REGIONAL CONFERENCE

Breaking Barriers:
Towards equality between women and men in politics

AGENDA

19-20 November 2017 – Cairo, Egypt
Al Masah Hotel, Zomoruda Hall
G7 MENA Transition Fund Regional Project
Context

While governments around the world are taking steps to advance gender equality, it remains a global challenge. Women’s full involvement in public decision-making is crucial to adequately reflect the priorities and needs of all members of society and women remain the main drivers advancing women’s rights issues.

The landscape of public decision-making and decision-makers has begun to shift in the MENA region. Women’s representation in parliaments has nearly doubled in the last decade from 9.6% in 2007 to 18.2% in 2017. However, it remains below the world average of 23.6% and OECD average of 28.8% and is still far from reaching the 30% critical mass considered to be the tipping point for women to more effectively influence change.

The MENA-OECD 2016 Ministerial Meeting in Tunis called for a better understanding of the challenges facing women in the region and highlighted the need to identify the right policy measures to empower women and allow them to fully contribute to the political and economic life of their countries. The MENA-OECD Initiative, through its two pillars on Governance and Competitiveness, works closely with MENA countries to translate gender equality goals into concrete results, guided by the standards enshrined in the 2015 OECD Recommendation on Gender Equality in Public Life and the 2013 OECD Recommendation on Gender Equality in Education, Employment and Entrepreneurship.

About the Conference

The Conference is jointly organized by the National Council for Women (NCW) Egypt, and the Women in Government Platform of the MENA-OECD Governance Programme. It takes place within the framework of the G7 Deauville Partnership MENA Transition Fund Regional Project “Towards inclusive and open governments: Promoting women’s participation in parliaments and policy-making”, which is implemented in Egypt, Morocco, Jordan and Tunisia.

The conference will feature the findings of the National Council for Women Egypt/ OECD’s new country study on equal political participation between women and men in Egypt and encourage knowledge transfer and dialogue between Egypt, Jordan, Morocco, Tunisia and other MENA and OECD countries on how to remove existing and emerging barriers facing women’s participation in public life.

The conference will celebrate the Year of the Egyptian Woman and the newly released “Egyptian Women Vision 2030: Women Empowerment Strategy”, which paves the path towards greater inclusive economic growth, social cohesion and well-being of all citizens equally.

It brings together representatives of governments, parliaments, local councils, academia, civil society organizations and other stakeholders from MENA and OECD countries interested in closing gender gaps.

Recently, the MENA-OECD Women’s Economic Empowerment Forum (WEEF) was launched in Cairo under the aegis of H.E. Dr Sahar Nasr, Minister of Investment and International Co-operation, Egypt and H.E. Marie-Claire Swärd Capra, Ambassador of Sweden to Algeria. At this occasion, the OECD publication on ‘Women’s Economic Empowerment in Selected MENA Countries: The Impact of Legal Frameworks in Algeria, Egypt, Jordan, Libya, Morocco and Tunisia’ was released. During the Forum, links between women’s economic empowerment and women’s political participation were highlighted.
AGENDA
Sunday, 19 November 2017

Conference Room Al Zomoroda

8:30-9:00  Registration and Welcome Reception

Opening session

Paths towards results for equality between women and men: solidifying the achievements

H.E President Abd El Fattah El Sisi has announced the year 2017 as the year of Egyptian women. During the year, H.E. has endorsed and launched on 8th of March 2017 Egypt’s Women’s Strategy 2030 and declared it as the parallel roadmap for Egypt’s vision 2030 and directed all governmental institutions to incorporate it and implement it into their own programs. The strategy builds on four main pillars and four cross cutting themes. It sets clear outputs with measurable indicators to be attained by 2030.

Building on the growing recognition that equality between women and men is a main driver of economic growth, social cohesion and well-being, since 2015, the OECD has partnered with Egypt, Morocco, Jordan and Tunisia, to strengthen women’s participation in policy making and in legislatures. This partnership builds on countries’ commitment to advance the equality between women and men within the framework of the 2015 OECD Recommendation on Gender Equality in Public Life. This session will highlight the latest achievements and strategic directions in the region in the area, including Egypt’s Women’s Strategy 2030, which will set the context for the conference.

