

Conclusions
Union for the Mediterranean
Third Ministerial Conference on Strengthening the Role of Women in Society
Paris, 12th of September 2013

1. The Ministers of the Union for The Mediterranean gathered in this Conference on the role of women in Euro-Mediterranean society in Paris on 12 September 2013 under the Co-Presidency of HE Catherine Ashton, European Union High Representative and Vice-President of the European Commission, HE Reem Abu Hassan, Minister of Social Development of the Hashemite Kingdom of Jordan, and HE Najat Vallaud-Belkacem, Minister of Women's Rights and Government spokesperson of the Republic of France in her capacity of host country, are:
2. Supporting the on-going historical changes across the Middle East and North Africa region and determined to work together towards taking concrete steps responding to these changes;
3. Highlighting the important role played by women in these changes and in the on-going political transformation processes in the Southern Mediterranean;
4. Conscious of the opportunities these changes present to build up more stable, prosperous, and inclusive societies and ensure the strengthening of the role of women and to promote and safeguard their full participation in the political, economic, civil, social and cultural spheres of life;
5. Considering that reforms launched in several countries provided opportunities to advance women's and girl's full enjoyment of their human rights and fundamental freedoms, which still needed to be fully exploited in order to achieve the expected improvements in gender equality;
6. Considering also, the need to pay due attention to the contribution of women to the economy, and also to the impact of the current financial and economic crisis and the global economic slowdown on women's lives and gender equality, and the need to integrate gender perspectives and to ensure women's participation in the recovery processes;
7. Recognising the significant contribution that women make to the economy and the major force that they represent for change and development in all sectors of the society; within this context, they attach great importance to respect for women's economic, social and cultural rights, including the right to development.
8. Confirming the right of women with disabilities and their empowerment in political, social and economic fields through designing, amending and strengthening policies, especially those related to their rights in education, health and employment, as well as preventing and combating all forms of violence and discrimination against them.
9. Strongly condemning all forms of violence against women and girls, and the violation of their rights, including these committed in situations of armed conflict, foreign occupation, all kinds of terrorism and post-conflict situations, inter alia their right to freedom of movement, to a secure and decent life, and to freely choose their residence without any expulsion by armed and forceful interventions and to undertake all efforts to end these situations;
10. Recognizing that sexual and gender-based violence affects victims and survivors, families, communities and societies, and calling for effective measures of accountability and redress as well as effective remedies; and recalling Security Council resolutions, including Resolution 1325 (2000) and 2106 (2013) as well as other relevant UN Resolutions;

11. Reaffirming the results and conclusions of the preceding Euro-Mediterranean Conferences on Strengthening the Role of Women in Society, held in Istanbul in 2006 and in Marrakech in 2009, including the Istanbul Common Framework of Action 2006-2011;

12. Reaffirming the international obligations and commitments in the area of women's rights, defined in international instruments to which states are parties, including those contained in the UN Convention on the Elimination of All Forms of Discrimination against Women (CEDAW) and its optional protocol, the Beijing Declaration and Platform for Action, the Programme of Action of the International Conference on Population and Development (ICPD) and the outcomes of their review processes, as well as the Millennium Declaration and the Millennium Development Goals, and taking into account the Post-2015 framework for international cooperation, which should be treated as a base when seeking solutions for Euro-Mediterranean regional challenges; and recalling the Agreed Conclusions on the elimination and prevention of all forms of violence against women and girls of the 57th Session of the UN Commission on the Status of Women.

13. Reconfirming the importance to promote, de jure and de facto, equality between women and men in their civil, political, economic, social and cultural rights;

14. Expressing their support to all levels of government and to the efforts of individuals, groups and organs of society to promote and protect universally recognized human rights and fundamental freedoms, including civil society organizations, in particular women's rights organisations and human rights defenders, and to networks of women and men engaged in the promotion of gender equality and women's empowerment as stakeholders.

15. Accordingly, the Ministers renew their previous commitments in the following areas, which shall be implemented in accordance with their international obligations across the Euro-Mediterranean region:

I. Equal rights of women and men to participate in the political, economic, civil and social life

The Ministers recognize that equal participation of women and men in all spheres of life constitutes a fundamental and universal right, as well as an indispensable precondition of sustainable socio-economic development and good democratic governance. Their participation is an effective way to tackle political, economic, and educational challenges across the region. In order to promote equal participation of women in political decision-making at the legislative, executive and judicial levels, as well as in private sector positions, the Ministers agree to:

