

“Spring Forward for Women” Conference

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Introduction

“Equality means nothing less than 50 per cent, and parliamentarians from both the European Union and the Arab world must aim for nothing short of genuine equality between men and women. We must make 2015 to 2030 the last stretch in our efforts to achieve gender equality.” This was the conclusion of the two-day ‘Spring Forward for Women’ international high-level conference hosted by the European Parliament. The event,



co-organized by the European Commission and UN Women, brought together lawmakers from the Arab States and the European Parliament to discuss gender equality issues in their respective regions, learn from each other's experiences and devise innovative solutions to move forward on priority issues. The ‘Spring Forward for Women’ conference was organized under the auspices of the Regional Programme for the Economic and Political Empowerment of Women in the Southern Mediterranean Region (“Spring Forward for Women”) a joint European Union-UN Women programme.

Women's political empowerment is a crucial step forward in achieving the gender equality that is key for political reforms, justice and economic development. Studies show that women in political leadership worldwide have a positive effect on legislation dealing with educational systems, infrastructure development, domestic violence and employment rights, and they stand as role models for young women and girls. In Tunisia, women parliamentarians in cooperation with civil society organizations and women from all walks of life and all ages took to the street to ensure gender equality would be upheld in the Tunisian Constitution. In the European Union, the Gender Equality and Women's Rights Committee members fought, side by side with civil society organizations, to preserve this committee as a standing committee in the European Parliament and continue the excellent work undertaken to mainstream gender in European Union legislation. Finally across the Arab world, women lawmakers and civil society organizations worked hard for the establishment of quota systems that brought more women into legislative assemblies and will allow them to work on gender equality issues. And we know from evidence from around the world that women in political leadership make strides in areas relevant to women, including domestic violence legislation and employment rights, and they act as role models for young women and girls.

Today, we stand at a historic moment in time as the international community embarked on the global review of the Beijing Platform for Action. The nations of the world are coming together to define, by 2015, a new global development framework with a specific goal to attain gender equality and empower women everywhere. Parliamentarians play a key role in this context at the local, national and global levels. The European Commission, the European Parliament and UN Women are committed to making women's political empowerment and gender equality a reality in the European Union and supporting the Arab States in their efforts towards this goal. Now is the time to take courageous, bold steps to bring about change in our societies and make women's political empowerment and gender equality a reality by 2030.

1. Spring Forward for Women Programme

The uprisings sweeping the Arab world after December 2010 have dramatically challenged the socio-political and economic frameworks of the region. The central role that women took within the uprisings has created new momentum for meaningful citizenship and political empowerment in a region with some of the lowest levels of political and economic participation among women globally.

Key facts and figures of the programme

Duration:	2012 - 2016
Funding:	European Union (€7 million) UN Women (€1.2 million)
Implemented by:	UN Women

The Regional Programme for the Economic and Political Empowerment of Women in the Southern Mediterranean Region (“Spring Forward for Women”) provides a mechanism to advance the economic and political empowerment of women in the Southern Mediterranean region.

The overall objective of the programme is to promote the access and effective participation of marginalized women in economic and public life by addressing the barriers that have impeded their access and engagement in these areas. The programme aims to enhance the economic and political empowerment of women by promoting and facilitating the exchange of knowledge and experience on a regional level.

The programme works at multiple levels to respond to the specific support needs at the regional and country level, building on local initiatives in selected countries, with the recognition that sustainable change must be locally-owned and led. At regional level the work focuses on capacity building and advocacy targeting all Southern Mediterranean countries coupled with programmatic action in a number of priority countries undergoing either transition or reforms, such as Libya, Tunisia, Jordan and Egypt or experiencing unrest or protracted conflicts.



The programme methodology is focusing on four areas:

- **Capacity development:** By strengthening the capacity of different stakeholders, the programme aims to ensure civil society’s greater ability to encourage and increase women’s participation in the political and economic spheres as well as governments’ capacity to set the systems and resources in place to serve women’s needs and priorities.
- **Evidence-based advocacy:** By supporting advocacy efforts by gender advocates from civil society (women’s rights organizations and networks, feminist economists and gender experts), from government (National Women’s Mechanisms, gender focal points in ministries, and women parliamentarians), the programme seeks to influence the policy making process.

- **Knowledge building and information sharing:** By undertaking research and gender analysis of the economic and political regional context, the programme aims to influence policy dialogue at national and regional levels, to strengthen the voice of gender advocates, and to provide evidence for change. It also aims to increase exchange of best practices across the region.
- **Partnership building, coordination and engaging with multiple stakeholders:** By engaging with multiple stakeholders (government, civil society, academia, media, etc.) and creating or strengthening spaces for multi-stakeholder dialogue, the programme aims to strengthen the commitment of different levels of government, opening spaces for civil society, and strengthening commitment towards women's participation in public life.



1.1. Conference Background

Within the framework of the Regional Programme for the Economic and Political Empowerment of Women in the Southern Mediterranean Region, the European Commission and UN Women organized an international conference at the European Parliament in Brussels on 5 and 6 November 2014. The conference brought together female parliamentarians from the Arab States region and members of the European Parliament and was hosted by the Women's Rights and Gender Equality Committee of the European Parliament. For a full list of participants please refer to annex 1.

The first day of the conference aimed to provide the opportunity for an exchange of experiences and views between women lawmakers from the Arab States and members of the European Parliament to foster networking, knowledge and experience exchange, peer-to-peer exchanges and common consensus-building around key issues of gender equality and effective leadership and policymaking. It:

- Offered a space for fostering alliances among women parliamentarians from Arab States and members of the European Parliament.
- Supported exchanges and experience sharing in addressing gender equality issues in parliamentary work from successful initiatives in the Arab States and Europe.
- Provided the basis for the development of a regional network of women parliamentarians working to advance gender equality issues.

