



Union pour la Méditerranée
Union for the Mediterranean
الإتحاد من أجل المتوسط



UfM Women Conference 2018 “Women build inclusive societies”

Lisbon, Portugal, 10-11 October 2018

CONFERENCE REPORT

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FOREWORD

The Mediterranean challenges

Strong evidence shows that better use of the world's female population could increase economic growth, reduce poverty, enhance societal well-being, and help ensure sustainable development in all countries. According to the McKinsey's study, evidence showed that if women participate equally as men in the economy, the annual global GDP would grow up to \$28 trillion in 2025 compared with a business-as-usual scenario¹.

In the Mediterranean region, there are positive trends in women's participation in the economic life, in politics and decision-making. However, according to recent studies, the region is witnessing some urgent challenges concerning gender equality and women empowerment.

The educational gains achieved by women are yet to translate into greater empowerment and participation of women in social and economic life. Discriminatory practices, social barriers and insufficient institutional protection continue to block women's progress. In the MENA region, despite there are more women than men attending university, the number of women entering the labour force is much lower than in other regions (less than one in three women), compared to 66 per cent in European Union countries². In the EU, many countries face some challenges which show that women are still a long way from achieving full economic independence. In comparison to men, women are still less employed, work in lower-paid sectors, work on average 6 hours longer per week than men in total (paid and unpaid) but have fewer paid hours, take more career breaks and face fewer and slower promotions³.

Women continue to be under-represented in decision making positions at all levels. Despite numerous actions to address gender imbalances in decision-making, the rate of progress in most European Member States is low. Women represent only 36,1 % of all members of the European Parliament and just a quarter (25.3 %) of board members in the largest publicly listed companies registered in EU Member States⁴. Across the MENA region, women's participation in representative bodies shows improvement, although it is still uneven, with most countries still far from reaching the 30% critical benchmark and a representation rate in consultative bodies or parliaments of 15.9% on average.⁵

Countries have taken measures to combat violence against women and gender-based violence by establishing national plans and strategies. However, in the EU countries, one in three women has experienced either physical and/or sexual violence since the age of 15 and 75 % of women in qualified professions or top management jobs have been sexually harassed. In the MENA region, statistics on violence against women remain high and there is also a greater challenge, as most countries do not have a sufficient legal framework, lack data, have low awareness and a general acceptance by men and women of violence against women⁶.

Twenty years ago, 189 UN Member States recognized the central role of media in shifting the gender stereotypes, so they made women and media one of 12 critical areas of the Beijing Platform for Action.⁷ Unfortunately, they continue to be under-represented in this crucial business sector. In the world, 19% of online news mainly focuses on women, as opposed to 10% in traditional media, while the proportion of women interviewed as spokespersons remains low (20%).⁸ In 2015, only 4% of news clearly challenged gender stereotypes.⁹ In the Middle East region, women make up 18% of the people in the newspapers, radio and television¹⁰, making this region the worst performing region in the world in this regard.

¹ [McKinsey Global Institute, The power of parity: How advancing women's equality can add \\$12 trillion to global growth \(September 2015\)](#)

² *idem*

³ [European Commission, Report on equality between women and men in the EU, 2018](#)

⁴ [European Commission, Report on equality between women and men in the EU, 2018](#)

⁵ [OECD - Women in public life: gender, law and policy in MENA](#)

⁶ [OECD - Women in public life: gender, law and policy in MENA](#)

⁷ <http://beijing20.unwomen.org/en/in-focus/media>

⁸ [Global Media Monitoring Project 2015 \(funded by UN WOMEN\)](#)

⁹ *idem*

¹⁰ *idem*

The UfM Secretariat response

The UfM strategy promotes gender equality and women empowerment in close coordination with the UfM countries and the key stakeholders operating in the region. It aims to enhance the regional cooperation as women empowerment constitutes a common and shared value and priority between countries from both shores of the Mediterranean.

The strategy is implemented through an integrated approach articulated around 3 pillars:

- Developing a regional policy framework for women's empowerment and gender equality
- Providing a regional multi-stakeholder platform for dialogue, knowledge exchange and cooperation
- Supporting regional projects on women's empowerment and gender equality

This approach promotes and allows the building of strategic and complementary partnerships and cooperation between public bodies and international organizations, civil society, women networks, private sector and local authorities which contribute to increasing the impact on women and girls.

UfM countries and regional stakeholders have identified four priority areas for the coming years, priorities that have been confirmed by the UfM fourth Ministerial Declaration on strengthening the role of women in society adopted the 27 November 2017 in Cairo:

1. **Increase women's economic participation** by fostering their labour skills and promoting an equal access to the labour market and by creating an enabling environment for women entrepreneurs.
2. **Strengthening women access to leadership positions** in public and private sector.
3. **Combating violence against women and girls** including in conflict and post-conflict contexts.
4. **Combating gender stereotypes** and fighting against social norms that hinder the full participation of women.

Inside these priority areas, countries and stakeholders agreed to give a particular attention to women and girls in specific contexts: women migrants and refugees, women in conflict and post-conflict context, women in rural areas and women with disability. An attention will also be given to the development of knowledge, research and data production on gender equality and women empowerment in the region.



THE WOMEN4MEDITERRANEAN CONFERENCE

The UfM Women4Mediterranean high-level Conference was held in Lisbon, Portugal, from 10-11 October 2018. It was co-organized with the Portuguese Government and was supported by the Swedish International Development Cooperation Agency (SIDA). The conference had the collaboration of several organizations such as the Champalimaud Foundation, UN Women, UNIDO, UNDP, the Parliamentary Assembly of the UfM (PA-UfM), Science Po Paris, Konrad Adenauer Foundation, CIHEAM and the Euro-Mediterranean Women's Foundation.

Since 2013, the Women4Mediterranean Conferences have represented the main Euro-Mediterranean platform for dialogue and for discussing, exchanging experiences and promoting gender equality and women's participation in public, economic and civil life in order to provide solutions to regional challenges. The conferences focus on the role of women as drivers of change and leaders for development in the region. They explore how women and men can overcome cultural and social barriers to advance the regional agenda for women's empowerment and the achievement of SDGs. For nearly five years, the UfM women conferences have grown in size and scope and have become a catalyst for the promotion of regional policies, initiatives and projects, new ideas and solutions, collaborations and partnerships in the field of gender equality and women empowerment.

The objective for the 2018 edition was to highlight the key roles played by women in the region in **leading the way to build inclusive societies** and to engage and raise awareness of the concerned stakeholders toward addressing the structural and cultural gender barriers, so the region can benefit from the whole potential of women and girls.

The Conference was also a unique opportunity to demonstrate the relevance of the UfM "multi-stakeholder approach" in promoting gender equality and women empowerment in the Euro-Med region.

Conference topics:

- *Women leaders in business and social changes*
- *Women's participation in public life and decision making*
- *Shifting stereotypes and social barriers*
- *The role of men in promoting gender equality*
- *The role of the private sector & Media*
- *Combating violence against women and girls*
- *The role of youth*
- *Women in rural and agricultural areas*
- *Women in Sciences and innovation (STEM)*
- *Investing in sexual and reproductive health*

It brought together more than 400 high level stakeholders from 30 countries and from all sectors involved in gender equality and women's empowerment in the region, including country representatives, heads of State, ministers, local authorities and institutions, parliamentarians, international organizations, civil society platforms, academics, private sector actors, project promoters, figures with an outstanding commitment towards gender equality, media and youth. The conference was opened by the President of Malta, Marie-Louise Coleiro Preca, and was attended by the Ministers H.E. Maria M. Leitão Marques (Portugal), H.E. Hala Lattouf (Jordan) and H.E. Néziha Labidi (Tunisia), the President of the Egyptian National Council of Women, Maya Morsy and the Secretary General of the European External Action Service, Helga Schmid.

The event provided the opportunity to take stock of the progress made by the UfM Member States a year after the adoption of an ambitious ministerial declaration to promote gender equality in all spheres of society. Over the 2 days, participants had the opportunity to discuss and exchange ideas, views and innovative approaches related to the role of men, private sector and media in promoting gender equality and challenging stereotypes and social barriers. Participants explored ways to combat gender-based violence, to empower women in rural and agricultural areas, discuss the role of women in science, technology

and innovation, and measures to invest in reproductive health. The importance of education, a crosscutting issue for the five Cairo priority actions, was also highlighted during the different sessions. All participants agreed on the fact that progress has been made in many countries and many sectors regarding women's participation both at legal and political level, however the gender gap and the weight of cultural and social stereotypes is still considerable and need to be addressed. The participants brought concrete recommendations and commitments, new opportunities of partnerships, ideas and solutions in addition to new regional projects and initiatives.

In parallel to the Conference, 6 important side events were organized that engaged special audiences in working groups and regional dialogue meetings to share experiences, insights and progress towards achieving concrete goals for improving women's rights and participation.

Conference side events:

- *UfM Regional Platform for Dialogue on women empowerment, 9 October 2018*
- *UfM Women Business Forum, in partnership with UNIDO, 9-11 October 2018*
- *WOMED – Women of the Mediterranean: next generation of leaders, in partnership with Sciences-Po Paris, 9 October 2018*
- *Euro-Mediterranean Youth Forum: Shaping the Digital Future, in partnership with Konrad-Adenauer-Stiftung, 9-11 October 2018*
- *Committee on Women's Rights of the Parliamentary Assembly of the UfM, 11 October 2018*
- *Round table: Behavioral Insights for women's economic empowerment, 11 October 2018*

In addition, during the regional dialogue meeting, countries agreed on the principals that will guide the design of the **follow up mechanism** to monitor progress and review countries' Ministerial commitments on strengthening the role of women in society, including an agreed set of indicators to be compared with regional data based on available common statistics. The objective of this mechanism is to get an accountable picture of the situation of women in the Euro Mediterranean region and to measure progress in the coming years.

Our mission now and for the years to come, as the UfM together with countries and regional stakeholders, is to track, support and gage all these ideas, solutions and projects in order to create impact on women and girls in the region.

Conference Highlights

429
participants
from **30**
countries

79,5% of
attendees
were **women**

36% attendees from the South and East shores of
the Mediterranean
32% Other EU member state
31% Portuguese **1%** Other

253 articles
reaching a
potential **140 M**
audience

Balanced media
coverage: **38%**
Southern Med, 41%
Northern Med
countries

253 articles
reaching a
potential **140 M**
audience

40 **interviews:** *Al Ahram, Al Arabi, ANSA, EFE, El Diario.es, EuroNews, Huffington Post, Kuriakos TV, Público, Radio Antenna1, Radio Liban, Radio Monte Carlo Doualiya, RFI, RTVE, TVE*

4 **Media Partnerships** *France Medias Monde, Lusa, Radio Liban, BBC Arabic*

6.500 visits
to the
event
webpages

205K
interactions
+1500
mentions on
Twitter

+ 20 regional
projects &
initiatives
presented

CONFERENCE POLICY RECOMMENDATIONS

Though the different panel discussions and workshops participants made key points and recommendations related to the different priorities on strengthening the role of women in society:



Combating gender stereotypes and fighting against social norms that hinder the full participation of women

Comprehensive laws and policies for structural empowerment

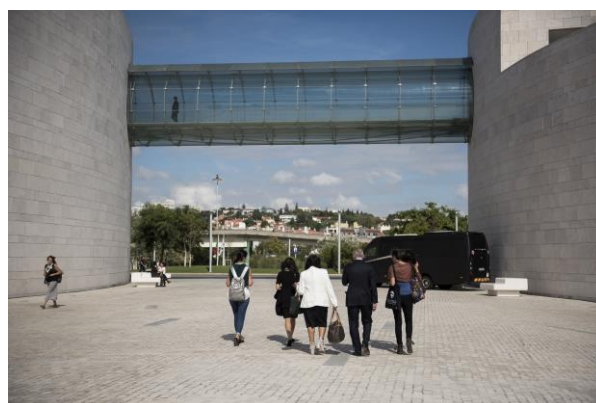
- A holistic approach is needed to foster equality and avoid superfluous and partial policy making. In order to achieve this, both changing and enforcing laws as well as deconstructing social norms and promoting gender equality in the political, economic and education spheres are essential. This can change the perception of what masculinity means, what is allowed, and what is not, including sexual harassment at the workplace and gender-based violence.
- Budgets are also necessary to create an adequate framework allowing women to fulfil their potential. Women ministers are also needed but not only Ministers for Women.
- Institutionalizing women empowerment also requires the implementation of progressist policies and laws. Therefore, justice personnel, police officers and actors of the public sector need to be trained.

