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Press Release

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Raising the Legal Age for Marriage in Lebanon to the Age of 18, an Overdue Priority

A panel discussion on child marriage in Lebanon and the needed legislative reform, was held today by the Lebanon National Gender Observatory in collaboration with EuroMed Feminist Initiative and the Lebanese Democratic Women's Gathering (RDFL), in the framework of the gender regional program *Madad for Women* - Strengthening access to protection, participation and services for women refugees, IDPs and host communities, funded by the European Union, through the EU's Regional Trust Fund in response to the Syrian crisis, the EU 'Madad' Fund.

Early marriage as a violation of human rights, the legislative framework, amendment of the existing draft law, and the current status of gender data in Lebanon, were amongst the key topics of discussion in the panel. Participants shed light on the negative impact of early marriage on girls and discussed the need to adopt the amendment of the law on "Protection of Children from Early Marriage", raising the legal age for marriage to the age of 18 years, an amendment that was presented already in 2017 by RDFL. Lamia Chamas from the National Gender Observatory reminded that early marriage was amongst the recurrent unsolved practice as per extensive study on the status of gender equality in Lebanon conducted by the Observatory in 2020. The pivotal role the media may play in urging the responsible authorities to pass this long overdue law was also underlined. The discussion concluded with policy recommendations that should be implemented for the passing of the draft law to become a tangible reality.

"Early marriage is one of the most severe forms of violence girls can be exposed to. Having a law that prohibits the marriage of any child is of utmost necessity" stated Ms. Manal Majed, Head of Legal Unit at the Lebanese Democratic Women's Gathering.

MP Georges Okeiss-Administration & Justice Committee stressed; "we must have a mandatory secondary education, and this by itself can prevent child marriage. I am an avid advocate of ending child marriage and I will never stop until this law is adopted".

Following the panel, a closing ceremony for the *Madad for Women* program in Lebanon was held to mark the achievements and to share best practices and lessons learned. The program implemented in Lebanon since September 2018 by a consortium of EuroMed Feminist Initiative (EFI), Lebanese Democratic Women's Gathering (RDFL), Care International (CARE) and Legal Action in Lebanon (LAW), ensured greater access for women to comprehensive multi-sectoral services, and better knowledge of their rights and access to protection, while mainstreaming gender in national policies and lobbying for greater public support of women's rights and change in discriminatory legislations. Over 19,000 women and girls received vital services including psychosocial support (PSS), legal counselling, and sexual and reproductive health rights (SRHR), and with an outreach of more than 23,000 people on topics related to women's rights and gender-based stereotypes.

The event provided a platform for decision makers, government officials, service providers, influencers academics, and international and national organizations, to discuss how to further strengthen the status of gender equality and enhance the protection of women and girls in Lebanon. 32 community-based organizations (CBOs) were acknowledged for their contribution to empowering women and enhancing their



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Lebanon National
Gender Observatory
المركز الوطني اللبناني
للمساواة بين الجنسين



EuroMed Feminist Initiative
المبادرة النسوية الأورومتوسطية
Initiative Féministe EuroMed

access to services, while raising the local communities' knowledge and awareness on Gender-Based Violence (GBV) as a violation of women's human rights.

About the European Union in Lebanon:

The European Union (EU) supports Lebanon's stability, independence and sovereignty, its prosperity and democratic order. It strives also to help protect its environment and natural resources by supporting sustainable enterprise and development. The European Union is also committed to the promotion and protection of human rights in Lebanon including defending gender equality, children's rights and freedom of expression.

The EU Delegation in Lebanon represents the European Union to the Republic of Lebanon with the objective to maintain and develop mutual beneficial relations. It engages in political, social and economic development activities on behalf of the European Union and based on the most pressing needs of the country of Lebanon.

Since its establishment in December 2014, a significant share of the EU's non-humanitarian aid for Syria's neighbouring countries is provided through the EU's Regional Trust Fund in Response to the Syrian Crisis, the EU 'Madad' Fund. The Trust Fund brings a more coherent and integrated EU aid response to the crisis and primarily addresses economic, educational, protection, social, and health needs of refugees from Syria in neighbouring countries such as Jordan, Lebanon, Turkey and Iraq, and supports overstretched local communities and their administrations.

For more information about the EU Trust Fund, please visit https://ec.europa.eu/trustfund-syria-region/content/home_en

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