

## **Arab Parliaments Dialogue on the Regional Review of the Beijing Declaration and Platform for Action 30 Years After Adoption**

**May 29-30, 2024  
Amman, Jordan**

The United Nations Economic and Social Commission for Western Asia (ESCWA), in collaboration with the League of Arab States, and the UN Women Regional Office for Arab States, organized the “**Arab Parliaments Dialogue on the Regional Review of the Beijing Declaration and Platform for Action 30 Years After Adoption**” in Amman, Jordan. Representatives from fourteen Arab parliaments, concerned with the advancement of the status of women and girls and gender equality, participated in the meeting where they reviewed the achievements of their parliaments in the area of women's advancement and gender equality, in particular women's participation in public life and decision-making positions, the right to work, decent work environment, opportunities for entrepreneurship, protection from violence, the rights and protection of the most vulnerable women and girls, family related matters, and personal status. Participants exchanged experiences and best practices on the role of Arab parliaments, their contribution to the advancement of women's issues, and monitoring progress towards the implementation of the Beijing Declaration and Platform for Action 30 years after its adoption. Additionally, participants discussed challenges that they are facing in their areas of work. The following key messages and recommendations will be submitted to the High-Level Meeting on 9 December in Muscat, Oman.

### **Key Messages and Recommendations:**

1. Emphasizing the unity of the Arab Parliament's stance on the centrality of the Palestinian issue, and its full support for ending the Israeli occupation in the Palestinian territories since 1967 and the Palestinian people's right to self-determination, the necessity of stopping the aggression and genocide in the Gaza Strip; and demanding that Israel be compelled to stop its settlement and colonial policies in the West Bank and Jerusalem, and all policies and procedures against Palestinian prisoners; and calling on the international community and UN institutions to compel the colonial Israeli occupation to implement the decisions of international law and the rulings of the International Court of Justice.
2. Importance of addressing the repercussions of global, regional, and national challenges that the Arab States have been facing over the last few years including; armed conflicts, Israeli occupation, COVID-19 pandemic, the global economic crisis, climate change, and their impact on women and girls, especially the most vulnerable.
3. Activate the pivotal role of parliaments in the national review processes of the Beijing Platform for Action, by clarifying this role in the guidance note of the comprehensive review of the Beijing Declaration and Platform for Action issued by the UN Women and the regional commissions of UN ESCWA, urging national machineries for women to involve parliaments and parties in relevant national consultations.
4. Intensify efforts to build the capacity of Arab parliaments in drafting and developing legislations that promote gender equality, and preparing gender-responsive budgets, by establishing a specialized Arab parliamentary platform, and organizing regional workshops to exchange experiences and lessons learned that highlight good practices in Arab parliaments.

5. Emphasizing the importance of developing mechanisms for the implementation of legislation, and strengthening the oversight role of parliaments in this context through the adoption of regulations, and the preparation and implementation of relevant strategies and plans.
6. Identifying gaps in national data on women and development, improving data collection and analysis in quantitative and qualitative studies, and availing them to parliamentarians to support their role in enacting evidence-based laws and policies.
7. Developing clear indicators and different measurement standards for conflict-affected countries, taking into account the different contexts of the countries, especially those facing armed conflict.
8. Cooperation with religious leaders to address religious misconceptions that perpetuate the patriarchal system, customs, perceptions and stereotypical roles of women, and hinder the desired legislative reform to enhance the role of women in public life.
9. Affirming that positive discrimination is a temporary necessity to overcome the historical discrimination against women to reach gender parity, and that quotas and seats reserved for women in elected councils represent the minimum level of participation and should not be an obstacle to women's access obtaining seats competitively.
10. Necessity of representative institutional structures and workplaces to be considerate of women and families to allow them to perform their duties in public work.
11. Building on legislative and procedural achievements in the area of women's participation in public life in a manner that aligns with the national political context, to gradually reach parity in elected councils and decision-making positions.
12. Continue to harmonize the legislation of the Labor Law and civil service regulations with international standards in relation to maternity and paternity leaves, the provision of nurseries, and protection from violence and harassment by adopting laws that balance between the responsibilities of the state and the obligations of the private sector towards its male and female workers.
13. Adopting a new approach to the concept of caring for children, the elderly, and people with disabilities, based on the principle of care economy and taking into account the need to reduce the burden of unpaid care and redistribute it among the family and institutions.
14. Continue reviewing the legislations that enhance women's financial inclusion and encourage their entrepreneurship; and adopt fiscal and financial policies that encourage investment in SMEs and access to finance, especially in rural and remote areas.
15. Adopt innovative mechanisms to ensure that parliamentarians communicate with stakeholders and recognize the special needs of women, either through hearing committees or oversight sessions, or by preparing in-depth studies on the legal texts legislated to understand the success of the implementation of the law, and identify gaps that require legislative amendments with regard to protection from violence, including political violence.
16. Review domestic violence protection laws to include punitive measures, such as the adoption of alternative punishments and psychosocial treatment for the victim, in order to address women's reluctance to report cases of violence due to fears of the impact of the breadwinner's imprisonment on the family.
17. Completing the legislative achievements made by countries, whether in acceding to relevant conventions or in approving laws, including legislation that sets the minimum age of marriage, provides protection for persons with disabilities, or criminalizes harmful practices, by activating the role of parliaments in addressing the economic and social conditions conducive to such practices.
18. Making parliaments more responsive to women's issues by achieving parity in the integration of parliamentarians in parliamentary committees, thematic committees, and investigation committees to consolidate the principles of citizenship.

19. Adopting community dialogue in the process of reviewing family and personal status laws to understand the impact of their application in the context of the family in accordance with the requirements of religious laws.
20. Emphasizing the importance of awareness of the rights granted by legislation, which contributes to the stability of family relations by ensuring that the terms of the marriage contract align with the requirements of religious laws.