

Union Pour la Méditerranée  
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## Union for the Mediterranean Ministerial Conference on Strengthening the Role of Women in Society

.....2017

*Draft Declaration as of 29.09.2017*

1. The Ministers of the Union for The Mediterranean gathered at the Ministerial Conference on strengthening the role of women in Euro-Mediterranean society, held in Egypt on 27 November 2017 under the Co-Presidency of Mariya Gabriel Commissioner for Digital Economy and Society, European Union and H.E. XXX Minister for XXX of the Hashemite Kingdom of Jordan, in the presence of the UfM Secretary-General H.E. Fathallah Sijilmassi, and hosted by xxx of the Arab Republic of Egypt.

### **Recognising the challenges, the progress to be consolidated and the gaps to be filled, in order to ensure that women enjoy their rights to the full**

2. The Ministers reassert their commitment to guarantee that women and girls exercise and enjoy human rights and fundamental freedoms on a basis of equality with men. They condemn all forms of violence and discrimination against women and girls and envisage to undertake the necessary measures and policies to eliminate gender-based discrimination. They reaffirm the need to enshrine women's rights within constitutions and law; to eliminate discriminatory laws, regulations and administrative provisions; to fill the remaining gaps between the legal framework and its implementation and to address urgently the challenges that still hinder the full implementation of women's rights.
3. The Ministers recognise the efforts made by the Euro-Mediterranean countries in relation to women's rights and empowerment and call the UfM Member States to consolidate, reinforce and advance on the progress achieved. They recognise that UfM Member States hold the primary responsibility for integrating women's rights and commitments related to women's empowerment into domestic policies and national legal frameworks, as well as ensuring and monitoring their full and effective implementation.
4. The Ministers reaffirm that building stable, prosperous, inclusive and sustainable societies requires women's full enjoyment of their fundamental rights and freedoms, and their full participation and leadership at all levels of decision-making in political, economic, public and private life. They acknowledge that the political, economic and social transition processes in the region call for addressing the root causes of gender inequalities and for strengthening the roles of women and girls in economy and in society.
5. The Ministers recognise that equality between women and men will not be achieved without the full involvement of all members of societies. Therefore, they assert that men and boys must be engaged

in debates, policy-making and actions to achieve gender equality and to ensure women's participation.

6. The Ministers acknowledge that despite some positive developments regarding women's participation in social, economic and political decision-making, obstacles still exist. They recognise the need to strengthen qualitative and quantitative women's participation in public life and to foster their role as leaders and promoting women's agency towards change within the Euro-Mediterranean region.
7. The Ministers acknowledge that the Euro-Mediterranean region is facing serious challenges in terms of peace and security, such as protracted conflicts, extremism, radicalisation and terrorism, with particular risks to women. They recognise that equal involvement of women in conflict prevention, management, resolution and peace building, is critical in preserving peace and ensuring global, regional, national and individual security on a long-term basis. In this regard, much remains to be achieved in the implementation of UN Security Council Resolution 1325 as well as subsequent UNSCRs on Women, Peace and Security, including the UNSCR 2242. The Ministers acknowledge the importance of the establishment and implementation of National Action Plans (NAP) on UNSCR 1325 within a 'whole of Government' approach.
8. The Ministers attach great importance to women's economic rights as fundamental human rights still to be fully implemented in the region. In line with the relevant conditions and principles set out by the International Labour Organisation (ILO), they agree on the necessity of tackling occupational segregation (both horizontal and vertical); entitling all women to earn their decent living through decent and freely work chosen within the formal labour market, with equal pay and labour rights; to ensure social protection with stable contracts on an equal footing, with durable, safe, healthy, moral and sexual harassment-free working conditions; to tackle gender stereotypes in education; and to eliminate all forms of discrimination in the labour market and in employment, including multiple and inter-sectional discrimination. They acknowledge that women's economic empowerment, women's participation in economic decision-making, women's right to land, and women's entrepreneurship are key to sustainable development and the economic wellbeing of countries in the Euro-Mediterranean region.
9. The Ministers strongly condemn all forms of violence against women and girls and the violation of their rights, including those committed in armed conflict and post-conflict situations, occupation and all kind of terrorism, in particular, domestic violence, harassment and cyberbullying in the private, public and working spaces, human trafficking and harmful practices, early and forced marriage as well as child abuse. They reassert that gender-based violence is a violation of human rights and acknowledge that it weakens society as a whole by preventing women from playing their full role and society from benefiting therefrom.
10. The Ministers acknowledge that in the context of conflicts and occupation, economic crisis, migration and refugee flows, women and girls have been strongly and disproportionately affected. The Ministers recognise the need to develop specific strategies and infrastructure to protect the most exposed or marginalised groups, such as children and girls, female migrants and refugees, older women, women living in poverty, women in rural areas, disabled women, women suffering from domestic or public violence and women head of household with children in charge.
11. The Ministers recognise that transforming social norms and attitudes is required to ensure gender equality and that UfM Member States hold the primary responsibility for raising awareness of their citizens to help tackle gender stereotypes and socio-cultural barriers to gender equality. Women are strongly affected in their life course by the impact of gender stereotypes, which deny them choices and opportunities. Gender stereotyping is a cross-cutting issue that must be addressed transversally and made central to each policy and field of action.