Welcoming remarks:

- **H.E. Ms. Sahar Nasr**, Minister of International Cooperation and Investment, Egypt (tbc)
- **MP Mr. Soliman Wahdan**, Deputy Speaker of Egyptian Parliament, Egypt
- **H.E Counsellor Lasheen Ibrahim**, Chairman of the National Elections Commission, Egypt
Opening session

Paths towards results for equality between women and men: solidifying the achievements

- **H.E. Ambassador Laila Bahaa El Din**, Assistant Foreign Minister for Human Rights and International Social and Humanitarian Affairs, Egypt
- **Ms. Rim Mahjoub**, Member of Parliament, Tunisia
- **Ms. Hayat Bouffarrachen**, Vice-President of the House of Representatives, Morocco
- **H.E. Dr. Salma Nims**, Secretary General, Jordanian National Commission for Women, Jordan
- **H.E. Ambassador Mervat Tallawy**, Director of Arab Women organization, Egypt
- **H.E. Dr. Maya Morsy**, President of the National Council for Women, Egypt
- **H.E. Ms. Mari Kiviniemi**, Deputy Secretary General, OECD

09:00-11:00

11:00 – 11:30  Coffee Break
Towards equality between women and men in politics
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Session 1
Towards equal access for women and men in public life: an imperative for change across MENA

While progress has been made, many women across MENA countries continue to face barriers to participation in public life, including gaps between women and men in electoral systems and political parties, violence against women and persisting cultural bias and stereotypes. This session will explore the challenges for equal access and discuss the reasons for these barriers, strengths and weaknesses of institutional responses in place, and the needed women’s strategies to overcome them. It will also provide access to good practices and lessons learned from MENA and OECD countries.

11:30 – 13:00
Chair: Ms. Sandra de Waele, Deputy Head of Mission at the Delegation of the European Union to Egypt

Speakers:

● H.E. Ms. Sanaa El Saeed, National Council of Women, Egypt
● Ms. Mbarka Aweyniya Brahmi, Member of Parliament, Tunisia
● Mr. Youssef Es Sathi, Ministry of Family, Solidarity, Equality and Social Development, Morocco
● Senator Ms. Sawsan Majali, Jordan
● Ms. Lara Ferguson, Legal Adviser, Institute of Women and for Equal Opportunities, Spain
● Dr. Maguid Osman, National Council of Women, Egypt

13:00 – 14:30
Lunch break
Making legislatures work for women and men

Legislatures have a critical role and responsibility to formulate the will of citizens. Making legislatures sensitive to the needs of women and men requires an integrated set of efforts and an analysis of parliamentary processes and practices, including oversight and accountability. This session will focus on experiences and lessons learnt from MENA and OECD countries on policies and practices to ensure equal participation of men and women in legislative processes and access to key decision-making posts within legislatures (such as budget and public finance commissions), while also looking at mechanisms to integrate a gender perspective in parliamentary operations and outcomes. The session will explore the state and role of parliamentary gender equality commissions and related mechanisms (e.g., cross-party women’s caucuses). This session will also reflect on experiences and lessons learned from other public institutions and explore their applicability to the parliamentary setting (i.e., OECD Toolkit on Gender in Governance).

Chair: H.E. Ambassador Jose Ignacio Wert, Permanent Representative of Spain to the OECD and Chair of the MENA-OECD Governance Programme

Speakers:
- Ms. Refaat Komsan, Councilor on Election Administration, Prime Minister’s Office, Egypt
- Ms. Samia Abbou, Member of Parliament, Tunisia
- MP Ms. Hayat Bouffarrachen, Vice-President of the House of Representatives, Morocco
- Ms. Alia Abu Hlail, Member of the House of Representatives, Jordan
- Ms. Tatyana Teplova, Deputy Head of Division, Public Governance Directorate, OECD

16:15 – 16:30
Coffee break
Session 3

Towards a dialogue on equality between women and men: engaging stakeholders

Civil society plays a critical role in voicing the diverse needs of the citizenry which is crucial to shape laws, policies and government programmes to benefit both men and women. A number of countries in the region have taken steps to strengthen the role of Parliaments in activating and relying on consultation and dialogue with civil society to incorporate relevant considerations of women and men into new laws and policy reforms. This session will explore the success stories and challenges to promoting greater openness and engagement between parliaments and civil society, including through the use of public consultation.

