

HIGH-LEVEL
CONFERENCE ON

WOMEN FOR THE MEDITERRANEAN

30–31 MAY 2024 /
NICOSIA, CYPRUS

#WOMEN4
MEDITERRANEAN



Union for the Mediterranean
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EVENT REPORT

FOREWORD



H.E. Nasser Kamel,
Secretary General
Union for the
Mediterranean

Data highlights stark disparities in gender equality across the Euro-Mediterranean area: in the MENA region, less than 5% of businesses are women-led compared to the global average of 25%, and female workforce participation rates remain alarmingly low, between 15% and 30. In the EU, women earn only 70% of what men do when employed. Additionally, the intersection of gender and climate change exacerbates these challenges, disproportionately affecting women and amplifying vulnerabilities. Our Mediterranean region, among the most affected by climate change, sees women and girls representing 80% of climate-displaced individuals. Finally, violence against women and girls (VAWG) remains unfortunately pervasive as well throughout our region: at least 35% of women in the MENA region have experienced intimate partner violence once in their life. At the same time,

in Europe, more than 3,000 women are murdered by their partners or a family member every year, and 32% of perpetrators of sexual harassment in the EU come from the employment context.

The High-Level Conference on Women for the Mediterranean, held in Nicosia, Cyprus, on May 30-31, 2024, aimed to discuss these crucial topics, bringing together diverse voices and perspectives to address the critical issues of women's economic empowerment, gender equality in the face of climate change, and violence against women and girls.

The Union for the Mediterranean (UfM), in collaboration with the Commissioner for Gender Equality of the Republic of Cyprus, co-organized this conference to foster dialogue and cooperation on these pressing

issues. The invaluable insights and recommendations from this conference will be incorporated into the UfM's roadmap for implementation of the 2024-2025, in alignment with the [5th UfM Ministerial Declaration on Strengthening the Role of Women in Society](#), adopted in Madrid in 2022.

The discussions and recommendations from this conference are highlighted in this document and reflect our collective commitment to advancing gender equality in the Euro-Mediterranean region. The conference underscored the urgent need to integrate gender-sensitive approaches across all sectors, recognizing that gender equality is not only a fundamental human right but also a cornerstone of sustainable development.

I extend my deepest gratitude to the Republic of Cyprus, the Commissioner for Gender

Equality, and all the participants who contributed to the success of this conference. Your dedication and commitment to gender equality inspires hope and drives change. Together, we can build an inclusive and equitable future for all in the Euro-Mediterranean region.

The path ahead is clear. We must translate the recommendations from this conference into concrete actions, ensuring that they are embedded in our policies and programs. By doing so, we reaffirm our commitment to gender equality and to the empowerment of women and girls, paving the way for a more just and prosperous society.

H.E. Nasser Kamel
Secretary General
Union for the Mediterranean

Day 1

OPENING CEREMONY

H.E. Costantinos Kombos, *Minister of Foreign Affairs, Republic of Cyprus* opened the conference by emphasizing its critical importance in addressing gender equality issues. He expressed pride in co-organizing the event with the Commissioner for Gender Equality of Cyprus, and the Union for the Mediterranean. The Minister highlighted the value of the conference as a platform for quality discussions and exchanges on the challenges faced by women in the region. The Minister acknowledged the invaluable cooperation of the Cypriot government and the Union for the Mediterranean towards gender equality.

H.E. Josie Christodolou, *Commissioner for Gender Equality, Republic of Cyprus* highlighted the significance of hosting the conference in Nicosia, emphasizing Cyprus's commitment to gender equality as a key priority of the government. The Commissioner discussed the conference themes,

including women's economic empowerment, gender-just climate change, violence against women and girls, and the impact of media narratives on public opinion. She underscored the importance of a holistic approach to gender equality and announced that the conference would adopt a roadmap for implementing the 2024-2025 strategy to strengthen the role of women in society, in line with the 5th UfM Ministerial Declaration adopted in 2022 in Madrid.

H.E. Nasser Kamel, *Secretary General, Union for the Mediterranean*, expressed his gratitude towards the Republic of Cyprus and the Commissioner for Gender Equality for co-organizing the event. He highlighted the conference as a critical forum for advancing gender equality amid pressing regional challenges and opportunities. Emphasizing the stark disparities in female economic participation and the compounded effects of climate change on women, he



H.E. Costantinos Kombos, Minister of Foreign Affairs, Republic of Cyprus / H.E. Josie Christodolou, Commissioner for Gender Equality, Republic of Cyprus / H.E. Nasser Kamel, Secretary General, Union for the Mediterranean / H.E. Basheer Zoubi, Jordanian Ambassador to the Republic of Cyprus

underscored the necessity of a gender-sensitive approach in all the sectors. The Secretary General praised the ongoing cooperation with Cyprus and called for collective action to implement the UfM 5th Ministerial Declaration on gender equality. He expressed hope that the conference would foster dialogue and shape the Roadmap 2024-2025, driving concrete actions for inclusive development and gender equality in the Euro-Mediterranean region.

H.E. Basheer Zoubi, *Jordanian Ambassador to the Republic of Cyprus*, expressed gratitude for the opportunity to speak on behalf of the Jordanian Minister of Social Development, extending thanks to Cyprus for hosting the event and to the Secretary General of the UfM for the organization. He highlighted the multiple crises facing the world and stressed the urgent need to promote women's economic and political empowerment. He outlined Jordan's efforts

in this area, including the implementation of the Second National Plan for Women, Peace, and Security, and the launch of the Economic Modernization Vision and the National Strategy for Women. He underscored the importance of regional cooperation to achieve gender equality and a better future for women and girls.

UfM Co-presidency: Focus on the RoadMap for Implementation 2024- 2025 of the Ministerial Declaration by Anna Dorangricchia, Project Manager, Social and Civil Affairs Division, UfM



Anna Dorangricchia, Project Manager, Social and Civil Affairs Division, UfM

Anna Dorangricchia of the Union for the Mediterranean (UfM) presented an overview of the **UfM 5th Ministerial Declaration on Strengthening the Role of Women in Society** and its Roadmap's priorities, focusing on gender equality and women's empowerment.. Key initiatives of the UfM projects like the **MENA Women Business Club** within the realm of gender equality include enhancing women's participation in the labor market, supporting female entrepreneurship, and integrating women into climate change policies were highlighted. Overall, in these sectors, the UfM aims to foster collaboration, avoid duplication, and leverage resources for sustainable impact.

