

Declaration of the Gender Innovation Agora, submitted to the Expert Group Meeting for the regional review of Beijing +25 in the Arab States Region

29 August 2019



We, the participants of the Beijing+25 Intergenerational Youth Dialogue, meeting in Cairo between 27 and 29 August 2019 to appraise progress in the implementation of the Beijing Declaration and Platform for Action in the Arab States region;

- Recalling with respect and appreciation the global feminist movement whose activism led to the adoption of the Beijing Declaration and Platform for Action by the 189 member State governments attending the Fourth World Conference for Women in Beijing in 1995, the largest-ever gathering of gender equality activists;
- Reaffirming the Universal Declaration of Human Rights (UDHR), which enshrines principles of non-discrimination and equal enjoyment of fundamental rights and freedoms to all;
- Reaffirming also the binding international norms and standards contained in the international human rights framework, particularly the Convention on the Elimination of all Forms of Discrimination against Women (CEDAW), which affirms human rights and fundamental rights and freedoms and equality for all women and girls;
- Reaffirming also the International Labor Organization Convention on the Elimination of Discrimination and Violence at Work;
- Recalling the Convention on the Rights of Persons with Disabilities (CERD), which aims to promote, protect and ensure full and equal enjoyment of all human rights and fundamental freedoms of all persons with disabilities and establishes equality between women and men as one of its principles;
- Recognizing United Nations Security Council resolution 1325 (2000) on women, peace and security, and United Nations Security Council resolution 2250 (2015) on youth, peace and security;
- Recalling that global leaders unanimously adopted Agenda 2030 for Sustainable Development at the Sustainable Development



Summit in 2015 and committed to promote gender equality and empower women and girls and established Sustainable Development Goal 5 to this effect;

- Reaffirming that women and girls' human rights are an inalienable, integral and indivisible part of all human rights and fundamental freedoms;
- Recognizing the impact of intersectionality and marginalization on the enjoyment of rights by women and girls in the Arab States region, including rural women, women with disabilities, refugees, asylum-seekers, migrants, internally-displaced women and girls, and indigenous women and girls, and survivors of fundamental human rights abuses;
- Recalling the unanimous commitment of the international community under Agenda 2030 to the principle of Leave No One Behind;
- Recognizing the widespread and intergenerational violations of fundamental rights as a result of conflicts in the region and the longstanding illegal occupation of the State of Palestine;
- Noting the impact of extremism on the enjoyment of the fundamental rights of women and girls; Noting that young people between the ages of 15 and 29 represent more than 30 per cent of the population in the Arab States region, representing more than 100 million people,[2] and that this demographic bulge offers a vital opportunity to establish an enduring culture of gender equality and empowerment of women and girls and to address negative stereotypes and

misconceptions that foster inequalities;

- Noting also the important role of youth as both stakeholders in the international sustainable development agenda grounded in human rights and as agents to bring about effective change that responds to the needs of all, including young people;
- Recalling the three dimensions of sustainable development recognized in the Beijing Platform for Action and in Agenda 2030, namely economic growth, social inclusion and environmental protection;
- Recognizing that while change has occurred over the past 25 years, women and girls across the globe and in the Arab States region continue to face significant challenges to the enjoyment of their fundamental rights and freedoms;
- Recalling the impact of the lack of effective implementation of national legislative frameworks in accordance with international laws and standards and its effect on the widespread of feminization of poverty, structural inequalities, underrepresentation in leadership across the public and private sectors.
- Recalling the persistent negative gender stereotypes, the digital gender divide and challenges to digital inclusion, and violence and harmful practices such as forced and child marriage and human trafficking are symptoms of enduring and unlawful discrimination against women and girls;
- Noting that the impact of climate change and continuing regional instability and conflict will



exacerbate current challenges to gender equality over the next five-year period and create new obstacles to the implementation of the Beijing Platform;

We identify the following drivers of change as critical to accelerate the implementation of the Beijing Platform for Action in the Arab States region:

- a. The adoption by the member States of a comprehensive legislative framework and enabling policy environment that translates international human rights commitments to the national context and that promotes women's participation and leadership in public life at all levels;
- b. Increased resources to be dedicated to national and regional civil society groups, networks and movements to promote people-centred development for gender equality and to serve as an effective bridge between grassroots communities and governments, to ensure that national development plans are inclusive, including of women and girls at risk of being left behind, and responsive to the challenges faced by women and girls, men and boys in the enjoyment of gender equality and empowerment of women and girls;
- c. Strengthened accountability for Beijing and other relevant commitments by member States, including a whole of society approach to national implementation plans, monitoring and reporting on progress in achievement of the Strategic Objectives across the 12 critical areas of concern, based on accurate and disaggregated data in alignment with the

