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“Promoting a common agenda for equality between women and men through Istanbul Process”

ROUND TABLE

Regional Dialogue on Enhancing Democracy through Strengthening Women’s Social, Political and Economic Rights

20th - 21st June 2012

Alternative Agenda for Enhancing Democracy

1. The Round Table “*Regional Dialogue on Enhancing Democracy through Strengthening Women’s Social, Political and Economic Rights*”, held on 20-21 June in Beirut brought together with State actors, politicians and members of civil society from the whole region. It was organized by European Feminist Initiative IFE-EFI, Association Najdeh and RDFL (Rassemblement Démocratique des Femmes Libanaises) within the framework of the two years regional project “*Promoting a common agenda for equality between women and men through Istanbul Process*” funded by the European Union. Within this project IFE-EFI and the partners in Lebanon, Jordan, Egypt, Tunisia and Palestine have launched a regional Euro-Med campaign ***Equality First*** advocating political parties, State actors and decision makers to promote women’s rights as a constitutive part of democracy and sustainable development and to put equality between women and men as a priority on their agendas.
2. The Round Table, organized in cooperation with REEWP/Oxfam-Québec and Friedrich Naumann Foundation, provided space for consolidating a regional dialogue on advancement of women’s civil, political, economic, cultural and social rights, as envisioned in the Istanbul Framework for Action. It also aimed to critically examine challenges and opportunities that the current political processes in the MENA region have opened for women’s rights and how the International Conventions and regional tools for gender equality can be utilized. The debate brought up feminist alternatives to the present increasing influence of conservative trends.
3. The participants underlined the importance of providing a space for a structural dialogue between the different stakeholders. They adopted recommendations to the Governments to enhance social justice and democracy through strengthening of women’s social, political and economic rights.
4. A report from the Round Table will be written and distributed by the organizers.

Recommendations to the Governments

I. To take measures in the sphere of the Civil Society

1. Adopt legislation and develop mechanisms that enable the independence of the civil society organizations, especially those working with monitoring of human rights of women and men, to play an advisory, accountability and monitoring role on the performance of the Government and the elected assemblies. These mechanisms should enable civil society to participate the policy-making processes, especially through monitoring of the implementation of international instruments and conventions on human rights and in particular on women's rights and gender equality.
2. Recognize the need of and develop effective mechanisms that enable women's rights and human rights organizations to issue complaints and negotiate in cases of violence and discrimination against women, against women's rights and against women's rights defenders.
3. Develop mechanisms that enabling civil society to hold a structural dialogue with Government, organize public hearings in Parliament on violence and all forms of discrimination against women
4. Enable the election of representatives from the civil society to the national bodies working with women's rights and human rights instead of them being nominated or appointed by the State. Call for the institutionalization of these bodies and while giving up the political patronage of the authority and of the State over these bodies.

II. To take measures to improve women's participation in the political sphere

1. Adopt, ratify and activate the international references of women's universal human rights without reservations and selectivity, enabling women's equal representation and participation. Harmonize national legislations with international conventions and resolutions that the States have ratified and that enhance women's political participation – CEDAW, BpA, UNSCR1325, Istanbul-Marrakech Framework for Action.
2. Adopt mechanisms to enable civil society to monitor the implementation of the States obligations towards the international and regional documents on women's participation.
3. Adopt mechanisms that aim at promoting women's political participation, such as minimum 30% quota as agreed by the U.N. in Beijing in 1995, as a temporary measure to address the lack of democracy and improving the status of gender equality.

4. Enhance political analysis based on MDG indicators on gender equality and implementation of women's rights.
5. Adopt electoral systems and design electoral institutions that enhance developing of party systems and promote women's political participation at the national and local levels, as adopting list proportional representation.
6. Engender the national budget, especially the political budget and introduce gender based statistics.

III. To take measures to improve the women's rights in the social and economic sphere

1. Introduce legal and economic and social rights based on the international conventions, allowing the ensuring equality in wages for the same value of work.
2. Harmonize national laws with international conventions, especially in the sphere of economic and social rights.
3. Introduce ongoing information mechanism that contributes to updating decision-policy makers on the economic and social international conventions and instruments.
4. Enable women's entrance to the labor market in areas traditionally closed for them.
5. Adopt policies and mechanisms as gender quota to ensure women's participation in economic decision and policy-making and implementation.
6. Develop policies that facilitate women's access to loans and national programs for management and marketing.
7. Make provision for public transport enabling women's mobility.
8. Develop policies and mechanisms that ensure the fair distribution of work between women and men in the private and public sectors; For this purpose, develop social state services as kinder gardens to enable women's participation in the public and economic life and production; introduce mechanisms to encourage and enhance men's participation and sharing of responsibility in the private sphere; Adopt international best practices and legislations that address sharing of responsibilities in the families.
9. Protect micro-credit institutions from donors' external pressures with regard to lending projects for women.