

Union For The Mediterranean Third High-Level Conference On Women Empowerment

WOMEN FOR THE MEDITERRANEAN

Driving force for development and stability

Barcelona, 10-11 October 2016

CONFERENCE REPORT



Union for the Mediterranean
Union pour la Méditerranée
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NB: This report summarizes interventions made by speakers during the sessions of this conference. The information and views set out in this report do not systematically reflect the official opinion of the UfM Secretariat.

FOREWORD



The Euro-Mediterranean Challenges

According to the World Economic Forum's Global Gender Gap Report 2016, the world is misusing a huge talent by not acting faster to tackle gender inequality, which could put economic growth at risk and deprive economies of the opportunity to develop; this will inevitably have a negative impact on employment trends and societies' development in general.

The Mediterranean region, like the rest of the world is far from having closed the gender gap, which deprives it of a huge potential that can contribute to its inclusive growth, especially in a period of its history when it is facing pressing and severe challenges that hinder its development and threaten its stability.

The global economic crisis has resulted in a high unemployment in the Mediterranean region, particularly for youth and women. The proportion of young people not in education, employment or training (the NEETs) has increased since the crisis, especially among young women. This situation would be much worse in the coming years if no appropriate measures are undertaken to address it. South and East Mediterranean countries have one of the youngest age profiles in the world (70% under 30 years old), and the total of young

people will increase in the coming decades, thus increasing the number of people seeking for a job. On the other side, women constitute a huge resource as agent for change: their role in creating jobs, adding value added, preventing climate change, addressing community needs or providing mediation services is everywhere demonstrated.

The challenges of political transitions in some countries of the region, and the eruption of the Syrian conflict, in addition to other conflicts have created additional difficulties for the development of the region. As a consequence, the flow of migrants and refugees crossing the Mediterranean has increased dramatically. In addition, the challenge of radicalization is threatening the security of the region and affecting young people and women who become more vulnerable to extremism.

With such immense challenges faced by the region, giving women greater and equal opportunities to participate in the social and economic life is not only a moral, economic and political duty; Closing the gender gap is the smart thing to do for our development and stability.

The UfM Secretariat response

The focus on human development, in particular through youth and women empowerment, as a main contribution to addressing the root causes of the current challenges is at the heart of the UfM Secretariat strategic activities. The Ministerial Conferences on Strengthening the Role of Women in Society (Istanbul 2006, Marrakech 2009 and Paris 2013) as well as the 3rd UfM Ministerial on Employment and Labour (Jordan, 2016) further reinforce the UfM's mandate to promote equality between men and

women, both in rights and opportunities, as an essential condition to foster regional stability and socio-economic development.

This strategy is implemented at a horizontal and integrated approach targeting several sectors and different entry points, all of them articulated around three main pillars: i) developing a regional platform for dialogue between countries and key stakeholders to build a common vision and to find sustainable solutions to the common challenges, ii) a partnership-building process to develop strategic and complementary partnerships and cooperation between key stakeholders to increase the impact and iii) the promotion of concrete and targeted interventions measured against impact indicators in order to contribute to improve people life on the ground.

The UfM Women Conference

It has been over three years since the UfM Secretariat organized the first edition of the *UfM Women Conference* as a unique regional forum of exchange and a laboratory for ideas and solutions between governments and the main stakeholders operating in the region, including international organizations, donors,

civil society, private sector, expert and young talented men and women.

The theme of the third edition “***Women for the Mediterranean: Driving force for development and stability***” has not been chosen by accident. This year, we have taken a new step forward, targeting highly topical and burning issues (employability of youth, climate change, threat of extremism, peaceful coexistence...) which constitute the top priority for all the countries of the region, being from the north or the south of the Mediterranean. It perfectly illustrates the approach and methodology adopted by the UfMS which is to collectively address the region’s needs and challenges and facilitate the creation of the right framework to provide sustainable regional solutions, thus building a common agenda and strengthening the regional integration.

The Conference was full of concrete recommendations and commitments, new opportunities of partnerships, ideas of new projects and initiatives and identification of new and promising talent. Building on the achievements already reached so far, it opens the way to amplify impact on the ground for the benefit of the women and the men of the region.



SUMMARY

The third UfM high-level Conference on Women's empowerment was held in Barcelona, Spain, from 10 to 11 October 2016. It was organized in partnership with the Spanish Agency for International Development Cooperation (AECID) and the German Cooperation (GIZ). The Conference's overall objectives were to highlight women's role in enhancing sustainable development and inclusive growth, in promoting tolerance and mutual understanding, to address the issue of women and migrations and to provide concrete recommendations and proposals of action for strengthening their positive contribution to the regional development and stability.

The specific aims were the following:

- Highlight women's role as actors of change to the Euro-Mediterranean challenges.
- Get inspired from testimonies and concrete experiences.
- Formulate recommendations in terms of policy decisions, exchange of experiences and good practices and identify concrete actions and initiatives.
- Explore the Regional Cooperation's contribution in fostering women's empowerment

Proceedings of the Conference included 5 sessions focusing on highly topical issues in the Mediterranean region:

- Towards the Ministerial Conference On Strengthening The Role Of Women In Society: A Gap To Close
- Women as drivers for sustainable development and inclusive growth
- Women as key actors against extremism and radicalization
- Job orientation and access to jobs for young women



- Women, mobility and migration

In addition, the following parallel sessions were organized in the margin of the Conference:

- The meeting of the Committee on Women's Rights in the Euro-Mediterranean Countries of the Parliamentary Assembly of the UfM
- UfM Regional Dialogue's meeting on Women Empowerment
- UfM ad-hoc SOM meeting on Strengthening the Role of Women in Society
- Med4Jobs promoters' coordination meeting

Over 250 participants from 30 Euro-Mediterranean countries participated in the Conference, including Ministers, parliamentarians, international organizations and development agencies, think tanks, youth, civil society, private sector and UfM promoters of projects.

The conference was opened by the UfM Co-presidency, represented by H.E Wajih Azaizeh, Minister of Social Development of the Hashemite Kingdom of Jordan and H.E Federica Mogherini, High Representative of the European Union for Foreign Affairs and Security Policy and Vice-President of the European Commission who delivered a powerful video message.

The Conference witnessed the participation of other high-level personalities such as the Minister

of Women and Family Affairs of Tunisia, H.E. Néziha Labidi, the former vice-president of the Government of Spain and President of *Mujeres por África*, María Teresa Fernández de la Vega and the President of the National Council for Women of Egypt, Dr. Maya Morsi. Engaged women from the civil society also participated, such as Inès Safi, Researcher at the Centre National de la Recherche Scientifique, Nabila Hamza, Member of the Civicus Gender Working Group Advisory Board, and Suzanne Jabbour, Restart Center Director and Member of the UN Subcommittee on Prevention of Torture from Lebanon.

Over the 2 days, the Conference provided a platform of dialogue, exchange and a laboratory of ideas and actions where participants stressed the need to invest in the essential contribution of women as a response to the current Mediterranean challenges, including inclusive growth, extremism and radicalisation as well as migration challenges. The Conference featured a wealth of exchanges of experiences, best practices and concrete initiatives.

All participants called for a stronger political engagement to put women at the heart of the solutions to the challenges of security and stability faced by the region. They also urged to tackle the unprecedented humanitarian crisis which strikes the Mediterranean region, highlighted the importance of education in order to fight against the ignorance and called for an integrated and comprehensive action by all the stakeholders, from policy makers to actors on the ground.



OFFICIAL OPENING



“Women play a central role in development, growth, poverty reduction and societal well-being in each country and in the whole region”

D. Borione

Ms. Delphine Borione, Senior Deputy Secretary General of the UfM, stressed that women play a central role in development, growth, poverty reduction and societal well-being in each country and in the whole region. She welcomed the positive evolution shown by the Euro-Mediterranean countries which have all expressed commitments to gender equality at the legislative, constitutional and policy levels. She highlighted the need to consolidate and further develop an enabling environment in which all driven forces can contribute on the ground to achieving this objective.

Considering the pressings challenges faces by the region, Ms. Borione explained the UfM Secretariat strategy in this regard:

- Working at the political level with governments to develop a joint policy agenda through the Ministerial meetings on strengthening the role of women in society.
- Building and strengthening the regional framework of dialogue, cooperation and partnership on gender equality and women’s empowerment, involving governments and the main stakeholders operating in the region. In this regard, a multi-stakeholder regional platform of dialogue was launched by the UfM in May 2015 with the objectives of i) reviewing with partner countries and stakeholders the progress made in translating the Ministerial commitments into actions and policies and prepare the next ministerial meeting, ii) proposing a follow-up mechanism for the Ministerial with indicators, iii) promoting the sharing of knowledge, best practices and innovative approaches and iv) reinforcing capacities and the coordination between key stakeholders to maximize the impact.
- Promoting concrete and targeted projects labeled by the UfM, to have a direct impact on the ground.
- Building strategic partnerships with national and regional organizations as an effective path to pool and coordinate efforts and to foster coherence and synergies in this field.

