their gender, are considered an urgent priority. Beyond this, there is a risk that the prevalence of these cases will increase, considering the complexity caused by the migration issue at world level. As a result, participants planned to act via a mechanism called “parallel female Euro-Mediterranean diplomacy”.

As for child marriage, this affects girls more than boys and, beyond its different names (child marriage, forced marriage, traditional marriage...), it must be denounced based on the mechanisms used. The language stereotype, infiltrated by rituals or religious rules (sadaq, Al-Fatiha, Sunnah), and sociocultural banalization are sexist mechanisms operating in favour of GBV. They must be deconstructed through education, legal literacy and the promotion of gender awareness.

Some specific recommendations emerged from the discussion (see p. 15).

Drawing up advocacy strategies for promoting women's economic rights

Mrs. **Sabah Chraïbi** of Espace Point de Départ was in charge of collecting ideas and moderating the discussion in partnership with Ms. **Fatiha Moukhliise** of the Centre d'information et d'observation des femmes marocaines (Moroccan Women's Information and Observation Centre). Chraïbi recalled that, in the world, women do two thirds of the total hours of work and produce more than half of the food, but earn only 10% of total income, own less than 2% of the land and receive less than 5% of bank loans. Less than 10% of businesses in the Mediterranean basin are run by women. Why are women less entrepreneurial than their male counterparts? It is true that there are obstacles hampering women's creative projects, but what assessment can be made of all the programmes supporting female entrepreneurs? How can we advocate to encourage political decision-makers and economic operators to establish strategies with a view to improving the entrepreneurial capacities of women to promote their socio-economic inclusion?



The participants reflected on how to integrate the gender approach into women's socio-economic development projects. This intervention method contributes to promoting equitable development by encouraging awareness of gender and its cross-disciplinary integration at various levels: in the way institutions work; in staff competences; and at all stages of management of the economic project or programme management cycle. In fact, interest in equality grew after the 4th World Conference on Women in Beijing in 1995, which came at a time of economic crisis and the globalization of markets. There are even the Millennium Development Goals and the Sustainable Development Goals on the issue, which governments have signed, particularly emphasizing the dimension concerning gender equality and women's economic empowerment.

The participants defined the terms of advocacy for women's economic empowerment based on three criteria:

- **Political commitment:** To what degree is there a will in each country to integrate gender into development strategies and all economic sectors? What does this commitment look like in practice? Through which information systems do women involved in production benefit from public policies?
- **Resources:** What proportion of resources is devoted to integrating gender into projects targeting gender equality in the promotion of entrepreneurship in different economic sectors? Are there specific resources for integrating gender into entrepreneurship?
- **Responsibility:** Are there people in positions of power who are responsible for integrating gender in policies to help women's businesses, regardless of their size and the area where they are involved? Do they have a clear mandate, legitimized by the hierarchy?

Some specific recommendations emerged from the discussion (see p. 18).



Useful tools for networking

Ms. **Emilie Vidal** and Ms. **Elisa Poch** of the IEMed presented the trilingual (French-English-Arabic) platform www.euromedwomen.foundation as a tool encouraging networking. The participants were invited to join this free network allowing them to have a profile to share news, publications and practices on behalf of their associations, universities and businesses. The Euro-Mediterranean Women's Foundation (FFEM) has created this exchange space to centralize the available information and knowledge about women and gender and to summarize the most relevant information using an online documentation centre. Tips on the proper use of social media (tags on Facebook and Twitter) were provided to make network members' initiatives more visible and highly rated.

DIALOGUE WITH INSTITUTIONS

Ms. **Latifa Bouchoua** of the FLDF opened the day welcoming institutions other than the associations already introduced on the previous days. She congratulated the women leaders who came from several Arab and European countries and who often work in difficult conditions to change society.

Ms. **Fouzia Assouli** of the FFEM underlined the importance of feminist diplomacy to build societies without gender discrimination or male supremacy. She spoke of the usefulness of initiatives to join forces and making it possible to publicize experiences on the ground to promote women's rights.

Mr. **Josep Ferré** of the IEMed recalled the need to use evidence from associations at local level and transfer them to a Euro-Mediterranean level. He noted that the campaigns of the CSO WINS project are a good basis for identifying areas of understanding for future partnerships.

Mr. **Mohamed Sebbar** of the Moroccan National Human Rights Council (CNDH) hoped the meeting would be a lever for mobilizing associations and he recalled several initiatives in support of women's rights in Morocco.