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## **Reaffirming the international legal and institutional commitments to ensure the recognition and implementation of women's rights**

12. The Ministers reaffirm the commitments taken in the preceding UfM Ministerial Conferences on Strengthening the Role of Women in Society, held in Istanbul in 2006, in Marrakech in 2009 and in Paris in 2013, and reiterate their determination to implement and monitor all the commitments previously taken.
13. The Ministers reaffirm the international obligations and commitments in the area of women's rights, including those contained in the UN Convention on the Elimination of All Forms of Discrimination against Women (CEDAW) and its optional protocol; the Beijing Declaration and Platform for Action; the Programme of Action of the International Conference on Population and Development (ICPD), the United Nations Refugee Convention; the Convention on the Rights of the Child and the Convention on the Rights of Persons with Disabilities (CRPD); the International Covenant on Civil and Political Rights; the International Covenant on Economic, Social and Cultural Rights and the relevant Conventions of the ILO relating inter-alia to non-discrimination in employment and occupation and equal remuneration.
14. The Ministers recall the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development and reaffirm in particular their commitment to combat inequalities within and among countries (SDG10); to build peaceful, just and inclusive societies (SDG16); to protect human rights and to promote gender equality and the empowerment of women and girls (SDG5); to ensure universal access to sexual and reproductive health-care services, including for family planning, information and education, and the integration of reproductive health into national strategies and programmes (SDG3); to ensure inclusive and equitable quality education for all girls and boys, women and men and promote lifelong learning opportunities for all (SDG4); to promote sustained, inclusive and sustainable economic growth, full and productive employment and decent work for all women and men, and equal pay for work of equal value, as well as to protect labour rights and promote safe and secure working environments for all workers, including migrant workers, in particular women migrants (SDG8). They consider that the commitments and the outcomes of the current Ministerial Declaration are crucial to achieve the 2030 Agenda Goals.
15. The Ministers recall the other relevant UfM frameworks that should be taken into account and closely linked to the present Ministerial Declaration, in particular the 2016 UfM Ministerial Declaration on Employment and Labour, which calls for policy reforms to improve employment and labour with a special focus on women who suffer from structural disadvantages on the labour market (notably high unemployment and extremely low labour participation rates); the Declaration on Regional Co-operation and Planning and on the other sectorial areas, as well as the UfM Roadmap endorsed by the UfM Ministers of Foreign Affairs on the 23<sup>rd</sup> of January 2017.
16. They recall the final Declaration of the Euromed Summit of Economic and Social Councils and similar institutions, held on 24-25 October 2016 in Greece, which underline the need to abolish the increasing difficulties faced by women entrepreneurs in the region so that their contribution to the economy of the region can achieve its full potential. They also recall the Resolutions of the Parliamentary assembly of the Union of the Mediterranean adopted in Rome in April 2017, and in particular the Declaration of the Committee on Women's Rights.
17. The Ministers recall the UN Security Council Resolutions 1325, 2242 and the other supporting resolutions on Women, Peace and Security, and call for stepping up their implementation.