A. Increasing women's participation in the political decision-making processes at all levels, including in situations of political transformation, by ensuring their freedom of movements, by promoting their participation in elections and in government; by promoting their active participation in local communities, in civil society organizations, as well as in national political life; by targeted policies and instruments; by providing women with appropriate tools, including role-models and mentoring; and by addressing their issues and concerns in the political process with the creation of parliamentary caucuses on women's affairs;

B. Ensuring women's participation in reconstruction, peace-building and in policy design in post-conflict by inter-alia implementing the UN Security Council Resolution 1325 on Women, Peace and Security, and by establishing the actual chairs for the women's representatives around the table allowing them to effectively participate in decision-making;

C. Increasing women's participation in economic decision-making processes by promoting representation of women in corporate governance structures as well as in trade unions and employers' organizations; and by mobilising public and private sector resources to support gender equality and empowerment of women in leadership positions;

D. Ensuring gender equality in employment by granting equal access to full employment, equal pay and social protection; by promoting healthy, safe and harassment free working environment; by ensuring safe transport to and from work; by combating involuntary part-time work as well as by providing conditions to reconcile family and work life, including paid maternity and paternity leave, strengthened pregnancy and maternity protection for women in the workplace, equal division of care and household chores between women and men, child care and of other dependent persons;

E. Improving women's employment in the private sector by addressing mismatch between skills taught in schools and what the labour market demands; by guaranteeing equal access to good quality education, by promoting women's education and training in scientific and technical universities and similar institutions, introducing life-long learning programmes for women and encouraging private companies to introduce training programmes for graduate women; by encouraging the private sector and foundations to invest in programmes and capacity building for women-owned enterprises and career development opportunities for women and girls; and by supporting the recruitment, retention and advancement of women and girls in science, technology and innovation through transparent criteria;

F. Promoting women's entrepreneurship, self-employment and economic independence and empowerment by undertaking legislative, administrative, social and educational measures to provide women with full and equal access to and control over economic resources, in particular to ownership of land and property, including through inheritance; to credits, loans, information, as well as to natural resources and knowledge about technologies; and by encouraging financial institutions to apply a gender perspective to their products and services and to provide micro-credits to women;

G. Reducing disparities between rural and urban women and girls by ensuring access to education, to technical and vocational training, new technologies and to financial assistance and credits; by promoting women's entrepreneurship also in rural areas as well as by establishing and developing childcare and family support and services in remote rural areas;

H. Ensuring the integration of gender equality and women's empowerment as a central issue within the post 2015 framework of the Sustainable Development Goals; analysing and implementing lessons learned from efforts to achieve the Millennium Development Goals, with particular reference to gender equality perspectives and the empowerment of women as a key element of sustainable development and poverty eradication;

I. Strengthening the citizenship status of women by ensuring women the right to equal protection by the law including equal rights with men to acquire, change or retain nationality and the possibility to transmit nationality to children.

II. Combat all forms of violence and discrimination against women and girls.

Referring to the Barcelona Declaration and Istanbul Framework of Actions, and recalling the Agreed Conclusions of the 57th Session of the UN Commission on the Status of Women (CSW), Ministers strongly condemn all forms of violence against women and girls, and acknowledge that gender-based violence and discrimination violates and impairs the full enjoyment by women and girls of human rights and fundamental freedoms. The UN Convention on the Elimination of All Forms of Discrimination against Women (CEDAW), the UN General Assembly resolutions on intensification of efforts to eliminate all forms of violence against women, and the resolution aimed at combating female genital mutilation and violence against women, as well as the Agreed Conclusions of the 57th Session of the UN CSW, provide a comprehensive set of measures for the elimination and prevention of all forms of discrimination and violence against women and girls. In this context, the Ministers agree to:

A. Addressing more effectively the prevention of and response to all forms of violence against women and girls including domestic violence, sexual harassment and bullying in public spaces when it is being used to intimidate women and girls who are exercising their human rights and fundamental freedoms, particularly freedom of opinion and expression; by adopting coherent and coordinated strategies to prevent and combat all violence against women and girls; by providing appropriate mechanisms of prevention, investigation, prosecution and punishment of perpetrators to end impunity; by ensuring women's right to equal protection by law, access to legal counselling and to justice as well as the right to adequate healthcare, including sexual and reproductive health, and reproductive rights, in accordance with the Programme of Action of the International Conference on Population and Development, the Beijing Platform for Action and the outcome documents of their review conferences;