Embedding gender equality in Public-Private partnerships

- National authorities, civil society organizations and communities should continue to collaborate to implement the regional agenda for the promotion of women's rights.
- Resources need to be allocated for programs aimed at eradicating gender stereotypes through advocacy and awareness-raising campaigns. The main message of the campaign should be that being a woman is not a source of weakness or shame, nor an obstacle, but a source of strength and possibilities.
- Innovation and digitalization should be promoted, given that the Mediterranean region is young and dynamic. Technology allows spreading fast new ideas that challenge and break stereotypes everywhere.

Work with the whole empowerment ecosystem: Family, media and educational system

- These three entities are essential to change mentalities and deconstruct embedded social norms. Collaboration between them is needed to instigate social change.
- Work is needed from the earliest years to break stereotypes in the education system. Education is key to transferring knowledge and changing centuries of mentality. Profound change should be promoted in childhood and adolescence, using music, sports and other academic tools to foster gender interaction in leadership and peace-making.
- Journalists and other media workers, including bloggers and influencers, who reach out to young people on a daily basis, should be trained.
- A common definition of "respect" should be adopted, which could help global dialogue in all sectors.



Increasing women's economic participation, including young people

A holistic legislative approach to inclusiveness

- Regulatory and judicial reforms are needed. Access to heritage and property rights has proven essential to ensure women's empowerment and independence.
- A multidimensional approach to initiatives, e.g. work-life balance and an ethical approach to the value chain is necessary.
- Promotion of multilevel partnerships.

The importance of experience sharing

- Sharing best practices throughout the region helps maximize the outcomes of strategies by putting forward some lessons learnt and adapting policies and initiatives to local contexts. Several examples can be cited, such as the one of the government of Malta who has succeeded in increasing the participation of Maltese women in the labour force by 20% in just 4 years. This measure has included different mechanisms:
 - Tax incentives for returning to work
 - Increasing maternity and adoption leave
 - Free childcare facilities
 - "Breakfast" and "afterschool clubs" for children.
- Accompanying women from the informal to the formal sector, which also implies providing social security;
- Investing in gender data collection, which can help better evaluate initiatives to make them sustainable in the long term;
- Promoting changes in social norms, which have an impact on women's status.
- Supporting young people through employment, access to information and access to the market so that they can break the circle of poverty.



Increasing political participation of women through quotas and representation

- **Investing in data collection and monitoring**
- The lack of reporting, monitoring and data collection on gender equality issues in the region impedes the creation of adequate and flexible policies.
- Data is necessary to be able to evaluate results and quantify the impact of programmes in order to monitor them and optimize policy-making.
- An interesting proposal was to conduct a survey to monitor the phenomenon of the informal sector, including unpaid care work.
- Including temporary measures to improve the presence of women in parliaments and in the decision-making process.
- Women should occupy positions of power, but they should not act as "women-men" which means women attracted by patriarchy.

Embedding principles of inclusiveness and equality within the private sector

- In order to ensure women's economic empowerment, enterprises could offer alternative and flexible working environments that take into account modern perceptions of responsibility sharing in a household.
- Women in rural areas are particularly vulnerable to discrimination and face multi-layered self-reinforcing inequalities deeply rooted in the society. Therefore, increasing women's economic participation in rural areas is a priority in the region:
 - Investing in modern and sustainable agriculture, i.e. organic agriculture, so that women are not exposed to pesticides along with their children;
 - Investing in innovation, which may improve women's daily life, for example during water supply;
 - Investing in the quality of education and capacity building;
 - Investing in microcredit and women's banking;



Increase the participation of Women in Sciences, Technologies and Innovation (STEM)

- **The importance of promoting STEM within the ecosystem.**
- The untapped potential of the digital economy for women empowerment needs to be explored in depth. Encouraging women to engage in digital and STEM-related jobs and training can be an element of evening-out the economic opportunities available for women and raising their employability.
- Encouraging families to pay attention to the scientific interests of their daughters as well

as the interests of their sons, without distinction.

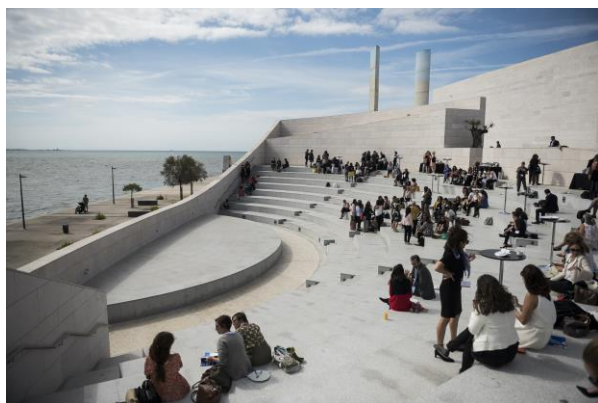
- Promoting science and ICT clubs and workshops for youth and women.
- Incorporating computing and informatics in public educational programmes.
- Representing women scientists in the media products.

Prioritizing key emerging sectors in public policy making

- Increasing the availability of STEM trainings for women allows to raise the bargaining power of women in the job market and widen the range of possible jobs accessible for women.
- Taking women's interests and preferences into account when establishing institutional policies.

Collaborating with the private sector to exit the loop of multi-layered structural inequalities

- Enabling women to participate fully in the labour market.
- Working to eliminate gender bias in the work place.
- Strengthening channels linking women in the field and other women networks.
- Investing in emerging enterprises and women entrepreneurs.
- Eliminating sexual and gender bias in professional and job interviews and not allowing sexist comments.



Investing in sexual and reproductive health

Sexual and reproductive health as a priority in national agendas

- The parliamentarians can advance this process forward by including HPV vaccination and

early detection of cancer in national health plans.

- Civil society is extremely important in advocating for right to health to the decision-makers.
- An increase in accountability is also required to foster a safe and constructive environment for long-term structural empowerment.

Investing in data collection on sexual and reproductive health.

- More visible data is needed to know more precisely what the gaps are and how to overcome them.

Work with all stakeholders: raise awareness, train and prevent.

- Advocating for women's access to health care within the ecosystem.
- Training healthcare providers in order to promote prevention, create safety nets and increase positive spillovers.
- Joining the WoRTH project for prevention and early detection of breast and cervical cancer, along with another project in the pipeline to combat VAGW, in collaboration with the WHO and the UN.

PROJECTS AND INITIATIVES

In addition to the policy and action-oriented recommendations, various initiatives and projects from the region were presented, as follows:

<p>UNIDO project <i>Promoting women empowerment for inclusive and sustainable industrial development in the MENA region</i></p>	<p>Labelled by the Secretariat of the Union for the Mediterranean in November 2015, “Promoting women empowerment for inclusive and sustainable industrial development in the MENA region” project is promoted by United Nations Industrial Development Organization (UNIDO), and partially funded by the Italian Government. It constituted the first regional best practice with an integrated approach to support women entrepreneurship on three levels: macro (policy dialogue), meso (reinforcing the capacities of the women business associations) and micro level (strengthening the entrepreneurship capacities of women entrepreneurs).</p> <p>For more information: https://ufmsecretariat.org/project/promoting-women-empowerment-for-inclusive-and-sustainable-industrial-development-in-the-mena-region/</p>
<p>British Council Project <i>Enhancing the civic and social engagement of women and youth in preventing violence and extremism</i></p>	<p>“Enhancing the civic and social engagement of women and youth in preventing violence and extremism” aims to support on the one hand the active involvement of young women and men in their local communities, in particular by building their capacity to engage in preventing violence and extremism and on the other hand, the establishment of local, national and regional dialogues, exchange of best practices, actions and networking between women and youth organizations. Around 5,000 direct beneficiaries and 20,000 community members are benefiting from the project’s activities.</p> <p>For more information: https://ufmsecretariat.org/project/engagement-preventing-violence-and-extremism/</p>
<p>The WoRTH project <i>Albania Montenegro and Morocco</i></p> 	<p>The Women’s Right to Health – The WoRTH Project is a UfM-labelled project that aims at implementing a comprehensive cervical and breast cancer control strategy through multi-sectoral partnerships anchored in relevant national policies and plans in Albania, Montenegro and Morocco. The WoRTH project targets, in addition of health professionals, 15.000 disadvantaged women living in vulnerable situations who have the opportunity to be tested for free for cervical and breast cancer. The project is promoted by the Centre for Epidemiology and Prevention of Cancer in Piedmont (CPO) in partnership with the World Health Organization.</p> <p>For more information: https://ufmsecretariat.org/project/womens-right-to-health-the-worth-project/</p>

Regional Campaign on preventing violence against women and girls

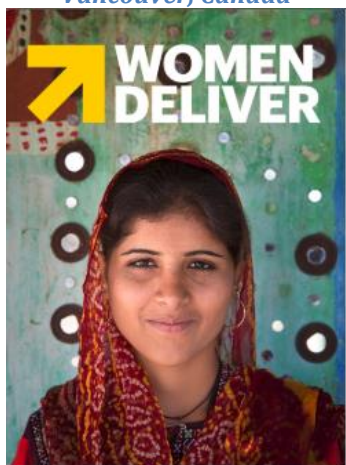


Funded by the EU, as provided by the UfM 4th Ministerial Declaration and implemented by the Euro-Med Feminist Initiative, the project aims (i) to support national stakeholders in developing and implementing practical and targeted information, awareness-raising and education activities, aimed at preventing and combating violence against women and girls (VAWG) in the Southern Neighbourhood countries; (ii) to develop the capacity of civil society organisations in the Southern Neighbourhood countries, notably women’s organisations, promoting legislation criminalizing VAWG; (iii) the establishment of a civil society mechanism to follow the achievements on VAWG made by the national governments in the Southern Neighbourhood countries.

For more information:

<http://www.efi-ife.org/regional-conference-launching-regional-campaign-zero-tolerance-violence-against-women-and-girls-0>

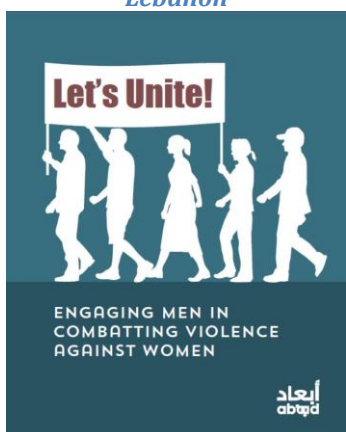
Women Deliver 2019 Conference Vancouver, Canada






Women Deliver is a leading global advocate that champions gender equality and the health and rights of girls and women. Its advocacy drives investment – political and financial – in the lives of girls and women worldwide.