Finally, given the enormous needs on the ground, Ms. Borione called for an increase of the regional financial commitments in this regard, to allow supporting more actions benefiting more women, that could be replicated on a large scale across the region.

H.E Federica Mogherini, High Representative of the European Union for Foreign Affairs and Security Policy and Vice-President of the European Commission delivered through video a powerful message highlighting the EU commitment toward gender equality. She stated that women of immense talent exist in

“Gender equality is not simply a basic human right but also a moral duty and it has to do with security and the fight against radicalization”

F. Mogherini

the whole Euro-Mediterranean region, but many of them don't have the chance to get the same equal opportunities. She also highlighted that women can't easily find a place in the organigram of the regional societies and, in some unfortunate cases, they become an easy target of the terrorist propaganda. Women who want to start a new business have to face in a daily base against the sceptics who tell them they were never making it. Ms. Mogherini emphasized that gender equality is not simply a basic human right but also a moral duty linking it tightly with security and the fight against radicalization. It is a powerful drive of growth and human development on both sides of the Mediterranean. She added that from a European perspective, the European Union doesn't just need good gender policies but also puts women at the core of its foreign policy.



H.E Wajih Azaizeh, Minister of Social Development of the Hashemite Kingdom of Jordan, reiterated the full engagement of the UfM co-presidency in the successful preparatory process toward the fourth Ministerial Conference on strengthening the role of women in society. In this regard, he congratulated the active UfM Regional Dialogue that started in 2015 and that has shown the real commitment of all the stakeholders in the region to act for change. He called for the necessity of providing equal and comparable means to the different actors on the ground, namely NGO's from Southern Mediterranean countries operating in the field of gender equality, capacity building and civil empowerment for youth in society; considering their essential and central role in fostering positive change on a daily basis through concrete and specific actions, he also stressed the importance of supporting the Refugees host communities to protect and empower women in these communities.

“There is a need of providing equal and comparable means to the different actors on the ground, namely NGO's from Southern Mediterranean countries and the need to support the Refugees Host communities in the Arab Region”

H.E Wajih Azaizeh

“Women empowerment and gender equality not only deals with justice and human rights but it is a legal and ethical obligation”

B. Hernández Oliver

Ms. Blanca Hernández Oliver, Spanish Government Representative for Violence against Women, highlighted the work done by the Spanish government in the fight against gender based violence. She firstly stressed out that women empowerment and gender equality not only deals with justice and human rights but it is a legal and ethical obligation. She spoke about the achievements of Spain in this matter but also the remaining challenges. She highlighted the strong legal and institutional framework orientated to the fight against gender violence and the fact that this theme has become a public issue, tackled by the government, medias and associations from civil society.



WOMEN CAN – INSPIRING TESTIMONIES FROM WOMEN ENGAGED TOWARDS GENDER EQUALITY



H.E. CATHERINE SAMBA-PANZA, former head of transition Government of Central African Republic sent an extremely inspiring speech that was read by **Ms. Khadija Idrissi Janati**, a young entrepreneur women engaged in gender equality:

“In my country, at the heart of the political crisis, while people hearts and minds were dominated by hatred and revenge, and men were soughing to strengthen their war strategies, a group of women requested my leadership to help ease the political and social tensions and to complete the transition.

I was elected as Head of State of Transition the 20 January 2014 and I became the first woman in CAR's history and the second French-speaking African women who led a country. My election has raised hopes among the population, especially women and young people who aspired to live in peace. I inherited a country completely devastated by years of crisis. Security, humanitarian, institutional, economic and social challenges acutely arose in a context of inter-communal tensions. I immediately decided to position myself in Chief State who brings a message of peace and hope and promote national reconciliation and social cohesion by dialogue and permanent consultation with all the antagonists of the crisis. Despite many obstacles, under my leadership, governmental actions supported by the international community have created a favorable environment for national reconciliation, for the resumption of functioning of public administration and socio-economic activities. In this dynamic, all the driving forces of the nation were mobilized and the profound aspirations of grassroots communities have been taken into account. My experience shows that women can drive big changes in their respective countries and around the world. Women in Africa and the Mediterranean should constitute influential groups with the aim to protect women's interests. However, we cannot meet this objective without the involvement and commitment of men.”
(extract of the speech).

“Women can drive big changes in their respective countries and around the world”

H.E. Catherine Samba-Panza



Ms. Khadija Idrissi Janati, beneficiary of the UfM labelled project WOMED, Morocco.

“Nothing is impossible for women. We are able to be in high places and to achieve remarkable things. I was selected in 2014 among 6 young leaders around the world to meet the American president Barak Obama and it was a very positive experience that confirmed me that I can and that women can. In my point of view, getting where I am today is not a hazard. I have been working hard for it. I believe that when women are determined and have the possibility to achieve something and are working hard to achieve it, they can bring the world to a better statute”.



Mariya Gabriel, Member of the European Parliament, Bulgaria

"My interest for politics started when I was 15 and the sentence I have the most heard was "politics is not for everyone and much less for a woman". However, I always believed that for my country, changes can also come through political decisions. I succeeded to access to politics thanks to a new party which offered a large place for women. For me it was always clear that women in politics should not necessarily be responsible of organizing "charity events" or being in charge only of social affairs. I have been elected vice-president of the parliamentary group. In my country Bulgaria, there is no quota's law, but there is a high political commitment to allow women achieving high level positions. When I was elected in 2009 in the European Parliament, I realized that there is still a long way forward the parity in politics. Since then, my new objective as a politician is to advocate for an equal access of women in politics"

"During my studies as agronomist, I passed an internship in a farm. One day, the manager of the farm asked me: why did you choose this discipline? It is not for a woman because it requires a physical strength and a capacity for decision-making. I continued my studies and I was graduated with High Honours, but I did not succeed to find a job in my discipline. I decided to be a research scientist in order to find solutions for environmental problems. My researches have led to find a lower cost alternative to address soil pollution. I was rewarded last year by the L'Oreal-UNESCO scientific prize. Now, as a university professor, I tried to help the future generations of women engineers to achieve their objectives and to help them combating stereotypes in this field"



Sarraf Arbaoui, a successful scientist and beneficiary of the UfM labelled project WOMED, Tunisia



TOWARDS THE 4th MINISTERIAL CONFERENCE ON STRENGTHENING THE ROLE OF WOMEN IN SOCIETY: CLOSING THE EQUALITY GAP



Key speakers

Moderator: *Ms. Delphine Borione, Senior Deputy Secretary General, Union for the Mediterranean.*

Key-note speaker: *Ms. María Teresa Fernández de la Vega, President, Mujeres por África and former vice-president of the Kingdom of Spain.*

Panelists:

- **H.E. Wajih Azaizeh**, Minister of Social Development, Hashemite Kingdom of Jordan.
- **H.E. Néziha Labidi**, Minister of Women's Affairs, Family and Children, Republic of Tunisia.
- **Ms. Maya Morsy**, President of the National Council for Women (NCW), Egypt.
- **Ms. Irène Mingasson**, Head of Unit, Regional Programmes Neighbour-hood South, European Commission.
- **Mr. Alexis Rinckenbach**, Head of the European and international affairs unit, Social Cohesion General Directorate, Ministry of Social Affairs and Health, France.
- **Ms. Serena Romano**, Gender Focal Point on behalf of the Ministry of Foreign Affairs and Intl Cooperation, Italy.
- **Ms. Boriانا Jönsson**, Executive Director, Euro-Mediterranean Feminist Initiative.

This session focused on the framework of the UfM multi-stakeholders regional dialogue process on women empowerment launched in 2015 toward the preparation of the 4th UfM Ministerial meeting on Strengthening the Role of Women in Society.

Ms. Delphine Borione opened the session by presenting the UfM Ministerial process on strengthening the role of women in society which started in 2006 by the first ministerial meeting held in Istanbul followed by the Marrakech meeting in 2009 and the Paris meeting in 2013. The 4th Ministerial meeting will take place in 2017. She summarized the regional dialogue process launched last year and presented briefly the main outcomes: notable progress has taken place in the region in relation to women and girls rights, and in overall, gender issues have gained significant momentum. All participating countries in the dialogue expressed commitments to gender equality within their legislative, constitutional and international frameworks. However, the positive developments undertaken by countries contrast with a reality in which discrimination against women and girls persists at all levels of society. Adopted measures and legal

provisions have not led to a significant increase in women's access to economic and financial resources and participation in decision-making. The most pressing issue identified is the effective implementation of policies on the ground.