### **Strengthening regional co-operation and welcoming an inclusive and pragmatic methodology of work**

18. The Ministers welcome the UfM commitment to put gender equality and the empowerment of women and girls at the heart of its strategies and activities. They commend the action of the UfM Secretariat in building and strengthening a regional framework of dialogue, co-operation and partnership on gender equality and women's and girls' empowerment, and in promoting concrete projects and initiatives which have achieved positive results. They encourage the Secretariat to continue its action to advance the agenda of gender equality and empowerment of women and girls in the region.
19. The Ministers highlight the relevance of an integrated and comprehensive action by all the stakeholders, from policy makers to actors on the ground. They welcome the work accomplished at a regional level by the key stakeholders in the region on promoting gender equality and women empowerment. They recommend increasing synergies between the relevant international and regional frameworks in order to foster complementarity and maximise the impact, in particular between the UfM, the European Union, the UN system (i.e. UN Women, UNIDO, ILO and UNDP), the League of Arab States, the OECD, the Council of Europe, the EBRD, the World Bank and the European Training Foundation.
20. The Ministers welcome the contribution and work accomplished by civil society organisations, including social partners' organisations, and acknowledge their understanding and great value in helping develop and implement adequate responses to gender inequality, as well as their key involvement in understanding and removing barriers to women's enjoyment of their rights, and achieving greater empowerment of women and girls in the Euro-Mediterranean region.
21. The Ministers welcome the work of Parliaments, the Economic and Social Councils and local authorities in promoting women's rights. They encourage the Economic and Social Councils and other tripartite social dialogue institutions, the Parliamentary Assembly of the Union of the Mediterranean and its Committee on Women's Rights, and of the Euro-Mediterranean Regional and Local Assembly to continue their positive action in this field.
22. The Ministers support the UfM Regional Dialogue Process on Women's Empowerment launched in 2015, in conformity with the request made by the 2013 UfM Paris Ministerial declaration, as a sustainable co-operation platform gathering key public and private stakeholders including civil society and international organisations with the aim of monitoring the ministerial commitments and to facilitate exchange of information, best practices and opportunities of co-operation and partnership between key stakeholders. However, further active involvement and participation of all the UfM countries in the Regional Dialogue Process is needed.
23. The Ministers commend the work undertaken by the four working groups of the Regional Dialogue on Women Empowerment and endorse the UfM Progress Report prepared in 2016. They share the priority areas (i.e. women's participation in economic life; women's access to leadership and decision-making positions; changing stereotypes through education and culture; combatting violence against women and gender-based-violence) identified for policy intervention, which are the basis of the concrete measures detailed below, as a way to implement the commitments entered into at the UfM Paris Conference in 2013, to strengthen the role of women in society and to enhance gender equality in the Euro-Mediterranean region.

**Considering the above background, the Ministers intend to promote the following Action Plan:**



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## I. Raising Women's Participation in Public Life and Decision-Making

### a) *Establishing and enforcing a legal and policy framework that ensures women's access to opportunities to participate fully in all domains of public and economic life*

#### **Removing legal, social and cultural obstacles to women's participation in public and economic life**

- Reaffirming effective women's rights within constitutions, laws and policies, especially in situations of political transition. Ensuring that the legislation in place recognises the independence, right to participate, opportunities, and freedom of movement of women and protects them as autonomous legal entities with equal dignity.
- Creating the conditions for women to get equal positions of responsibility in all public and economic spheres, not limiting them into commonly stereotyped 'women's' issues or responsibilities, recognising their responsibilities in the field, and guaranteeing equal pay for equal work and work of equal value and conditions for women and men to balance their working, family and private life.
- Reviewing, and where necessary, reforming electoral systems, including through voluntary or compulsory quotas, to guarantee and strengthen qualitative and quantitative women's participation, also revising party structures and procedures that hinder the participation of women, including through the use of special measures.
- Ensuring effective women's access to economic decision making in business and institutions on an equal footing with men, including trade unions and employers' organisations as well as cooperatives and organisations of self-employed workers and independent workers' organisations.
- Expanding commitments to voluntary or compulsory targets to increase women's representation. In addition, review legislative frameworks to remove indirect discrimination preventing the advancement of women.