16:30 – 18:00

Chair: Mr. Nabil Samuel, Member of NCW, Head of the non-governmental organisations Standing Committee at NCW, Egypt

Speakers:

- **Mr. Abdelkrim Lahouaichri**, Member of the House of Councillors, Morocco

- **Ms. Renata Pavlov**, Executive Director of the MENA-OECD Governance Programme Centre of Caserta, Italy

- **Ms. Akila Bettayeb**, Regional Delegate of the Governorate of Zaghounan, Ministry of Women, Family and Children, Tunisia

- **Ms. Arwa Al-Jarhie**, Member of the elected council of the Aqaba governorate, Jordan

- **Ms. Miriam Allam**, Head of MENA-OECD Governance Programme, OECD
This session will explore elements which are holding back equality between women and men and impacting women’s economic and political empowerment. The OECD publication “Women’s Economic Empowerment in Selected MENA countries: The impact of legal frameworks in Algeria, Egypt, Jordan, Libya, Morocco and Tunisia” finds that much progress has been made towards equality. Yet in the Middle East and North Africa, where women are better educated and skilled than ever, the share of them in work or involvement in public life is still amongst the lowest in the world due, among others, to legal barriers which impact the society at large. Discriminatory legal provisions ensure that women often do not share the same rights as men to make decisions, pursue a profession, travel, marry or divorce, head a family, receive an inheritance or access wealth. Women’s participation in politics can have a positive impact on inclusive growth and women’s economic empowerment. This session will explore linkages between women’s economic empowerment and women’s political participation, as highlighted in the framework of Sustainable Development Goal 5 towards achieving gender equality and empowering women and girls.

Chair: Ms. Charlotte Goemans, Policy Analyst, MENA –OECD Competitiveness Programme, Global Relations Secretariat, OECD

Speakers:

- **Ms. Kholoud Alkhaldi**, Senior Enterprise Development Specialist, ILO
- **Ms. Rim Aljabi**, Gender Consultant, CAWTAR, Tunisia
- **Ms. Shaza Abdel-lateef**, M.A. Gendered political Economies – AUC, Women, Family and Childhood Department, League of Arab States (LAS)
- **Mr. Mohamed Nejib Torjmen**, Member of Parliament, Tunisia
Session 5

Ending violence against women: at the core of societies well-being and women’s empowerment in MENA

Violence against women is repeatedly identified as one of the main barriers to women’s access to a political career and for empowerment more broadly. As awareness of the extent and implications of violence against women increases across the MENA region, many countries are working to establish multi-sectoral, specialised services for victims and are currently strengthening legal frameworks to prevent and combat violence. This session will explore specific challenges related to the MENA countries efforts to combat violence against women.

Chair: Dr. Nagla El Adly, Director of International Cooperation Department at NCW, Egypt

Speakers:
- Ms. Randa Asha’ar, Member of the House of Representatives, Jordan
- Ms. Mary Hanafin, Local Councillor, Ireland
- Ms. Aicha Achahbar, Ministry of Family, Solidarity, Equality and Social Development, Morocco
- Ms. Rim Mahjoub, Member of Parliament, Tunisia

Closing session of regional conference

Closing remarks:
- H.E Dr. Maya Morsy, President of the National Council for Women, Egypt
- H.E. Mr. Giampaolo Cantini, Ambassador of Italy to Egypt (tbc)
- Ms. Tatyana Teplova, Deputy Head of Division, Public Governance Directorate, OECD
The NCW

The National Council for Women (NCW) was established in the year 2000 as an autonomous entity affiliated with the presidency, with the purpose of advancing the status of Egyptian women. The NCW aims to enhance the status of all Egyptian women and to maximize their contribution to the growth and development of Egypt. The focus is on narrowing existing socio-economic gender gaps and addressing women's strategic needs including social, economic and political empowerment.