H.E. Wajih Azaizeh, started his speech by saying *"personally, I see the future in the eyes of my granddaughters"*. He stressed on the importance of evaluating the progress made since the Istanbul Ministerial meeting. For him, this impact evaluation is crucial to better build for the 4th Ministerial Meeting. He wondered how far UfM countries (north and south) have succeeded on defining common priorities in the field of women empowerment and if these priorities were translated in concrete and fully funded regional projects, permitting the cooperation and the exchange of expertise between countries from the two shores of the Mediterranean. He also highlighted the necessity of elaborating a concrete and operational action plan with measurable indicators for the next ministerial meeting in order to guarantee its implementation. He closed his address by highlighting the challenging regional context and his concerns about the rise of extremism, a situation that is likely to worsen if no progress is made in empowering women. He believes that women's involvement and voices on the issue of peace building and the fight against extremism should be strengthen and heard.

Dr. Maya Morsy, focused her intervention on violence against women, given the fact that Egypt has coordinated with UN Women the working Group on fighting violence against women. In Egypt, ending violence against women is a provision of the Constitution and a specific bill to protect women against all forms of violence has been recently introduced to the Parliament. She closed her address by stressing the importance of combating gender stereotypes and fostering women's economic participation as a way to ensure equal opportunities for women.



H.E. Néziha Labidi presented the evolution of women statute in Tunisia since the reforms undertaken in 1956 by Leader Habiba Bourguiba, the adoption of a progressive code that strengthened women's rights and contributed to foster the participation of women in Tunisia. Today, 35% of parliamentarians are women, 20% of National Unity Government are women. Full political rights for women are stipulated in Article 34 of the new constitution, adopted on 2014 "The rights to election, voting, and candidacy are guaranteed, in accordance with the law. The state seeks to guarantee women's representation in elected councils."

The draft organic law on combating violence against women was approved by the Council of Ministers on July 2016 and will be presented soon to the Parliament (Assembly of People's Representatives). However, in order to be effective, it is essential to establish relevant mechanisms to ensure laws implementation. There is no point to adopt laws if they are not implemented. Another issue highlighted by the Minister was the education of girls. In Tunisia, 69% of university graduate are women and with honors. Unfortunately, a big proportion of them

are absent from the labor market and from economic life which constitute a great injustice.



Ms. Irène Mingasson recalled that gender equality is a fundamental value and principle for the European Union. These principals are strongly embedded in the new Neighborhood European Policy revised a year ago. She commended the important and inclusive work accomplished under the framework of the UfM Regional Dialogue process in the perspective of the next ministerial meeting and the active participation of civil society organisations. She expressed her wishes that the next Ministerial embeds the adopted participatory approach because she is convinced that this collaborative approach is the way forward and is going to be essential for the monitoring of commitments made. Finally, she stressed that gender equality and women empowerment should be put at the top of the agenda of all the other sectors that the UfM, the EU and all actors of the region involved in.

Alexis Rinckenbach explained that from 2013 to 2016, the region experienced dramatic events that changed drastically its context. For him, the 4th Ministerial meeting and the gender equality agenda in general should constitute a way to combat obscurantism. He underlined that we are bound by an obligation to achieve results and of providing means and financial resources to this end. For him, the regional dialogue process has as a final objective to transform the society and for that, it echoes the 2030 global agenda process which is under definition of gender sensitive indicators and a monitoring mechanism.

Serena Romano, as co-moderator of the working group on women's economic participation, presented the UfM Regional Dialogue process, especially the principals and the approach adopted in assessing the 2013 Ministerial commitments. She explained that participants in the Regional Dialogue process estimated that the commitments made in 2013 are very well good drafted and very detailed; this is why there is no need to redraft them. What is needed is to apply them by establishing a follow-up mechanism. The adopted approach was to select some priorities and try to assess how they were implemented and provide recommendations on what should be done. The priorities selected by the group on women's economic participation were "women in the informal economy" considering the important number of women in this sector, "women entrepreneurship and access to finance" and "work and life balance". In informal economy, the working group recommended that governments have to develop an incentive process to make women move out of the informal economy. Secondly, women's work should be recognized, should be valued and should be paid including within the family businesses. Finally, she stressed on the fact that civil society should be actively and systematically involved.

"Commitments made in 2013 are very well drafted and very detailed, but a follow-up mechanism needs to be established"

S. Romano

On entrepreneurship and access to finance, women have difficulties and reluctance to obtain a loan and it is necessary to adopt targeted policies and mechanisms to facilitate women's access to loans. Entrepreneurship should also be integrated in the education system. Regarding work-life balance, Public-Private Partnerships with civil society should be promoted to establish child care or elderly care. Flexy-time and remote

work should be included for both parents when justified.

Boriana Jönsson presented the civil society dialogue process related to the 2013 Ministerial Conclusions, launched by Euromed Feminist Initiative last year through a European Union funding. The objective is to enhance regional cross-sector cooperation through policy dialogue and exchange of best practices with existing networks and stakeholders and contextualize the implementation of the Paris Ministerial conclusions in the ongoing challenges in the region. The process aims also to build a regional civil society platform with concrete policy recommendations to the 4th UfM Ministerial conference. About 600 representatives have been involved up to date. Regional and national dialogues were held to discuss the regional priorities but also to raise priorities of national interest. The major priority areas that came out through this process were: changing discriminative legislation and enhancing participation, ending violence against women (which were linked to armed conflicts and occupation in the region), changing education system and curricula and challenging gender stereotypes and public discourse (which were connected to the (lack of) access of women to the decision-making and to the elimination of violence). Finally, she stressed that dialogue

initiated by civil society has to continue because it opens a structured way for discussions and sharing of analyses with policy makers.

In her key note address, **María Teresa Fernández de la Vega** strongly advocated for an enhanced involvement of women whom only will be able to embody a new leadership and address current challenges such as climate change or peace mediation. She stressed out that they are the best actors of change and of modernity and the most suitable to bring new ways of thinking, to create new opportunities for our societies. She reminded that although we are all aware that women are an untapped potential of growth and development, current measures and policies are still not enough to involve them fully.

She also presented her project called Nador lighthouse, an investigation center which will be opened soon. She explained that the objective is to help and accompanying the development of the continent through women's access to full knowledge and research, through training, qualification and empowerment. The Nador lighthouse aims to become the first center of research on women issues within the African continent.



WAY FORWARD

- For the next UfM Ministerial Declaration on Strengthening the role of women in society, the necessity of elaborating a concrete and operational action plan with measurable indicators in order to guarantee its implementation.
- The 4th Ministerial meeting should embed the adopted participatory approach as a way forward to monitor the undertaken commitments.
- Women's involvement on the issue of peace building and the fight against extremism should be strengthened and heard.
- The importance of combating gender stereotypes and fostering women's economic participation as a way to ensure equal opportunities for women.
- It is essential to establish all necessary relevant mechanisms to ensure laws implementation. There is no point to adopt laws if they are not implemented.
- Regarding economic participation:
 - Governments have to develop an incentive process to make women move out of the informal economy.
 - It is necessary to adopt targeted policies and mechanisms to facilitate women's access to loans.
 - Public-Private Partnerships with civil society should be promoted to establish child care and elderly care services and flexy-time and remote work should be included for both parents when justified.
- The importance to continue involving civil society organisations in the dialogue process and the follow-up mechanism.
- Gender equality and women empowerment should be put on the top agenda of all sectors that the UfM, the EU and all key stakeholders are involved in.



WOMEN AS A DRIVER FOR SUSTAINABLE DEVELOPMENT AND INCLUSIVE GROWTH

Key speakers

Moderators: *Ms. Karina Chabour, Journalist, France 24.*

Panellists:

- **Ms. Jihen Boutiba Mrad**, Secretary General, Business Med.
- **Dr. Marianne Azer**, Parliamentarian, Egyptian Parliament.
- **Ms. Sanem Oktar**, President, KAGIDER, Turkey
- **Ms. Sita Vanbinst**, Legal Policy Advisor to the State Secretary for Equal Opportunities & Poverty Reduction, Kingdom of Belgium.
- **Ms. Nabila Hamza**, Member of the Civicus Gender Working Group Advisory Board.
- **Ms. Begoña Suarez**, Deputy General Director for Women Empowerment and career advancement, Instituto de la Mujer y para la igualdad de oportunidades of Spain.

Testimonies:

- **Ms. Imene Bouchair**, Women's earth and Climate Action Network (WECAN) and Arab Youth Climate Movement (AYCM).
- **Ms. Fatima Zahra Beraich**, Founder, Biodome du Maroc, and beneficiary of the UfM Labelled project WOMED: the “next generation of leaders”



Key issues discussed

Progress is being made in increasing women's participation in the economy and recognising their key role in achieving sustainable development. But there is still a considerable gap in women's equal participation. Women remain a largely untapped resource in addressing the pressing challenges faced by the Euro-Mediterranean region, and it is more than time to harness their great potential. This session tried to address the following questions.