Participants were officially welcomed by President of the European Parliament Martin Schulz, Executive Director of UN Women Dr Phumzile Mlambo-Ngcuka and the Director for EU-Neighbourhood Policy at the Directorate-General for Development Cooperation, Dr Michael A. Köhler. The conference was structured around three main pillars. The first session framed the debates and provided a snapshot of the current state of affairs of women's political empowerment in the Arab world and the European Parliament. The second session aimed to allow for an exchange of good practices and successful initiatives for mainstreaming gender in legislation in both regions. Finally the third panel addressed three potential avenues for enhancing women's political

empowerment: working with civil society organizations, close cooperation with the media, and building national, regional and international political networks.

The second day of the conference offered parliamentarians from the Arab States the opportunity to participate in the work of relevant European Parliament Delegations including those to the Mashreq and the Maghreb, and the Iraq and the Arab Peninsula Delegations, as well as in the work of the Women's Rights and Gender Equality Committee.

Three parallel focus group meetings were organized with members of the Arab States delegation to discuss and decide next steps for cooperation. Within the framework of these discussions, the participants agreed the Brussels Declaration that lays the groundwork for a future network of women lawmakers dedicated to gender equality, at the regional level. For a full



overview of the programme, please refer to annex 2. The conference received widespread coverage from media outlets in Europe and the Arab States. For a snapshot of the main news items and tweets around the conference please refer to annex 4.

This report rests upon three main sources: 1) a desk study and literature review of academic publications and reports from international governmental and non-governmental organizations to understand the current state of affairs with regard to women's political participation in the European Parliament and the Arab States; 2) contributions from parliamentarians from the Arab world and the European Parliament during the international conference 'Spring Forward for Women' and focus group discussions organized subsequently; 3) desk research to identify case studies and pinpoint good practices from both the European Union and the Arab States with regard to women's political empowerment.

1.2. Women's political participation, an overview

The election of women to parliaments around the world is an important step forward in increasing women's political participation, empowerment and contribution to more democratic societies. *"We know from evidence around the world that women in political leadership have a positive effect on educational systems and infrastructure*

investment. They make strides in areas relevant to women, including domestic violence legislation and employment rights, and they act as role models for young women and girls," **underlined the Executive Director of UN Women, Phumzile Mlambo-Ngcuka.** The percentage of women holding political office is one of the measures by which to assess a country's commitment to women's rights and gender equality. Women's absence from or under-representation in legislative assemblies

"One decisive step to realize gender equality in our societies is to achieve gender equality in politics and to realize equal representation in our parliaments."

Martin Schulz, President of the European Parliament

infringes on their political rights and can restrict rights in other areas, given the central role national legislatures have in formulating, implementing, and monitoring laws and budgets.

There are several grounds to argue for the equal political representation of women. From a justice perspective it is unfair for any single group in a society to monopolize representation. *“Equality between men and women is a universal value for which we all fight together,” said Dr Sahar F. D. Al Qawasmi; Member of Parliament, State of Palestine.* A more equal distribution of seats in parliaments is believed to contribute to a more just and democratic political system because it implies more equality, at least in the descriptive representation of other societal groups.¹

From a pragmatic point of view, women’s particular experiences and interests are often better understood and represented by women. Furthermore, as women gained their right to vote and are more and more engaged in the public spheres, parties need to present more feminine faces among their contenders in order to attract women voters. Last but not least, the differentiation argument points to the diversity among women’s perspectives that implies that only a significant number of women, above the internationally agreed threshold of 30%, can secure the adequate representation of this diversity of views.² The different life experiences and structural positions women have in societies influence the substantive representation of women’s interests and women’s perspective.³ Research indicates that a legislator’s gender has a distinct impact on the range of policy issues that are considered and the types of solutions that are proposed. As more women are elected in parliament there is also an increase in policy-making around women’s issues, such as childbirth or maternity leave; policies that directly affect women either for biological or social reasons.⁴

“Human rights have never been a battle between different cultures, religions, countries or regions. Human rights are the universal language of the powerless in any religion, country or culture against the cultural relativism of the powerful. And this is what binds us together today in the European Parliament, the fight for gender equality”, **concluded the EU Special Representative (EUSR) for Human Rights**, Stavros Lambrinidis, before participants started to discuss the current situation with regard to women’s rights in their respective regions.

1.3. The international legal framework

To encourage governments worldwide to actively promote gender equality and women’s political and economic empowerment, various international legal instruments and conventions have been adopted, in particular in the past three decades.

Since 1979 and the adoption of the Convention on the Elimination of All Forms of Discrimination against Women (CEDAW) the international community stressed the obligation of respecting, protecting and fulfilling women’s rights for the advancement of society as a whole. The Convention calls on governments to work towards bringing an end to discrimination against women and recommends an agenda for national action plans. **Article 7** of the Convention refers to the right of all citizens, and in particular of women, to be allowed to vote and to hold political office as well as to participate in policy development in public or private organizations.