Every three years, the Women Deliver Conference is organized, gathering more than 6,000 world leaders, influencers, advocates, academics, activists, and journalists with the objective to present new knowledge, promote new and innovative solutions, and engage a broad spectrum of voices toward gender equality. The next Conference will take place on 3-6 June 2019 in Vancouver, Canada and it will focus on several issues from health, nutrition, education, economic and political empowerment to human rights, good governance, and girls’ and women’s agency and equality.

ABAAD– Resource Center for Gender Equality Lebanon



ABAAD is a UN ECOSOC organization that aims to achieve gender equality as an essential condition to sustainable social and economic development in the MENA region. It advocates for the development and implementation of policies and laws that enhance women’s effective participation and the elimination of gender-based violence. ABAAD also seeks to support and strengthen the capacities of local, regional and international entities working on programmes of Sexual and reproductive health and rights (SRHR), Mental Health & Psychosocial Support. It has a pioneer “Masculinities” programme, which commits men to work towards an equitable society, free of hegemonic masculinities and violence against women. The program involves a diversity of people, including civil society organizations, local feminist organizations, boys, girls, women and adolescent men, refugees, and decision-makers (such as politicians, religious leaders, judges, Internal Security Forces (ISF)), to understand masculinities in modern times in Lebanon and throughout the MENA region. The overall goal is to transform the way men and women understand "masculinity" into versions that are more gender-equitable, non-violent and consistent with universal human rights beliefs.

<p>SouthMed WiA Algeria, Egypt, Jordan, Lebanon, Morocco, Palestine and Tunisia</p> 	<p>SouthMed WiA is a project funded by the EU within the framework of the regional program Med Film. It aims to strengthen the capacities of female professionals and operators of the audiovisual sector in seven countries of the Southern Mediterranean and to contribute to sustainable development and cultural diversity by enhancing the image of women in the film sector. The organization also aims to strengthen women's skills and capacities to advocate and participate in prominent roles in the local and regional audiovisual industry. It also aims to improve evidence, provide comprehensive and relevant arguments and raise awareness of the potential for women's participation in the audiovisual sector and in society in general.</p> <p>For more information: http://www.smedwia.eu/en/home/</p>
<p>She Fighter Jordan</p> 	<p>SheFighter is the 1st Self-Defense Studio in Jordan created by Lina Khalifeh in January 2010. The studio aims to empower women both mentally and physiologically through Self-Defense Techniques. By learning SheFighter's Techniques women will feel more confident, secure and strong to defend themselves from different violent situations.</p> <p>For more information: https://www.shefighter.com/</p>
<p>CIHEAM Italy</p>  <p>Cooperazione Italiana allo Sviluppo Ministero degli Affari Esteri e della Cooperazione Internazionale</p> <p>CIHEAM 1980</p> <p>GE.MA.I.S.A.</p> <p>"ENHANCING GENDER MAINSTREAMING FOR SUSTAINABLE RURAL DEVELOPMENT AND FOOD SECURITY ACTIONS"</p>	<p>Ciheam implements a project that aims to enhance Gender Mainstreaming in sustainable rural development and food Security (GeMaiSa). This goal is achieved through an interinstitutional public/private platform to protect and increase the role of women in the Mediterranean and Near East mostly in natural resource management and food security through institutional building. A specific component has been developed in Tunisia through the assessment of strategic potential partnerships for women empowerment, capacity building, dissemination, both nationally and internationally, of positive experiences in women entrepreneurship.</p> <p>For more information: https://www.ciheam.org/en/research/projects/one_programme?programme=en_hancing-gender-mainstreaming-in-sustainable-rural-development-and-food-security&id=81</p>
<p>Acacias for all Tunisia</p> 	<p>Acacias for all is a project that aims to fight desertification by mobilizing rural communities to develop climate change adaptation strategies. It has reached 270 direct beneficiaries, mainly farmers who are convinced of the need to adapt to climate change and take advantage of opportunities to contribute to the fight against the spread of the desert, taking into account both economic and ecological constraints.</p> <p>For more information: http://www.acaciasforall.org/</p>
<p>Raye 7 Egypt</p> 	<p>Raye7 is a mobile app that helps connect car drivers and commuters to share their everyday ride to work or anywhere else. Samira Negm and Ahmed Negm created this mobile application which has been recognized as the world's second best mobile startup at the Mobile World Congress in Barcelona 2016. Their aim is to help individuals save time and be more productive. At the same time, drivers will find company along the way and earn some money.</p> <p>For more information: https://www.raye7.com/</p>

Entr@crush Tunisia



Hayfa Sdiri is a young Tunisian woman who founded **Entr@crush**, an online platform for young Tunisians with entrepreneurial ideas, to establish contacts with like-minded individuals, donors and entrepreneurs. It offers e-learning courses in a variety of subjects, from administration and accounting to communications, to prepare young entrepreneurs. It also links donors with young entrepreneurs. She built this non-profit initiative with only five people and no capital. Ms. Sdiri was one of 12 change makers of the Youth Leadership Programme (YLP) designed and implemented by UNDP with the support of UN Women in the Arab region.

<http://entracrush.blogspot.com/>

Women sense tour Morocco, Tunisia, Turkey, Indonesia and Iran



The Women SenseTour is a personal project initiated by Sarah Zouak, 25 years old, who wishes to meet, support and (re)value the image of Muslim women as agents of change in favor of the empowerment of women and girls. She spent several months in Morocco, Tunisia, Turkey, Indonesia and Iran meeting 25 women who are all true agents of change and serenely combine their faith and activism for gender equality. The idea of this project is that these women are not only perceived with a positive perspective, but to turn them into models and sources of inspiration for everyone.

For more information: <https://womensensetour.com/>

Girls Got It Lebanon



Girls Got IT aims to break the cultural stereotypes that surround women in STEAM subjects by exposing young females to essential technology skills and by encouraging them to venture into STEAM career paths. The initiative also seeks to support the technology start-up ecosystem in Lebanon, by partnering with entrepreneurs, SME and tech specialists from the community to provide GGIT workshops.

For more information: <https://www.girlsgotit.org/>

Lebanese Women Angel Fund Lebanon



The **Lebanese Women Angel Fund (LWAF)** is an impact initiative redefining the role of women in business beyond social and economic boundaries, empowering women to become seed investors. Beneficiaries include women investors as well as women entrepreneurs of SMEs registered in Lebanon.

For more information: www.lwaf.co

<p>The AGEMI project</p> 	<p>Advancing Gender Equality in Media Industries (AGEMI) project takes an innovative and integrated approach to combating gender stereotypes and promoting an equal, diverse and inclusive media sector. It aims at promoting gender equality in the university and a gender approach in the curricula. The program also provides long-term training on gender equality, supports the development of internal codes of ethics and carries out gender awareness-raising campaigns among personnel in partnership with the Palestinian public television and other institutional organizations.</p> <p>For more information: https://www.agemi-eu.org/</p>
<p>EcoTown Lebanon</p> 	<p>The NGO Bahr Loubnan is collaborating with the Union for the Mediterranean, to transform selected cities, towns and villages on the Mediterranean coastline into Ecotowns. Through public programmes and school visits, these ecotowns will serve as educational platforms, providing a model of environmental responsibility in the region. The creation of Ecotown involves 5 phases:</p> <p>Phase I: Water and Waste</p> <p>Phase II: Electricity and Renewable Energies</p> <p>Phase III: Agriculture and Forest</p> <p>Phase IV: Implement Policy change</p> <p>Phase V: Education and interaction</p> <p>For more information: http://ecotowns.org/en/index.html</p>
<p>The ReBootKamp (RBK) Jordan</p> 	<p>Reboot Kamp, or RBK, is a Silicon Valley-based nonprofit specializing in education, which wants to give Syrian refugees living in Jordan, as well as Jordanians, an opportunity to learn market-ready skills and find employment in the tech industry. The organization hosts bootcamps inside of a facility called a “ZatLAB”, which are a compact, self-powered, modular, portable and scalable learning environment containing computers and other tech equipment. Bootcamps are immersive vocational programs emerging in places like North America as alternatives to traditional four-year computer science degrees and are designed to meet the growing demand for tech workers.</p> <p>For more information: https://rbk.org/</p>

OFFICIAL OPENING

The moderator, **Ms. Dominique Laresche, Journalist of TV5 Monde**, introduced the plenary session stressing that this is a great moment for women, as 2018 began with the #metoo movement and increased reports of sexual abuse and harassment. She highlighted the Nobel Peace Prize that was recently awarded to a man, Dr. Mukwege, for his commitment against female genital mutilation in the Democratic Republic of the Congo, along with a woman, Nadia Murad, Yazidi former Daesh sex slave. According to Ms. Laresche, these are all evidence of a real movement in action.

Ms. Leonor Beleza, President of Champalimaud Foundation, explained that the foundation, located in Portugal, is open to the World as a space for union and contacts between cultures and it contributes to gender equality by including a large number of women in its research teams. She explained that Portugal is one of the first countries in the world in terms of women's participation in Science and highlighted the importance of Gender Medicine as a relevant area when addressing gender equality issues. Ms. Beleza described her own career as a public servant in which she also held ministerial positions and from which she also tried to contribute to a more egalitarian society. She noted, however, that there is still a long way to go, and referred the Declaration of the UfM Ministerial of Cairo as an essential document to promote the empowerment of women and their full participation in society.

H.E. Marie-Louise Coleiro Preca, President of the Republic of Malta stated that, over the years, the Women4Mediterranean conference has created and enriched a respectful space to explore, promote, share and actively pursue the empowerment of Women in the Mediterranean region. The President valued the partnership created and strengthened during the last decade by the UfM between the 43 countries and beyond positively. Moreover, she highlighted that the UfM is creating a shared sense of ownership to address the many challenges and opportunities in the region. However, she reminded that the valuable contribution of girls and women is still too often ignored or minimized due to gender inequalities, which continue to predominate in the region. The President drew the public's attention to the UfM progress report Women's empowerment in the Mediterranean region which underlines that the differences in opportunities between women and men are not only explained by gaps in education, but also by social and cultural norms concerning women and their place in the family and in the communities. She also recalled that the achievement of women's equality is a commitment made by all countries, through the United Nations

Agenda 2030 and the 17 Sustainable Development Goals, in particular SDG no. 5. She concluded by calling on the authorities to implement comprehensive gender equality laws, which are in line with the mandate of the Universal Declaration of Human Rights, adopted 70 years ago.

"We must do more to listen to what women and girls have to say, and then take action to address their challenges."

H.E. Nasser Kamel, Secretary General of the Union for the Mediterranean explained that the conference took place during an exceptional period for the UfM as it was the celebration of the tenth anniversary of the creation of the Union for the Mediterranean. He stressed that the conference represented one of the UfM's greatest successes, as it brought together a large number of actors to work together in a new and effective format that has produced concrete results on the ground. The SG reminded participants of the historic turning point of the moment, when inequalities have never been so forcefully denounced in public and private spheres. He highlighted that empowering women is one of the main drivers of innovation and growth and represents an important factor for the stability in our societies. However, he pointed out that much remains to be done and that the strengthening of cooperation and dialogue in the Euro-Mediterranean region is now more necessary than ever. He expressed the hope that the Mediterranean would make a significant, coherent and coordinated contribution to global efforts in this field within the framework of the 2030 Agenda Sustainable Development Program.