- *What is the contribution of women to the region's inclusive growth and sustainable development?*
- *How to make it more visible?*
- *How to harness women's full potential and overcome barriers that still hinder equal participation?*
- *How could regional dialogue and cooperation help to achieve these goals?*

Ms. Jihen Boutiba Mrad explained that women continue facing many barriers in moving up the careers ladder or in trying to progress to senior positions in private sector. The existence of this “glass ceiling” is the result of, on one hand the prevailing stereotypes that women cannot be a leader and on the other hand the lack of confidence of women themselves. Legislations that recognise the equal rights for women exist in many countries but it is not applied or implemented enough. She recommended working with private sector and companies to demonstrate to them the advantage of gender diversity in the progress of a company. In this sense, Business Med has developed a regional project on social dialogue involving governments, private sector and trade unions and promoted the participation of more women in the dialogue

meetings to foster their influence on the decisions taken. Finally, she recommended to unify, under the framework of the upcoming Ministerial meeting, the main organisations, women networks and women leaders in the region and to develop a regional charter with common objectives in order to improve women access to leadership and senior positions.

Ms. Sanem Oktar said that empowering women economically is not enough. For her, in every decision-making process, women should be also a role player. There is a close linkage between entrepreneurship, employment and education, as told by the World Bank. She described the advocacy work made by KAGIDER under the framework of G20 which led to the integration of gender equality as a main priority in G20 commitments adopted in Turkey in 2015. These commitments serve as support document when she goes to discuss with government in Turkey because the government committed to implement them. Finally, she closed her intervention by saying that making laws is important, forcing decision-makers is important, but this will not work without taking concrete actions to allow women equal participation.

Ms. Sita Vanbinst emphasized on the importance to have a dialogue with all stakeholders because it may lead to learn from each other and to be sure that reforms taken meet the needs of all concerned parties. She gave the example of the federal plan on gender and work launched this year by Belgium that was prepared with the consultation of civil society organisations, trade unions, lawyers and other concerned stakeholders.

Ms. Nabila Hamza started by emphasizing that today there is wide acknowledgment that women empowerment for social, economic and inclusive development and many studies of international organisations showed that there is a link between women empowerment and GDP per capita. Evidence showed that companies which have more women in senior positions register better



benefits than other companies. On the other hand, women are very active in agriculture in the region and worldwide. By facilitating their equal access to land and to resources, this would increase agriculture's income about 30% in the Arab world for example. Empowering women is also beneficial for the family and for the community. In this regard, she gave the example of micro-lending where it has been noticed that for each dollar women earn, they reinvest 90% for the family and children while men reinvest only 40%. She spoke about the situation in Tunisia where there is a widespread assumption that when women enter to the labour market men lose jobs, while evidence shows that it is not true. On the contrary, when women work, they create jobs: as entrepreneurs, in child and elderly care sector, domestic help, clothing sector, sport... She closed her speech by saying that to ensure an equal participation of women, governments and stakeholders have to act on different aspects and not only on education: on culture, on religion and on the legal framework, especially the statute of women in the family laws. We have also to act on the public side but also on the private side.

Ms. Begoña Suarez focused her intervention in presenting concrete actions in particular related to entrepreneurship, that the Institut for women and for Equal Opportunities de la Mujer is implementing such as their national programme called “Supporting women entrepreneurs” in cooperation with all Spanish Chambers of Commerce. It mainly consists in providing women with information and advice and facilitating access to all the requirements to create their businesses, It includes facilitating access to finance, with a microfinance system (up to 25.000 euros per entrepreneur) and a subsidized system of provision of loans or guarantees in partnership with a public spanish institution. The programme has recently created a mentorship network to advise and empower new entrepreneurs. She stressed the importance to support women in rural areas because their situation is even more difficult.

Regarding career advancement, she mentioned that in Spain, companies with more than 250 employees are obliged to set up equality plans, which are a very good tool to detect where the inequalities are happening within the company, and identify actions that need to take place to eliminate those inequalities. The Institute helps and subsidises SMEs to also set up and implement equality plans. In 2014 the Ministry of Health, Social Services and Equality started the initiative “More women, better companies” through which companies sign a voluntary agreement with the Ministry, in which they commit themselves to reaching specific targets regarding gender balance in decision-making positions and boards of directors. Companies also commit themselves to develop and implement targeted measures to achieve those voluntary targets in a four year period. The initiative has been linked to Promociona project, a very successful project to promote women to decision making positions project developed in collaboration with by the Spanish Federation of Business Organizations.

Women keep facing many challenges on one hand because of the lack of gender mainstreaming which is not correctly included in laws and policies both in their implementation and development, and on the other hand because of the persisting stereotypes. She recommended that women should create more networks to support each other. Once women arrive to a top management position, they should help other women in middle management positions advancing in the hierarchy. **Ms. Marianne Azer** presented the evolution of women participation in Egypt history from the Pharaohs to the modern history, when women have played an important role as leader and as an actor of change in the society.



Ms. Imene Bouchair highlighted the vulnerability of women of the Mediterranean to climate change, and the major work youth and women oriented Climate and environmental NGOs and networks are doing to cope with it. She also talked about the creation and the launch of the first Mediterranean Youth Climate Network that will gather Mediterranean youth around one mission: Climate Change. She stressed that young women will both play a major role and be a target group in the network's future activities.

WAY FORWARD

- To ensure an equal participation of women, governments and stakeholders have to act on different entry points and not only on education or culture, but also on religion and or on the legal framework, especially the statute of women in family laws.
- The need to work closely with private enterprises on the advantage of gender diversity as a productive factor in business.
- Empowering women economically is not enough. This needs to be strengthened by promoting women as a role player in every decision-making process.
- The need to unify the main organizations, women networks and women leaders in the region and develop a regional charter with common objectives in order to improve women's access to leadership and senior positions.
- Making laws is important, but this will not work without taking concrete actions and measures to foster women equal participation.
- The importance to have a dialogue with all stakeholders to ensure a participatory process, allowing to learn from each other and to be sure that reforms taken meet the needs of all concerned parties.



YOUMATCH: JOB CREATION AND ACCESS TO JOBS FOR YOUNG WOMEN

Key speakers

Moderator: *Ms. Nadine El Asmar, Founding partner, Beyond reform & development IRADA.*

- **Panellists:**
- **Ms. Emanuela Pozzan**, Senior Specialist on Gender Equality Director, Arab States Office, International Labour Organisation (ILO)
- **Mr. Sherif El Tokali**, Assistant Resident Representative, Egypt Country Office, United National Development Programme (UNDP).
- **Ms. Wedjen Ben Ayed**, Deputy Director in the Cabinet of the Minister, Ministry of Vocational Training and Employment, Tunisia.
- **Ms. Mais Gousous**, Vice-President, "Akhtaboot Cares Initiative" Champion.
- **Ms. Helena Simas**, Regional Director of English Language Programmes, AMIDEAST.
- **Ms. Olfa Arfaoui**, Programme Manager, EconoWin-Intégration économique des femmes - MENA (EconoWin)
- **Ms. Laila El Refai**, EconoWin-Intégration économique des femmes - MENA (EconoWin)
- **Ms. Eman Qaraeen**, Technical Advisor TWEED - Promotion of Training to Improve Efficiency in the Water and Energy Sector II, giz Deutsche Gesellschaft für Internationale Zusammenarbeit (GIZ).

Key issues discussed

Unemployment rates among women in the MENA region are considerably higher than those among men and the ILO World Employment and Social Outlook (WESO) 2015 even states an overall negative trend for women over the last decade. Across the region, the employment-to-population ratio for women is far below that of men and despite their participation in higher education, many young women drop out of the transition process from school to work and do not find their way into decent jobs.

An integrated approach is needed to empower (young) women and to enhance their access to decent jobs. Moreover, the promotion of female entrepreneurship and self-employment can play an important role.

The session tried to address the following questions:

- How can the school-to-work-transition of young women be improved?
- Are there good practices of employment services geared to the specific needs of young women? Are there successful strategies for young women to gain access to the labour market?
- What role can online media / social media play in this process?
- Do cultural values have an influence on labour market access of young women?
- What impact can regional exchange, for instance in the frame of the YouMatch network, have on the improvement of labour market access for young women?



Ms. Nadine El Asmar moderated and opened the session by stressing the differences between male and female labour force participation across the MENA region. The economic crisis following the Arab spring affected youth and women in particular. The unemployment rate of youth on average is twice as high as that of adults, with an even higher rate of unemployment among young women (up to 3 times more than men).