States that are party to the treaty should report regularly on their progress on implementation to the CEDAW Committee. All twenty-eight members of the European Union and the countries of the Arab States region⁵ have ratified the Convention. Many of the Arab States have upheld reservations with regard to certain articles, in particular, article 2 (elimination of discriminatory legislation against women), article 9 (equal nationality rights for men and women), article 15 (the right of women to freely choose their domicile), and article 16 (equal rights for men and women in all matters related

to marriage). Palestine is the only country to have adhered to the Convention without any reservation and recently, in April 2014, Tunisia also lifted its reservations.⁶

In 1990, UN Economic and Social Council resolution 1990/15 called on governments, political parties, trade unions, and professional and other representative groups to aim towards a minimum of 30% representation of women in leadership positions. Five years later, in 1995, the Beijing Platform for Action, reiterates the importance of removing all obstacles to women's active participation in all spheres of public and private life. Since then, numerous other international legal instruments, declarations, action plans and conferences re-emphasized the importance of women's political and economic empowerment.

In the year 2000, the Security Council adopted its groundbreaking Resolution on Women, Peace, and Security (UN SCR 1325). The resolution affirms women's key role in the promotion of peace and security and urges Member States to ensure increased representation of women at all decision-making levels in national, regional and international institutions. The six other subsequent resolutions on Women, Peace and Security address the importance of women's contribution to promoting peace and stability worldwide and the importance of their inclusion in decision-making processes at all levels.⁷

The UN General Assembly called on Member States, through its 2003 resolution on women's political participation (A/RES/58/142), to take steps to, among others, monitor progress on the representation of women and develop mechanisms and training programmes that encourage women to participate in the electoral process. Most recently, in 2011, UN General Assembly resolution (A/RES/66/130) calls on UN Member States to take a variety of measures to advance women's political participation, including to: review the impact of national electoral systems on women representation, to encourage political parties to remove any discriminatory practices that might hinder women's political participation, to investigate allegations of violence against women elected officials and candidates for political office and to promote awareness-raising on the importance of women's political participation.⁸

The 2011 UN General Assembly resolution on women's political participation (A/RES/66/130) stresses its critical importance in all contexts. It calls on UN Member States to take a variety of measures. The Millennium Development Goals (MDGs) also call for representative democracy as the key to good governance. In particular MDG 3 aimed at promoting gender equality and women's empowerment. Gender equality and women's empowerment is also being discussed in the Post-2015 framework.⁹

Article 7

States Parties shall take all appropriate measures to eliminate discrimination against women in the political and public life of the country and, in particular, shall ensure to women, on equal terms with men, the right:

(a) To vote in all elections and public referenda and to be eligible for election to all publicly elected bodies;

(b) To participate in the formulation of government policy and the implementation thereof and to hold public office and perform all public functions at all levels of government;

(c) To participate in non-governmental organizations and associations concerned with the public and political life of the country.

CEDAW Convention on the Elimination of All Forms of Discrimination against Women

Four decades since the adoption of the CEDAW, gender equality is still not a reality in most regions worldwide. “No country can claim to have achieved equality between men and women. It is time for the world to come together again for women and girls and complete this journey”, **said UN Women Executive Director Phumzile Mlambo-Ngcuka.**

The 20th anniversary of Beijing opens new opportunities to reconnect, regenerate commitment, charge-up political will and mobilize the public. In this framework the United Nations Commission on the Status of Women will carry out a review and appraisal of the implementation of the Beijing Declaration and Platform for Action. *“Governments, the private sector and other partners were urged to reduce women and girls’ poverty, ensure their right to access education and training, safeguard their health – including their sexual and reproductive health, protect women and girls from violence and discrimination to ensure that technological advances benefit all, and to promote their full and equal participation in society, politics, and the economy”,* **concluded Phumzile Mlambo-Ngcuka.**

1.4. Women lawmakers in the European Parliament

May 2014 has been an electoral month for Europeans. Citizens of the twenty-eight member state of the European Union casted their vote in a Europe-wide parliamentary election that brought 751 parliamentarians to represent their interests and needs in the European Parliament. Women now represent 37%, a significant increase if compared with the first parliamentary elections in 1979 when women occupied only 16%, but only a 4% difference from the previous legislature.¹⁰

The European Parliament is perceived to be more open to women’s political participation than many of the national parliaments of the European Union member states. As early as 1979, when the first European Parliamentary elections took place, 17% of its members were already women, while twenty years later, in 1997, when the IPU started to publish their world average statistics, women occupied only 11.7% worldwide. Although the presence of women in the European Parliament marks significant differences between individual EU

“We have had equality legislation in the European Union for over fifty years but we still don’t have equal representation, even in the European Parliament where we currently have 37%. In my own national parliament, in the British Parliament which claims to be the oldest democracy in the world, only 23% of members are women, so we still have a lot of work to do.”

Linda McAvan, Chair of the Committee on Development, European Parliament

member states delegations, it seems easier for women to get elected to the European Parliament than to national legislatures. Political parties have been more open to proposing women for European elections and there is less competition from men, as the European Parliament is not perceived as a true power centre in European capitals. Parties might also see European elections as a good venue to prove their credentials in terms of women’s political empowerment and therefore are more easily ready to appoint women in winnable positions on party lists.¹¹

1.5. The political context of the Arab States

The street demonstrations that started in Tunisia with the self-immolation of one fruit vendor in December 2010 toppled several dictatorial regimes and sent shock waves throughout the region with many governments taking political measures to appease popular democratic demands, including regarding women’s rights. In 2013 the Arab States region¹² registered the highest annual

progress in the number of women entering parliaments, reaching a historic high of 16%.¹³ In most countries, the increase is due to the introduction of various quota systems or the appointment of women into traditionally male-dominated institutions, such as the legislative assemblies.