NCW is supporting women economically through its Women Business Development Center, WBDC, and supporting women politically through its Women Political Support Unit. It has various focused and multidimensional projects, initiatives, campaigns and programs to support social empowerment of women and changing negative cultural norms and stereotypes and guarantee equality between women and men. Among which is ombudsman office, Taa Marbouta campaign, ID National project and equal opportunity units.

The National Council for Women in Egypt launched the ‘National Women's Strategy 2030,’ which aims at achieving the SDGs for women by 2030, and for which President Abdel Fattah Al Sisi announced to be the national document to guide the country in its women empowerment efforts; confirming the country’s commitment to achieve the empowerment of Egyptian women and its will to play an active role in the advancement of women. The Strategy aims to emphasize Egypt’s commitment to guaranteeing women's rights in accordance with the 2014 Constitution, as well as binding international conventions, covenants and declarations to which Egypt is a party.

Moreover, the Strategy aims to respond to the real needs of Egyptian women—particularly those living in rural areas in Upper Egypt, the poor, women headed households, and elderly and disabled women, as the groups entitled to care—when the State makes development plans.

The OECD

Building on its expertise, the OECD launched the 2010 Gender Initiative and set a number of standards on policy reforms to enhance gender equality. The Council Recommendation on Gender Equality in Education, Employment and Entrepreneurship was adopted in 2013, followed by the OECD 2015 Recommendation of the Council on Gender Equality in Public Life and by the 2015 update of the G20/OECD Principles of Corporate Governance.

In 2017, recent policy developments on gender equality were reported to the OECD Ministerial Council Meeting. They are discussed in detail in the OECD publication The Pursuit of Gender Equality: An Uphill Battle which illustrates that progress in OECD countries has been slow and that there is a strong need for further policy action to close gender gaps in education, employment, entrepreneurship and public life.
The OECD’s engagement to advance gender equality spans a variety of OECD committees and regional initiatives such as the G20 and through the MENA-OECD Initiative on Governance and Competitiveness for Development. The work by the MENA-OECD Programmes on Competitiveness and Governance are complementary and build on each other’s findings to supporting gender equality in the MENA region. Going forward, they will increasingly collaborate and develop synergies.


In the framework of the MENA-OECD Governance Programme, the MENA-OECD Gender Focus Group has provided a forum for policy dialogue and capacity building since its inception in 2009. It promotes legal equality as well as equality of opportunity and political voice, building on the 2015 OECD Council Recommendation on Gender Equality in Public Life.

The OECD publication “Women in Public Life: Gender, Law and Policy in the Middle East and North Africa” provides recommendations on how to eliminate gender-based discrimination, strengthen the institutional framework for gender equality and enable women’s access to decision making posts in the public sector.

The OECD Policy Toolkit for Gender in Governance targets OECD member and partner countries while aiming to support them in the implementation of the OECD Recommendation on Gender Equality in Public Life. The Toolkit draws a road map to strengthen gender equality results through putting in place good governance frameworks and tools; for each Recommendation’s provision it provides: a priority checklist; a set of self-assessment questions; a rationale explaining the importance of various governance aspects to achieve gender equality; key actions and pitfalls to avoid; and good practice examples.

www.oecd.org/governance

The MENA-OECD Competitiveness Programme has been working for over a decade to advance women’s economic empowerment in the region. Building on the 2007 Declaration on Fostering Women’s Entrepreneurship (English) and the 2009 Action Plan on Fostering Women’s Entrepreneurship and Employment, the Programme created a OECD-MENA Women’s Business Forum (WBF), which grew to become a network of over 700 participants from MENA and OECD countries governments, the private sector, academia and civil society.

The MENA-OECD Women’s Economic Empowerment Forum (WEEF), launched in October 2017, will build on this work, seeking to address critical issues such as: equal access to economic opportunities, challenges in implementing legal reforms, gendered data collection, and achieving Sustainable Development Goals and benefit from the input of reputed experts from other regional and international organisations.

www.oecd.org/mena/competitiveness