H.E. Maria M. Leitão Marques, Minister of Presidency and Administrative Modernization of the Portuguese Republic, explained how Portugal's investment in promoting the role of girls and women, and more specifically their education, has been a motor for the country's progress. She described how Portugal steadily reduced the illiteracy rate for women from 31% in 1970 to 6.8% in 2011 and increased women's education opportunities (in 1970 only 0.5% of women over 20 had higher education degrees, while in 2011, 53.3% of girls were in university). She stressed that for the past 4 years, the Portuguese government has supported the promotion of equality and it has directed its efforts to increasing women's participation in public and economic life and in decision-making processes. Portugal has adopted a law to address the issue of equality in the labor-market and enterprises, a law to promote balanced participation of women and men in management bodies, as well as a law with similar objectives for all public institutions. The Government has also proposed a revision of the Parity Act, to increase the participation of women in political

bodies and to increase the percentage of women in Parliament to 40% (and 50% in the first two places on electoral lists). She emphasized the importance of integrating other complementary measures such as a program to enable women to better reconcile their working life with their personal and family life. She underlined the importance of creativity and the use of new technologies to achieve greater equality, for more leisure and the reconciliation of work and family life. Finally, she underlined that the Portuguese Government has set itself the serious objective of eradicating all forms of violence against women and girls by presenting a new Action plan for the prevention and eradication of violence against women. The Minister concluded by congratulating all women on the award of the Nobel Prize for Peace in 2018.

H.E. Federica Mogherini, High Representative of the European Union for Foreign Affairs and Security Policy, Vice-President of the European Commission acknowledged in a video message the work that the Union for the Mediterranean is doing to provide fair opportunities to girls and women in the region and commended the work of civil society organizations, stressing that their engagement is the most powerful source of inspiration for all. She briefly presented some of the work the EU has recently done to empower women in the Mediterranean region. She spoke about the project with Syrian women which aims to involve them in the political process to achieve peace in Syria. She also highlighted the message to women and girls who should be able to choose whatever they want to be in life if they work hard for it, and reminded that nothing should be out of their reach just because they are women.

"Women and girls should be able to choose whatever they want. Nothing should be out of their reach just because they are women"



H.E. Hala Lattouf, Minister of Social Development, Hashemite Kingdom of Jordan stated that the conference on the role of women in building safe and

prosperous societies was taking place during an exceptional period of political and social changes in the Euro-Mediterranean region and in the world as a whole. She underlined that during the recent years, women in the region have been raising their voices to denounce the lack of equality in the region and multiple initiatives and collaborative effort aimed at raising gender equality and equality of chances have been implemented in the Euro-Mediterranean region. However, she reminded that, as pointed out by the President of Malta, today we need to define the current major obstacles hindering equality and impeding women empowerment in the region and elaborate comprehensive strategies to answer these priority needs. The major obstacles she identified are armed conflicts, forced displacement, the Israeli colonization, the rise of right-wings' extremist groups and social stereotypes. She stressed that women and girls are often the first victims of armed conflicts and the refugee crisis the region is currently subject to, yet, they are still left out of peace discussions and negotiations. Jordan hosts more than 300 Syrian refugees which represents almost 20% of the overall Jordanian population. She added that the government is working hard on taking its humanitarian responsibility and offers all refugees their basic services, closely related to basic human rights and needs, such as education and health. One key aspect she also pointed out, was the importance of women being represented in politics and decision-making processes such as in Jordan, where more than 25% of the parliamentary seats are occupied by women. She highlighted that there is no peace and safety under any kind of gender discrimination. Therefore, she underlined that in order to achieve peaceful and prosperous societies, we need to work on empowering women through capacity building, fighting gender-based violence, closing legal and legislative loopholes, including women in peace discussions and conflict management processes, confronting extremism and terrorism, enabling women to integrate the labour market and access the resources, dismantling social stereotypes, raising awareness among the youth about key issues such as early marriage and the role, rights and duties as citizens, working hand in hand with social institutions and entities, such as the family, to fully achieve equality and making sure that women participate in the decision-making process. She added that gender equality should not be treated as a separated issue from youth and enabling the youth to achieve its potential is closely related to harnessing opportunities for women in the region. According to H.E., we need exceptional and innovative interventions that require our alliance and our support to the shared structures and platforms of dialogue and most importantly to the UfM.

H.E. Neziha Labidi, Minister of Women, Family and Childhood, Republic of Tunisia began her speech by

explaining that despite the ups and downs that Tunisia has been experiencing since 2011, it is their determination that defines the reality and the role of women in this country. She remembered Habib Bourguiba, the first president of the Tunisian Republic, who promulgated in 1956 the personal status code, by which he canceled polygamy, regulated the role of women in the family and allowed Tunisia to be a modern country. The Minister briefly presented Tunisia's experience in promoting gender equality, particularly during the revolution, when millions of Tunisians took the streets to claim their rights to dignity and parity between men and women. In 2014 the new Constitution was promulgated, including article 46, which makes the government responsible for protecting the human rights of women. She pointed out that women and girls must be protected from violence which is one of the main threats to their rights and dignity and which exists everywhere in the public and private space. This is why in 2017, Tunisia adopted a comprehensive law against violence against women. The Minister also expressed that Gender budgeting and combating terrorism constitutes one of the priority areas for Tunisian Government. For the Minister, empowering women means giving them the chance to be economically independent. For this reason, Tunisia opened a line of credit dedicated to women that benefited more than 3.500 women in a year and a half. The Minister announced that Tunisia, will be in 2019, after Sweden, the world capital for equality between men and women.

*"Empowering women, means giving them
the chance to be economically
independent"*

H.E. Maya Morsy, President, Egyptian National Council of Women started by stressing the importance of ensuring access of women to all human rights in order to build a prosperous society based on principles of mutual respect, multiculturalism and religious pluralism that rejects extremism, racism, intolerance, terrorism and hatred. She reminded that President Abdel Fattah Al-Sissi announced 2017 as the year of Egyptian women and that the resolution 2030 of the UN was going to be used as a working document to activate in the following years a national strategy aiming at establishing gender equality in every sector. She underlined that the strategy was built with the participation of 175 experts and researchers and included half a million women. Moreover, 180 civil society organization as well as numerous government agencies, ministers and governors participated in the design of this strategy that covers 4 main areas: Economic Empowerment; Political Empowerment and increasing women's leadership roles; Social Empowerment; and Protection. She also pointed out

the importance of working on changing the culture of the community towards women and establishing social mechanisms aiming at strengthening equality of chances in the mindsets. She reminded that the UN praised this strategy in 2017 as the first national strategy implemented to empower women within the framework of the Sustainable Development Goals 2030. The Egyptian National Council of Women initiated, with the collaboration of partners, a number of project aiming at putting the strategy in action and raising awareness about the role of women in the community. H.E. cited from these initiatives: the setting-up of the National Observatory for Women, aiming at gathering data and information on women issues as well as building indicators for monitoring and evaluation and to prepare the biannual report on Egyptian women; and the strategy implemented to get rid of gender-based violence, early marriage and circumcision relying on showing the economic cost of violence against women as well as establishing a hotline and 440 units in public hospitals in charge of admitting women who have been victims of assault. In the domain of raising awareness, the Egyptian National Council of Women was able to reach in 2017 more than 2 million women, increasing the rate of awareness to 236% compared to the previous years. The 'Taa Marbouta' campaign launched by the Council with the cooperation of UN Women, UN population, UNDP and the European Union, reached 100 million followers on social media, while the 'Because I am a man' campaign, launched by the Council and UN Women, reached 7 million men in its first week. In terms of economic empowerment, the Council worked with the Central Bank to raise financial awareness, disseminate the financial culture, encourage saving and lending projects and train entrepreneurs. As far as social empowerment is concerned, one of the initiatives presented by H.E. was the programme of financial support, 'Solidarity and dignity' that involved 2 and a half million families from which 90% are women. She also highlighted that protection and prevention are better than cure, explaining why the new Egyptian Constitution grants more than 20 articles pleading for gender equality in duties and rights. She presented the Articles 11 and 53 stipulating the need for an appropriate representation of women in the parliament to ensure their right to hold decision-making positions in the State and in judicial bodies without any discrimination, and the Article 180 stipulating that 25% of local council seats are reserved to women. The recent wins for women in decision making were also exposed by H.E. Maya Morsy, namely the nomination of the first female National Security Advisor, the designation of 5 female vice-governors and the first female Christian governor, the nomination of the first female president of the Court of Justice and achieving a rate of 15% of female parliamentarians. This trend also had a positive impact on the legislation, inducing extensive penalties for the

crime of circumcision, strengthening the penalties for harassment and criminalizing denial of inheritance. She also stressed the importance of including the gender perspectives in laws such as the new law concerning disabled people, but also laws on investment and business. She concluded that many challenges persist today despite the political will, the strategies and national mechanisms, mostly the social biases and stereotypes that hinder empowerment denying the role of women as productive citizens, successful entrepreneurs and crucial peace-makers. However, she repeated that there could not be any development without including women in the process and without eliminating terrorism.

Ms. Helga Schmid, Secretary General of the European External Action Service began her speech by stressing that Women's economic empowerment, financial inclusion and entrepreneurship are *sine qua non* for inclusive and equitable economic growth. One of the EU's external objectives in the Mediterranean and around the world is to help ensure women's access to the socio-economic resources. It is very important for the EU that women participate in all decision-making processes. Ms. Schmid highlighted that gender equality is a shared challenge between the EU Member States, so the Union for the Mediterranean platform is unique in its promotion among its members. She explained that to respond to the Syrian crisis, the European Union set up the regional trust fund which focuses particularly on providing them with the necessary means through mentoring and training, ensuring their access to basic services and preventing them from violence. In the region, the EU also supports women's entrepreneurship and job creation both in traditional but also in innovative sectors. They provide education and vocational trainings to help women respond to the need of the labor market, but also to increase their competitiveness. However, Ms. Schmid stressed that the promotion of women entrepreneurship and economic participation can only be effective when women are involved in all spheres of society, in particular social and public spheres. She also highlighted the important role that women must play as agents for peace and security. The EU has supported local coalitions of women involved in peace processes in many countries around the world through training in mediation and negotiation, even though they are often excluded from high-level negotiating tables and from post-conflicts reconstruction processes. She emphasized that networks of women mediators are very important in combating radicalization and preventing violent extremism. She also stressed the need for women and girls to feel safe, secure and protected from all forms of violence in order to develop their full potential. To respond to this priority, the EU has launched the EU-UN spotlight initiative aimed at fighting violence against women worldwide,

both in the public and the private spheres, with initial EU funding of 500 Million Euro.

"Networks of women mediators' are very important in combating radicalization and preventing violent extremism"



PLENARY SESSION 1: MEDITERRANEAN WOMEN LEADING FOR CHANGE

This session explored women's positive contribution to creating change and building inclusive and wealthy societies in the Mediterranean region through their leadership and innovative visions in the private and public sectors. In two panel discussions, experts and leading women and men examined the main challenges and opportunities, strategies and achievements for women to lead positive change.

Insights from the keynote speaker

H.E. Marie-Louise Coleiro Preca

- *Many of the challenges faced by women are due to factors of social, economic and cultural discrimination, injustices and inequalities.*
- *There is a need to continually explore and creating safe and respectful spaces to actively listen to women and girls, especially at this time of conflicts and raising extremism in the region.*
- *Women must be catalyst to address inequalities, prejudices and discriminations that create unnecessary social tensions in countries of the region.*
- *To achieve positive peace, women cannot remain absent from decision-making positions.*

Key issues discussed

Panel 1: Driving women's participation in public life and decision making

Ms. Maria Teresa Fernández de la Vega, as former judge, Member of Parliament and Minister of Spain, stressed that, when it comes to gender inequality, judicial power is the most important. In her opinion, gender inequality is a matter of secular injustice, but it is also a question of guaranteeing democracy and dignity. According to her, there is a need for new leadership to change and work in a different way. The factors of change are to understand what is of concern to citizens, namely healthcare, education, work, security and nutrition. In her opinion, women bring a very different vision, because they know and recognize problems, so they can make proposals to move forward towards the solution.