Algeria became the first Arab country to surpass the 30% threshold of women in a legislative assembly. Following the 2012 parliamentary elections, 146 women entered the National People's Assembly.¹⁴ This significant leap forward is largely a result of the new quota system for political party lists, which requires between 20% and 50% of the candidates for parliament to be women.¹⁵ *"There is a quota of a minimum 30% in all elected bodies, be they local, municipal or national. What was the outcome of this newly introduced quota system? In 2012, 31%, 146 women were elected to the National Legislative Assembly", noted Hafida Benchehida, Member of Parliament from Algeria.*

Bahraini women entered political office for the first time in 2000, when four women were appointed to the 40-member Consultative Council. One year later women were also enfranchised in municipal council elections through a royal decree. Women currently have four seats in the Council of Representatives and 11 seats (out of 40) in the Shura Council. New elections for the Council of Representatives are scheduled for November 2014 when representatives will be elected by absolute majority vote in single-member constituencies.¹⁶

Following the 2011 democratic upheaval, **Egyptian** women lost a significant number of seats in the Shura Assembly, going down from 65 women (12%) in the pre-revolution assembly (2010) to 10 (2%) in the post-revolution assembly (February 2013).¹⁷ Most analysts attributed this fall in numbers to the abolition of the quota system in place during the Mubarak regime.¹⁸

Iraq was the first Arab country to have had a female minister, as early as the 1950s, and to pass legislation giving women the right to file for divorces. Today, Iraqi women hold 25% of the seats in the Council of Representatives, also largely due to the constitutional quota in place. In the 2010 legislative elections, five women won enough votes to be elected in spite of the quota system in place and in the last legislative elections, *"22 Iraqi women won seats in their constituency outside of the quota provision, running against the other candidates", said Huda Sajad Mahmood Al-Khayyat, member of the Iraqi Council of Representatives.*



In Jordan women hold a historic 18 seats (12%) also due to the country's electoral quota system by which 15 seats are reserved for women selected among the candidates who did not win district seats. Three women won their seats outside of the quota provision. The King dissolved the Senate in October 2013 by Royal Decree and appointed a new 75-member Senate where women also hold 12% of the seats.¹⁹

In **Kuwait** there is only one woman (a Minister) member of the 65-strong membership of the National Assembly.²⁰ In **Libya**, women occupy 16% of the seats in the House of Representatives,²¹

again in part due to the national quota system according to which 32 of the 200 seats are reserved for women.²²

According to the 2014 World Economic Forum *Gender Gap Report*, **Lebanon** is ranked 141 in the world out of 142 countries studied in terms of women's political empowerment. The current Parliament includes only 4 women out of 128 Deputies (3.1%). In 2013, the percentage of women standing as candidates was 6.2%, a significant increase on the 1.7% of candidates in 2009.²³ Several attempts to introduce a quota for women in parliament have been made but up to now the National Assembly has voted against.

In **Morocco**, following the 2011 protests in neighbouring countries, a series of reforms were passed aimed at democratization and greater protection of human rights. Parliamentary elections were held in November 2011, when women won an unprecedented 66 seats.²⁴

Oman was the first country of the Cooperation Council for the Arab States of the Gulf to grant women the right to vote and to run for public office, back in 1996. Today women hold only 18% (15 of the 83 members) of the seats in the State Council and in the current Consultative Council there is only one woman representative (out of the 84 representatives).²⁵

In the State of Palestine, women occupy 17 seats (out of 132) in the Palestinian Legislative Council and benefit, according to the 2005 Election Law and the 2007 Decree on the Election Law, from a quota system by which political parties must have at least one woman among the first three candidates on the list, at least one woman among the next four, and one woman among every five for the rest of the list.²⁶ *"We only managed to have 13% of members of parliament, but we do think this is a great achievement for Palestinian women"*, said **Dr Najat A. A. Al-Asttal, representative of the State of Palestine**.

In **Qatar** in the current, as in the previous Advisory Council there are no women members. A woman does, however, occupy the position of Minister of Communication and Information Technology, the third female minister in the country's history.²⁷

In **Saudi Arabia**, following the 2011 decree, 30 women (20%) were appointed to the 150 member National Advisory Council, the highest legislative body in the Kingdom.²⁸ This was the first time that women were allowed to enter what was known to be a men-only institution.

Tunisia, the country most praised by the international community with regard to the path of its democratization process, adopted a quota system to support women's access to parliament. The Tunisian 'zipper-system for quotas' mandates that women should represent 50% of candidates on party lists and that candidate names on party lists should alternate by gender. As a result, 27% of the elected members of the 2011 assembly were women.²⁹ In the recently held elections in October 2014 women won 68 seats (out of 217 available) which represent 31% of the seats in the new Parliament.³⁰ Tunisia will thus become the second Arab country to pass the internationally recommended threshold of 30%.

Women in the **United Arab Emirates** were able to run for the first time in elections for the Federal National Council (FNC) in 2006. In September 2011 the country held parliamentary elections for the second time and members were indirectly elected by an Electoral College. As in 2006, only one woman was elected (out of the 20 seats available),³¹ six other women were later appointed by the rulers of the constituent states.³²

According to the 2014 World Economic Forum *Gender Gap Report*, **Yemen** ranks 138 in terms of women's political empowerment. The Gulf Cooperation Council (GCC) Agreement, which outlines the framework for the transition in Yemen, clearly stipulates that women should be represented in the National Dialogue Conference (NDC).³³ Currently there is only one woman in the Yemeni House of Representatives, which has 300 members. *"We feel quotas are important. We are drafting a new constitution and women insist that quotas are included in order to ensure women are properly represented in the legislative body"*, **stressed Dr Amatalrazzak Ali Hummed Al-Hawri**, Minister of Social Affairs and Labour for the General People's Congress Party.