She briefly introduced the key priorities areas of future work of the UfM's Agenda on Gender Equality such as (i) Support Gender inclusive green and digital economic transformation (more effective labor market policies, competitive female entrepreneurs, strengthened skills for works of the future), facilitate access to finance (gender-budgeting, gender-sensitive fiscal policies, private gender lens-investments, use of capital market debts), (ii) boost the women's agency in the resilience to climate impact risks under the Women Peace and Security Agenda (WPSA) and as cross cutting issues (iv) reinforce data collection capacities, raise awareness on social norms, promoting legal reforms on VAWG.

Day 1

ROUNDTABLE 1: WOMEN ECONOMIC EMPOWERMENT

Roundtable 1: Women Economic Empowerment

Enabling conditions and supporting ecosystem for Inclusive economies

MODERATOR
Anna Dorangricchia, Project Manager, Social and Civil Affairs Division, Union for the Mediterranean

Simbarashe Sibanda - Regional Advisor, Women's Economic Empowerment, UN Women Regional Office for Arab States

Wendy Telek - Head, Women Entrepreneurs Finance Initiative (WE-Fi)

Rania Tarazi - Gender Team Leader, UNDP

Micheline Massaad - Executive Director, National Commission for Lebanese Women (Lebanon)

Regional and National Programmes for women financial and digital inclusion in the region

Anne-France Wittman - Programme Officer, DG NEAR

Amr Soliman - Board Member, National Council for Women (Egypt)

The high-level roundtable on women's economic empowerment gathered insights of high-level speakers from Europe and the MENA region, focusing on the challenges and opportunities for women in the realm of economic participation and empowerment. The discussion incorporated perspectives from esteemed international organizations, including United Nations (UN) Women Arab States, the European Commission, and the United Nations Development Programme (UNDP). Additionally, exemplary practices from country representatives were presented, particularly those from Lebanon and Egypt.

According to the Global Gender Gap Report 2024, the MENA region has seen a 1.8 percentage-point increase in economic participation compared to 2023, reaching 43.1% of gender gap in this sector. Labor-force participation remains a challenge, with some gender gap scores as low as 20.1%. Conversely, Europe shows a modest gain in economic parity, with a score of 67.8%. Notably, 27 European economies exhibit over 80% parity in labor-force participation, with some women holding significant representation in senior leadership and technical roles¹. This roundtable aimed to build on these statistics and share best

¹ Global Gender Gap Report 2024, https://www3.weforum.org/docs/WEF_GGGR_2024.pdf

practices and potential solutions to overcome the current challenges, towards enhanced economic empowerment for women across the Euro-Mediterranean region.

Challenges:

- 1. Low Female Labor Force Participation:** The participation of women in the workforce in the region remains significantly low – hovering between 15% and 30% of the total workforce. The socio-cultural norms and gender biases still limit women's access to employment opportunities.
- 2. Access to Finance:** Women entrepreneurs face substantial barriers in accessing financial resources. There exists a lack of trust and financial literacy among women, which hinders their ability to secure loans and investments. There is as well limited access to formal financial services and credit histories for rural women.
- 3. Digital and Technological Exclusion:** Women are less likely to have access to digital tools and technologies, which are essential for modern economic activities. The digital divide exacerbates existing gender inequalities in economic participation.
- 4. Inadequate Support Systems and Infrastructure:** Limited support from government and private sectors in providing necessary infrastructure for women-led businesses. This results in lack of mentorship, training, and capacity-building programs tailored to women's needs.

Potential Solutions/Recommendations:

- 1. Policy and Legal Reforms:** Implement policies that promote gender equality in the workplace are needed to support women's labor force participation.
- 2. Financial Inclusion Initiatives:** Develop programs to improve women's financial literacy and trust in financial institutions. The creation of targeted financial products and services for women entrepreneurs, including microloans and grants, could foster women's financial inclusion. One good example in this sense is the Egypt National Council for Women (NCW) in partnership with UN Women Egypt's [National Financial Inclusion Programme "Ta7wisha"](#). Moreover, the UNDP "[Women's Economic Empowerment: Lessons Learned on Women's Entrepreneurship and Micro and Small Enterprises \(MSE's\) from Select Arab Countries](#)" Report was presented to highlight the main recommendations, underscoring the need to pay equal attention to social resources and networks, and address norms and institutions towards women's economic empowerment.
- 3. Promote Digital Literacy and Access:** Government and private sectors should invest in digital literacy programs specifically designed for women. It is essential to ensure access to affordable digital tools and the internet for women in both urban and rural areas. A specific focus was devoted to the new EU-OECD regional Action "[Women's Economic Empowerment in the Southern Mediterranean: Enhancing Women Entrepre-](#)

Roundtable 1: Women Economic Empowerment

neurs' Financial Inclusion and Access to finance in the Digital Age" aiming to support an enabling policy and regulatory framework for women's economic empowerment in the region with a focus on promoting entrepreneurship by women. A second component of the programme will promote gender-sensitive financial tools and build women entrepreneurs' capacities to use them.

- 4. Strengthen Support Networks:** Enhance collaboration between government, private sector, and civil society to support women entrepreneurs. Establish mentorship and capacity-building programs that address the specific needs of women in business. Implement targeted campaigns to highlight successful initiatives and educate the public about available resources.



Day 1

ROUNDTABLE 2: GENDER EQUALITY AND CLIMATE

Roundtable 2: Gender Equality and Climate Change

National good practices



Cristiana Carletti - Roma Tre University, Seconded at Italian MFA and International Cooperation



Fedoua Derouiche - UfM Gender Focal point (Tunisia)

Roundtable 2: Gender Equality and Climate Change

Nexus on Gender Equality and Climate Change and Inclusive Food systems



Antonella Autino - Coordinator of the Future4prima project, PRIMA



Chiraz Bensemmane - Founder of Pitch World Fast

The high-level roundtable on gender equality and climate change featured prominent regional speakers from Partnership for Research and Innovation in the Mediterranean Area (PRIMA), Pitchworld Fast Enterprise, and national representatives from Italy and Tunisia. The discussion highlighted the severe and accelerated impacts of climate change in the MENA region, which pose specific risks to women and girls, including higher mortality during disasters and challenges in accessing relief.