As for the participation of women as negotiators at the peace and security tables, according to **Amb. Véronique Roger-Lacan, at the OSCE**, it is above all a question of common sense, since women represent a part of the population to be taken into account. She expressed the

view that men do not discuss women's needs when donors allocate money, when unfortunately, most negotiations are usually made by traditionally male leaders. During the panel discussion, Amb. Roger-Lacan also highlighted that women ambassadors remain a minority to contribute in addressing that, the OSCE launches the "Women in International Security Program", with the objective to create a partnership with women and girls willing to have access to international studies to become diplomats.

Dr. Laila Ghannam, began her speech by clarifying that the motivation of Palestinian women today and in the past stems from the eagerness of overcoming challenges developed within themselves in the shadow of the occupation. She shared her personal experience as a Palestinian women fighting, alongside her family, to achieve her goals and gain legitimacy in the public space. She stressed the importance to never give up despite the heaviness of the obstacles women can encounter. She managed, despite her studies being interrupted for five years due to circumstances linked to the occupation, to obtain her baccalaureate, bachelor, masters and PhD in 8 years and a half. She also worked during her studies as a kindergarten teacher and as staff in local elections. She stressed that, on top of being rewarding, this experience from the field allowed her to understand the public sphere and increased her will to participate to the decision making process. At age 34, she was the first female Governor not only in Palestine but also in the Arab world. She stressed that this is an indicator of the equality of chances in Palestine where women can reach high political positions because the President Mahmoud Abbas and the different ministers believe in the crucial role of women in the society in instigating change and building a society of equality in all sectors and not only so-called feminine sectors.

She highlighted that the most important support for women to realize their untapped potential is family. She was treated as an equal, a mind and a content and not as a social gender. She added that women in Palestine can become whatever they aspire to be in political, judicial or diplomatic positions as well as in business or as peace-negotiators. She underlined the importance of mentoring and showing young girls what they can achieve because she believes that the best support for women and young people are other women and young people, with the help of men and not at their expense.

She added that development is achieved through focusing on human capital, man and women, to help them not only participate in building the country today but also empowering them to inspire and educate new generation cultivating values of equality and fairness.

She concluded by saying that women in Palestine are not victims, they are fighters, actors of their own

destinies. In her opinion, Palestinian women have always been strong and passionate even if the media did not feature them. This does not mean that she does not need help to build a healthy and peaceful society.

Panel 2: Women leaders in business and social changes

Ms. Katja Iversen, President of Women Deliver started the second panel by highlighting three important points: i) when we invest in women and girls in the value-chain and business, this is a ripple effect and everybody wins; ii) despite we see lots of political conservatives wining and attacking women's rights and gender equality, we also see a lot of progress; iii) gender equality is a responsibility of all of us.

Ms. Katja Iversen recalled a recent McKinsey study that showed that if gender equality in the labour market became effective, the global GDP would grow by 26%, a percentage equivalent to that of the United States and China. She emphasized that investing in gender equality is not only the right thing to do, but it is also a really smart thing from an economic and social cohesion point of view. Everyone says that investing into the value chain is just good for business, but in Ms. Iversen's view, it is also important to invest in the "supply chain", that is when companies choose where to buy their goods and from whom they buy. Finally, she stressed that according to research study, when Procter&Gamble, Unilever or l'Oréal changed their traditional portrayal of women, they actually made more money.

"When we invest in women and girls in the value-chain and business, this is a ripple effect and everybody wins"

Sen. Hafida Benchehida reminded that women parliamentarians in Arab countries are doing a great deal to promote women, not only in economics, but also in the decision-making process. She gave the example of Algeria, where there is a minimum quota of 30% participation of women in Parliament. In addition, the Algerian Constitution recognizes empowerment of women. She explained that since 1962, Algeria and other neighboring countries have recognized the right to equal pay for men and women, despite the fact that much remains to be done to promote gender equality in families, rural areas and even in conflict situations. Above all, she concluded that education is a priority and that the media plays a key role, since there is not enough communication on these issues.

Ms. Saida Neghza, President, BusinessMed, Introduced Business Med as the main representative of the private sector in Algeria and a platform promoting foreign FDI in the Mediterranean with the aim of both supporting the private sector in the Mediterranean countries and

strengthening the dialogue in the region. She added that the CGA is the oldest promoter of Investments in Algeria and the African continent in order to boost their economic and social development. She explained that the work of the confederation is to increase the dynamism of the Euro-Mediterranean region as a whole while still empowering women economically and socially. She stressed that women in the region have been fighting eagerly to unfold their untapped potential and to gain legitimacy in sectors in which they have been denied access or that have been considered as male sectors. She highlighted that rights are not given easily, they are difficult to obtain but deserve to be fought for, in spite of the patriarchal society that hinders women's freedom and other socially imposed restrictions. While presenting her personal experience as a woman that did not have many options for her professional carrier, she stressed the importance of believing in the ability to change the society and the possibility of replicating successes through mentoring and positive leadership. She presented the multiple obstacles she faced while growing as a business woman in Algeria and stressed that even when male employees refused to follow her orders, she still managed to continue and even moved from the domain of contracting to the domain of mining and quarries. She highlighted that Algerian women have a crucial economic role that cannot be denied, and that they can directly influence gender gaps that hinder equality. She gave the example of her current projects that employ many women and men, and that are expanding from one field to another overcoming many explicit and implicit socio-economic biases. She added that women need to be actors of their stories, fight to overcome the challenges and take the responsibility to build a society based on the values of equality and mutual respect. She insisted on the importance of providing an appropriate business environment through the implementation of a complete equality with men in the law and a facilitation of business regulations. She concluded that inducing structural changes that aim at fostering a virtuous circle of socio-economic empowerment is crucial to achieve development in any field, as well as a prosperous and peaceful region capable of overcoming through collaboration and solidarity all challenges.

Business Med works on building the capacity of women in the region through training and mentoring that aims at raising the employability of these women as well as initiating them in entrepreneurship. She introduced the IPSOMED project, aiming at promoting networks and business support organizations in the South Mediterranean region It is a 4-year program funded by the EU to empower women economically, promote support and training entities and boost North/ South collaboration through expertise sharing, investment opportunities and women-led business-to-business partnerships. She presented one of the recent

IPSOMED events, the 10th forum of business women, that took place in Amman, Jordan in November 2018. She concluded by reminding the tight link between women empowerment, democracy and achieving the sustainable development goals.

As a lawyer and a professor of Family Law, **Ms. Hakima Fassi Fihri** pointed out that education is a sensitive area in the context of MENA region, where absolutely more efforts are needed to reform some family laws. Drawing on her experience with young people, especially schoolgirls, her main message was that education is a unique tool for empowering girls and boys. Unfortunately, some girls are not aware of their potential. According to Ms. Fassi Fihri, it is important that teachers not only educate girls on the course topics, but also advise them. In Ms. Fassi Fihri's opinion, university is a great platform for transmitting values and making girls aware of their value and their rights.

PLENARY SESSION 2: BREAKING STEREOTYPES AND SOCIAL BARRIERS

This session explored ways to question and deconstruct gender roles, in order to achieve greater equality between men and women. Three panels discussed the role of men, of the private sector and media in eliminating stereotypes and creating more egalitarian and inclusive societies

Insights from the keynote speaker **Ms. Sarah Poole, UNDP**

- *Impact of stereotypes in our lives is related not only to who we are as gender, but also to the "intersectionality" of who we are as a whole, i.e. where we are from, if we are young, the color of our skin, our religion and many other factors.*
- *It is important to keep gender equality and women's empowerment at the center of development agendas, debates, plans, policies, partnerships and budgets*
- *Women's empowerment can have a real impact in all sectors, including business, although women continue to earn less and face the burden of unpaid work*
- *The role of the media is key in perpetuating or in changing stereotypes. Its stories can deeply influence public opinion and establish societal norms, while they still reinforce the perception of women as secondary with marginal roles and voices.*
- *Social Media is a valid tool for raising awareness and countering stigma and disinformation.*



Key issues discussed

Panel 3: The role of men

The panel started with the question of "What makes some men less supportive of equality and what makes men less?" To respond to this question, **Ms. Blerta Aliko** presented the key-findings of IMAGES (International Men and Gender Equality Survey), a Promundo project in collaboration with UN, Cairo University and other local resources, which focuses on four very diverse countries, Egypt, Palestine, Morocco and Lebanon, and involves 10.000 people, both women and men, aged 18 to 51. Their research shows that there is still a high rate of violence in the region, including psychological and domestic violence, and there is also a high tolerance of this violence. In addition, she explained that when asked about gender equality, men proved to have more regressive views than their parents did while women have a more progressive views towards gender equality. However, the study shows that men who had positive role models in the household have a more progressive perception of gender equality. In addition, when children experience violence in their childhood, they tend to reproduce it throughout their lives, which is called the 'cycle of violence'.



"Men who had positive role models in the household have a more progressive perception of gender equality"

The video of the campaign 'Because I am a man' was launched in Egypt in 2017 to promote the role of men as an instigator of gender equality in the society. This video, that has reached more than 7 million viewers in Egypt alone, aims at deconstructing social norms and stereotypes on masculinity in Egypt by encouraging men to refuse these stereotypes and stop abiding by them. It starts by exposing the social norms that dictate the behavior of men as free and strong compared to the weak defenseless women that are not able to do what they want. The role of women in the society is also pointed out; it is not to do housework and stay at home to educate the children but it is to achieve their full potential in all sectors from sports to jobs. The true way of being a man is to break this

vicious circle, not to promote and replicate these structural and deep-rooted stereotypes; it is to encourage, support, protect and respect women but above all to help them have all their rights respected without any discrimination.

According to **Ritxar Bacete González**, it is important to turn what happens at home into something political. He explained how in his own book, he raises the most important questions a man should ask himself in the XXI century: "What does it mean to be a man? What is expected from me? Am I just a man? Can I change? Should I change? How do I relate to other men? To other women? Am I a good father? Are my relations with women equal? Am I a sexist?" According to him, it is time for men to participate in the transformation towards egalitarian paradigms and values in society.

"It is time for men to participate in the transformation towards egalitarian paradigms and values."

Ms. Leyla Younis presented some outcomes of Status M, an NGO that raises awareness of gender equality among men and youth in Croatia. She mentioned that in Croatia laws *per se* are well written, but people are not sufficiently informed and there is still a lot of resistance from the employers. She also explained one of Status M campaigns in the Balkans, "Be a man", which aims to transform the harmful masculinity to promote a peaceful and caring masculinity on a daily basis.

Mr. Hassan Joumaa talked about his experience as a trainer and awareness raiser on masculinities at ABAAD, one of the most successful NGOs in Lebanon. He explained that the process is long as we live in a patriarchal society that gives men a place of power. Patriarchs are decision makers, providers and protectors, so losing one of these roles, may decrease them and increase gender-based violence in the household. In this context, he stressed the importance of involving policy makers and religious leaders who play a crucial role in changing the norms but who can also be an obstacle. He considers their strategy of engaging religious leaders to be multilevel, dealing with anger and gender, without even pronouncing the words "gender" or "equality".

Panel 4: The role of private sector & Media

Ms. Nicole Ameline highlighted the link between rights and development. She reminded the importance of making equality the DNA of a more just, peaceful and balanced world. To this end, it is essential that rules and constitutions evolve. The moderator noted that many countries (189) signed the Convention on the Elimination of All Forms of Discrimination against Women, but most of them do not apply it or even

when they do, they also report backlashes. To this purpose, it is not only important to adopt laws, but also to enforce them.