2. Challenges for women's political participation

Twenty years after the adoption of the Beijing Platform for Action (1995), women continue to be a minority in parliaments worldwide. According to the Inter-Parliamentary Union, in September 2014 women constitute 21.8%, only a 10% increase since 1997, when the world average was 11.7%. While overall trends point to an increase in women's parliamentary representation, the gains are not spread evenly across regions. The highest percentage of women in parliaments is held by the Americas, at 25.7% and the OSCE member states at 24.8% and the lowest in the Pacific and the Arab States region both with 15.9%.³⁴

"Gender equality cannot be administered; it is a power struggle, a struggle that has to be fought. Achieving gender equality implies that sometimes some people will need to step back, and this will be mostly men. We are half of the population, therefore half of the power please, thank you, nothing less!"

Malin Bjork, Member of the Gender Equality and Women's Rights Committee, European Parliament

Research in this area finds fairly consistent factors that hinder or support women's election to parliaments worldwide, be they in the European Union or the Arab States. Participants in the conference mentioned several key factors. Each of them is listed below, and their influence on women's political participation. The impact of each factor varies from country to country.

2.1. Political factors

Electoral systems are one of the most important factors that determine women political representation. Majoritarian electoral systems limit women's election because, among other things, they provide fewer opportunities for representation. On the other side, proportional electoral systems have a positive and statistically significant effect on the percentage of women elected, compared to, for example, plurality or majority systems. In proportional systems parties nominate several candidates and are therefore more likely to balance the representation list to attract a wider pool of voters.³⁵ In the case of proportional representation systems, and if quotas are in place, closed lists tend to favour women's access to parliament. In the absence of quotas, open lists allow women better opportunities for competing with other candidates because voters have more flexibility in selecting candidates.

Parties are the gatekeepers of candidate selection and the primary and most direct vehicle through which women can access elected office and political leadership. The structures, policies, practices and values of political parties influence women's political participation. They play a fundamental role in women's election to parliament through

“Why is there not a single Arab woman Minister of Defence, Minister of Foreign Affairs or Minister of Interior Affairs? We are given consolation prizes, Ministry of Women's Affairs, Ministry of Social Affairs.”

Myasar Salem Aied Al Froukhi, Member of Parliament, Jordan

finance, endorsement or access to a range of resources. Some parties tend to ignore women candidates altogether on their lists based on the belief that women are not capable of winning seats in elections because they lack leadership skills and give the party fewer chances of winning the elections. How prospective women candidates and women MPs relate to their own political parties or political groups is fundamental to increasing women's representation and influence in parliament. Therefore women need to become genuine “insiders” within their parties and take on leadership positions to be able to ‘play the political game’ and advance their interests and needs. On the other side, parties have to be held accountable for the implementation of concrete measures towards a better representation of women within their ranks. Superficial efforts, such as establishing a women's wing with no statutory authority, selecting female placeholders on candidate lists and placing women in un-electable districts, should be strongly discouraged and sanctioned when possible.

2.2. Socio-economic factors

Participation in the labour force, abuse of religious and traditional practices, patriarchal societal structures, prejudice and cultural stereotypes and perception about the role of women, limited education and political knowledge of women, have all been found to have an impact on women's participation in politics in both long-standing and new democracies.

The **social and economic status of women** in society has a direct influence on women's participation in political institutions and elected bodies. Academic studies point to the

“There are traditions within our cultures that over time became true religions. This is sinful; this is haram and so forth. We have to get rid of them because they are hindering our development. There are, however, traditions that must be safeguarded as they have helped us survive and continue our fight”.

Rabiha D.H. Hamdan, Member of Parliament, Former Minister of Women's Affairs, State of Palestine

correlation between women's legislative recruitment and the proportion of women working outside the home, as well as the percentage of woman college graduates.³⁶ Women's participation in politics is further constrained by poverty and lack of access to information. It is difficult for women to participate in political life when their major concern is survival and trying to meet the basic needs of their children and extended family. This situation is particularly accentuated by the increase in the number of female-headed households in conflict and post-conflict countries.³⁷

Unfair electoral financing is a challenge for women. Studies show that men get more financing if the electoral financial flow is not transparent. *"We have to fight for transparency of all electoral financing of elections; this is an important element for women's success", said Heidi Hautala (Finland),* Member of the Committee on Development, European Parliament and former Minister of Development of Finland. **Raising money** to gain the party nomination, to run the campaign and in some cases even to perform your duties in Parliament, as is the case in Tunisia, is one of the greatest challenges women lawmakers have repeatedly emphasized.³⁸ Women are more likely, sometimes by virtue of their assigned place in the private sphere of the society, to face **capacity gaps** when running for elections as they are less likely than men to have the education, resources or the extended professional networks needed. The absence of women from these networks hampers their ability to access the necessary financial resources for campaigning, and the knowledge and networks needed to develop a political career and to advance political interests and women's needs. *We cannot ask women to be men's equals and at the same time confine women in their homes. We should put in place the needed mechanisms",* said one of the representatives of the State of Palestine.

Initial funding to launch a candidature campaign, gain exposure and build recognition often comes from candidates themselves. After winning the nomination, party support may increase and greater visibility may attract additional sources of funding, however this is not a standard practice. In **Tunisia**, even elected parliamentarians face financial challenges. Lawmakers are paid an annual salary, are allocated an airline and a local travel card, and travel and accommodation allowances but do not receive any funds for administrative expenses, office or constituency support. With a few notable exceptions, such as the leaders of committees or Assembly-wide positions, deputies do not have offices, computers, or phones provided by the Assembly.³⁹

According to socialization theories, attitudes towards sex roles in societies are acquired early in life through formal education, local communities, family and workplace attitudes towards women and men. In traditional patriarchal cultures, many women may be reluctant to run for

"There must be a change in attitudes, in the cultures. It is not enough to change the legislation. A culture of equal opportunity must take root. We must educate the people."

