



Press release

Regional Conference "The impact of political, economic and social changes on the reality of Arab women"

Beirut, February 21, 2019 - Under the patronage of H.E. President General Michel Aoun, represented by the President of the National Commission for Lebanese Women, Mrs. Claudine Aoun Roukoz, the Regional Conference "The Impact of Political, Economic and Social Changes on the Reality of Arab Women" was inaugurated today. The conference is organized by the Lebanese Council for Women (LCW), in partnership with the United Nations Entity for Gender Equality and the Empowerment of Women (UN Women) and the Arab Women Organization (AWO).

The two-day regional conference (February 21 and 22) held at Coral Beach hotel brings together jurists, politicians, diplomats, economists and academics from Lebanon, Egypt, Tunisia, Jordan, Kuwait, Morocco, Palestine, Yemen and Iraq, current and former ministers, representatives of national and Arab commissions, NGOs, Lebanese and Arab economic bodies, and foreign delegations to Lebanon. The panels discuss the reality of Arab women and their political and economic participation, mechanisms to protect women from violence, including the implementation of UNSCR1325, while looking into future mechanisms of action and means of cooperation.

Lawyer Iqbal Murad Doughan, LCW's President delivered opening remarks followed by Ms. Jamal Hermes Ghibril (representing the International Council of Women), the Director general of the Arab Women Organization, Dr Fadia Kiwan; the UN Women Regional Director for Arab States, Mr. Mohammad Naciri; the Head of the European Union Delegation to Lebanon, Ambassador Christina Lassen and Sheikha Hessa Al Sabah, president of the Council of Arab Businesswomen. Then, H.E. MP Bahia Hariri, head of the Future Parliamentary Bloc, representing the Prime Minister Saad Hariri, delivered a speech, before giving the floor to Mrs. Claudine Aoun Roukoz speaking on behalf of the patronage. Former Minister Wafaa Daa Hamze represented House Speaker Nabih Berri.



The conference examined several crucial topics, and the first panel on women and political participation: pathways of challenges and acquisitions, was chaired by The Alliance for Arab Women's president Dr. Hoda Badran (Egypt), during which the Director General of the AWO, Dr. Fadia Kiwan, analyzed the situation of Arab women, in light of current political changes. Then, the experiences of several Arab countries were tackled: Judge Tahani Al-Jabali, previous vice-president of the Supreme Constitutional Court of Egypt discussed Egypt's example and Ms. Radhia Jerbi, Head of the National Union of Tunisian Women, examined Tunisia's example. Afterwards, Ms. Asma Khader, executive director for The Sisterhood is Global Institute in Jordan, explored the Jordan case, before LCW's president, lawyer Iqbal Murad Dughan got into Lebanon's example.

Dr. Batul Yahfoufi, researcher in local development chaired the second panel on women's economic participation, economic policies and empowerment paths. Mr. Adib Nehme, researcher and expert in social and economic development at ESCWA looked into economic empowerment policies and their impact on women's economic participation. Ms. Carmen Zgheib from the Council of Arab Businesswomen explored the transition from pastoral work to productive institutional work.

In the third intervention, Farida Khmelishi, General Secretary of the Union Nationale des femmes Marocaines (Morocco) addressed national strategies in support of enhanced economic participation and Dr. Lamia Moubayed Bissat, Director of the Institut des Finances Basil Fuleihan (Lebanon), explored partnership with the private sector to achieve decent work for women in light of the 2030 agenda goals.

Ms. Faten Tibi, Manager of women's Protection and Economic Empowerment Program at UN women, chaired the third panel addressing protecting women from violence and mechanisms of implementing UNSCR 1325. The first intervention addressed legal and legislative campaigns to protect women during armed conflicts and H.E. Intisar al-Wazir, member of the Palestinian Legislative Council and former minister, presented Palestine's experience, while Ms. Ghida Anani, Executive Director of Abaad, shared Lebanon's example. Focusing on implementing UNSCR 1325 and protection mechanisms, Ms. Huda al-Attas, member of the expert committee of Yemen's peace talks presented the Yemeni's case and Ms. Nadya Khalife, Women, Peace and Security Specialist at UN Women, addressed Lebanon's experience. Eng. Liza Nissan Hido, President of the Baghdad Women's Association, discussed the role of women in negotiations and peacemaking.

On the second day of the conference, Dr. Dunia Taan, researcher in Lebanese emigration, will chair the fourth session on envisioning the future of women in Arab countries. Ms. Lina Abu



Habib, executive director of the Collective for Research and Training on Development Action, and Ms. Leila El Ali, co-President of Euromed Feminist Initiative, will both focus on strengthening participatory mechanisms and Arab and international women's alliances. Engineer Adnan Melki, national coordinator at The Global Environment Facility, will discuss alliance and networking with civil society organizations to advocate for women's causes, while lawyer Manar Zaiter, consultant at ESCWA, will tackle opening channels of dialogue and negotiation with national authorities.

Lawyer Iqbal Murad Doughan, President of the LCW, said on the importance of convening this regional conference "This conference is held in order to confront violence in Arab countries in order to identify the real situation of women, so that in our countries, young men and women are not burdened by ignorance and unemployment".

UN Women Regional Director for Arab States, Mr. Mohammad Naciri said "ensuring equality before the law, full access to justice, and protection from violence for all women and girls are key to achieving gender equality in the Arab States region. Without such guarantees, no country will be able to realize the grand promise of prosperity, peace and sustainability enshrined in the Agenda 2030 for Sustainable Development".

The Director general of the Arab Women Organization, Dr Fadia Kiwan mentioned three negative aspects that have characterized the so-called "Arab Spring", including the emergence of communities of displaced persons and migrants, the decline of the role of the State in the provision of social welfare and the emergence of extremist cultural and religious streams as well as terrorist organizations.

Tomorrow, 22 February, will be announced *The Beirut Statement for Arab and international women's Solidarity*.