Mr. **Philip Holzapfel** of the EU Delegation in Morocco recalled the EU's commitment to involve civil society in all decision-making processes at local and national level. The EU wishes to ensure that the associations can play their role of monitoring politicians. He took the example of Morocco as a country turning gender equality into a strategy. However, he also noted that there is only one woman minister in Morocco and that, despite the efforts made, there is a fall-off in women's participation in the job market.

Civil society dialogue mechanisms in the South of the Mediterranean in terms of gender equality

Ms. **Nathalie Pilhes**, Special Advisor to the French interministerial Delegate for international technical cooperation, from the French Prime Minister's department, called on those involved to give their views of the mechanisms for dialogue between international institutions and bodies active in gender equality in the Euro-Mediterranean region.



Ms. **Nouzha Skalli**, the former Moroccan Minister for Social Development, the Family and Solidarity, highlighted the convergence between equality and human development, because, in all countries, the position of many people (elderly people, children, etc.) is intrinsically linked to the situation of women. Skalli recalled that government departments are ought to deal equally with women and men, so there is already a discrepancy shift when considering public policies as a whole. The weight of gender discrimination is a particular handicap in Arab countries. According to the Organization for Economic Cooperation and Development (OECD), the cost of discrimination against women amounts to 575 billion dollars a year in the Middle East and North Africa (MENA) region. As a result, there is an urgent need for the establishment of a new development model in which the feminist movement should be represented at decision-making levels, in parliament and in all institutions.

Ms. **Meriem El Hilali** of the UfM Secretariat stressed the role of women as a driving force for regional integration in the southern Mediterranean countries. She recalled the process of conferences of ministers of the 43 UfM countries and invited the associations to closely monitor their commitments and to link them to their actions. Many women are not active in the job market and twice as many women as men are looking for work in the region. Equality is a moral obligation but it cannot be imposed. The UfM Secretariat supports projects and initiatives, such as the Mediterranean Week of Economic Leaders (Meda Week) in Barcelona, including the MEDAWOMEN Forum which brings together female business leaders from all over the Mediterranean basin. El Hilali underlined the effectiveness of civil society in terms of tangible results and encouraged the representatives of associations to join the committee of experts launched by the UfM¹.

On the subject of EU support for neighbouring countries (European Neighbourhood Policy), Mr. **Philip Holzapfel** and Ms. **Paula Cristina Fernandes**, of the EU Delegation in Morocco, explained that funds were paid out depending on results indicators and for very specific processes, for example, in the case of legislative progress on the criminalization of marital violence. Work with civil society is essential, both from the point of view of legislative changes and changing mentalities. Holzapfel admitted that civil society could be even more integrated in monitoring States' achievement of indicators. The representatives of the EU encouraged the associations to form consortiums and submit joint applications to access financing, as it is very difficult for small associations to meet the demands of tender processes, because the EU controls its finances very strictly.

Women's access to political responsibilities: progress and challenges

Ms. **Serena Romano** of Corrente Rosa asked the speakers to give their views on how to strengthen the position of women in political life.

Ms. **Agnès Arcier** of the Federation of Women Administrators – Gender Diversity and Governance around the Mediterranean Network recommended that women should speak out on public policy in general (security, employment, budget, migration, etc.) and not only on gender equality policies. She advocated showing up the discourse of male supremacy as outdated and

the practice of “networking” egos. In other words, women should be bold enough to hog the microphone in the same way as men do.



Ms. **Wafa Elloumi** of Mouwatinet recalled that the debate on parity is in full swing in Tunisia. Since 2016, women’s associations have been trying to mobilize public opinion by all possible means and to forge alliances with members of parliament and local elected representatives. The principle of equality established in the constitution must still be extended more widely to parties and trade unions. The law establishes penalties for lists not respecting horizontal and vertical parity.

Ms. **Iman Abdelrahman** mentioned the difficulties faced by the Hiwar Center for Youth and Women’s Empowerment (Palestine) in advocating in favour of the implementation of quotas for women in a context of tension. Her association is committed to greater involvement of women in local political life during the strike by Palestinian prisoners. Although the elections were reported several times, her association managed to attract the attention of the media on this issue.

Ms. **Amal Idrissi** of the CNDH in Morocco recommended ensuring that the form of scrutiny encourages the presence of women. For Ms. **Agnès Arcier**, there has been great progress in the legislative sphere in France thanks to initiative measures (zebra lists where two people of the same sex cannot follow one another). However, the evidence is that penalties are not enough: women rarely chair the councils of départements, regions or bodies such as metropolitan authorities. Truly binding laws are required because political parties would rather pay than fulfil their obligations. In France, feminists would like to learn from pilot experiences such as the gender-sensitive budgeting applied in Morocco.