Rachida Tahri, Member of Parliament, Morocco

elections, and should they do so they may fail to attract sufficient party and electoral support to win.⁴⁰ In certain cases, **cultural norms** discourage women from competing directly with men or holding positions of public office and tend to position childcare and housekeeping as the exclusive domain of women. National or cross-national research on public attitudes towards women in politics, in particular in the Arab world, is scarce. A 2007 Pew Research Poll on attitudes towards women in leadership conducted in 47-nations found that 64% of Palestinians, 62% of Kuwaitis and 49% of Jordanians believed men made better political leaders than women.⁴¹ More recently, smaller scale

research conducted through focus groups organized in Libya in 2011 and 2012 shows that both women and men believe women would not make good political leaders not only because of their responsibilities towards the family but also due to their emotional attitudes. Many interviewees claimed that women candidates did not have a demonstrated track record, nationally or globally, of successful leadership that would prove them capable of political office.⁴² Most Iraqis (53%) think social norms are responsible for women not being able to work outside the home, followed by religious beliefs and lack of family support (both 24%).⁴³ Opinions about women in political leadership positions are somewhat correlated with the extent to which women already play leadership roles within their respective societies and are portrayed by the media.⁴⁴ But, as one member of the European Parliament pointed out, “*religion, culture or traditions should not be used to oppress women*”.

Negative media representations of women and in particular of women in politics reinforce cultural stereotypes:

The issue of women’s representation in the Arab media has been a subject of debate for many years due to its negativity and its ability to affect the image of Arab women in society at large, as restated by participants in the conference as well. A 2014 study conducted by King Faisal University, Al-Ahsa, in 16 Arab countries found that 76% of the satellite channels portrayed working women as exploiting their sexuality to progress in their careers, 59% of satellite channels presented working women as unable to multitask and prone to low productivity and 30% portrayed them as corrupt and lacking intelligence.⁴⁵ At the same time, there is potential and the Arab media can be a vehicle for changing mind-sets and attitudes, a force for positive change in society simply by portraying a different image of women and their role in societies. Media could contribute to the achievement of comprehensive social development policies and address the change of prevailing concepts, traditional legacies and misconceptions about women and their role in society.⁴⁶

“There is a very important relation between the media and women parliamentarians. The way the media portrays women, their role in society and their participation to public policy is detrimental to women’s empowerment. When there is a very long meeting in the parliament, the following day, newspapers present women as not participating enough or being too tired. There must be an alliance between women parliamentarians and the media, we need to reconcile with the media”.

Sanaa Gamaleldin, Former Member of Parliament, Egypt

Women around the world are playing increasingly visible roles in the political processes of their countries as voters, candidates, representatives, protesters, journalists and as civic educators in the home, the community and beyond.⁴⁷ As women’s political visibility rises, so does their **vulnerability to electoral violence**. This risk is frequently amplified by anger against the perceived image of women rejecting traditional roles and values. According to the latest IPU annual report, in 2013 violence, sometimes associated with certain cultural norms and behaviours was a barrier to women entering political life. Women candidates, politicians and voters from around the world speak out against gender-based electoral and political violence that includes intimidation, physical assault and threats, verbal intimidation, destruction of property, hate speech sometimes perpetrated using text messages or online tools. In Libya during the last elections, some women expressed concerns regarding publishing their image in print or televised media so as not to anger conservative elements and used symbols or drawings on their pamphlets instead of their images.⁴⁸ The new Speaker of **Italy’s lower house** revealed the numerous emails she has received threatening rape, sodomy,

torture and murder, most of these being acts of a sexual nature.⁴⁹ The forms of violence most frequently perpetrated on women candidates and political party supporters and public citizens and voters include intimidation, verbal harassment and group clashes or politically motivated theft.⁵⁰ *“During armed conflict women are being instrumentalized. This is the case in Libya. Women are being separated from their children and their families. Rape is used as a weapon of war. After the war against the previous regime guns have been abandoned in the hands of militia. We are not at war but we want to get rid of the militia. Women cannot rightfully claim their rights in situations like these”, said the Libyan representative, Amal M. A. Bayou* describing the very difficult situation on the ground in Libya.

2.3. Institutional factors

The institutional structures that define the context in which women participate in public life, including in politics, such as the constitutional framework or the electoral laws, can support or prevent women’s political participation. Ensuring these institutional structures are gender-sensitive has a significant impact on women’s political participation. Among institutional factors, the transition and consolidation of democratic societies can be expected to promote wider political and civil liberties, including women’s rights to vote and to stand for elected office, as well as strengthening parties and institutionalizing the channels of political recruitment into parliament and government.⁵¹

Institutional factors are important once women lawmakers are elected to parliament as well. The written and unwritten rules and procedures, including facilities available, sitting times, budget allocations and services can hinder or support women lawmakers. On entering parliament, women lawmakers enter an institution primarily designed by men, an institutional culture that does not accommodate their needs but to which they are expected to conform. Challenges range from infrastructure, such as the actual architecture or location of the building where the legislature meets and the

“In Jordan, we are very concerned about discrimination against men and women. There are 14 laws in Jordan that are discriminatory against women, legislation on nationality, on inheritance rights, the electoral law and others. But parliament is not yet able to reform these laws. In my view, the electoral law is the problem. The electoral law is based on electoral districts where there is little enthusiasm to have women participate in political life....We want to change the electoral law so there is equal representation for men and women. We also want to change the legislation that forms the parties so there is more participation from women.”