Women, particularly those dependent on climate-sensitive livelihoods like agriculture, receive inadequate support for adaptation. Intersectional factors such as age, disability,

and socio-economic status further influence their vulnerability. Despite these challenges, women in the MENA region are already leading efforts to increase resilience and resolve conflicts over natural resources. The roundtable emphasized the importance of an intersectional approach to understand and address the compounded disadvantages faced by women in this context, aiming to enhance their capacity for adaptation and long-term resilience.

Main Challenges:

- 1. Climate Change Impact:** Climate change disproportionately affects women, particularly in vulnerable regions.



Roundtable 2: Gender Equality and Climate

Women and girls represent 80% of the displaced people victim of these impacts.

- 2. Economic and Social Empowerment:** There is a need to address economic and social processes that perpetuate gender inequalities, especially regarding access to education, visibility in climate change issues, and decision-making positions.
- 3. Gender-Based Violence and Harmful Practices:** Women and girls are disproportionately affected by harmful practices like Female Genital Mutilation (FGM) and gender-based violence, which hinder their full participation and contribution to society. In natural disaster and war contexts, the percentage of gender-based violence increases.

Recommendations/Potential Solutions:

- 1. Enhanced Access to Resources and Services:** Ensure equal access to resources and sexual and reproductive health services, including during emer-

gencies, to address the specific needs of women and girls.

- 2. Integration of Gender in Climate Policies:** Incorporate a gender lens into climate change initiatives and policies, recognizing the unique challenges faced by women and leveraging their participation in climate-resilient agriculture, sustainable energy, and other sectors
- 3. Financial Support and Capacity Building:** Increase funding and support for women-led organizations and initiatives, including climate finance mechanisms tailored to prioritize women's jobs, livelihoods, and participation in green and blue economies. The need for gender-just climate transition strategies was emphasized as essential for building resilient societies. Initiatives such as the [Gender Just Climate Solution Awards](#) was presented as a relevant tool to give visibility to women as agents of change in the climate actions.

Day 1

ROUNDTABLE 3: VIOLENCE AGAINST WOMEN AND GIRLS



The high-level roundtable on Violence against women and girls featured esteemed speakers from international organizations, such as the United Nations Women, and national representatives from Palestine and Spain, who discussed the pressing issue of gender-based violence and explored potential solutions within this context.

Despite some progress, the MENA region still faces significant legal gaps that undermine the effectiveness of responses to violence against women and girls (VAWG). According to the Social Institutions and Gender Index (SIGI) 2023, fewer than half of MENA countries have laws protecting women from psychological abuse (9 countries) and economic abuse (7 countries), and none explicitly criminalize marital rape². In the EU, violence against women also remains a severe threat, with 83% of young women avoiding certain situations due to fear of assault, and 2,300 women killed annually by partners or ex-partners³. This roundtable underscored the urgent need for comprehensive, integrated responses

² OECD, 2023 <https://www.oecd.org/stories/gender/social-norms-and-gender-discrimination/sigi/>

³ European Commission, 2023 https://commission.europa.eu/news/eu-calls-end-violence-against-women-2023-11-24_en

to effectively address and reduce VAWG and Violence Against Women and Girls in Politics (VAWP).

Challenges:

- 1. Increased Risk of Violence:** Social media has contributed to an increase in violence against women in politics, particularly through psychological, economic, physical, and sexual means. This poses a significant challenge to women's participation in decision-making positions.
- 2. Lack of Concrete Data:** There is a lack of concrete data on violence against women globally, making it difficult to address the issue effectively. This is also due to the dysfunctional reporting mechanisms, which contribute to under-reporting of incidents, as there is often no follow-up or action taken on reported cases.



Roundtable 3: Violence Against Women and Girls

- 3. Need for Holistic Approach:** Addressing violence against women requires a holistic approach involving collaboration with legislators, media, civil society organizations, and the collection of standardized data to give visibility to the issue.

Potential Solutions/Recommendations:

- 1. Standardized Data Collection:** Implement standardized data collection mechanisms, to collect comprehensive data on violence against women in politics. This data can help understanding the extent of the issue and developing targeted interventions.
- 2. Capacity Building and Training:** Provide training and capacity building programs for media outlets to increase sensitivity and awareness about violence against women. This includes training on language use, reporting practices, and – regarding violence against women in politics - ensuring
- 3. Collaborative Initiatives:** Foster collaboration between government agencies, civil society organizations, and international bodies like UN Women to address violence against women effectively. This can involve joint campaigns, policy advocacy, and resource-sharing to support women's participation and safety in all the processes.
- 4. Legislative Reforms:** Advocate for legislative reforms to strengthen legal frameworks and mechanisms for addressing violence against women. This includes implementing laws that protect women's rights, establishing functional reporting mechanisms, and ensuring accountability for perpetrators.

Day 2

Key note speech “Gender Justice” by Ms Clara Maghani, Governance Public Sector Specialist, World Bank Group (Egypt)



Clara Maghani, Governance Public Sector Specialist, World Bank Group (Egypt) highlighted the significance of gender justice and shared best practices from World Bank projects in Sub Saharan Africa. She emphasized the importance of understanding the real-life experiences of women who do not access justice due to gender stereotypes. The presentation delved into data showing disparities in justice access between men and women globally, such as women being less likely to report abuse or seek legal aid. It discussed initiatives undertaken by the World Bank, including integrated justice centers and mobile courts, aimed at addressing these inequalities and making justice systems more gender-sensitive. Ms Maghani stressed the need for gender-specific interventions and data-driven approaches to ensure equitable access to justice for all. Indeed, one of the outcomes of the World Bank Group Gender Strategy 2024-2030, highlights the need to reinforce justice and legal services, which can fortify women’s rights, and the necessity to always foster data and knowledge drive solutions.