The plenary was asked to give sector- and country-specific insights into women's situation regarding labour market access. It was clear that gender stereotypes are persistent in many countries leading to wage discrimination and sectors and positions, which are not socially accepted for women. The basic education system is in urgent need to integrate information and counselling starting early. Employers and (female) employees could serve as role models and are first contacts to the world of work. Entrepreneurial thinking should also be addressed in schools and in vocational and higher education in order to skill young people to start their own business. Also promising is to link students and unemployed with financial institutions or with (female) business associations to address their special needs.

Mr. Jens Adam introduced YouMatch, the UfM Labelled project implemented by GIZ. YouMatch has received the political endorsement of the UfM member states as one of the high priority projects in the region. The project facilitates a regional and global dialogue on employment services based on peer exchange. This dialogue includes the public and private sector as well as the civil society and youth themselves in order to identify solutions that really offer a potential for improvement of employment services for youth. It focusses on:

- providing professional orientation
- preparing youth for labor market entry
- matching jobseekers and labor demand.

The YouMatch initiative has a value to bring and a sound message to share towards the economic

empowerment and enhancement of women access to decent jobs in the region's labour markets.

The main objectives of the project, its first successful initiatives and lessons learned could be communicated to advocate the importance of specific job matching tools for young women.

Mr. Sherif El Tokali, from UNDP Egypt gave an overview on facts and figures with regard to women's employment. In Egypt, the unemployment rate for women is 71% whereas for men it is at 25%. The rate decreases with an increasing level of education. Businesses are mainly run by men, only 11% of businesses are owned by women who indicated lower levels of access to financial resources and an estimated lower level of self-esteem hindering them from starting a business. The need of education is high since 20% of women in the MENA region are illiterate.



Emanuela Pozzan from ILO brought in the importance of carrying surveys which can generate relevant information about the labour market situation and therefore allows a better understanding of the situation for women and can better address this target group. A survey conducted in Egypt, Tunisia, Palestine and Lebanon indicates that women are often better educated than men, but do not enter the labour market due to household duties or traditional role models.

The speakers tackled the role of media and the influence of cultural values. EconoWin developed and implemented innovative tools to mobilise women's potential together with partners from

civil society, governmental institutions as well as companies in Egypt, Jordan, Morocco and Tunisia. Their image campaign, called “Ana Hunna” raises awareness for women’s contribution to economic and social development. Media proved to be an empowering and powerful instrument to support women’s empowerment.

Ms. Mais Gousous from Akhtaboot presented the activities of the company which provides employment services to young people. Through job fairs, women get connected with renowned local and international companies, where gender equality is highly promoted. Through a targeted media campaign they reached a share of 48% female attendees and, according to a survey, initiated behavioral changes. Akhtaboot's goals are not only to help connect job seekers with employers but, acknowledging the prevalent mindset, to achieve behavioral and practical changes that are much needed in order to catalyze economic growth and increase competitiveness of knowledge economy sectors.

AMIDEAST, a U.S. non-profit organization on education and training was represented by

Ms. Helena Simas. Similar to the GIZ TWEED Programme based in Jordan, they provide skills with a special focus on female secondary-school. Starting from 2014, the programme has been implemented in Jordan, Morocco, Lebanon, and Egypt, with approximately 350 graduates. Participants receive a four months training in English language, computer/IT, workplace, and job search skills. Ms. Fatima Al Annan, beneficiary of this project shared her experiences and the impact it had on her life: Today, she not only got a job but is also helping other women in developing their skills. GIZ TWEED focuses on skills development in the water sector and is implementing training courses to link employment with the urging problem of water scarcity.

Based on the exchange during this session, Moroccan and Algerian participants stressed the difficulties faced by women which are triggered by the lack of support from the policy level and local authorities, but also the lack of financial support which prevent women from starting their own business.

WAY FORWARD

- Call for an integrated approach to empower women and to enhance their access to decent jobs. Need for awareness raising addressing men and women and job orientation for girls (and their families) while they are still at school. After graduation, school-to-work-transition schemes including job preparation shall address the particular challenges for young women.
- Female entrepreneurship should be tackled on different levels: through entrepreneurial education in (vocational) schools or universities, encounters with the private sector or mentorship programs. In general, a highly practice oriented education is needed to prepare young people for the world of work at an early stage. This is also a tool to reduce recruiting costs for companies and to promote women in decision-making positions.
- Call for a stronger and interlinked support of all actors and a better follow up on initiatives which have already been launched in this regard.
- Knowledge exchange on good practices addressing women is highly appreciated by all participants and can help creating and fostering innovative approaches.

WOMEN AS KEY ACTORS AGAINST EXTREMISM AND RADICALISATION

Key speakers

Moderator: *Ms. Zeina El Tibi, Journalist, Observatoire d'études géopolitiques and President of the Association des Femmes arabes de la presse et de la communication.*

Panellists:

- *Ms. Belen Alfaro Hernández, Ambassador at large of the Alliance of Civilizations and for interreligious and intercultural dialogue, Spain.*
- *Ms. Inès Safi, researcher, Centre National de la Recherche Scientifique.*
- *Ms. Suzanne Jabbour, Restart Center Director and Member of the UN Subcommittee on Prevention of Torture, Tunisia.*
- *Ms. Hafida Benchehida, Member of the National Council, Algeria.*
- *Mr. Mohammad Naciri, Regional Director Arab States, UN Women.*

Testimonies: *Ms. Samia Essabaa, Teacher at Théodore Monod vocational school, Seine Saint Denis, French Republic.*



Key issues discussed

Women are often the first to observe the early warning signs of extremism in families and at the community level. They can be voices of tolerance and provide a strong counter narrative message to extremism. Educated and empowered women, as teachers, mentors, journalists, faith leaders, civil society actors and political and community leaders, can act as role models to build resilience to the influence and spread of extremism. At the regional level, women's networks and women leaders can play a critical role by voicing their position to counter extremism and radicalisation and to influence strategies and programmes locally, nationally and regionally.

The session tried to address the following questions:

- *Is there a specific contribution by women to prevent extremism and radicalisation?*
- *How can we develop their full potential as peace builders and mediators, promoting mutual understanding and inter-cultural dialogue?*
- *What is the role of women leaders and women's regional networks in fighting against extremism?*
- *What are the capacity-building needs to support their efforts and to develop their knowledge and skills to reject the influence of extremism and to prevent radicalisation?*

Ms. Zeina El Tibi explained that women are well placed to see signs of radicalization within their families and for that they must have a whistleblower mission. Women are not only victims. They also tend to get more and more radicalized. This double involvement should be taken into account in the responses to this threat. She recommended to develop synergies with women civil society organisations and public authorities to establish public and community structures to facilitate networking and cooperation between the concerned stakeholders. For her, the role of education, in the broadest sense, is also essential because ignorance leads to extremism. In this sense she recommended to strengthen women's knowledge of religion and promote and disseminate knowledge and information of the real and moderate Islam.

“The different connections of women with extremism, as victims, extremists and actors of change, should be taken into account when designing responses strategies to extremism threat ”

B. Hernandez

Ms. Belen Alfaro Hernández emphasised that extremism is not linked to any religion or culture. Muslims are the first victims of extremism's acts. For her, the situation of women can be analyzed from two different but linked approaches: as victims and as actors of change. She insisted on the importance of no longer considering women as only victims of extremism but also as actors of change exemplifying with the interfaith groups for peace in which women are fully active. Going still further, she stressed that the role of women should not only be considered as agents of civil society but also as decision makers both at the national and international levels. The key role of media and education was stressed as main vectors to strengthen women's capacity in this

regard, including women within families, and to make visible their role in decision- making processes.

Finally, regarding the prevention and conflicts mediations, she highlighted that a UN study found out that only 9% are female mediators in the peace processes led by the United Nations. The same studies evidenced that the participation of women in conflict resolution and mediations is essential; this is why peace agreements must incorporate specific clauses for women.