**Dr Rula Al-Farra, Member of Parliament,
Jordan**

availability of women’s restrooms, to cultural challenges such as dress codes or how parliamentary members refer to each other and to the biased distribution of resources, including office space, computers, staff and research facilities. Derogatory and sexist language and incidents of sexual harassment can make women feel like outsiders. A 2008 study conducted by the Dubai School of Government on women in the **UAE Federal National Council** found that women parliamentarians expressed dissatisfaction with the lack of facilities available to female members, compared to male members. Prayer and relaxation rooms or restrooms near the assembly halls were available to all male FNC members, whereas insufficient or ad hoc facilities were made available for women members. The report recommended that relevant ministerial bodies take the necessary steps to address these shortcomings.⁵²

3. Good practices for women's political empowerment

Research on good practices for women's political empowerment highlighted several examples that should be taken into consideration. Scholars began looking into cross-national studies highlighting the effects of these positive practices. Identified good practices include: *affirmative actions, such as quotas or reserved seats; regulation of electoral campaign financing; capacity-development training for women wanting to run for parliamentary elections or women who are already members of parliament; gender-mainstreaming legal frameworks, such as constitutions or electoral laws; supporting the establishment of gender equality commissions or cross-party women caucuses.*

Presented below are a select number of good practices and case studies from both the European Union member states and the Arab States, some of which were mentioned by participants at the conference.

First and foremost, affirmative actions, such as quotas or reserved seats, have proven over and over again to play a key role in supporting women's access, in greater numbers, to political office. As noted by the CEDAW committee in 1997, *"temporary special measures are an essential prerequisite to women's equality in political life".*⁵³

In Libya, prior to 2012, parliamentary elections were held as far back as 1964 and 1965 but political parties had been banned since then by the monarchy and under Gaddafi. **No women participated as candidates in those elections.** In early January 2012, the NTC's Election Committee released a draft election law for public consultation which stated that, "the National Congress consists of 200 members chosen by direct and free elections, where a 10% quota of the total number of members of Congress is reserved for women".⁵⁴ The quota clause was significantly debated due to the vaguely worded language. Women's rights organizations were vocal about their concerns regarding the wording and the implementation of the quota system and declared a Day of Anger on 2 February 2012 to demand revisions to the Draft Electoral Law, including an increase in the quota to 30%. The legislative elections were considered by international and domestic observers as a crucial turning point for women and women's political empowerment. Women comprised 45% of registered voters and 39% of the total voter turnout and participated in record numbers as polling station workers and observers.⁵⁵

Iraqi women obtained the right to vote in 1980 and the same year, 16 women entered parliament, winning 6% of the seats in the National Council. This proportion doubled to 13% in 1985 and fell to 11% in 1989, to 6% in 1996 and 7% in 2000.⁵⁶ The current Constitution stipulates that the electoral law shall aim to achieve a 25% representation of women as members of the Council of Representatives. The Constitution was approved by a public referendum in 2005. The Electoral Law specifies that a proportional representation system will be used for elections. To guarantee the inclusion of women, any party seeking to contest the election has to include women candidates ranked as one among every third name included in the party list. The result is that in the 2005, 2010 and 2014 elections women won 25% of seats in the Council of Representatives.

In Jordan, women did not hold any seat in the Upper House of the Legislative Assembly before the introduction of quotas in 2003, and only 3 seats in the Lower House.⁵⁷ Following amendments made to the Electoral Law, six seats out of the 110 were reserved for women candidates who had achieved the highest percentage of all votes cast in their respective constituencies, apart from

women who may have been elected in direct elections. This immediately led to women entering the legislative assembly, in greater numbers. Only one woman was elected directly in 2007. In the 2013 elections, women won 18 seats (15 through the quota).

In Saudi Arabia, following the King's decree in 2011, at least 20% of the members to be appointed in the Consultative Council are to be women. The Council, known as a male-only institution, is appointed by the King for a four year period and advises him on legislative issues.⁵⁸ *"The Shura Council will be formed of a Speaker and 150 members, to be selected by the King according to their knowledge, experience and profession, provided that women would be represented in the Council with no less than 20% of its members. A royal order will designate members' rights, duties and other things"*, ran the Royal Order.⁵⁹

Electoral gender quotas are a widely used method in the member states of the European Union as well. A 2013 study for the European Parliament shows that the introduction of gender quotas in several countries, including France, the United Kingdom, Slovenia, or Belgium does seem to have had an immediate effect in the increase of women's access to legislative office, even if other factors may have played a role. The increase in each country is of at least 10 percentage points.⁶⁰ In the Arab world the gains obtained in women's political presence in parliament were clearly attributed by all participants in the conference to the use of quotas. Libya, Iraq, Algeria, Jordan or Palestine are just a few of the examples where women were able to enter institutions that were previously dominated by men, due to the adoption of various quota systems.