Clara Maghani, Governance Public Sector Specialist, World Bank Group (Egypt)

Day 2

SESSION I: WOMEN ECONOMIC EMPOWERMENT IN THE REGIONAL CRISIS CONTEXT

Session I: Women Economic Empowerment in the Regional Crisis Context

	MODERATOR Giulia Maria Ferraresi - Project Analyst, Social and Civil Affairs Division, UfM		Ovi Karkkainen - Gender Focal Point, European Training Foundation ETF		Meriem Chehli - Chair & Founder of Algerian Women Foundation (Algeria)		Rana Boulos - Global Women Forum		Kenza Benmoussa - WeCan Network (Morocco)		Anna Kyrianiou - Legal Counsel, Board Secretary of Business and Professional Women (Cyprus)
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The Session I on women’s economic empowerment brought together influential voices from the European Training Foundation (ETF), the Algerian Women Foundation, the WeCan Network, the Global Women Forum, and the Business and Professional Women of Cyprus.

This diverse panel of experts tackled the multifaceted challenges faced by women in the economic sphere and explored potential solutions to enhance their participation and success. Key challenges discussed included limited access to finance, the absence of mentorship and networking opportunities, and deep-rooted cultural and societal barriers. To address these issues, the panel recommended developing financial programs tailored for women entrepreneurs, investing in comprehensive mentorship and training programs, and promoting gender-inclusive policies and practices.

Challenges:

- Limited Access to Finance:** Women often face significant barriers in accessing financial resources. Traditional banking systems and financial institutions may have stringent requirements that are difficult for women to meet, particularly in regions with prevailing gender biases.
- Lack of Mentorship and Networking Opportunities:** There is a notable absence of mentorship programs and networking opportunities for women in many regions. Without guidance and support from experienced professionals, women may struggle to navigate the entrepreneurial landscape and achieve business growth.
- Cultural and Societal Barriers:** Deep-rooted cultural norms and soci-

etal expectations can hinder women's economic participation. These barriers often manifest in limited support for women pursuing careers or starting businesses, and in some cases, outright discrimination.

Recommendations/Potential Solutions:

1. **Enhance Access to Finance:** Develop and implement financial programs specifically designed for women entrepreneurs. This includes microfinance schemes, grants, and low-interest loans. Financial institutions should be encouraged to adopt more inclusive lending practices that consider the unique challenges faced by women.
2. **Invest in Mentorship and Training Programs:** Establish comprehensive mentorship and training programs tailored to women entrepreneurs. These programs should focus on business development, leadership skills, and industry-specific knowledge. Creating platforms for women to connect with mentors and peers will help build a supportive network. The participants presented good practices in this sense, such as the [Global Women Forum](#), the [WeCan Network](#), and the [Algerian Women Foundation](#).
3. **Promote Gender-Inclusive Policies and Practices:** Encourage the inclusion of men in discussions and initiatives aimed at women's economic empowerment. This can help shift societal attitudes and foster a more inclusive environment. Additionally, advocating

for policies that promote gender equality in the workplace and entrepreneurial ventures can help dismantle cultural and societal barriers. The ETF "[Gender dimension of labour market transitions report](#)" was presented as a good practice for skills development towards labour market's inclusion.

Presentation of UfM-IEMed MedWE policies studies publications "Towards More Inclusive Economies: Advancing Women's Economic Empowerment in the Mediterranean Region" by **Gemma Aubarell**, *Director of Culture, Gender, and Social Affairs of the European Institute of the Mediterranean (IEMed)*, who explained that the publication represents the inaugural work of the MedWE (Mediterranean Women Empowerment) Programme, a collaborative effort between the Union for the Mediterranean (UfM) and the European Institute of the Mediterranean (IEMed). It focuses on gender equality and women's empowerment in the Mediterranean region, addressing the multifaceted challenges women face in achieving economic and social advancement. Based on insights from a conference held in Barcelona in September 2023, the paper examines key obstacles and opportunities in areas such as education, workforce participation, entrepreneurship, access to finance, legal reform, and gender equality in the workplace.

Through policy recommendations, it aims to guide policymakers, business leaders, activists, and scholars toward fostering greater gender equality and social inclusion in the Mediterranean. This publication marks the beginning of a series of studies and joint

activities under the MedWE Programme, aimed at promoting dialogue, exchanging knowledge, and advancing gender equality initiatives across the Euro-Mediterranean

region. The next publication will be on the nexus of Climate Change, Security and Gender Equality.

Session I: Women Economic Empowerment in the Regional Crisis Context



Gemma Aubarell, Director of Culture, Gender, and Social Affairs of the European Institute of the Mediterranean (IEMed)



Day 2

SESSION II: FEMALE ENTREPRENEURSHIP

Session II: Female Entrepreneurship



MODERATOR
 Anna Dorangrichla, Project Manager, Social and Civil Affairs Division, Union for the Mediterranean

Ayah El Arief - MENA Women Business Club (Egypt)

Hala Barakat - AUC CEI (Egypt)

Hiba Abulbdeh - Woman entrepreneur Sunergy (Palestine)

Raoula Kheder - Journalist, RTCI (Tunisia)

Ana Iñe - Assistant Deputy Director for female entrepreneurship, gender equality in companies and collective bargaining, Institute of Women (Spain)

The Session II on female entrepreneurship gathered insights from distinguished speakers representing the Women MENA Business Club, the American University of Cairo Center for Entrepreneurship and Innovation (AUC CEI), Sunergy Enterprise, Radio Tunis Chaîne Internationale (RTCI), and the Spanish Institute of Women.

Despite the substantial growth in investment in the MENA startup ecosystem, with \$3 billion invested across 639 deals in 2021, less than 1% of this funding went to women-founded startups. In the first nine months of 2022, out of 482 startups that raised almost \$2.4 billion, only 38 were founded by women, securing a mere 2% of the total investment value⁴. This disparity highlights the significant gender gap in the entrepreneurial landscape, further exacerbated by gender stereotypes, age limitations, and cultural norms. To tackle these challenges, the panel discussed recommendations including enhancing financial literacy, designing age-inclusive programs,

and providing tailored support for women entrepreneurs.

