



Press Release

21 September 2020

On-line Regional Policy Dialogue “Combating Violence Against Women and Girls and Strengthening Women’s Rights in the Context of Covid-19 pandemic”

The Policy Dialogue on Combating Violence Against Women and Girls and Strengthening Women’s Rights in the Context of Covid - 19 pandemic was held online in partnership with the Ministry of Social Development of the Hashemite Kingdom of Jordan on 21 September 2020. It gathered more than 60 decision-makers, ministerial representatives, legal and gender experts, researchers, and representatives of women’s rights organizations from the South Mediterranean.

It was held in the frame of the regional project “Combating Violence against Women in the Southern Mediterranean Region”, funded by the European Union (EU) and implemented by the EuroMed Feminist Initiative (EFI) with a consortium of nine member organizations in Algeria, Egypt, Jordan, Lebanon, Morocco, Palestine, and Tunisia.

Based on the evidence that the Covid-19 crisis has put a sharp light on and exacerbated the existing structural inequalities and the different realities that women and men are facing in the pandemic, the Policy Dialogue discussed and proposed concrete recommendations to follow up and support the implementation of the 4th Union for the Mediterranean (UfM) Ministerial Declaration on Women’s Rights in the context of the crises provoked by the Covid-19 pandemic.

In her welcoming address, H.E. Ms. Basma Mousa Ishaqat, Minister of Social Development, Jordan opened the Policy Dialogue stressing on the importance of establishing mechanisms to monitor the effectiveness of governments’ responses to Covid-19. H.E. Ms. Jamila El Mossali, Minister of Solidarity, Social Development, Equality & Family, Morocco, emphasized that the socio-economic development cannot be fully achieved without the active participation of women in all spheres of life. H.E. Ms. Amal Hamad, Minister of Women Affairs, Palestine, affirmed that the Israeli occupation and recent normalization agreements have exacerbated the repercussions of the pandemic on Palestinians and especially women. H.E. Ms. Marisa Farrugia, Deputy Secretary-General for Social and Civil Affairs, Union for the Mediterranean (UfM), affirmed that the UfM has always put gender equality, women empowerment, and ending VAWG at the centre of its agenda mainly through the Paris 2013 and Cairo 2017 UfM Ministerial declarations on Strengthening the Role of Women in Society. For her part, Ms. Henrike Trautmann, Head of Unit at the Directorate-General for Neighbourhood and Enlargement Negotiations (DG NEAR) of the European Commission underlined the importance of the Regional Dialogue in recognizing the devastating impact of the COVID -19 pandemic on women and girls and crafting effective responses and policies. Ms. Lilian Halls-French, Co-President of EuroMed Feminist Initiative highlighted the role of the Regional Civil





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Society Observatory in supporting women's rights organizations and following up and monitoring the implementation of the UfM Ministerial process.

In the course of two panels, the participants exchanged analyses, experience, and good practices on advancing women's rights in the context of the Covid-19 crisis. They affirmed that addressing VAWG and advancing the Women, Peace and Security Agenda is a must in the context of the Covid-19 pandemic and its devastating consequences on women, and in the light of the drastic increase in rates of violence against women and girls. They stressed the importance of mainstreaming and integrating a gender perspective in Covid-19 preparedness, response, and recovery measures, in particular in the field of health, economic participation, education and learning, media, and women's participation in decision-making processes.

Moreover, they asserted that the governments' response to Covid-19 should be in accordance with their obligations with regards to human rights standards and international women's rights instruments, in keeping with their commitments stated in the 4th UfM Ministerial Declaration on Strengthening the Role of Women in Society (November 2017 Cairo).

In their closing remarks, Ms. Borianna Jonsson, Executive Director of EFI and Ms. Leila Al Ali, Co-President of EFI emphasized the importance of this rich, invaluable and high-level discussion, and confirmed that the recommendations adopted in the Regional Policy Dialogue will be presented to the UfM and will be instrumental in the follow up work on the implementation of the Cairo Ministerial Declaration.

Watch the full video of the Policy Dialogue: <https://bit.ly/3mJgLis>

The Regional Campaign on Zero Tolerance for Violence Against Women and Girls Website and Social Media Channels: www.ostik.org, [Facebook](#), [Twitter](#), [Instagram](#)

For further information, please contact the coordinator of the project Mariam Khalaf at mariam.khalaf@efi-ife.org or +962 7 7070 7050