"It is essential that rules and constitutions evolve, it is not only important to pass laws, but also to strengthen them"

Ms. Liliana Rodrigues, highlighted that there is no equality in the media and this can be seen in movies, on TV, on the radio, in magazines or online, where there is always a high percentage of chances to find stereotypes that perpetuate gender discrimination. According to her, discrimination and stereotyping of women is "normalized" in media. As the rapporteur of the Socialist group for gender equality in the media in the European Parliament, she tried to address this issue although they did not achieve the ideal results in terms of legislation due to lack of consensus. She tried to introduce the creation of European Ombudsman for Media, or the compulsory quotas which were not finally approved and which were set as optional. She advocated the need of greater coordination between regulatory entities at national and at European level, the establishment of clear regulations and the promotion of media literacy at different levels of schooling to show young people the restrictive and harmful nature of stereotypes and sexist behaviors. She reminded that media, as well as other professional areas, are still essentially male, although approximately 60% of journalism graduates are women. She concluded that there is still a long way to go, also at European level. According to her, it is not true that Europe is a great example of gender equality to the rest of the world. She stressed that example should be given at political level and in the business world, namely in the highest positions, where women have to be more present.

Ms. Mercedes Giovinazzo recalled that culture is absent in the targets of SDGs, while it represents an instrument for development, which allows individuals to fulfill their roles of citizens. Although we are all equal before the law, we are not equal in our daily lives, declared Ms. Giovinazzo.

Ms. Paola Parri presented the outcomes of the Permanent Conference of the Mediterranean Audiovisual Operators. In particular, she spoke about the AGEMI project, an EU project in collaboration with InterArts to promote the portrayal and profession of women in the audiovisual and cinema sector in all the South-Mediterranean countries. The AGEMI project aims to promote gender equality in universities and a gender approach in the curricula. Another project, in partnership with the Palestinian public television and other institutional organizations, provides long-term training on gender equality, supports the development

of internal codes of ethics, and conducts gender awareness-raising campaigns among personnel.

Panel 5: Combating violence against women and girls

Mr. Benito Marin-Herrero presented the EU regional campaign on violence against women and girls in southern Mediterranean countries, which will be launched in April 2019, as provided for in the UfM Cairo Ministerial declaration on strengthening the role of women in society. Awareness-raising, capacity building of civil society, adoption of laws against VAWG are the activities included in the project, along with the creation of a regional observatory to monitor the implementation of commitments made by the UfM Ministers in Cairo in 2017. He explained that the EuroMed Feminist Initiative will carry out this 3-year campaign, together with six NGOs from the South, in seven countries of the region, and it will be adapted to the specific social and cultural characteristics of the different countries, as well as to their particular problems. As requested by the European Commission, men and boys will be actively involved, along with religious leaders. The project will also involve the EU delegations together with other strategic actors, such as the media, the civil society, local authorities and the UfM regards to the creation of the "regional observatory".

Mr. José Rui Carço presented the outcomes of the South-North Center of the Council of Europe, in relation to its three interdependent pillars: youth, education and women. He explained how they are addressing the problems of violence against immigrant women and women in refugee camps. According to Mr. Carço, the communication of domestic violence against the so-called "invisible woman" is also a problem that affects all countries without exception.

"The communication of domestic violence against the so-called "invisible woman" is also a problem that affects all countries without exception"

Amb. Katri Viinikka reported that even in Finland they face the problem of VAGW, although her country ranks third in the gender equality global index, probably due to their meticulous reporting system. She said that compared with other countries, the type of violence in Finland is mostly in the private sphere, not just domestic but "inherent" to its culture. She emphasized that the resources allocated to address this problem do not help to diminish this reality, which is a constant. However, she stressed that the President of Finland is one of the champions in the "HeforShe" initiative and the one who launched a recruiter training programme with the participation of the Defense Forces. Moreover, Amb. Katri Viinikka reminded that Finland is

one of the few countries with programs to teach men about anger management.

Ms. Amarsanaa Darisuren stated that VAGW is present in all societies, even in times of peace and stability. She stressed the possibility of preventing VAGW if it can be detected earlier and if action is taken. He also explained that men traditionally dominate the security sector, whether it is police or the armed forces, making it difficult for women to enter due to cultural stereotypes. However, in recent years a number of measures have been taken to increase the presence of women in the security sector as well.

Ms. Lina Khalifeh, the founder of SheFighter, the 1st self-defense studio for women in the Middle East, began her intervention with a practical demonstration of how our minds are destabilized when we think we are leaving our comfort zone. According to her, the same thing happens with change. "When you create an initiative or a project which is changing society, if you want to be successful, be prepared, there is always a prize for it". She highlighted that there are many obstacles to allow change and that people will not always like it. She emphasized on the importance of continuing to work and being prepared for the worst.



WORKSHOP 1: EMPOWERING WOMEN IN RURAL AND AGRICULTURE AREAS

Key issues discussed

Ms. Wafa Dikah Hamze, Agriculture and rural development specialist, CIHEAM Delegate, highlighted the importance of the theme of this workshop organized in partnership with CIHEAM, the International Center for Advanced Mediterranean Agronomic Studies. She reminded that investing in women's capacities in rural and agricultural sectors is not only a matter of women's rights but a necessary condition for building inclusive societies and increasing the resilience of our territories.

Insights from the keynote speaker Blanca Moreno-Dodson, CMI-World Bank

- Rural women represent 43% of the world's agricultural workforce, and in some countries they account for 70%.
- Women are a major contributor to food and nutritional security, income generation, the improvement of livelihoods and the overall well-being of households, particularly low-income.
- Women are increasingly leading their own businesses, although their entrepreneurial potential remains largely unknown and underutilized.
- Women are major actors in the fight against climate change.
- It is important to use indicators that help to better measure progress by taking into account the key role and contribution of women.
- It is necessary to put women at the center and invest in quality education which should be a precondition for granting loans to women in rural areas.
- An improvement of the infrastructure of transport, water supply services is needed, along with facilitating technology to connect women in remote areas.

Ms. Patrizia Pugliese presented the activities of CIHEAM consisting of training, the development of research projects and institutional partnerships. She explained that the commitment with women's empowerment is a process even for the institution she works for. She described the GeMaiSa regional programme for

"Enhancing Gender Mainstreaming in Sustainable Rural Development and Food Security", which has just entered its second phase. The programme involves six countries around the Mediterranean and it has a multidimensional approach which means there are different strategies to support these women. For example, they are working with women trained with soft skills and they are accompanying them to put them into practice. She also explained that men's reactions are ambivalent in the framework of these projects.

Ms. Monica Carco, in charge of the UfM labelled project for the empowerment of rural women in seven countries of the MENA region (promoted by UNIDO and currently in its second phase), reminded that rural is not synonym of agricultural and it includes some other aspects such as culture, heritage, arts and others. The aspect of creativity is also important to improve women's skills and economic empowerment. According to Ms. Carco, finding work is not enough and the eco-system is fundamental. Rural women certainly encounter more problems although some of them are the same problems as urban women have, i.e. access to finance, access to infrastructure, access to transports, access to connectivity, training, finance, and in particular access to market. To this end, the second phase of the UfM-UNIDO project aims to empower rural women with urban women and improve the quality of production through certification, exports and value chain selection. She concluded by saying that promotion of knowledge, information and linkages will help these women to move from the informal to the formal sector.

Ms. Rima Tarabay presented the experience of Ecotown, the ongoing project of the NGO Bahr Loubnan. Their project focuses on environmental agriculture, i.e. sustainable organic agriculture, without the use of pesticides. Ms. Tarabay explained that they are working with municipalities in Lebanon to have a sustainable village. Within this village, they work on a wide range of actions, from organic agriculture, to waste management, to the restoration of a public eco school. Ecotown is also present in Morocco, France and many other countries, and it represents a real bridge between the North and the South of the Mediterranean.

"The Gender Index (SIGI) shows that the lack of property rights is due to a patrilineal inheritance system, which prevents women from having direct access to land, unless they do so through their husbands and male relatives"



Ms. Sarah Toumi, the only Arabian in the Forbes list of entrepreneurs under the age of 30, spoke about her experience in land restoration as a tool to combat desertification, poverty and gender inequality. She explained her experience in 7 steps: 1) plant acacia trees which produce Arabic gum; 2) plant other traditional crops, which grow in arid countries and can be used in the cosmetics industry; 3) work only with women; 4) offer continuous peer-to-peer training and practice to offer women a real title of "farmer"; 5) support the development of soft skills; 6) work only in an area of 500 m² so that women can easily reach their homes; 7) help them to become true entrepreneurs and inspire their children by setting an example for their communities.

Ms. Alejandra Maria Meneses presented the work of OECD Development Centre on gender equality which has a global and collaborative platform called Wikigender which aims at linking policy-makers, practitioners, researchers, students to find solutions to advance gender equality. The Centre is also using the Gender Index (SIGI) which looks at discriminatory laws and practices against women and girls, which restrict their access to resources, employment and justice. She explained that discriminatory legal frameworks restrict women's rights to land. According to SIGI, the lack of property rights is due to a patrilineal inheritance system, which prevents women from having direct access to land, unless they do so through their husbands and male relatives. SIGI also shows that in 1/3 of the Mediterranean countries women do not have access to land inheritance like men and they only own 15% of agricultural land.

According to her, SIGI presented some problems. On the one hand it was seen that social norms were found to be difficult to measure and, on the other, not all countries collected data, more specifically disaggregated data including rural women. Political decision-makers and governments are therefore called upon to adopt all possible solutions to guarantee women's inheritance rights. First, by abolishing discriminatory laws which restrict women's access to land and means of production; second, by harmonizing

customary laws with national frameworks in order to align them with international human rights commitments and mechanisms; thirdly, by improving women's basic knowledge; and finally, by ensuring access to justice for rural women. Ms. Meneses also recalled that rural women are much more affected by forced marriage, child marriage and pregnancy.

Ms. Belouahri Houria, an Algerian agro-economist, is in charge of a project, El Ghaith, which means "SOS", which offers training to women, who after a year become trainers of other women. This ensures sustainability and engages women that become active actors of development. The program of activities mainly includes practical training for the production of textile, cheese and honey, but also courses to gain self-confidence and legal knowledge. Ms. Houria further explained that their project is based on a preparatory business plan that includes a set of indicators, so they did not have any problems at the evaluation stage.



WORKSHOP 2: WOMEN IN SCIENCES, TECHNOLOGIES AND INNOVATION (STEM)



Key issues discussed

Ms. Sanaa El Aji, declared that women's education has progressed, while their access to certain disciplines such as engineering, remains limited and falls short of what is required.

Insights from the keynote speaker

Ms. Leila Serhan, Managing Director Microsoft

- Women are still underrepresented in science, technology, engineering, and mathematics.
- Countries with a higher proportion of engineering graduates grow faster than countries with a higher proportion of graduates in other disciplines.
- The untapped potential of women who might be interested in STEM, but who choose not to obtain degrees in these fields or who decide to change careers because of obstacles, represents an important lost opportunity for the whole society.
- Artificial Intelligence needs a lot of emotional intelligence and that is why the presence of women is necessary.

Ms. Susan Schorr spoke about the "International Girls in ICT Day" initiative launched in 2011 that has encouraged 350.000 girls to study ICT. She explained that is very important to continue feeding a pipeline of girls that study ICT and integrate coding and computational thinking in the regular school curricula, which will help achieve gender equity.