Challenges:

- 1. Gender Stereotypes:** Gender stereotypes often dictate that certain professions are more suited to men than women. This can result in fewer opportunities for women in fields like technology, engineering, or finance. These biases can also affect perceptions of leadership and competence, making it harder for women to be taken seriously as entrepreneurs.
- 2. Age Limitations:** Age restrictions in funding and support programs can disproportionately affect women, especially those who start their entrepreneurial journey later in life. This is particularly true for women who may have taken career breaks for family or other reasons. In fact, some programs have age limitations that may hinder women,

Session II: Female Entrepreneurship

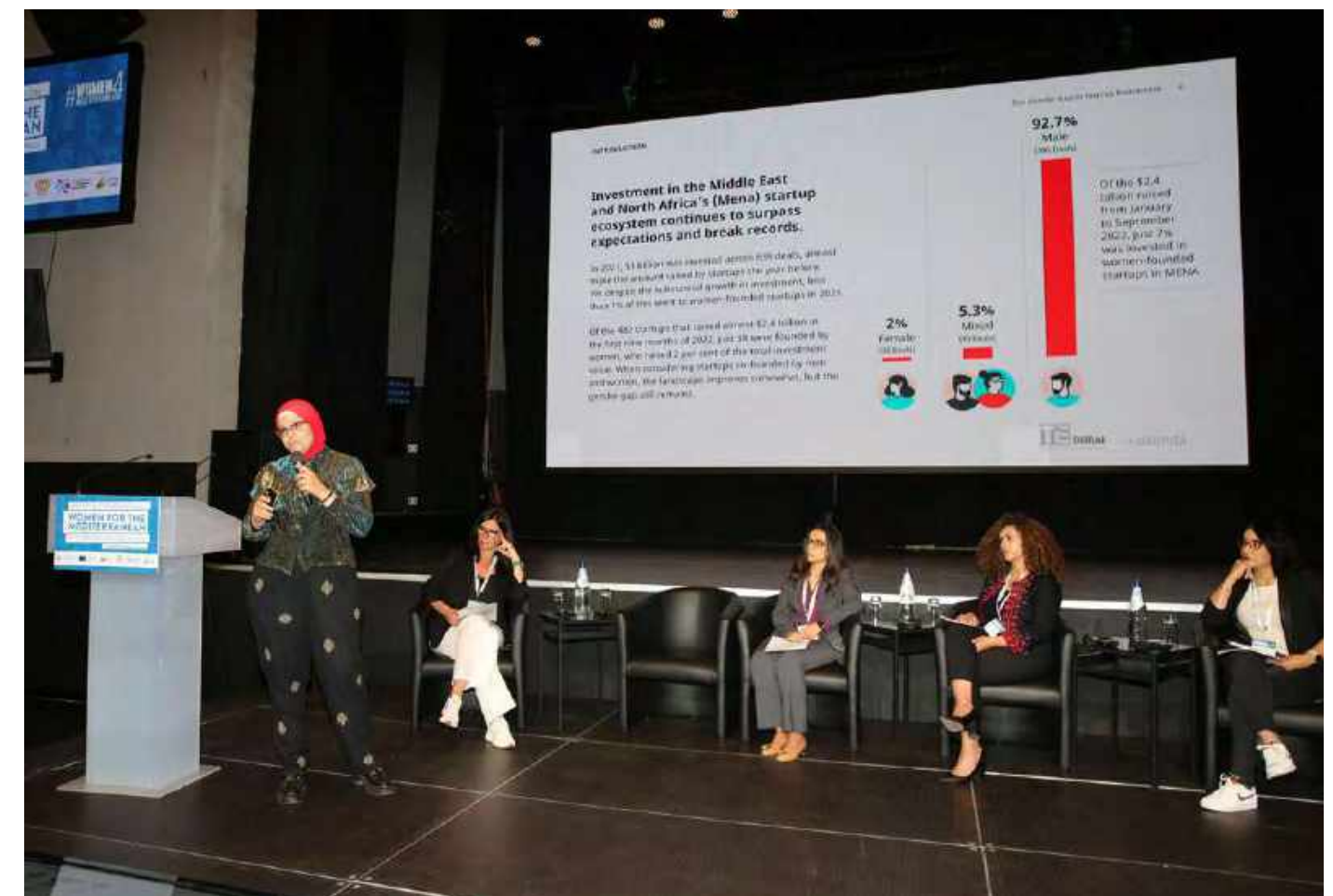
especially those over 35, from accessing funding and support.

- 3. Cultural and Social Norms:** Cultural and social norms in certain regions, such as the expectation for women to focus on family after a certain age, can impact their ability to pursue entrepreneurship.

Recommendations:

- 1. Financial Literacy:** Providing financial literacy training tailored to the needs of women entrepreneurs can help them better understand investment opportunities and financial management.

- 2. Age-Inclusive Programs:** Designing programs that are inclusive of women of all ages, including older women who may be starting a business later in life
- 3. Tailored Support:** Recognizing that the needs of women entrepreneurs vary based on factors such as region, age, and cultural background, and designing support programs accordingly. Mentorship and Networking opportunities, such as the ones offered by the **MENA Women Business Club**, can represent a good practice for women entrepreneurs' inclusion.



⁴ The Gender Gap in Startup Investment, TIE Dubai & Wamda, 2022 <https://www.wamda.com/research/pdf/gender-gap-startup-investment>

Day 2

SESSION III: CLIMATE CRISIS AND GENDER EQUALITY IN THE EURO MEDITERRANEAN REGION: EMERGING SECURITY RISKS



The session on “Climate Crisis and Gender Equality in the Euro-Mediterranean Region: Emerging Security Risks” featured esteemed panelists from the Arab Reform Initiative (ARI), International Water Management Institute (IWMI), Lebanese American University, and the journalist from L’Orient-Le Jour. This discussion underscored the intricate linkages between climate change and gender disparities in the MENA region.

As the climate crisis deepens, its repercussions intersect with existing gender inequalities, amplifying vulnerabilities particularly for women. Reports from UN Women highlight the disproportionate gendered impact, predicting that by 2050, climate change could push up to 158 million women and girls into poverty and forced displacement, with 232 million facing food insecurity⁵. The panel delved into the challenges women face, such as limited access to resources,

increased vulnerability due to displacement, and mental health impacts. Recommendations emphasized empowering women in decision-making within the climate change framework, improving infrastructure and support services, and promoting education and awareness to build resilience against climate change.