Ms. Inès Safi explained that the Islamic history is full of examples of women, starting from those close to the prophet Mohammed, who can be considered as feminists. They have challenged the misogynist pre-Islamic mentality, prevailing in Arabia and in the Mediterranean, as well as the misinterpretations of the Quran or statements attributed wrongly to Mohammed. They demonstrated their capacities and ingenuity in assuming the role of scholars, sponsors, poets, spiritual or political leaders, or ambassadors and mediators between different cultures and religions. She mentions that the most important spiritual guides of the great scholar Ibn Arabi are women, and that he devoted a poetry book to Nizam. He met her while walking around the Kaaba, when she revealed to him the profound

meanings of koranic verses. He qualified her as "Cheikhat Al'Haramayn", the master of Mecca and Medina. Dr. Inès Safi reminded the common history of the Mediterranean region which has always been a crossroad of exchanges, interactions and dialogue between different cultures and religions even during conflicts. For her, the challenging situation today in the region regarding extremism is mainly resulted of the ignorance of people, including Muslim people, of the Islamic history and the Islam's foundations and values. In this context, she insisted on the importance of sharing and spreading knowledge about Islam and about the role women have played in the Islamic history in promoting peaceful and multi-religious societies. Finally, she recommended to European countries to revise the history courses and to include muslim heroes who have contributed to change the history of humanity. On one side, this would allow Muslim citizens to identify themselves in this history and not feel excluded neither humiliated, as well as to discover Islam through figures and not only from scriptural texts. This would also help European citizens to be aware of the common roots and revisit their stereotypes, and to improve the mutual understanding between the two shores of

the Mediterranean.

Ms. Suzanne Jabbour presented the experience of *Restart Center* in fighting extremism in Lebanon. The organisation started first working with detainees because most of the extremists were recruited in prisons but also with mothers and wife's detainees. They also worked in schools and with Syrian refugees to sensitise them on the risk of extremism because many of children are used as soldiers. Given the enormous needs, the successful actions on the ground at the local level need to be supported and scaled up in order to reach and benefit to a higher number of people.

Ms. Hafida Benchehida explained that in the last decade, most literature about the link between women and the extremism has always presented women either as victims or as violent extremists. The Algerian experience showed that the security-orientated approach is not sufficient enough to eradicate extremism. Economic and social measures are most important in addition of the religious system. Regarding the last aspect, Algeria has organized training of imams on moderated Islam, but also women "*Morchidat*". Their role is to lead an outreach work and to counter extremism narrative because the extremism narrative can only be countered with



people who know perfectly the principals and religious text. For her, extremism is rooted in the region because of ignorance and of a superficial knowledge of the Islam. This should be accompanied with economic measures such as social engagement, promoting employment and offering incentive to help young people creating their own business.

“The need to restore the perception of Islam, too often mistakenly interpreted, by sharing and spreading knowledge about it”

H. Benchehida

Mohammad Naciri started by presenting the work undertaken by UN Women of the Security Council’s resolution 2242 which integrates the women peace and security agenda with the role of women in countering violent extremism. Women have played a catalytic and major role in fighting violence and extremism and in advancing peace and security during the last 16 years. The resolution also pushes and makes us aware of the potential negative impact of the counter terrorism legislations on women rights and civil right organisations. For him, we need to be vigilant on this dimension while working on the counter violent extremism agenda. UN Women is currently working with religious institutions in some Muslim countries of the region to develop a counter narrative discourse and look in the religious texts from women’s rights perspective. He highlighted that women have ample agency in the society, inside civil society organizations and inside families. We need to work with women to promote this counter-narrative among their families and their societies.

Ms. Samia Essaba delivered a testimony on the importance of education in fighting against stereotypes, ignorance, misconceptions on women and religions. She gave the concrete example of her action as a teacher within a secondary school in a vulnerable neighborhood in

France. She brought her students, which the most of them come from migrant’s families and from different religions, to the country of origin of their parents or grand-parents to show them that citizens from different religions can leave, work and be friends (the case for example between Moroccan Jews and Muslims). She urged to teach young people their shared history, culture, influences, heritage and called for teachers to be entrepreneurs, to develop projects which could allow students to leave the environment where they grow and make them aware of their common history by traveling and meeting other students from different countries.



WAY FORWARD

- The different connections of women with extremism, as victims, extremists and actors of change, should be taken into account when designing strategies of responses to extremist's threat.
- The role of women should not only be considered as agents of civil society but also in the field of strategy design and decision making processes both at the national and international levels.
- Strengthen women's knowledge on religion to enabling them countering the extremist discourse among their families and communities.
- Peace agreements must incorporate specific clauses to foster the role and involvement of women.
- The need to restore the perception of Islam, too often mistakenly interpreted, by sharing and spreading knowledge about it and about the role women have played in the Islamic history in promoting peaceful and multi-religious societies.
- To European countries, to revise the history courses in the way to permit to every citizen, including Muslim citizens, to identify themselves in this history and not feeling excluded.
- The work on religious aspects should be accompanied by economic and social measures such as social engagement, promoting employment and offering incentive to help young people finding jobs or creating their own business, in order to avoid their recruitment by extremist groups.
- Develop synergies with women's civil society organizations and public authorities to establish public and community structures/platforms to facilitate networking and cooperation between the concerned stakeholders.
- The importance of engaging with everybody, men and women and not only with the stakeholders already committed to this cause. The key role of media and education was stressed as main vectors to strengthen and make visible women's role in this regard.
- The successful actions on the ground at the local level need to be supported and scaled up in order to benefit to a higher number of people.
- Teach the Mediterranean young people their shared history, culture, influences and heritage to promote the mutual understanding and strengthen the joint feelings of belonging.
- Facilitate meetings and networking between women on intercultural and interreligious dialogue, to help them build their recommendations for the ongoing peace-building processes.



WOMEN, MOBILITY AND MIGRATION

Key speakers

Moderator: Mr. Javier Parrondo, Head of Department of Cooperation with the Arab world and Asia, Agencia Española de Cooperación Internacional para el Desarrollo (AECID).

Panellists:

- **Ms. Carolina Barrio Peña**, district attorney in Santa Cruz de Tenerife designated to International Cooperation, Spain.
 - **Ms. Haifa Haidar**, Independent Researcher, beneficiary of AECID's programmes.
 - **Dr. Sawsan Majali**, former Secretary General of Higher Population Council and Senator of the Hashemite Kingdom of Jordan.
 - **Ms. Teresa Maria Pitarch i Albós**, President, Catalan Institute for Women.
- **Testimonies:**
- **Ms. Maryam Chahidi**, beneficiary of the UfM Labelled project HOMERe (High Opportunity for Mediterranean Executives Recruitment)



Key issues discussed

Women have always played an important role in international migration. Women have a growing role in the economic development of both the host country and their countries of origin.

Along the migration route and on arrival in the country of destination, women and girl migrants face many and specific challenges as they are particularly vulnerable to situations of trafficking in human beings, exploitation, violence and discrimination. Once established in the host countries, women migrants can be an important factor for positive integration within their family unit and communities.

The session tried to address the following questions:

- What is the scope of women's migration and mobility in the Mediterranean region?
- How can we better take into account the specific needs of women refugees?
- What practical solutions and pathways are there to overcome identified threats and ensure full respect for women's rights?
- How does the gender perspective on migration relate to policy responses on education, health and the environment? How can we maximise the benefits of women's migration and mobility?
- What role can regional partnerships and regional cooperation play?



Javier Parrondo started its intervention by stressing the role of women and girls in migration. If they are properly channeled these flows are generally considered an opportunity for both hosting and origin countries and a way to empower women. Migration presents also many challenges to women who face additional obstacles and threats than those affecting men: violence, trafficking, sexual exploitation or sexual abuse. If we really want to take advantage of all the opportunities that women migration offer and to tackle the problems they face, there is a need to understand the link between migration and other important issues such as education, health, urban development and others, and to have disaggregated data by sex. It is also important to link migratory issues with the Sustainable Development Goals' Agenda.

He highlighted the importance of this topic for AECID which promotes women's rights, particularly women migrants, in the North of Africa and the Middle East region either bilaterally or with EU funding. In December 2015 the EU launched the Trust Fund for Africa, in which migratory issues play an important role, and AECID has been active enough to submit a series of projects to address

the root causes of migration in countries such as Senegal, Morocco, Mali or Egypt. This fund has raised since its creation more than 2.000 million euros targeting 3 main regions: North-Africa, Horn of Africa and the Sahel.

Carolina Barrio stated that the world that today's girls will find in the future will depend of the world we start building today. She focused her intervention on human trafficking endured by women migrant. She explained that human trafficking is the second most profitable crime that exists. 80 % of victims of human trafficking are women. In Spain most of the victims come from foreign countries and some of them are in a vulnerable situation. Traffickers take advantage of this situation to trick them, to move them from their countries abusing their situation of vulnerability, need or with fraud, to then exploit their dignity and violate their human rights. Human trafficking reduces women to the concept of goods. If hosting society doesn't provide them with the tools to empower themselves and to avoid this extrapolation the problem will never be completely solved.

"Women trafficking will never be completely solved if hosting societies don't provide women with the tools to empower themselves"

Carolina Barrio

From her experience as a district attorney in Santa Cruz de Tenerife responsible of smuggling of migrants and anti-trafficking unit, Spain has proven experience in the field of fighting people smuggling and human trafficking. Canary Island received between 2005 and 2009 a flow thousands of migrants coming from Africa, escaping from misery and smugglers took advantage of this vulnerability, bringing them to Spain under highly risky conditions.