B. Promoting education as a tool for the prevention of all forms of violence against women by establishing trainings for all actors concerned by the fight against violence, such as public officials and civil servants, including judiciary, police, politicians, medical professionals, teachers, boys and girls at school; by engaging, educating and supporting

men and boys to take responsibility for their behaviour; by creating and maintaining an educational climate that is conducive to equality and mutual respect at schools; and by recognising and addressing the important role the media can play, including the social media, in inciting, but also as a tool for social change in combating violence against women and girls;

C. Educating the trainees on judicial bodies, candidates for judges and deputy public prosecutors on the subject of "Treatment of Women Victims in Court Proceedings" in order to improve judicial protection of the rights of women victims of violence, and implementing the inter-agency partner program of prevention with a review to raising awareness of citizens and reporting violence against women;

D. Preventing and combating all forms of sexual violence and violence against women and girls, including the elimination of domestic violence, human trafficking and harmful practices such as female genital mutilations (FGM), as well as child, early, and forced marriage and 'honour crimes' by raising awareness among women and men, boys and girls; by raising the minimum age for marriage to meet the obligations of the UN Convention of the Rights of the Child; by reviewing, enacting and strictly enforcing laws and regulations concerning such issues and by generating social support for the enforcement of these laws in order to eliminate such practises combined with penalties for practising them;

E. Guaranteeing an appropriate framework for women victims and survivors of violence by providing appropriate support services and shelters, professional counselling, childcare and rehabilitation; by establishing telephone helplines for women and girls who are victims of violence by taking the necessary legislation and other measures to prohibit compulsory and forced alternative dispute resolution processes, including forced mediation and conciliation, in relation to all forms of violence against women and girls; and by training of medical and social care professionals, security personnel, police, lawyers and judicial authorities on the social, psychological, physical and legal risks and consequences of violence;

F. Strengthening the role of civil society organizations, in particular women's and youth organizations, women's rights defenders, as well as of local authorities and local communities, in the efforts to eliminate all forms of violence and discrimination against women and girls;

G. Recognizing the linkage between women's economic empowerment and the elimination of violence; developing entrepreneurship as a tool for women to gain economic independence and rehabilitation to a life free from violence; empowering women by boosting self-confidence, bringing them together in networks and making their voices stronger to stand-up for their rights.

III. Change in attitude and behaviour to attain gender equality with a view to promote women empowerment not only in rights but also in reality.

The Ministers agree that fighting stereotypes portrayal of women and men, and transforming social norms and attitudes are main components in ensuring the promotion of women's active role in society on equal footing with men. In this regard, Ministers agree to:

A. Promoting a balanced and non-stereotypical portraying of women and men in the media and in the education system, and raising consciousness of the society on gender equality with a view to promote women empowerment by organizing awareness and educational campaigns as well as training in schools targeting not only women and girls, but also men and boys, as well as employers and employees of both public and private sector, to foster positive attitudes and behaviour and to ensure changes in the institutional behaviour with regard to women's rights and fundamental freedoms;

B. Designing and implementing national policies promoting a balanced and non-stereotypical roles of women and girls in society and combating trafficking and sexual exploitation of women and girls;

C. Promoting an effective partnership between the public and private sectors, employers, trade unions business and professional associations as well as civil society organizations, women's associations, and youth across the Euro-Mediterranean region in the dialogue aimed at improving the situation of women.

The Ministers of the UfM member states agree to establish an effective follow-up mechanism as a Euro-Mediterranean forum on strengthening the role of women in society to ensure an effective dialogue on women-related policies, legislation and implementation. Ministers mandate senior officials/ experts to meet at least once a year to review the progress in translating the above commitments in laws and the implementation of measures contained in these conclusions, and provide report to UfM Senior Officials. The senior officials/experts will hold meetings to review progress on strengthening the role of women in society, taking into account the outcome of the consultations with the civil society.

In order to implement the measures agreed under the priority themes and bring the cooperation on strengthening the role of women in society to an operational level, Ministers, in accordance with their national policies, will support the development of projects in this area by relevant stakeholders, including civil society organisations, in particular through the identification of their needs for technical assistance and the improvement of an environment conducive to the implementation of such projects, including through the availability of appropriate funding. They welcome the projects labelled in the UFM, as presented by the UFM Secretariat Progress report on Women Empowerment and Gender Equality and encourage Member States, regional and international organisations, as well as non-governmental organisations to submit concrete projects to the UfM labelling process by UfM Senior Officials and encourage the UfM Secretariat to identify sources of funding and facilitate access to funding of these projects.

The Ministers agree that the next Ministerial Conference on strengthening the role of women in society shall take place in 2016 as an opportunity to review and evaluate the progress made.

The Ministers express their gratitude to the Republic of France for hosting this Conference and all the efforts exerted to ensure its success.