Challenges:

- 1. Access to Resources:** Women, particularly in rural areas, face challenges related to access to clean water, land ownership, and resources for farming. Rapid declines in the availability of water directly impact their ability to grow crops, leading to economic challenges as farming becomes less lucrative, forcing many women to leave the agricultural sector, where a significant portion of them is employed.
- 2. Internal Displacement and Vulnerability:** Climate-induced disasters such as floods and droughts often lead to internal displacement, with women being disproportionately affected. Women left behind in areas prone to climate risks face increased vulnerability, including the risk of exploitation, trafficking, and gender-based violence. Displacement also disrupts their social and economic networks, leading to additional stress and challenges in accessing basic needs like food, water, and sanitation.
- 3. Impact on Mental Health and Socio-cultural Disruption:** Displacement, loss of traditional roles within communities, and the stress of climate-induced challenges significantly impact the



Session III: Climate Crisis and Gender Equality in the Euro Mediterranean Region: emerging security risks

mental health of women. The loss of traditional roles and access to education can also lead to increased risks of child marriage and further social and cultural disruption within communities.

Recommendations/potential solutions:

- 1. Intersectional Approaches:** The importance of adopting an intersectional lens when addressing the challenges faced by women in the context of climate change. This means considering factors like gender, socioeconomic status, and solutions that address the diverse needs of women across different contexts.
- 2. Empowerment and Participation:** Empower women by involving them in decision-making processes at all levels, from local communities to national governments. Women’s active participation in decision-making regarding land ownership, resource management, and disaster response can help ensure their needs and perspectives are taken into account.
- 3. Improved Infrastructure and Support Services:** Enhancing access to essential resources such as clean water, sanitation, and healthcare services is crucial. This includes providing adequate shelters with proper sanitation facilities for displaced women and ensuring access to food, clean water, and healthcare services in disaster-affected areas.
- 4. Education and Awareness:** Education plays a vital role in empowering women and girls to better adapt to and mitigate the impacts of climate change. Providing education on climate-resilient farming practices, disaster preparedness, and gender equality can help build resilience and reduce vulnerability among women in affected communities. [The Water Energy for Food Program \(WE4F\) – MENA Regional Innovation Hub \(RIH\)](#) was presented, among others, as a good practice to provide local innovators with innovative solutions for the most pressing water and energy issues in food production and agriculture in the MENA region.

⁵ World Economic Forum, 2024 <https://www.weforum.org/agenda/2024/01/women-health-climate-change/#:~:text=A%20report%20launched%20at%20COP28,to%20leave%20their%20homes%20worldwide>

Day 2

SESSION IV: VIOLENCE AGAINST WOMEN AND GIRLS

Session IV: Violence Against Women and Girls



MODERATOR
Cristina Mas - Journalist, Diari Ara



Thaker Alzahool - EuroMed Feminist Initiative (EFI)



Jahda About Kalil - Arab Women Forum Disability



Rana Husselni - Journalist, Jordan Times (Jordan)



Andri Andronikou - Executive Director of the Association for the Prevention and Handling of Violence in the Family (Cyprus)

The session on Violence Against Women and Girls featured regional and civil society perspectives, represented by the Euro-Med Feminist Initiative (EFI) and the Arab Forum for Women with Disabilities, the media perspective thanks to the participation of a specialized journalist from the Jordan Times, and the local perspective from the Association for the Prevention and Handling of Violence in the Family of Cyprus.

The discussion highlighted the severe issue of violence against women and girls in the MENA region, where reliable statistics are scarce, and femicide is often overlooked. Notably, up to two-thirds of men and half of women in some countries accept “honor killings,” indicating deep-seated societal norms perpetuating gender inequality. The panel emphasized the need for the engagement of all the society against VAWG, the

need for awareness raising campaign and of media training in order to eradicate violence and allow all women to fully participate in building stronger, inclusive, and sustainable societies.

Challenges:

- 1. Lack of Social Acknowledgment:** There seems to be a challenge in gaining social acknowledgment of women as active agents in political and social spheres. This lack of recognition may hinder efforts to combat violence against women and girls.
- 2. Barriers to Implementation:** Implementing national action plans and policies to address violence against women and girls faces challenges due to legal provisions and international obligations

Cristina Mas, Journalist, Diari Ara

that hinder their effectiveness. This highlights a need for better alignment between national legislation, policies, and international mechanisms.

- 3. Limited Reporting and Awareness:** There appears to be a historical reluctance or fear in the media to report on issues related to violence against women and girls. This lack of reporting can perpetuate the issue by keeping it hidden and preventing societal awareness and action.

Recommendations/Potential Solutions:

- 1. Engagement of Civil Society:** Civil society organizations play a crucial role in advocating for the implementation of policies and supporting victims of violence. Empowering and involving these organizations can help bridge the gap between policy formulation and on-the-ground implementation. [The Regional Observatory on Violence Against Women and Girls](#), hosted by EFI, was presented as a good practice





Session IV: Violence Against Women and Girls

of cooperation among governments and civil society organization in order to follow-up on the data and indicators on VAWG in the region.

2. **Media Training and Advocacy:** Providing training sessions for journalists on reporting about gender violence can improve media coverage and public awareness. Journalists can be encouraged to report on such issues with sensitivity and accuracy, contributing to changing societal perceptions and attitudes.
3. **Encouraging Public Discourse:** Initiatives that encourage public discourse and debate on gender violence issues can help break down societal taboos

and foster a culture of accountability and support. Public discussions can also challenge harmful stereotypes and beliefs that perpetuate violence against women and girls.

Roundtable: Media and Gender Equality - Shifting Narratives

On the morning of May 30, before the opening ceremony of the High-Level Conference on Women for the Mediterranean, a session focused on “Media and Gender Equality - Shifting Narratives” was held, bringing together around 15 journalists from both EU and non-EU countries in Cyprus. This session served as a platform for exchanging challenges and good practices related to media narratives on gender equality.