Ms. Salma Bennani highlighted that only 30% of active women work in the STEM field. A recent study showed that there is a prior blockage, which makes girls think they are not good at STEM, so they choose humanistic

disciplines. In her opinion, it is a question of self-confidence and prejudice. She also recalled that in the STEM sector, 50% of women are victims of discriminations which is a higher percentage than in other sectors. Women are discriminated against at different stages: in the recruitment phase, in terms of salary and also during their careers. She proposed that senior managers be trained to avoid such discrimination. According to her, it is also necessary to guide and orient girls to study STEM disciplines, otherwise recruiters may not find women to hire, even if they wish to.

"In the STEM sector, 50% of women are victims of discriminations which is a higher percentage than in other sectors. It is a question of self-confidence and prejudice"

Ms. Isabel Lousada, explained that years ago women could not enter medical school because men assumed it would be better for women to take care of children and motherhood. She stressed the importance of role models in schools, as children follow teachers more than parents.

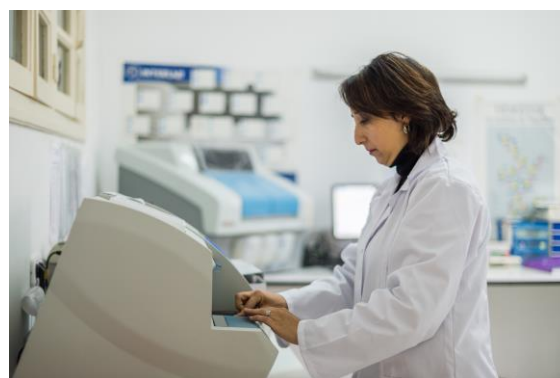
Ms. Samira Negm, explained that she started to love mathematics and science thanks to her teacher. She could then enter the automotive sector, which is usually considered masculine and inaccessible to women. He stressed that the toys that parents bring home are very important, and explained that she was able to play with Lego and video games thanks to her brothers. Her mother was also a role model to her as she challenged common stereotypes. Finally, Samira Negm emphasized the positive side of being a woman in the MENA region, specifically in Egypt, where women do not have the same financial obligations as men. If women fail, they can return to live in their parents' home, which is common and accepted by the culture.

According to **Ms. Hayfa Sdiri**, the cause of the reduced presence of women in STEM is the work-life balance. She explained that careers in STEM take up more time, while women have to use their time to take care of the family. However, she noted that in recent years, women have increasingly entered the STEM sector, at least in the MENA region, because it offers stability and more career opportunities, which is not the case in developed countries.

WORKSHOP 3: INVESTING IN SEXUAL AND REPRODUCTIVE HEALTH

Key issues discussed

Dr. Andreas Ullrich presented the workshop, which aimed to address sexual and reproductive health services, but also freedom of choice in pregnancy and contraception. He noted that in the MENA region there are huge gaps in the access to healthcare. He also mentioned the project [WoRTH](#) "women right to health", labelled by the UfM, for a comprehensive cervical and breast cancer control strategy in three member countries.



Insights from the keynote speaker

Ms. Monica Ferro

- According to the WHO, each year 200 million women do not have access the modern contraceptives they need, more than 45 million women receive inadequate or non-existence prenatal care, 1 million women and girls are infected with HIV, and 25 million abortions are unsafe.
- Health is the missing link between the aspiration and realization of the human rights and gender equality agenda. Investing in women's sexual and reproductive health is the game changer.
- At the regional level, there can be a difference in coordination, investment, and creation of platforms such as the UfM, which allows SDGs to transform from global to local.
- Resources for sexual and reproductive health and rights would cost only 8.4 dollars per person per year, which will have a major impact on women's lives and the economy.
- Parliamentarians should be engaged as they create and pass laws as well as watching over governments and holding them accountable.

Ms. Flavia Bustreo, stated that no woman can be empowered if she cannot decide about her own fertility and health. Nowadays 300.000 women still lose their life from giving birth. For cervical cancer, countries provide neither data nor prevention, she reported. Data comes first, because policy makers need data to justify their budget allocation. The civil society and media, i.e. social media, are also needed to raise awareness on these issues. Finally, she advocated for the role of UfM which is seen as crucial in helping to monitor data quality.

"We cannot think about women empowerment if these women or girls cannot decide about her own fertility and health"

Dr. Gülhan Inci is a gynecologist, expert on sexual and reproductive health and responsible for several projects in the MENA region and China. She reminded that 800 women die every day as a result of childbirth or pregnancy related problems, simply because they do not have access to simple things such as clean water, for example. She highlighted that not only is contraception important, but also working on the prevention of sexually transmitted diseases such as papilloma. Breast cancer is also important in developed countries, where patients can be treated, but in developing countries, these patients cannot be cured. This is not only an economic problem, but also a cultural one.

Ms. Ana Alcalde, stressed that sexual and reproductive health and rights are the best tool for empowering women even though they are no longer a priority. Therefore, she reminded that funding has begun to "disappear" in the last ten years, so they have had to reduce the number of target countries. Ms. Alcalde noted that it is impossible to work on SRHR without addressing the issue of VAWG as all the beneficiaries of its programs have suffered some form of violence. Ms. Alcalde pointed out that women cannot assert their rights, if they are isolated in their communities so it is important to work in their organization and in promoting solidarity among them.

Dr. Livia Giordano emphasized the importance of advocating for policy makers and governments to allocate money for the cure and prevention of breast and cervical cancer, including HPV testing and screening programs, as this can help save lives and improve the quality of life of many women. Cervical cancer affects all countries, but its incidence is highest in the South, because there are no screening programs. It has been shown, that in countries where the cervical cancer is higher, the human development index is lower and gender inequality is also higher. She

explained that in the three target countries of the UfM labelled WoRTH project - Albania Montenegro and Morocco - both rural and urban settings are involved, with the collaboration of different actors, such as the WHO headquarters and offices, together with the three national Ministries of Health. The project integrates important aspects such as the promotion of cancer awareness, among not only women, but also among health professionals and it generates partnerships between health professionals and local communities.



PLENARY SESSION 3: TOMORROW'S CHANGE MAKERS – YOUTH FOR WOMEN'S EMPOWERMENT

Youth as a driver of change is at the heart of the advancement of the 2030 Agenda, from theory to practice, particularly the gender equality agenda. Young people are innovative, creative, and enthusiastic. They can perceive social change, convince and motivate people to act, and can raise awareness. This session provided a framework for young leaders committed to the promotion of gender equality and women's empowerment, who presented their projects and initiatives.



Key issues discussed

The moderator, **Ms. Dominique Laresche**, stressed the importance of giving way to young people, who represent the future and can change more easily.

Ms. Cristina Díaz Fernández-Gil, in her keynote speech, asked how we can empower young people to change their mentality and patterns. She stated that the role of youth is particularly relevant in the Euro-Mediterranean region. Decision makers should take into account the perspective of young people, who should be represented in the structure of every society.

Ms. Sarah Zouak spoke about her personal story as a Moroccan, French and Muslim woman. She understood that it was time to change things when she wrote her graduation thesis on Muslim feminists to show role models for Muslim girls.

Ms. Nora Noor explained how her project links portraiture with feminism. According to her, a woman who has a bad self-image is exposed to violence and attracts toxic relations in her life. To this purpose, Ms. Noor explained how she organizes ateliers on the ground, helping to deconstruct the capitalist and sexist image of women. In these sessions, women are not

forced to obey fixed codes of beauty. For her, self-esteem is the best self-defense.

Ms. Sarah Diouri, spoke about new masculinities and about the role of men in women's empowerment. "If you work for women's empowerment and inclusive societies without including men, this will seem too much of a struggle or an opposition", noted Ms. Diouri. On the contrary, we should find a way to build our societies, our companies and our schools accommodating all genders, all identities, without putting them in a stereotyped category.

"A woman who has a bad self-image is exposed to violence and she attracts toxic relations in her life. Self-esteem is the best self-defense"

Ms. Carolina Pereira, said that sometimes people get the impression that women are the ones who treat each other the worst. However, she believes that this is just one of the effects of the fact that they are oppressed. She explained that in many minorities, the oppressed often exercise self-censorship. So she thinks that there is no real problem "between women", but that we must confront the problems between women and men, through empathy and a common narrative. She highlighted the importance of understanding that by liberating a woman we liberate ourselves and others.

Mr. Bachir Yagui, Secretary General of the Arab League, started his speech by reminding that women empowerment and gender equality are priorities for the Arab League, who works hard on strengthening the role of women in the Arab world. He underlined that the Arab League believes in the tight link between women empowerment in all sectors and scales, achieving the sustainable development goals and instigating a positive social change, despite the difficult political, economic and social circumstances surrounding the region. He pointed out that the Council of Arab States adopted, in 2017 in Jordan, the Cairo declaration on women empowerment in the region and the action plan of the operational strategy's agenda on women empowerment 2030. On top of an assessment of the situation of the Arab women in the region, this strategy included the recommendations for the next steps towards equality and all the implementing bodies concerned, as well as monitoring indicators allowing an evaluation of the implemented actions. He added that the Arab League also prepares progress reports based on measurement conferences and indicators in cooperation with regional and national institutions. One of the initiatives the Secretary General presented was the first conference on good practices and the opportunity to promote women's rights as well as to facilitate obtaining

citizenship and achieving economic empowerment, organized by the Arab League.

He also introduced the 2015-2030 regional operational strategy and action plan on protection, security and safety of women in the region stressing the tight link between peace-making, security and women empowerment. He insisted on the need of ensuring the availability of financial resources to enable the implementation of the related plans and strategies, especially when it comes to the participation of women in the peace-making and decision-making processes. Finally, he emphasized the importance of complying and following the strategies and instruments developed by regional bodies and of considering them a framework at national and regional level, which would allow policy makers to build on what has already been accomplished efficiently.



The session concluded with two "debriefs and recommendations", one side event on the "Euro-Mediterranean Youth Forum: Shaping the digital future" and one on "WoMED – Women of the Mediterranean: Next Generation of Leaders" in collaboration with the Konrad Adenauer Stiftung and Sciences Po respectively.

The side event on shaping the digital future focused on how to use an increasingly digitalized world to influence young people. Presenters Marius, and Eva, reminded that there are thousands of young people willing to act, but simply do not have the tools to make their inspirations a reality.

In the second side event, Ms. Françoise Milewski, presented the "WoMED" project which is an intensive two-week training program aimed at women in the South of the Mediterranean to be future leaders in their sectors and disciplines. She explained how the representatives of the three editions met to share the projects that the beneficiaries had launched upon their return, some of which are still ongoing. These projects are very different from each other, but all aim to raise awareness about equality.

CLOSING CEREMONY: WRAP-UP AND WAY FORWARD

The closing ceremony served to present the results of the conference discussions and debates. To conclude this important event, a round table of high-level keynote speakers discussed what remains to be done and the way forward to improve gender equality and women's empowerment.

Key issues discussed

Ms. Cristina Díaz Fernández-Gil explained that this conference was the continuation of the work begun in Barcelona in 2016 and the confirmation of the ministerial commitments agreed in Cairo in 2017. According to her, women should be at the center of debate, which is the precondition of any other achievement. She also highlighted that regional organizations such as UfM are of vital importance to advance in the field of gender equality, as they help to find efficient solutions in the regional context. She urged the adoption of a comprehensive Mediterranean strategy on gender equality, with concrete indicators that help assess progress. Ms. Diaz recalled the importance of involving and partnering with civil society organizations to find efficient solutions.

"It is important to involve and partner with civil society organizations to find efficient solutions to advance in the field of gender equality"

She explained that even before the 1995 Beijing conference, the same agenda had been led by civil society organizations, as they are the ones who best know the specific needs and aspirations of women in our countries.