Mr. **Mustapha Chafiai** set out the [recommendations of the Civil Society Dialogue to promote women’s access to political responsibilities](#):

1. In countries that have not yet included parity in their constitutions, **undertaking reforms to have the principle of gender equality included in the constitution** and banning all kinds of discrimination against women.
2. **Implementing mechanisms to ensure vertical and horizontal parity in terms of women’s access to political decision-making** and elected positions.



3. Examining legislative frameworks and institutional mechanisms intended to eliminate direct and indirect discrimination against women, preventing their advancement.
4. **Making assessments at micro (local) level to ensure changes in policies are having a real impact on the ground.** The assessment of policies makes it possible to mobilize and raise the awareness of different local agents in favour of meeting targets and the coherence of public policies at all levels (national, local, regional, etc.).
5. **Assessing the impact of quotas that could be called “legally binding targets”** and promoting their effectiveness. Encouraging the use of legally binding quotas, at least temporarily, by adopting penalties linked to quotas.
6. Institutionalizing dialogue between stakeholders (authorities, media, associations, universities, private sector) to promote a true partnership encouraging changes in behaviour concerning women's access to decision-making positions.
7. **Ensuring that women have access to parliamentary functions, management functions and responsibilities not limited to women's issues,** so that women are not horizontally stereotyped.
8. **Establishing binding measures or penalties to broadly extend respect for parity at decision-making level in political parties and trade unions** (zebra lists, changes to the form of scrutiny, partnerships, etc.).
9. **Achieving media coverage for the issue of parity and using social media to mobilize public opinion** and the electorate with regard to women's participation in politics and decision-making.
10. **Dealing with work-life balance issues.**
11. **Implementing training programmes for women in managing public affairs.**
12. **Allocating gender-sensitive budgets at local, regional and national level.**
13. **Training and preparing women in political parties for elections** and strengthening their capacities, particularly in the areas of communication and leadership. The associations organizing this training must be supported.
14. Supporting young people, particularly students, to develop a culture of democratic, egalitarian citizen politics.
15. **Establishing policies to ensure girls and women have access to education, and fighting illiteracy.**

Progress and gaps in combating VAW and gender stereotypes

The journalist Ms. **Mariam Moukrim** asked the speakers to give their views on how to eliminate VAW and gender stereotypes.

Mr. **Emad Karim**, of the UN WOMEN Regional Office for Arab States/North Africa noted that one woman in three in the world is a victim of violence. To provoke a reaction from decision-makers, UN WOMEN has estimated the cost of VAW. In Egypt in 2015, it has been estimated at 2.17 billion Egyptian pounds (supporting families, time spent avoiding certain places, children's absences from school, etc.). Karim presented some studies of the factors influencing violent behaviour towards women in the MENA region. A good number of the people interviewed stated that equality is not part of their culture. Many men said they are ready to accept the establishment of quotas and to have a woman as their hierarchical superior, provided they remain the breadwinners and their wives run their homes. Karim



concluded that paternity could be a way of changing behaviour and gender roles within couples.

Ms. **Amal El Idrissi** took up this analysis and specified that women aged between 15 and 45 are most subject to violence; that women with disabilities do not escape it; and that many married women are victims of violence. She also stated that many young men are both victims and aggressors. Violence generates violence (according to studies, men who have stated that they were faced with violence in their childhood – witnesses of GBV or victims of physical violence – would be more inclined to be guilty of violence in turn). Many women were also victims of rape by police officers.

Ms. **Nermeen Elbahtiti** of the Life Foundation for Development and Community Integration mentioned the success of the campaign of so-called “tourist” marriages in rural areas of Ismailia, Sharqia and Port-Said in Egypt. Volunteers have been trained to go to the villages and measure the scope of this phenomenon. Artistic activists have given families confidence and medical and psychological services have been offered to identified victims. Poverty and a lack of jobs are the source of the problem, together with low levels of education. In addition, parents are not aware they are prostituting their children. Egyptian law should condemn this type of crime more firmly. Communication materials suitable for all kinds of people, particularly those with little education suffering the effects of this type of marriage, are also needed.