Key points highlighted involved the necessity to include more female experts as sources in articles, addressing the issue that women are less frequently available for immediate commentary compared to their male counterparts, and therefore less present in the media. Additionally, it emphasized the need for media outlets to keep statistical track of gender representation in their reports, to ensure equal visibility for both genders. Furthermore, the session highlighted the importance of databases of female experts, such as the [2GAP developed by AFP](#), which is accessible and free of charge. Training for journalists and greater representation of women in managerial positions within the media industry were also identified as crucial steps for a more inclusive media sector, as well as the need

for gender equality guidelines, toolkits for reporting, and avoidance of stereotypes and victimizing narratives. The creation of a network of EuroMed Women Journalists to follow-up on these issues was suggested. The rapporteurs from this session brought these perspectives into the thematic panel debates on Day 2, ensuring the media's role in promoting gender equality was thoroughly integrated into the conference discussions.

SHARED RECOMMENDATIONS FROM THE CONFERENCE

Amb. John Paul Grech,
Deputy Secretary
General, Social and Civil
Affairs, Union for the
Mediterranean



- 1. Enhance Access to Finance:** Develop targeted financial products and services, such as microloans and grants, to improve women's financial inclusion and support female entrepreneurs.
- 2. Invest in Mentorship and Training Programs:** Establish comprehensive mentorship and training programs focusing on business development, leadership skills, and industry-specific knowledge for women entrepreneurs.
- 3. Promote Digital Literacy and Access:** Invest in digital literacy programs specifically designed for women and ensure access to affordable digital tools and the internet for women in both urban and rural areas.
- 4. Strengthen Support Networks:** Enhance collaboration between government, private sector, and civil society to support women entrepreneurs through networks' platform, mentorship, and capacity-building programs.
- 5. Integrate Gender in Climate Policies:** Incorporate a gender lens into climate change initiatives and policies, recognizing the unique challenges faced by women and leveraging their participation in climate-resilient agriculture and sustainable energy sectors.
- 6. Address Violence Against Women and Girls:** Implement standardized data collection mechanisms to understand the extent of violence against women and girls and develop targeted interventions. Strengthen legal frameworks and ensure accountability for perpetrators.
- 7. Foster Collaborative Initiatives:** Promote collaboration between government agencies, civil society organizations, private sectors and international bodies to address gender inequality effectively through joint campaigns, policy advocacy, and resource-sharing.
- 8. Empower Women through Education:** Provide education to build resilience, confidence, and reduce vulnerability among women in all communities.
- 9. Promote Gender-Inclusive Policies and Practices:** Advocate for policies that promote gender equality in the society, in the workplace and in political fora, and encourage the inclusion of men in discussions and initiatives aimed at women's empowerment.
- 10. Improve Infrastructure and Support Services:** Enhance access to essential resources and healthcare services for women, particularly in rural areas and disaster-affected regions.
- 11. Set-up a network of EuroMed Women Journalists** to follow-up on the issues raised during the "Media and Gender Equality - Shifting Narratives" session.