To give a solution to this problem of people smuggling and human trafficking, Spain decided to create a specific response to tackle the issue by creating the Migrant's Issues Unit. This specialized

Unit is in charge of people smuggling, human trafficking, forced prostitution and offences against foreign citizens, there is a Unit in each province and a Central Unit in Madrid which coordinates all of them. The role is not to persecute the migrants but to fight against the human trafficking and people smuggling prosecuting the traffickers. In coordination with the Spanish Network Against Human Trafficking, they developed a special protocol focused on improving victims living conditions and on offering them another alternative to build a better life. The purpose of this Protocol is to establish a guideline for the detection, identification, assistance and protection of victims of THB, to promote coordination and communication among the institutions involved in those proceedings. This protocol also includes the need of providing victims with psychologic support, legal aid, training, education and the possibility to obtain work / residence permits to women in illegal situation.

Lessons learned from the Spanish experience show that fighting against human trafficking needs to be implemented with a holistic approach. It has to be a coordinated and comprehensive response. Responses should be provided at different levels: at the legal framework, support mechanisms to the victims, etc. today in Spain, the support offered to the victims by NGOs, government, social security services, etc, is completely coordinated and integrated. Also, the cultural specificities need to be considered. The migrants issues unit, works coordinated with special police units against human trafficking and smuggling of migrants, with specific training not only in investigation methods but also interviewing victims. It is also very important to work on stereotypes and the images reflected in the Society regarding women's victims of human trafficking, avoiding mistaken terms such as the use of "prostitute" to refer a victim of human trafficking with the purpose of sexual exploitation, it is essential to avoid re-victimization and to raise awareness of the importance of this crime that affects and attacks directly Human Rights.

Teresa Maria Pitarch i Arbós declared that vulnerability of migrant women is intensified the fact of being women. Along their trip, women face triple challenge: as migrants, as women, and because of their vulnerable economic conditions. Comprehensive policies to empower migrant women in the hosting countries are very much needed and need to be further developed. As priorities, policies have to consider the family reunification, the right to women migrants to act as household heads, fostering their access to health, education and work. The security and wellbeing of those women in irregular situation should also be taken into account. She stressed that the cultural and social transformations related to migration need to be an opportunity to improve the life conditions of all women.

She presented the work undertaken by *the Institut Català de les Dones* which advocates for including a gender perspective in the reception and integration policies. The *Institut* work is based in concrete actions, like supporting, with subsidies, the empowerment and social participation of migrant women, protocols for prevention of gender based violence, actions to combat forced marriage or genital mutilation, or concrete actions for promoting equality among young migrants. They also provide training to increase the skills from a gender perspective of the professionals working in host positions.



“Comprehensive policies to empower migrant women in the hosting countries are very much needed and need to be further developed.”

Teresa Maria Pitarch i Arbós

They are currently working in the design of different interventions that will be part of the new Migration and Citizenship strategy 2017-2020 in Catalan region. The strategy is completed by the Catalan civil law 5-2008 on gender based violence. The law establishes that the government should eliminate the barriers to the early detection of gender based violence, making special emphasis to migrant women who are more vulnerable, even women in irregular situation.

Dr. Sawsan Majali started by presenting the situation in Jordan which has been known throughout his history to have taken and being host of refugees since 1948, with the Palestinian refugees and the Iraqi refugees during the first and second gulf war. Since 2011, Jordan has hosted about 1.4 million migrant Syrians within which 650.000 are registered as refugees, with a total Jordanian population of 9.5 million.

There is a common factor between migrant women who came for work in Jordan and those who are refugees: vulnerability. If the Jordanian Labour law is the same for Jordanian and non-Jordanians, many migrant workers are not declared, and therefore not protected. Half of Syrian refugees in Jordan are women, and approximatively half of them are below the age of 17 which make them very vulnerable when they arrive to Jordan, especially if they are not registered as refugees. Most of the refugees live outside the camps. Women that are living outside the camps and those not accompanied by family members are the most vulnerable without economic incomes to provide shelter for their family, access to health care or schooling. These women are exposed to early marriage and gender based violence. 35% of Syrian marriages in Jordan are occurring below the age of 18 years old. Due to poverty and with the

aim to protect girls, the number of marriages increased in the recent years.

Syrian refugees have a considerable pressure on the Jordanian labour market. The economic participation of women in Jordan is 15%, and many of them work at home. The challenge is how to balance the need to look after the Syrian refugees, and at the same time continue to meet the Jordanian needs in order to avoid creating animosity in the host communities who have the feeling they are losing important benefit. Considering the high unemployment in Jordan, it could be difficult to explain to Jordanians who could not find jobs, especially to youth, that 200,000 Syrians will also enter to the labour market.

Many countries or international organisations promised to support Jordan to host refugees, but only 37% of what has been pledged has been received.

Ms. Haifa Haidar presented the project *Tahdir*, implemented by the AECID which focuses in preventing gender based violence, and in providing trainings to women on peace building. She mentioned the importance of the training courses and the reinforcement process of women refugees. Most of the time, women feel detached and alone; this is why it is very important to reinforce their role and their self-esteem, then they can play a key role in peace building process in their country. She stressed how working with Syrian women refugees is hard. It is complicated to convince women who have lost family, home, money, that they will need to return and play an active role in the reconstruction of their country. More certain is that all of them want to have the opportunity to go back home.

Ms. Haidar ended her intervention by saying that besides working on the support to the victims of the conflicts, all the involved actors in the region, including the international organisations and the European countries, need to work on the solution of the conflicts; not only on their the consequences.

WAY FORWARD

- Comprehensive policies to empower migrant women in the hosting countries are very much needed and need to be further developed.
- All the involved actors and countries in the region, including European countries need to work to solve the conflicts, not only on their consequences.
- The security and wellbeing of women in irregular situation should be taken into account.
- The cultural and social transformations related to migration should be an opportunity to improve the life conditions of all women.
- The importance to reinforce the role and the self-esteem of women migrant, then they can play a key role in peace building process in their country.
- The necessity to support hosting countries in balancing between the needs of refugees and those of hosting communities in order to avoid creating animosity against refugees.
- On fighting against human trafficking:
 - The need to have holistic approach with a coordinated and comprehensive response. Responses should be provided at different levels: legal framework, and support mechanisms to the victims.
 - The importance to work on stereotypes and the images reflected in the media on women's victims to avoid a re-victimization and amalgams.



WOMEN'S RIGHTS COMMITTEE OF THE PARLIAMENTARY ASSEMBLY OF THE UfM



The meeting was opened by Ms. Leila Chettaoui, President of the Committee. There was a common agreement on the need to monitor progress on gender equality and to follow on UfM commitments in the field of strengthening the role of women in society. Emphasis was put on regional cooperation's role as a strategic way to align and coordinate member States' national policies with regional needs and most urgent development priorities. The meeting's conclusions were as follows:

On the Political level

- Strengthening the participation of women in politics and business is the guarantee of peace and living together in the Mediterranean.
- There is a lack of implementation of policies in the field of gender equality.
- Relying on the quota system in electoral law is still necessary in the Southern and Northern Mediterranean countries as an essential measure to ensure a minimum representation of women in parliaments. However, the "quotas" system needs to be improved. It is a temporary measure that needs to be consolidated and complemented by a real political will to promote women's participation in government and in decision-making bodies - Achieving a balance between law enforcement means and a real political will.
- The relationship between men and women is not a war but rather a relationship of cooperation and fair competition.

- A strong need for a spontaneous female solidarity: women leaders should lead by example and commit themselves to this cause.
- The root causes of radicalization are poverty and ignorance within most vulnerable communities and at their forefront, women in all family units.

On the Operational level

- Working towards the establishment of a common Mediterranean charter on women participation with the engagement of national parliaments.
- Draft an advocacy letter for UfM national parliaments and political parties toward reaching the critical threshold the 1/3 female political representation, as a subsequent way to achieving parity between women and men in politics.
- The need is not only to make more efforts into new actions but reinforcing and consolidating existing projects and initiatives while measuring their impact.
- The PA-UfM should further lend political support to UfM Secretariat's projects in the field of gender equality and women empowerment. Deputies could play a key role in the mobilisation of local actors.
- The need to pay particular attention to migrant and refugee women who tremendously suffer from losing their homes and countries. They play a central role in the education of their children. Strengthening their role would contribute to a better integration of refugees and migrants in host countries. In this regard, the Committee would work in the coming meetings on more specific recommendations related to actions on the ground through its Working Group on Women and Migration.