Mr. **Lotfi Adjabi** recalled the sociocultural context in which the campaign against violence in public places developed in Guelma in Algeria. In this town, girls suffer double discrimination: in effect, their families do not allow them to go out to do sport or other recreational activities for fear that they will suffer harassment or aggression. That is why it was fundamental to publicize the law in the criminal code adopted by the Algerian State at the end of 2015 in order to dissuade those responsible for this violence.

Ms. **Naïma Chikhaoui** set out the [recommendations of the Civil Society Dialogue to combat VAW and gender stereotypes](#):

1. **Advocating for States to approve the Istanbul Convention** on preventing and combating VAW and domestic violence and allocating the budgets required to implement it, including political violence.

A. Concerning rape

2. **Taking priority action on the issue of “rape”**, often combined with other sexual violence, including sexual harassment – commonly banalized and not criminalized – affecting girls and women of varied family status and in different situations (married, single, with specific needs, in the course of migration, elderly, etc.).
3. Firmly stressing the fact that **conjugal rape must be dealt with socioculturally and judicially and under all laws concerning GBV.**

B. Concerning migrant women

4. **Processing, publicizing and using quantitative and qualitative data documenting the facts of GBV** in order to act based on complete, specialist knowledge of the situations, depending on the regions and the field (conflicts, negotiation, etc.).



5. **Providing emergency solutions to protect and support women victims of sexual violence (SV) in States concerned and involved**, as well as in countries in conflict (particularly Syria and Libya), transit countries and exile or host countries.
6. Advocating for measures backed by laws and international instruments in force or to be created, and to be adopted and applied in the following order of priority:
 - a. **Establishing preventive mechanisms against SV**, including secure accommodation centres.
 - b. **Documenting abuses** and getting criminals into the judicial circuit, depending on the case and the appropriate laws.
 - c. **Ensuring health services offering prevention and cure and education for dependent children and supporters of migrant women.**
 - d. **Undertaking campaigns against rape and the risks and subsequent impact of unwanted pregnancy.**
 - e. **Urging local and international NGOs to monitor and report GBV/SV and to provide the right responses, as well as systemizing the monitoring of the use of funds intended for women.** Transparency is imperative and some of the finance must be set aside for specific recommended measures (accommodation, care, etc.).

C. Concerning the marriage of underage girls

7. Using conceptualized language such as “forced marriage of underage children” or “forced marriage of girls and isolated cases of boys”, and **unifying the discourse of advocacy in the countries in the region when VAW is justified by the interpretation of religious texts.**
8. **Legislating for a legal age of 18**, the age of civil majority and personal freedom and responsibility, which also eliminates the obligation of guardianship, allowed to judges in cases involving minors in certain countries.
9. Proceeding towards harmonizing national laws with international agreements and abrogating articles that contravene the law and **raising judicial awareness in order to publicize the relevant laws protecting underage girls and coercing or punishing their aggressors.** This involves establishing the mechanisms for applicability and equal, controlled access to allow the efficiency of justice.
10. Ensuring greater independence of the most vulnerable girls and women by establishing the necessary human and financial resources, paying attention to the following priorities:
 - **qualitative compulsory schooling.** This schooling must be imbued with the culture of equality and human rights (taught and applied in the teaching).
 - **constructing empowerment** (self-esteem) and actively combating the current internalized and sociocultural and institutional stereotyping.
 - access to apprenticeship and job training in phase with the job market, and to the generation of income and financial and economic empowerment.
11. Adopting **a human capital and social capital approach** in all empowerment projects and processes, including the capitalization of expertise and know-how to behave and the construction of feminine and feminist leaderships.
12. **Tackling the issue of economic violence and inequality of inheritance through** harmonizing laws and combating violations of socio-economic rights.

D. Concerning legal frameworks and the laws relating to GBV

13. **Advocating to draw up/adopt overall (framework) laws on GBV based on the greatest progress made to date, specifically in Tunisia, as a reference** to be completed



and adapted. These framework laws should focus on prevention; protection; stopping impunity; reparations and compensation for women who have survived violence. They should:

- a. **Cover all forms of violence, including the respective customs of each Mediterranean country, under the concept of “GBV”.**
- b. **Be based on international law on the issue**, particularly:
 - The CEDAW.
 - The Council of Europe Convention on preventing and combating VAW and domestic violence. This international convention, dated 11 May 2011, coming into force on 1 August 2014, signed by 45 States in November 2017, and ratified by 24 States is legally binding, which allows civil society to use it as a reference document to establish legal changes and practices in all States.
 - The Istanbul Protocol on Torture and Other Cruel, Inhuman or Degrading Treatment or Punishment.
 - The African Charter on Human and Peoples' Rights (reference to the principle of gender equality).
- c. Alongside this or inclusively undertake advocacy for **harmonization with internal laws, particularly the family code and the penal code**. In fact, several laws tolerate VAW and/or leave legal loopholes that are used to allow child marriage (for example, articles 16 and 20 of the Moroccan Family Code).
- d. **Integrate a communication/media element into the framework laws on violence putting across the message that GBV is a cross-disciplinary public issue concerning human rights and world peace** that allows no sociocultural justification and which involves educating and informing women about their rights.
- e. Finally, **work on the proper application of the laws against violence in countries that have them**, such as Algeria and Tunisia.

Enhancing women's economic empowerment: findings and challenges

Ms. **Esther Fouchier** of the Forum Femmes Méditerranée (Mediterranean Women's Forum) asked the speakers to give their views on how to boost women's economic empowerment. She referred to empowerment as a process of transforming economic, political and social structures and she reported that there are 17 big cooperation programmes in the Euro-Mediterranean region on this issue.

Ms. **Moumena Benamar** of the United Nations Population Fund (UNFPA) focused on the correlation between the elimination of gender disparities and the capacity of women and their daughters to fully exercise their sexual and reproductive rights. A woman's capacity to avoid unwanted pregnancy has an effect on her chances of continuing her studies and finding a job. If her reproductive health prospects are restricted, her life choices could be limited. Inequalities concerning employment and remuneration reflect and are reinforced by those linked to reproductive health. Benamar regretted that economic empowerment strategies focus on the factors helping women to success and advance in the market, rarely taking into account sociocultural factors such as access to education, the absence of remuneration, access to property and the unequal distribution of housework.



Mr. **Bachir Mokrane** focused his contribution on the United Nations Development Programme (UNDP) in Morocco's role in promoting gender equality and the empowerment of women. He gave examples of good practices in the MENA region: Ennajah Machrouii/Je réussis mon projet (in Tunisia); the Common Programme for gender equality and increasing independence for women in Algeria Al Insaf; the Social Fund Development (in Egypt); the Tafilalet Oasis programme; the Oriental Integrated Development Programme (in Morocco), etc. Mokrane proposed a review of the classic approaches to income-generating activities by exploring innovative solutions and supporting women who have commercial leadership potential.

Ms. **Nisreen Amer** shared the initiative by the Jusoor Center for Development and Studies to develop a feminine economy in Libya in very difficult conditions of instability and violence. Businesswomen and female entrepreneurs were identified in four regions (Benghazi, Tripoli, Yefren and Sabha) and discussion groups organized to discover the challenges facing them and how the institutions could better support them by facilitating their inclusion in economic growth. Considering their careers and the political situation in Libya, these women have proved that they are models of intelligence and strength.

According to Ms. **Sabah Chraibi** increased economic empowerment must be understood as access to dignity and security. She set out the [recommendations of the Civil Society Dialogue to ensure women's economic emancipation](#).

Recommendations aimed at States:

1. Working for **equal gender representation at decision-making levels in business** and in consultative and representative assemblies for instance in banks.
2. **Ensuring the establishment of the principle of equal pay and remuneration.**
3. **Advocating for positive discrimination in credit facilities.** This implies providing access for women entrepreneurs to medium-term structured loans, reducing interest rates and granting longer repayment periods.
4. **Guaranteeing women fair access to infrastructures:** property, mobility, adequate childcare in the workplace, health, safety, transport and an effective strategy to combat VAW.
5. **Adopting measures to encourage the inclusion of women in the formal job market** by reforming employment laws, broadly extending social cover for entrepreneurial women, promoting tax breaks, etc.
3. **Adopting a gender-based approach in local, provincial, regional and national policies for socio-economic empowerment** and integrating the gender dimension in aid policies to businesses, regardless of their size or area of action.
7. **Ensuring that national programmes to promote female entrepreneurship are integrated,** in other words, engaging the public sector, private sector and civil society and taking good practices into account.
- 8 **Strengthening the capacities of the people in charge of running the programmes to support the integration of women into the economy.** Ensuring that these people have the necessary resources and competences to support women's entrepreneurial initiatives.
9. **Raising the awareness of elected women and those who have benefited from access to decision-making functions so that they will mobilize networks to promote women entrepreneurs.**



