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RECOMMENDATIONS FROM THE ROUND TABLE

Building a Common Agenda for Implementing International, Regional and National Mechanisms that Promote and Protect Women's Rights and Enhance Democracy

2nd of July 2012
Ministry of Parliamentary Affairs

1. Representatives from government, ministries, members of parliament and senators, together with civil society organisations met on the 2nd of July 2012 at the Round Table "*Building a Common Agenda for Implementing International, Regional and National Mechanisms that Promote and Protect Women's Rights and Enhance Democracy*" organised by the European Feminist Initiative IFE-EFI, Sisterhood is Global Institute SIGI and Arab Women Organization AWO within the framework of a two-year regional project "*Promoting a common agenda for equality between women and men through Istanbul Process*" funded by the European Union. The Round Table was organized in cooperation with the Ministry of Parliamentary Affairs in order to discuss women's rights and role in democratic development.
2. The participants recognized the important role of the Ministry of Parliamentary Affairs for providing space and opportunity for this important dialogue. The efforts of the Ministry of Social Development towards the improving of the status of women's rights and reaching out to all rural areas were also acknowledged together with Ministry's interest to be part of the dialogue. The involvement and participation of the Ministry of Foreign Affairs and Ministry of Planning was recognized as imperative in this process. In addition an acknowledgement was given to the support of the EU and the involvement of European Feminist Initiative and the partners Sisterhood is Global Institute and Arab Women's Organisation in organising and mediating this dialogue.
3. The Round Table enabled a consolidation of a dialogue between civil society, State actors and politicians on the advancement of women's civil, political, economic, cultural and social rights, as envisioned in the Istanbul Framework for Action through the Istanbul-Marrakech Process on "Strengthening the role of women in the society". It examined challenges and opportunities that the recent developments, particularly resulting from the Arab spring, have opened for women and women's rights and ways of utilizing the international, regional and national mechanisms for gender equality.
4. The participants assured that the transitional period sweeping the Arab countries and the wide public protests advocating and defending human rights, national dignity, public freedoms and gender equality provided a friendly political ground for women's rights which intersect with the demands that women have claimed for a long time. The participants expressed their determination to defend the social and political rights of Arab women and in collaboration with the civil society and all forces of modernity and progress in the Arab world and the international arena, to resist any call for backwardness.

5. The participants reiterated that women's rights are human rights and therefore there are no more excuses for delaying their implementation. Consequently there are no reasons to postpone the abolishing of discriminative legislation that abuses women's dignity.
6. In this regard the significance of the international human rights instruments, in particular the UN Convention on the Elimination of All Forms of Discrimination against Women (CEDAW), the Program of Action of the International Conference on Population and Development (ICPD), the Beijing Platform for Action and the Millennium Development Goals (MDGs) as well as the UN Security Council Resolution 1325 on Women, Peace and Security, was recalled together with the regional instrument Istanbul Framework of Action and the Jordanian National Strategy for Women 2012-2015. Consequently the importance of Jordan commitment to international obligations to "promote de jure and de facto equality between women and men and to respect the civil, political, economic, social and cultural rights of women as well as men", as defined in the Conclusions of the Ministerial Meeting in Marrakech 2009.
7. The participants recognized that there are still many important challenges that hamper the full and equal enjoyment of human rights by women as persistent legal inequalities between women and men notably in the personal status law, in the criminal law, or in the labour market, which hinder women from reaching personal and economic independence. Furthermore remaining challenges to be addressed are the under-representation of women in the political and economic decision-making processes; the difficult task of reconciliation of work and family life due to the strict division of public and private and the gender stereotypical expectations regarding women and men roles; and not least the persistent phenomenon of violence against women. The participants acknowledged that these challenges are faced by the women in Europe as well, where independently of better legislation and the organised efforts from the women's movement, women continue to be subjected to violence, underrepresentation or full absence from decision making processes and are the first victims of the financial crises. The participants recognized that these challenges hamper women's full participation in social, political and economic life, especially in a difficult economic slowdown situation which imperatively requests the integration of gender perspectives in all funds, plans and programs, ensuring women's participation in all the responses and policies.
8. The vulnerability of rural women was underlined as they are even more subject to poverty and exclusion, being most often isolated from policies regarding social services or non-reached by different governmental and non-governmental programs.

Herewith the Round Table that gathered State actors, politicians and civil society gave the following recommendations:

1. The Round Table recommends that in order to strengthen the work on gender equality and towards improving the status of women and women's rights in the society and in the legislation, notably through the implementation of the Istanbul Framework of Action and Marrakech Conclusions, binding provisions and monitoring mechanisms need to be established; mechanisms that involve and engage different sectors of the society-governmental, political, civil society, academia - in a sustained and continuous dialogue on gender equality.
2. In order to boost the cooperation between governmental and non-governmental spheres, an adopting of a common strategy recognizing the civil society as one of the engines for social change and creating a dialogue on gender equality with the civil society are needed and are recommended.

3. Beneficial for Jordan and for the whole region would be to engage in common Jordan-European studies to research European and Jordanian experiences and lessons learned from working with women's empowerment and gender equality, researching patterns and examining common limitations and lessons learned of overcoming them.
4. The Round Table recommends to integrate in the educational system and in all training programs the values of equality between women and men and women's rights as enshrined in the international conventions, regional and national documents and to initiate a nation-wide campaign against gender stereotypical portrayal of women that is detrimental for their dignity and hampers the utilizing of all the human resources which cannot be achieved unless equality is recognized and enacted in the national legislations.
5. The round table affirmed that the collaboration between the different spheres – governmental, the Jordanian National Commission for Women, political sphere, civil society and academia is a necessary precondition towards improving the status of women's rights and gender equality. Therefore, the participants endorsed the formation of a national cross sector committee as a channel to further develop and sustain the initiated dialogue; to work on the creation of a National Action Plan for the implementation of Istanbul –Marrakech Ministerial Conclusions and as a mechanism to monitor the implementation of international, regional and national documents that the State has ratified.