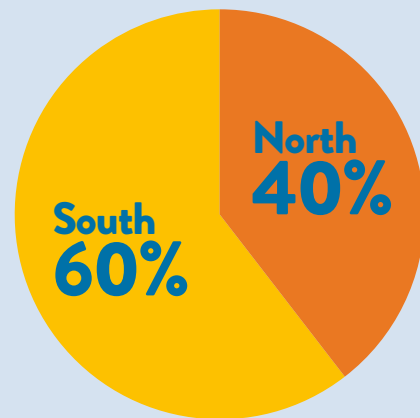
THE CONFERENCE IN NUMBERS

Number of articles/interviews related to the Conference



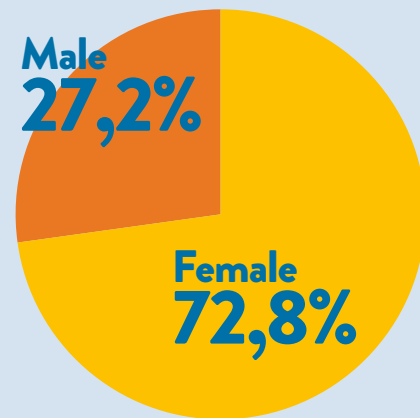
Region

In-Presence Participants

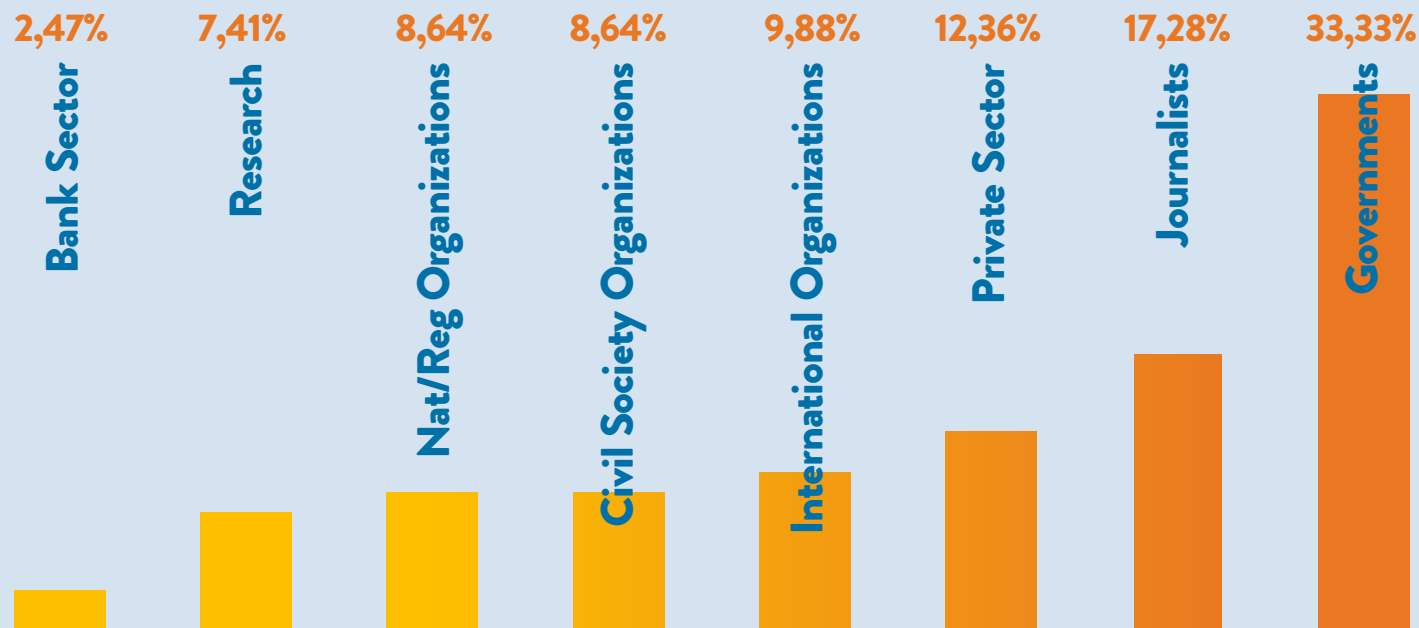


Gender

In-Presence Participants

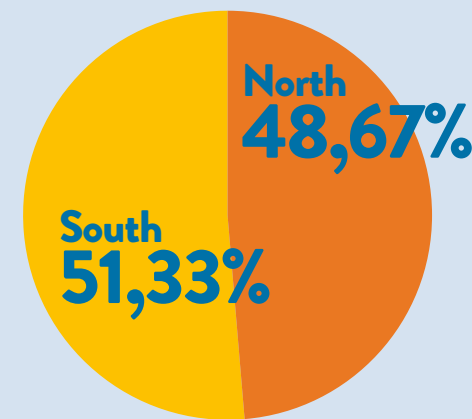


Type of Institution -- In-Presence Participants



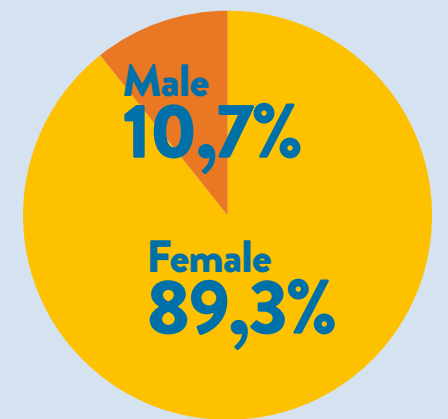
Region

Online Participants

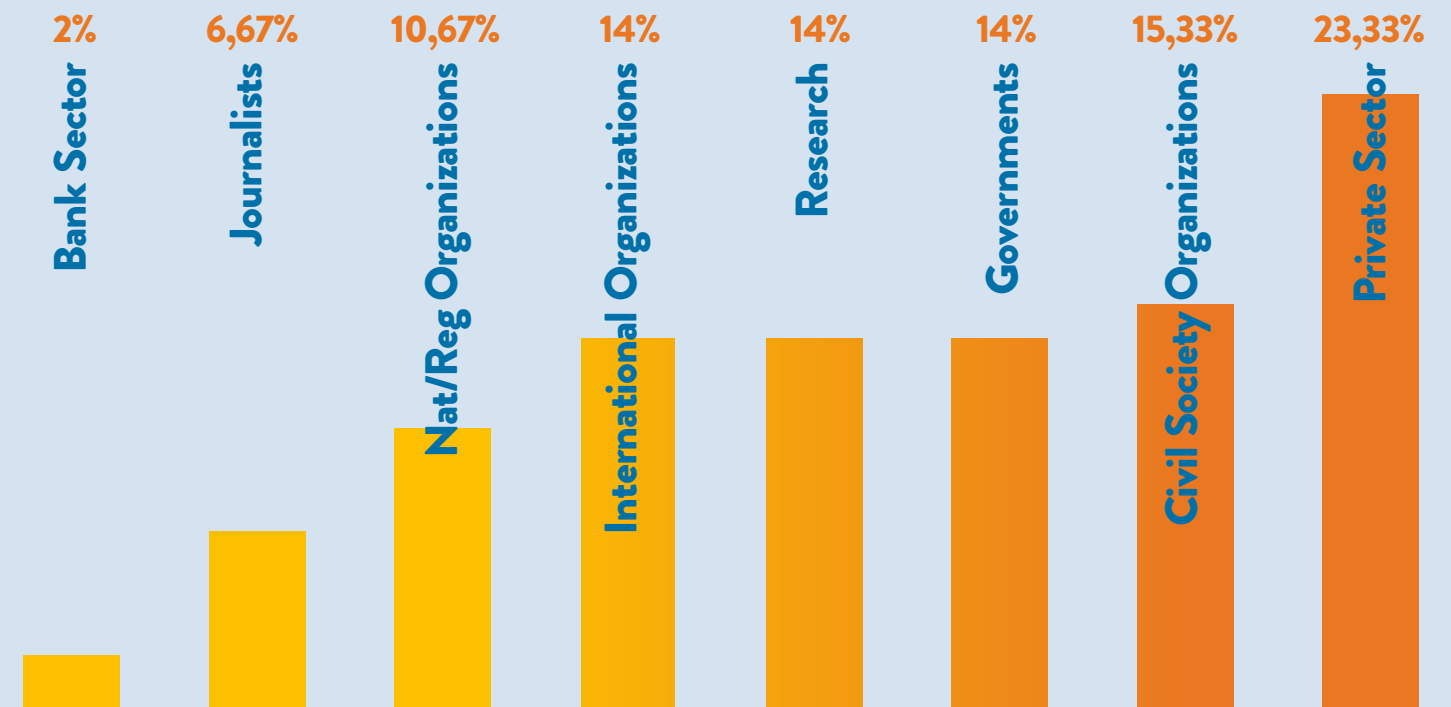


Gender

Online Participants



Type of Institution -- Online Participants



Social Media



1000+ visits to the Conference's webpage

119.895 people reached on LinkedIn, Facebook, Instagram and X/Twitter

186.919 impressions

Videos played **7.303** times

YouTube livestreaming: up to **280** **LIVE** online viewers per day

HIGH-LEVEL
CONFERENCE ON

WOMEN FOR THE MEDITERRANEAN

30–31 MAY 2024 /
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