10. **Developing advocacy platforms aimed at economic operators to promote mentoring actions and the outsourcing of services for the benefit of businesses run by women.**
11. **Developing structures to provide economic information and managerial, financial and commercial training in new technologies and management techniques** for women entrepreneurs.
12. **Expanding access routes to local and international markets** by encouraging access by women to production and marketing spaces.
13. **Encouraging women to invest in new forms of the sustainable and alternative economy – the positive economy**, the green economy, the knowledge economy – increasing the value of experience and expertise. These non-traditional leadership projects corresponding to new trends will motivate women. Among other things, this involves creating chambers of the solidarity economy at the instance of other chambers of trade and industry.
14. **Changing the stereotyped image of women conveyed by school curriculums** and using the media to change the stereotyped image of women.
15. **Establishing an overall framework law against all forms of VAW in economic terms** (for example: the right to inheritance, workplace harassment).

Recommendations at regional level (for all the countries in the Euro-Med region):

16. Broadly expanding successful experiences through all countries in the region and creating networks for exchange and partnership in order to promote female entrepreneurship all over the Mediterranean through traditional routes, fair trade and e-commerce.
17. Setting up a common market and international exhibitions.
18. Capitalizing and benefiting from practical studies.
19. Exchanging experiences among women through networking and communication to sell products.
20. In terms of security, working to protect women running economic initiatives, such as traders.

Cross-disciplinary recommendations have also emerged from the Civil Society Dialogue:

- Adopting a gender approach in all cooperation agreements between States, at bilateral or Euro-Mediterranean or international level.
- Advocating for the systematic application of the gender approach for financial institutions and making States' respect for the CEDAW a condition of grant aid and loans.
- Allowing constitutional courts to adapt bills to conventions and international treaties before they are submitted to parliaments in order to ensure women's rights are not influenced by the ideological tendencies and political agendas of the different States.
- Ensuring the involvement of independent women's associations in monitoring States' respect for commitments in favour of equality.
- Financially supporting independent women's associations and providing protection to female legal activists when they play a key role in democratic surveillance.



Prospects for women's status in the future, particularly after the 4th UfM Ministerial Conference on the role of women in society

Mrs. **Fouzia Assouli** launched an appeal to the associations to mobilize for the effective implementation of women's rights included in constitutions. Along the same lines, Mrs. **Aïcha Ech-Chenna** claimed that failure to respect the law has serious effects on women's lives.

The Moroccan Minister of Justice, Mr. **Mohamed Aujjar**, gave an optimistic speech on the vitality of women's associations and their capacity to change the world. He repeated the commitment of the Kingdom of Morocco to preserve and develop gains in terms of women's rights until the mechanisms give satisfactory results. In terms of access to positions of responsibility, he took the example of parliamentary lists as affirmative action. He stressed the capacity of Islam to respect the place of women and denounced behaviour challenging gender equality justified in the name of a certain interpretation of the religious texts. He also declared that the Kingdom of Morocco shares the same values as the EU in terms of freedom, pluralism and women's empowerment. Finally, Aujjar stressed the importance of advocacy in schools and the media, because regressive ideas are threatening States and individuals. For him, women are the hope of the Mediterranean.

Ms. **Soukaina Bouraoui** of the Centre for Training and Research of Arab Women (CAWTAR), concluded that the harmonization of national laws with international charters and standards is vital in all areas. She recalled that the principle of non-regression of rights had been reiterated throughout the preceding sessions. Bouraoui stressed the idea of establishing a regional platform to shape and enhance laws on the ground. Advocacy is an art and a technique which increasing numbers of associations are mastering for the greater good of women's rights. Bouraoui hoped that women would exercise power in a humane way, with concern for altruism, social justice and a fairer world view than their male counterparts.

Final reflections

Progress on women's rights at judicial level has not yet been translated into experience – backward-looking mentalities still exist. The associations must work on representations and perceptions so that the laws can be more effective. There is still a big gap between laws and social behaviour in all areas (political parity, violence, economic empowerment, etc.). However, the qualities of civil society, which has acquired great expertise because it is close to reality, must be recognized. Associations must succeed in working together because the task of unpicking the oppression of women and revising legal texts is an enormous one.

So that their struggles can be translated into results, there must be convergence between movements in favour of human rights, along with political will. Without true commitment from political leaders, the goals cannot be achieved, which is why it is important to monitor the men and women at the highest levels of power, particularly women parliamentarians. Finally, inequalities in the area of economic and civil rights are an urgent issue, with effects at all levels. The economic aspect, in terms of the empowerment of women and access to productive and remunerative sectors, is therefore one of the main priorities for the future.

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