COMMITMENTS TO GENDER EQUALITY

Key speakers

- **Amb. Helge Skaara**, Ambassador of Norway to Spain.
- **Ms. Neila Amara**, Expert to the United Nations Industrial Development Organization (UNIDO)
- **Ms. Khadija Idrissi Janati**, Gemed - Network for gender equality in the Mediterranean.

Ambassador Helge Skaara, opened his address by presenting the close cooperation between Norway and the UfM, with whom they are pleased to be a partner since 2014. He explained the importance and the relevance of this cooperation due to the current context of the Mediterranean region. He called to strengthen their action, promoting good governance, basic services such as health and education but also the urge to mobilize private sector in order to create job opportunities. He stressed out the relevance of the UfM as strategic partner to work on these issues. Thanks to a pragmatic and practical approach, the UfM manages to ensure regional cooperation and achieve concrete results. He concluded on his expectations to further develop the partnership with the UfM, hoping it will inspire others, both countries and donors.

Ms. Neila Amara, introduced two UfM labelled projects in partnership with UNIDO: “Promoting Women Empowerment for inclusive and sustainable industrial development in the MENA region”. The project, which targets seven countries, Algeria (second phase), Egypt, Jordan, Lebanon, Morocco, Palestine and Tunisia, constitutes 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). The project’s first phase ended in July 2016 and a second phase is due to start by the end of the year. Both phases are funded by the Italian cooperation.

The second project, “Development of clusters in Cultural and Creative Industries in the Southern Mediterranean”, aims to facilitate the development of innovative clusters of Micro and SMEs in Algeria, Egypt, Jordan, Lebanon, Morocco, Palestine and Tunisia. The project is currently supporting the development of 13 clusters where women are particularly involved. As part of its activities, a regional conference on “Creativity, Jobs and Economic development in the Southern Mediterranean” will take place in February 2017 in Algiers.

Ms. Khadija Idrissi Janati, presented Gemed - Network for gender equality in the Mediterranean which was launched after she took part in the training programme implemented by Sciences-Po Paris under the framework of the UfM labelled project WOMED. WOMED gathers young talented women committed to gender equality from the Mediterranean countries with the idea to create a network to exchange, collaborate and share best practices, promote women from the Mediterranean and their achievements and finally to accompany the young women in their personal and professional developments through mentoring and networking.

Others participants such as Ideaborn, the Italian Agency for Development, the French Ministry of Foreign Affairs, ILO and the World Health Organization took the floor to emphasize the need to more support and engagement from donor’s on the issues of gender equality.



WRAP-UP SESSION AND WAY FORWARD



Delphine Borione thanked all participants for the rich and inspiring debate and interventions and for their relevant and concrete proposals and recommendations. She summarized few key messages that emerged from the different sessions:

1. **Need for Action and political commitment to put women at the center of all policies and reforms.** The upcoming UfM Ministerial meeting on strengthening the role of women in society will be focusing on this objective.
2. **Humanitarian emergency:** The conference highlighted the impact of conflicts on women security and physical integrity, the challenging situation of women migrants and refugees and the urgency to address these issues.
3. **The complexity of issues which requires an integrated response.** The issues impacting women faced by region are very complex, interlinked and sensitive, which means that they should be addressed all together and with the participation of the all actors: governments, civil society, private sector and media.
4. **Women leadership:** the need and necessity to have women in leadership and in senior positions in politics, economic and social life and at all level of society was stressed by all participants. Recognizing and strengthening the role of women in peace-building processes was strongly highlighted.
5. **Education and culture** are essential for the evolution of mentalities and changing stereotypes.

6. **Role of men:** all participants unanimously agreed on the key role of men to promote the gender equality agenda.
7. **Synergies:** the need to pool efforts and foster synergies at the regional in order to achieve the common objectives on gender equality and women empowerment. Facilitating these synergies is part of the UfM Secretariat mandate and of the UfM Women Conferences.

Dr. Sawsan Majali, Jordanian Senator, spoke on behalf of the H.E Wajih Azaizeh, Minister of Social Development, Hashemite Kingdom of Jordan. For her, the two key words of the conference were **participation and inclusion**. She stressed the need to include women and men, North and South, all religions in the discussions and dialogues, public and private sector and the civil society. She highlighted that we are all together in it and we should work together to address all the challenging issues the region is facing. Unless there is a real commitment to peace in the region, we are all going to suffer and women in particular. She stated that it is good to talk, but there is a need to put words into actions. She recommended to establish specific task forces for each issue; countries could choose in which priority area they would like to work. She ended her speech by stressing on the need to support refugees' hosting countries to deal with the humanitarian crisis.

Ambassador Hatem Atallah Executive Director of the Anna Lindh Foundation focused on the impact of the gender stereotypes as a major issue and a cross cutting challenge that is affecting all the areas of intervention in gender equality: from leadership to labour inclusion, from family to socio-cultural integration. He stressed that women are suffering of this situation, while at the same time they are the essential drivers for change in their societies. The Mediterranean societies are now ready for a cultural shift and for a change. He believed that there is a real need for building on the synergies between the organisations that are working on the field and

for promoting an effective approach in the politics and strategies on place. This is the framework in which the UfM Ministerial conference of women is taking place and also the framework to which the Anna Lindh Foundation is fully committed. He ended his intervention by proposing the following recommendations:

1. Support to women as active citizens for the intercultural dialogue and social change.
2. Promotion of intercultural citizenship education and the youth approach as main instruments tackling gender equality.
3. Promotion of the non-stereotyped images of women mainly through the media and the cultural actions.
4. Support to the research and monitoring of the perceptions regarding women in the region.



Mr. Fathallah Sijilmassi, Secretary General of the UfM, thanked all the participants for making the 2016 Conference a successful event, and praised the support given to it by Germany and Spain through the GIZ and AECID. He reiterated the firm engagement of the UfM to continue working with all stakeholders to help promoting their project on the ground.

The high participation in the conference illustrated the working methodology adopted by the UfM Secretariat over the past few years. This approach has three distinct but complementary

levels to achieve the expected results for each UfM priority area:

1. Political level through Ministerial meetings.
2. Platform for dialogue and cooperation between states and key players with the aim of identifying the most urgent priorities, enhancing coherence, complementarity and synergies between the different interventions for the benefit of the peoples of the region.
3. Promotion and implementation of concrete projects and initiatives with a direct impact on people's lives.

This approach is applied in the field of women's empowerment. As concrete results:

- 3 Ministerial meetings on Strengthening the role of women in Society have already taken place with strong commitments from the countries. A 4th Ministerial is under preparation and will take place in 2017.
- A structured regional dialogue with the involvement of UfM countries and key stakeholders at the regional level, such as UN Women, OECD, UNIDO, EU, civil society, private sector and many others. A progress report is under preparation which will take stock of the progress made and identify the common challenges that still need to be addressed. A sustainable framework for monitoring progress, exchanges, synergies and partnerships is being built to reach concrete results on the ground.
- Many concrete projects are under implementation targeting young women. Priority is given to fostering economic participation through strengthening employability and entrepreneurship, as well

as other priorities such as fight against violence and access to health.

This Conference came at a pivotal time for the Mediterranean region, which faces pressing challenges that threaten its development, stability and the livelihood of its peoples. The challenges of youth unemployment, migration and terrorism are emergencies for which all efforts must be mobilized to address them. Young people and women need jobs and stability, but above all they need an enabling environment to develop their immense potential and talent for the good of our societies.

We need to build a "positive agenda" in the Mediterranean, with committed, innovative and visionary men and women. Much of them are already working on the ground to advance the economy, create jobs, protect the environment and implement strategic priorities in the region. But a great part is still seeking for its place and needs better guidance to develop their talents. The region needs development, peace and stability, but development and stability need inclusion of women and men and of young people. The two must go hand in hand.

Action is a priority in that regard. The UfM is proud of progressed achieved on the ground with its projects and initiatives.

The Secretary General ended his intervention by announcing the second UfM Annual Forum's meeting which will take place in the coming months with the objective to discuss and define a common regional roadmap to strengthen regional cooperation around common priorities. The role of youth, and of women, will be at the center of this roadmap.

CONFERENCE FIGURES

More than **250 participants** from **40 countries**

50% of attendees were
young people



30% of attendees were
men

30 Government
representatives from both
shores of the
Mediterranean





**25 parliamentarians from 20
Euro- Mediterranean
countries**

**100 Civil Society
representatives**



-
- 30 private sector
 - 20 International Organisations
 - 30 think tanks
-

Media



Journalist Attendees: TVE, BTV, Món Empresarial, 8aldia, 2M TV, El Periódico, Cadena SER, 2 Rives TV, Catalunya Radio, EFE/EurActiv, Al Ahram, Huffington Post Maghreb, Monte Carlo Doualiya, El País, Asharq Al-Awsat, MAP, Econostrum, Diari Ara

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