#### **Creating the conditions for women to access and remain in decision-making positions**

- Setting specific targets and implementing measures to substantially increase the number of women in leadership and decision-making positions in political, public and economic life, including through the use of special measures.
- Engage with women who are in decision-making positions, reviewing their needs, experiences and any gaps or barriers identified.
- Supporting and implementing training, mentorship and personal development programmes for women that have a specific focus on strengthening women's leadership.
- Producing statistical data on women leadership to monitor the post-intervention progress.
- Promoting networks and synergies amongst women in leadership so that they raise each other up involving men in leadership positions in this process.
- Engaging with men to challenge prejudices on gender roles that undermine women's leadership in order to achieve gender equality.

### b) **Advance women's participation in decision making in the field of peace and security, as well as prevention and resolution of social conflicts, violence and extremism**





- Strengthening the role of women in peace and security efforts, by adopting National Action Plans for carrying out of UNSCR 1325 and the subsequent resolutions within the Women, Peace and Security agenda, and establishing monitoring provisions to evaluate the implementation of such national plans.
- Addressing as a priority the situation of displaced, migrant and refugee women and girls in order to properly ensure their needs and rights and to prevent the violence they suffer during their movements, as well as in migrant/refugee camps and asylum centers.
- Integrating women's rights and balanced representation in the design of national security strategies, as gender equality contributes to stability and development.
- Making women partners in countering terrorism and extremism, by recognising the particular risks faced by women and the role they can play in mediation and by acknowledging the role they can play in both preventing and participating in violent acts.
- Promoting research to understand better and to address the conditions that hinder women from participating in the construction of inclusive and peaceful societies.
- Conducting studies to collect statistical data and monitor the role of women in peace and security issues.
- Fostering the collaboration between national stakeholders on peace and security including in education fields.
- Establishing local and national networks including key stakeholders to be associated to public measures on peace and security, making sure that women are not side-line observers but actively participate in decision-making, including by encouraging the recruitment of women in security services.
- Increasing the proportion of aid to peace and security, targeting women's needs, rights and participation as a principal objective and fostering long-term, accessible and predictable funding for women civil society organisations working on peace and security at all levels.
- Providing women participating in peace and security processes with opportunities of training in skills and logistical support, and protecting women activists participating in peace and security talks.
- Fostering regional co-operation and co-ordination between countries and key regional and international stakeholders on women, peace and security.

## II. Raising Women's Economic Participation

### ***a) Establishing and enforcing a legal and policy framework that ensures women's access to opportunities of full economic participation***

- As an integral part of efforts to promote decent work in the region, creating and stepping up the effective implementation of labour legislation to promote equity and equality between men and women and to combat gender discrimination. Monitoring implementation to ensure providing women workers with the full exercise of their rights, decent working conditions and appropriate employment security and ensuring moral and sexual harassment-free workplaces, including through the action of competent monitoring bodies.



- Encouraging companies to review their internal policies and practices, by introducing a gender equality perspective and implementing measures to eliminate sex discrimination including in career progress and recruitment to leadership positions.
- Eliminating the gender pay gap and putting in place the conditions for women to balance professional, family and private life, without any detriment to their career prospects.
- Removing restrictive measures and promoting women's freedom of mobility, workplace safety, and removing all restrictions on their employment.
- Promoting women's access to training, including vocational education and training, skills development in line with labour market needs.
- Supporting women's access to their legal rights and promoting the understanding of these rights amongst employers and employees, and to this end supporting a higher participation of women in trade unions and employer's associations, as well as fostering social dialogue and cultural change through it.
- Acknowledging the gender imbalance in unpaid work, by creating the conditions to encourage men to engage in a more equal division of care and domestic work with women, recognising the value of this work, and taking measures to address it, thus freeing women for paid employment. Ensuring that newer forms of work, namely ICT-based and flexible work arrangements, do not result in fragile, precarious and informal work for women.
- Improving the safety of women at and on the way to work, by improving infrastructure such as transportation, adequate sanitation facilities and improved lighting.
- Promoting legislations condemning moral and sexual harassment at the workplace.
- Developing comprehensive statistics of women economic participation. This will not only allow to identify the imbalances and issues in order to design targeted solutions but also to assess the effectiveness of the measures taken over the years.