According to Ms. Diaz, the main challenges of the Mediterranean region are regional stability, human development and regional integration. She stated that solutions to these problems go hand in hand with inclusive growth, the participation of women, the participation of young people and the pursuit of sustainable development. She emphasized that the Union for Mediterranean represents a unique and useful platform for regional dialogue. In conclusion, she reminded AECID's commitment to establish a follow up mechanism that includes concrete indicators. Spain's second national action plan on women, peace and security adopted in 2017, already includes these indicators.

Mr. Placido Plaza, recalled that in the last twenty years the female labor force in the agricultural sector of the region has increased from 35 to 45%. He described the

challenges faced by the workers in this sector which are mainly climate change, food insecurity and the management of natural resources in a context of depletion and degradation of ecosystems. He explained that there are also high inequalities in the territories and communities of the Mediterranean area, which cause rural exodus and waste of human resources. He talked about the 2016 action Plan of CIHEAM, which places women's empowerment at the center of all its actions as a crosscutting link, as gender has become increasingly important for Member States.

Ms. Laurence Païs, stated that the conference proved to be the right way forward with regard to the priorities of the commitments made in the ministerial declaration signed in Cairo in 2017. She said that best practices and obstacles shared at the conference will be included into the UfM agenda, to support women's empowerment and equality in the Mediterranean. She also stated that the role of facilitator of UfM is important to provide platforms for exchange between representatives of institutions along with civil society, parliaments, media and the private sector. In this regard, the priorities are: i) rural women, who are the poorest and who accumulate multiple forms of discrimination, ii) healthcare, which was on the agenda but which must be developed, iii) education, to start deconstructing social barriers from an early stage, iv) role models, whether men or women, who are an inspiration, especially for young people.

According to Ms. Païs, synergies are crucial in order to continue all this work, also among participants. A follow up mechanism is also needed because we lack data, that provides a clear picture of the situation of women's inequality in the Mediterranean region, while we have these data from all other regions of the world. In November 2017, the UfM was mandated to issue this follow up mechanism on the basis of existing statistics. The aim of this mechanism is to get a responsible, though not perfect, picture of the situation of the women in the Euro Mediterranean region. Ms. Païs recalled that, although there is no single Mediterranean or European identity, we have shared common values, so we have to find a way to measure where we are and what we still have to do through a set of common criteria.

"A follow up mechanism is needed because the data will provide a clear picture of the situation of women's inequality in the Mediterranean Region"

H.E. Rosa Monteiro, stated that the union, peace and inclusion of the region should be achieved through substantive equality between women and men. The Secretary of State reported on the Portuguese model which is in line with the recommendations of the Cairo

Declaration. These measures have consisted in implementing equality policies, proposing legislative measures and working on the transformation of discriminative practices and cultures and the elimination of VAWG, in partnership with women and feminist associations. She also highlighted Portugal's support for migrants and the country's efforts to develop an integration policy, with a special attention on the specific needs of women and girls.

In his conclusions, the Secretary General of the Union for the Mediterranean, **H. E. Nasser Kamel** underlined the agenda-setting function of the UfM conference agenda. The SG declared that the presence of the representatives of Member States, international organizations, civil society, private sector, media, and all the stakeholders involved during the two days of lively and enriching discussions made the multi-stakeholder approach of the UfM a reality. As reported by the SG, creating synergies and learning from each other was one of the most important objectives of the conference. According to the SG, the recent Nobel Peace Prize awarded to Denis Mukwege and Nadia Murad for their efforts to end the use of sexual violence as a weapon of war and armed conflict, has represented an important message and the conference was there, not only to hear that message, but also to act on it. The SG confirmed the UfM's commitment to continue the partnership with all regional actors to make the Mediterranean region an area of gender equality, building on the lessons learned at the conference.



CONFERENCE AGENDA

Opening ceremony

High Level Segment: Session 1:

- H.E. Nasser Kamel, Secretary General, Union for the Mediterranean.
- H.E. Maria M. Leitão Marques, Minister of Presidency and Administrative Modernisation, Portuguese Republic.
- H.E. Marie-Louise Coleiro Preca, President, Republic of Malta.
- H. E. Marcelo Rebelo de Sousa, President, Portuguese Republic.

High Level Segment: Session 2:

- H.E. Hala Lattouf, Minister of Social Development, Hashemite Kingdom of Jordan.
- H.E. Neziha Labidi, Minister of Women, Family and Childhood, Republic of Tunisia.
- H.E. Maya Morsy, President, Egyptian National Council of Women.
- H.E. Federica Mogherini, High Representative of the European Union for Foreign Affairs and Security Policy, Vice-President of the European Commission. (Video message).
- Ms. Helga Schmid, Secretary General, European External Action Service.

Plenary session 1: Mediterranean women leading for change

Moderator: Ms. Nicola Ehlermann, Head of the MENA-OECD Competitiveness Programme, Organisation for Economic Co-operation and Development (OECD).

Keynote speaker: H.E. Marie-Louise Coleiro Preca, President, Republic of Malta.

Panel 1: Driving women's participation in public life and decision making

- Ms. Maria Teresa Fernández de la Vega, President, Mujeres por África.
- Dr. Laila Ghannam, Governor Ramallah and al-Bireh, Palestine.
- Amb. Véronique Roger-Lacan, Ambassador of France at the Organization for Security and Co-operation in Europe (OSCE).

Testimonials

Panel 2: Women leaders in business and social changes

- Ms. Katja Iversen, President & CEO, Women Deliver.
- Ms. Hafida Benchehida, Senator, People's Democratic Republic of Algeria.
- Ms. Saida Neghza, President, BusinessMed.

- Ms. Hakima Fassi Fihri, Director of International Relations, International University of Rabat.

Plenary session 2: Breaking stereotypes and social barriers

Moderator: Ms. Nada Abdelsamad, Journalist, British Broadcasting Corporation (BBC).

Keynote speaker: Ms. Sarah Poole, Deputy Regional Director for Arab States, United Nation Development Program (UNDP).

Panel 3: The role of men

- Mr. Ritxar Bacete González, Researcher and Senior Fellow, Promundo Global and member of the Network, Hombres por la Igualdad.
- Ms. Blerta Aliko, Country Representative in Egypt, UN Women.
- Ms. Leyla Younis, President of the NGO Organization Status M'.
- Mr. Hassan Joumaa, Masculinity Officer, Abaad MENA.

Testimonials

Panel 4: The role of private sector & Media

- Ms. Nicole Ameline, President, Committee on the Elimination of Discrimination against Women (CEDAW).
- Ms. Liliana Rodrigues, Vice-President, Committee on Women's Rights and Gender Equality, European Parliament.
- Ms. Mercedes Giovinazzo, Director, InterArts: SouthMed WiA project "Enhancing the image of women in the film sector in MENA".
- Ms. Paola Parri, Deputy Secretary General, Permanent Conference of the Mediterranean Audiovisual Operators (COPEAM).

Testimonials

Panel 5: Combating violence against women and girls

- Mr. José Rui Carço, Executive Director, South-North Center of the Council of Europe.
- Amb. Katri Viinikka, Ambassador for Gender Equality, Ministry for Foreign Affairs, Finland.
- Ms. Lina Khalifeh, Founder, SheFighter.
- Ms. Amarsanaa Darisuren, Senior Advisor on Gender Issues, Organization for Security and Co-operation in Europe (OSCE).
- Mr. Benito Marin-Herrero, Programme Manager, Directorate-General for Neighbourhood and Enlargement Negotiations (DG NEAR), European Commission.

Testimonials

Workshop 1: Empowering women in rural and agriculture areas

Moderator: Ms. Wafa Dikah Hamze, Agriculture and rural development specialist, CIHEAM Delegate.

Keynote speaker: Ms. Blanca Moreno-Dodson, Managing Director, World Bank/Center for Mediterranean Integration (CMI).

Panel:

- Ms. Patrizia Pugliese, Senior Researcher, CIHEAM
- Ms. Monica Carco, Senior Expert, United Nation Industrial Development Organization (UNIDO).
- Ms. Rima Tarabay, Founder of Ecotown & vice president Bahr Loubnan, Liban.
- Ms. Alejandra Maria Meneses, Organisation for Economic Co-operation and Development (OECD) Development Centre.
- Ms. Sarah Toumi, Founder, Acacias for All.
- Ms. Belouahri Houria, in charge of El Ghaith project.

Testimonials

Workshop 2: Women in Sciences, Technologies and Innovation (STEM)

Moderator: Ms. Sanaa El Aji, Sociologist and Founder and Publishing Director of Marayana.com, Morocco

Keynote speaker: Ms. Leila Serhan, Regional General Manager, Microsoft.

Panel:

- Ms. Isabel Lousada, Member of the European Platform of Women Scientists (EPWS).
- Ms. Susan Schorr, Head, Digital Inclusion Division, International Telecommunication Union (ITU).
- Ms. Samira Negm, Founder, Raye7.com.
- Ms. Hayfa Sdiri, Founder, Entr@crush.
- Ms. Salma Bennani, Director, Wavestone and beneficiary of the UfM labelled project: WOMED – Women of The Mediterranean: Next Generation of Leaders.

Testimonials

Workshop 3: Investing in sexual and reproductive Health

Moderator: Dr. Andreas Ullrich, Former Adviser to the Assistant Director General, World Health Organization (WHO).

Keynote speaker: Ms. Monica Ferro, Director of the Geneva Office, United Nations Population Fund (UNFPA).

Panel:

- Ms. Flavia Bustreo, Special Consultant, International Federation of Gynecology and Obstetrics (FIGO).
- Ms. Gülhan Inci, Gynecologist, Charité – Universitätsmedizin Berlin.
- Ms. Ana Alcalde, General Director, Alianza por la Solidaridad.
- Dr. Livia Giordano, MD, PHD, representative of Project WORTH

Testimonials

Plenary Session 3: Tomorrow's change makers – Youth for women's empowerment

Moderator: Ms. Dominique Laresche, Journalist, TV5 Monde.

Keynote speaker: Cristina Díaz Fernández-Gil, Director of Cooperation with Africa and Asia, AECID

Panel:

- Ms. Sarah Zouak, Social Entrepreneur, Chief-editor founder of Womensentour and – documentary filmmaker.
- Ms. Sarah Diouri, Head of Espace Bidaya, Social Green Tech incubator.
- Mr. Gili Roman, Director, Eastern Mediterranean International School (EMIS).
- Ms. Nora Noor, Portraitist, laureate of the Euro-Mediterranean Women's Foundation (FFEM) photo contest on gender stereotypes.
- Ms. Carolina Pereira, UN SDG Action Campaign & HeForShe.
- Debrief and recommendations of the "Euro-Mediterranean Youth Forum: Shaping the digital future".
- Debrief and recommendations of the meeting "WoMED – Women of the Mediterranean: Next Generation of Leaders".

Testimonials

Closing Ceremony: Wrap-up and way forward

Moderator: Ms. Dominique Laresche, Journalist, TV5 Monde.

High Level Segment: Wrap-up and way forward:

- Cristina Díaz Fernández-Gil, Director of Cooperation with Africa and Asia, AECID
- Mr. Placido Plaza, Secretary General Ad. Interim, International Centre for Advanced Mediterranean Agronomic Studies (CIHEAM)

- Ms. Laurence Païs, Deputy Secretary General, Union for Mediterranean.
- Mr. Nasser Kamel, Secretary General, Union for the Mediterranean.
- H.E. Rosa Monteiro, Secretary of State for Citizenship and Equality, Portuguese Republic.

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