Agenda 2030 targets and indicators;

- d. Full and effective participation of all stakeholder groups, in a spirit of social inclusion, and in furtherance of the principle of Leave No One Behind, with a particular focus on youth as the next generation of gender equality advocates for a strengthened feminist movement that recognizes intersectionality and diversity;

We call on governments, civil society, academia and research institutions, the private sector and other stakeholders to take the following actions under several Critical Areas to ensure the accelerated realization of gender equality and empowerment of all women and girls in the Arab States region in alignment with the Beijing Platform and SDG 5:

Critical Area D: Violence against women

1. Establish and implement effective legislation and policies in accordance with international human rights commitments under CEDAW and the DEVAW to prevent violence against women in all its forms, including rape and sexual assault, intimate partner violence, trafficking in women and girls, and harmful practices.
2. Implement international standards regarding personal status laws to eliminate impact on women's agency and capacity to leave violent domestic conditions.
3. Increase efforts to address harassment of women, including the workplace, as a repudiation of attempts to push women out of public spaces.



Ambassador Asma Khader, CEO of تضامن/SIGI Jordan and one of the original Arab States participants in the Beijing Conference back in 1995

4. Establish an effective regulatory framework in accordance with the recommendations of the UN High-Level Panel on Digital Cooperation to ensure safe online spaces for women and address intimidation of women online.
5. Establish effective accountability mechanisms to bring to justice perpetrators of violence against women.
6. Establish comprehensive pathways for provision of services to survivors of violence and encourage reporting by survivors and witnesses to facilitate their protection.
7. Facilitate accessible Pro Bono legal representation for survivors of violence and psychological support services.
8. Take appropriate additional measures to ensure that vulnerable women, including women with disabilities, are protected from all forms of violence and are able to access essential services for women who have experienced violence.
9. Address violence against women participating in the political field, whether as candidates for office or as voters, to protect their rights to political participation and to assembly and freedom of speech.
10. Take special measures to protect human rights defenders.
11. Take steps to ratify and implement the Protocol to prevent, suppress and punish trafficking in persons, especially women and children, supplementing the United Nations Convention Against Transnational Organized Crime.

12. Developing policies to ensure the protection of the vulnerable status of irregular migrant women and girls.
13. Provide funding to ensure that rural women have access to public services such as education, health care and infrastructure with a focus on eradicating illiteracy.

Critical Area E: Women and armed conflict

1. Increase the participation of women and youth in peacebuilding negotiations.
2. Engage women in the drafting and implementation of legislative and policy frameworks in the post-conflict reconstruction context, including in the design and implementation of security sector, judicial and local governance reform, and the delivery of essential relief services.
3. Invest resources in the training of women representatives to participate in these processes and advocate on behalf of their communities to ensure inclusive and effective peace processes.
4. Ensure accountability for crimes against civilians, particularly women and children and refugees, during conflict and under occupation, and provide redress to survivors, particularly in cases of sexual violence, displacement, persecution etc., as crimes against humanity and other international crimes.

Critical Area F: Women and the economy

1. Ensure equal access to services and resources



related to economic integration, such as training and education, finance, access to information, networking, inheritance etc.

2. Develop gender-responsive social protection systems and ensure access to decent jobs, for all women including those living in rural areas.
3. Support a gender-responsive private sector that attracts, retains and promotes women in the workplace, marketplace and community and encourages entrepreneurship by women.
4. Recognize the contribution of the care economy to national, regional and international socio-economic growth and reduce the unequal distribution of unpaid care work through investing in the care sector as a means to promote greater labour force participation of women.

Recommended Action Coalition: Addressing harmful gender stereotypes to achieve gender equality and the empowerment of all women and girls

1. Ensure a gender equality perspective in education curricula to support gender-positive learning from early education onwards.
2. Address online harassment of women and girls, as well as other forms of dangerous online content that contributes to violence against women in the physical world, and

create safe online spaces for women and girls.

3. Establish an effective regulatory framework to ensure greater access to, and gender-responsive representation in media and mass communications with respect to women and girls and men and boys, including currently under-represented groups such as those with disabilities, including by disabilities-responsive modes and formats of communication.
4. Promote the value of women's work and collective sharing of unpaid care work and address negative stereotypes around gender roles and labour.
5. Engage men and boys as advocates and partners in an inclusive and strengthened feminist movement.
6. Ensure legal protection for gender diversity in line with international human rights standards and the principle of Leave No One Behind, promote positive masculinities and address toxic masculinity.