**b) Promoting women's entrepreneurship**

- Adopting measures to ensure that women have access to a range of fair funding options, not simply for small businesses and micro-enterprises– including lines of credit that are tailored to the needs of women.
- Implementing tailored training and mentoring programmes for women, considering existing opportunities and infrastructure, including risk management training and financial literacy, and integrating entrepreneurship curricula in early education and particularly in vocational training.
- Actively supporting women-led businesses to grow into medium and large enterprises. Promoting "*opportunity recognition*" whereby women are encouraged to recognise their skills and interests and to access existing sources of support to promote their entrepreneurship.
- Disseminating regional best practices, promoting women's empowerment, developing platforms for exchange, enhancing opportunities for market access within the Euro-Mediterranean region by fostering information and communication technology (ICT) business opportunities and label identity.
- Encourage and support women and girls in their efforts to seize the opportunities brought by the widespread use of ICT and to actively participate in and benefit from the digital economy.

**c) Favouring transition from informal to formal work**

- Adapting public policies in favor of women's access to quality employment with fair working conditions and social protection to open up the formal employment market to them.
- Developing an innovative and engaging procedural process that can be an incentive for both women and men to move out of the informal sector, by ensuring their social protection as well as their access to a range of financial incentives to reduce the burden of formalization.
- Ensuring that women's work is adequately recognized and valued, in particular work carried out within the family, and paid according to the applicable legislation of the relevant countries. Raising awareness of the benefits of women's employment and ensuring that women's contributions are formally recognized. Private business, social partners, civil society and academia should be actively involved in this process.
- Developing and implementing back-to-work programmes for women who have left the formal sector to raise children or assume other care responsibilities as well as establishing legislative measures that ensure protection against discrimination and dismissal for working parents (including pregnant women and parents returning from leave) and carers.
- Producing statistical data in this regard.

**d) Improving work-life balance**

- Adopting a holistic approach to work-life balance that includes a comprehensive range of provisions, both in public and private spheres: making sure that infrastructure meets the needs by setting child and elderly and other dependents' care as a priority; addressing transport issues; introducing flexible work arrangements for both parents or carers and ensuring adequate social and employment protection; adopting measures and incentives to ensure the equal right of parental leave for women and men, including an awareness- raising strategy for society and ensuring that equal parts of the parental leave are paid and non-transferable between mothers and fathers, taking into account the specific national context.
- Promoting an equal balance of care and domestic responsibilities, promoting men's roles as care givers and having equal domestic responsibilities, and promoting incentives to ensure equal right and uptake of parental leave for and by women and men.

### **III. Combating all Forms of Violence Against Women and Girls**

**a) Enforcing legal and policy framework to eradicating VAWG**

- Reviewing law and policies to ensure that key aspects of the international legal obligations are being addressed and implemented. Spread knowledge of the Istanbul Convention on combatting violence against women and develop national campaigns for zero tolerance towards violence against women and girls; identifying key gaps to be addressed as a matter of urgency and promote the best examples of legislation on violence against women and girls in the region.
- Investigate, prosecute and punish the perpetrators of violence against women and girls, end impunity and provide protection as well as access to appropriate remedies for victims and survivors; develop and adopt comprehensive laws that criminalize all forms of violence against women and girls, provide protection and stimulate prevention, including in consultation with women's rights Civil Society Organisations.
- Addressing the phenomenon of intimate partner harassment and violence, supporting women to assert their rights, including their right to sexual and reproductive health, and reproductive



rights, in accordance with the Programme of Action of the International Conference on Population and Development.

- Ensuring that family law, whether civil or customary, protects women, children and family from abusive partners during marriage and divorce.
- Condemning and punishing the use of violence, particularly sexual violence, as a weapon of war and taking specific measures to protect the rights of vulnerable women, including female migrants and victims of violence during conflicts.
- Facilitating the access to justice for women and girls and simplifying the applicable legislations. Supporting women to assert their rights providing free legal aid and psychological support during court proceedings.

**b) Promoting a holistic approach that includes Prevention, Protection, Prohibition, Response and Public Awareness**

- Developing public awareness campaigns to eradicate gender stereotypes and to sensitise all members of society on all forms of domestic and gender-based violence, relevant legislation and protection mechanisms.
- Raising awareness amongst women of their rights and pathways to support them.
- Educating and supporting men and boys to take responsibility for their behaviour; involving women and men in eradicating the phenomenon of VAWG, and mainstreaming coordinating responses across concerned stakeholders including civil society organisations.
- Ensuring that there are adequate women's services in relation to protection, prevention and response guaranteeing the necessary articulation between them. Supporting the creation of accommodation facilities and rehabilitation programmes for victims of gender-based violence, including service provision and compensation.
- Putting in place programmes that aim to work with the perpetrators and providing tools to measure their effectiveness.
- Monitoring and gathering information and data on violence against women across countries and the region, highlighting the political and social costs of VAWG. Conducting studies and surveys for monitoring and developing indicators to improve the public awareness on VAWG.
- Promoting funding and allocating budgets towards VAWG programmes, including identifying regional sources of funding where possible to co-ordinate approaches.
- Establishing trainings for all actors concerned with VAWG in particular politicians, religious officials, civil servants, including judiciary, police, medical professionals, teachers.
- Engaging religious leaders, institutions and education system in the fight against VAWG.
- Developing fast response strategies to crisis situations, to ensure safety of women and girls (in particular women migrants, refugees and women in the context of conflict).
- Addressing the structural causes such as social norms and gender stereotypes that perpetuate VAWG.

#### **IV. Challenging Cultural and Social Norms and eliminate gender Stereotypes, Particularly in and through Education and Media**

##### **a) *Strengthening the legal framework***

- Adopting a framework of laws and regulations extended to all areas of society and economy that explicitly promote equality between women and men and challenge the consequences of stereotyping. This must include measures for implementation and for scrutiny.
- Scrutinising and amending the existing laws and removing unconscious stereotyping to promote positive outcomes for gender equality.

##### **b) *Fighting against gender stereotypes in media, including social media***

- Developing enforceable regulations that actively promote positive portrayals of women and eliminating degrading and sexist imagery in the media. These could be combined with voluntary codes, incentives for diverse portrayals of women that promote dignity and respect, promoting female leadership within the media, and training for media (journalists and media owners) and other professionals to be gender sensitive.
- Providing critical media awareness education in schools including engaging with boys and girls.
- Developing specific campaigns targeting youth in social media, creating positive role modelling for women and men.
- Adopt and regularly monitor common regional reference guides to identify gender stereotypes and women sexual objectification in the media and establish a proactive approach to promote equality between women and men and combat negative stereotyping which restricts women's opportunities.

##### **c) *Fighting against stereotypes through Education***

- Training and engaging with education providers and mainstreaming gender equality within the curriculum, school materials and activities to ensure that they represent the values of equality between women and men and eliminate stereotyping.
- Developing career guidance that challenges stereotypes in relation to both boys and girls (promoting technology, exact sciences, engineering, mathematics and medicine for girls and arts, social sciences and humanities for boys).
- Raising awareness amongst young people of gender stereotyping and inequality and including gender equality in national youth policies and with all stakeholders.
- Training of teachers, other key educational actors and other school staff, including parents so that they are more gender sensitive and challenge stereotyping and sexism within classrooms and in school in general.

##### **d) *Fostering public awareness in challenging cultural norms and engaging with men***

- Engaging with men and women to discuss traditional female and male perceptions on gender roles. Raising awareness on the role of parents in education of boys and girls on an equal footing.
- Raising public awareness of the consequences of sex discrimination for society as a whole in terms of barriers to development and losses in economic and social terms.
- Engaging directly with policy makers, corporate leaders and academic to challenge their practices in terms of recruitment and career development of women as well as gender sensitive

policies and practices to value women's participation in management and corporate leadership.

- Engaging with recognized religious organisations to support gender equality and to promote positive roles for women in the context of religion.
- Encouraging cultural activities that deconstruct stereotypes and promote gender equality.

## V. Fostering implementation and strengthening operational cooperation

### a) *At a national level: enforcing implementation, fostering women's empowerment mainstreaming and developing gender sensitive budgeting*

- Integrating gender mainstreaming in an effective way in all national policies; providing training to leaders, managers, and policy and law makers. Supporting the development of concrete projects related to women's empowerment and ensuring their funding.
- Making the financial system more gender-responsive, and develop gendered budgeting in all public policies in all sectors and with all stakeholders.
- Backing up legal and policy frameworks on women empowerment with monitoring and evaluation systems using concrete indicators, both qualitative and quantitative (output, outcomes and impact indicators included).
- Developing research, studies and data production to better understand the root causes of discrimination and the impact of gender blinded policies.
- Ensuring that adequate and valuable funding is secured to implement all local and national measures dedicated to these goals.
- Guarantee independence and freedom of expression, organisation, speech, and movement to CSOs and women's rights defenders by repealing laws and measures curtailing these, including measures prohibiting their international and national financial support.
- Engage women's rights CSOs as partners in developing national gender equality policies: from the discussions on gender equality policies to their implementation and monitoring, recognising them as interlocutors.

### b) *At regional level: consolidating cooperation*

- Calling all stakeholders, including governments, parliaments, international organisations, IFIs, local authorities, social partners, private sector and CSOs to strengthen the regional synergies. This co-operation should promote a learning-based approach between governments and stakeholders through the exchange of knowledge, experiences, good practices, innovative approaches and concrete projects.
- Identifying and promoting concrete regional programmes and initiatives that would contribute to enhance and complement countries interventions and strategies, and to increase impact on the ground.
- Increasing the percentage of funds earmarked for bilateral and regional programs furthering women's empowerment, including through dedicated financing instruments, and involving key donors in the region to implement the agreed measures regarding women's empowerment.

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The Ministers ask the UfM Secretariat to continue and amplify its action as a facilitator for the Regional Dialogue on empowerment of women and girls, which will serve as a Euro-Mediterranean forum on strengthening the role of women in society.

To ensure the follow-up of this Ministerial Declaration, they envisage:

- a)** to establish with UfM Secretariat and countries and key stakeholders a regional and operational follow-up mechanism against agreed indicators, to monitor progress, to evaluate the gender gaps and to provide recommendations to policy makers and stakeholders, in order to improve the impact. This mechanism would be implemented in complementarity and co-ordination with the existing mechanisms in the region. The UfM Secretariat is mandated to develop the mechanism, in close coordination with countries and key stakeholders in the region and with the support of relevant experts.
- b)** To ask the UfM Secretariat to identify and gather, in collaboration with all the UfM countries, reliable gender-sensitive data and statistics as well as impact indicators on gender equality, as a tool to improve stakeholders' accountability and gender impact assessment.
- c)** To ask the UfM Secretariat to continue promoting concrete regional projects which contribute to the implementation of the actions listed in the Declaration, and to encourage countries and donors to support them technically and financially.
- d)** To task their ad-hoc senior officials/experts to review progress in translating the above commitments in laws and the implementation of measures contained in these conclusions, taking into account the outcome of the consultations with the civil society, and to provide report to UfM Senior Officials, before the next Ministerial Conference.

The Ministers hereby envisage to launch a regional campaign to prevent violence against women and girls.

The Ministers agree that the next Ministerial Conference on strengthening the role of women in society shall take place in 2021 at the latest.

The Ministers express their gratitude to the Arab Republic of Egypt for hosting this Conference and all the efforts exerted to ensure its success.

This Declaration does not create rights or obligations under international law, nor commit either side financially.