In order to be effective, a quota system must be compatible with the electoral system in place and supplemented with rules concerning rank order for women and men as well as legal sanctions. Quotas should be ambitious, detailed and include implementation mechanisms to have impact. Enforcement and penalties for non-compliance, such as the disqualification of lists, financial penalties, or loss of public funding are also instruments that can help stimulate compliance.⁶¹

The flow and distribution of **political funds** have a direct influence on the actual ability of candidates and parties to put their messages across to the voters, and thus directly influence electoral equality. To encourage women to run for elections and **limit the impact of scarce financial resources**, two options could be envisaged at the national policy level:

- Limit electoral campaign expenses in order to ensure equality of opportunity for all candidates. Setting a ceiling on campaign expenditure and limiting the campaign period could help promote the ability of all actors to participate in political life.
- Use public funding as a mechanism to level the playing field in the electoral period. This positive measure is usually directed to parties represented in parliament and is provided in most cases without any obligation on the recipients, but it could be regulated in such a way as to encourage parties to address women's political empowerment. **In France in 1999** a legislative amendment to the Constitution led to the parity principle which requires that 50% of proposed candidates presented for election must be women, or political parties face financial sanctions. Parties lose part of their public funding when the difference between the numbers of candidates of each gender goes beyond 2% of the total number of candidates on the list. As a direct result of this sanction, in 2001, 47.5% of the councillors elected in towns with more than 3,500 inhabitants were women.⁶²

The ability of a woman parliamentarian to mainstream gender or promote gender-friendly legislation is closely tied to her ability to work within the confines of her party. Therefore, it is critical that **parties and their parliamentary groups actively work towards women's empowerment**. In the Spanish Socialist Workers' Party (PSOE), women worked with male colleagues to advocate for affirmative actions, such as candidate quotas or reserved seats. The support of male colleagues was critical in building internal party support for these policies. The PSOE's women's secretariat played an important role in the introduction of a series of incremental internal quotas that would provide the framework for a party culture open to promoting women as leaders, as well as taking on a gender equality platform. Benefitting from the quota, an enhanced presence of women in the party contributed to other strategies, including the strong advocacy for women by Prime Minister Zapatero and the passage of the 2007 law on equality. Zapatero is also broadly recognized as being instrumental in creating Spain's first majority women cabinet in 2008, as well as giving women the numerical edge in the cabinet by creating an Equality Ministry.⁶³

Strengthening the campaigning skills of women candidates and providing women with more educational opportunities are important for increasing women's electoral opportunities. Political parties can and should facilitate the access of women candidates to the campaign machinery, campaign staff, security, venues, and funds, which can greatly enhance their chances of winning. Training may target fundraising, message development, working with the media, building voter contact and outreach programs, writing campaign plans, and designing targeted methods of voter communication. In the UK, the Conservative Party's Women2Win initiative, which includes a website of the same name, was designed to increase the number of Conservative women Parliamentarians, by campaigning for more women to win nominations for winnable and Conservative-held seats. The initiative played an active role in recruiting new women members and providing them with the training, mentoring, and support they needed to succeed within the party. In the 2010 election, the number of women MPs in the Conservative Party group in parliament increased from 17 to 49.⁶⁴



As indicated in the previous section, institutions play a significant role in supporting or hindering women's political empowerment. A **country's constitution** provides its governing framework and can have a profound impact on women's ability to participate in public life. In a society transitioning to democracy, such as Tunisia or in societies in transition, such as Yemen, Egypt or Libya the drafting of a new constitution is an important step in the establishment of a civil and democratic state and

laying the groundwork for an egalitarian society. The post-revolution Tunisian Constitution contains provisions on women's equality, and explicitly commits to eliminate violence against women, to promote women's empowerment, and to work towards parity in all elected bodies within the country.⁶⁵

Text Box - Tunisia

Tunisia's new Constitution has captured international headlines. It is regarded as ground-breaking in its gender-equality provisions, much as with its Personal Status Code, back in 1956, that made Tunisia famous for its stance on women's rights. The Personal Status Code went as far as abolishing forced marriage and introducing a minimum marriage age; it prohibited polygamy and repudiation. These advances were hitherto unseen in the Arab World in the 1950s.

'I participated in the drafting of the Tunisian Constitution, which would not have been put together without participation from the media and civil society. Ennahda party wanted to introduce a clause in the Constitution that said that women were complementary to men. But that is contrary to the UN declaration on the role of women. Article 46 of the Constitution is an achievement, as the Constitution must ensure parity, equality for women'.

Fatima Gharbi Mamoghli, Member of the Arab Parliament, Tunisia

The newly adopted Constitution confirms equality of rights and duties and prohibits gender discrimination (article 21) and guarantees women's representation in all elected bodies (article 34). Rights already acquired by women are guaranteed (article 46), and the state is required to ensure that women and men have access to all levels of responsibility (including to run for President, a first for a Muslim Arab country). Such clear recognition of the importance of equality and of the state's responsibility to enable the realization of equality is rare in constitutions anywhere in the world. This Constitutional victory for women's rights is the result of many months of hard work and sustained advocacy. These advances were not won without a fight.

In 2012, the working group on rights and liberties within the legislative assembly proposed the insertion of an article stating that 'women are complementary to men': "*The state guarantees the protection of women's rights and consolidation of [past] gains based on women being fundamental partners to men in nation-building, with their roles complementing one another within the family*".⁶⁶ The idea that women are complementary to men caused an enormous upheaval among women's rights organizations and supporters of gender equality. Numerous protests were organized throughout August 2012 (when the draft was released) to pressure the NCA to change the article. Exactly fifty six years since the passing of the Personal Status Code and 18 months after the January 14 Revolution, women and men mobilized in the streets of Tunisia to contest the article on gender "complementarity" in the country's draft constitution. The issue stirred such an international debate that it was even brought up in the Human Rights Council of the United Nations. This internal and external pressure made possible the change brought to the now famous article 46.

An explanation for this positive outcome lies in the vigilance of civil society and the robust role it played. Many NGOs, such as the Tunisian General Labour Union (UGTT) and the Tunisian Union for Industry, Commerce, and Handicrafts (UTICA), joined with women activists and with women lawmakers to press for a progressive and representative charter. Through constant demonstrations and protests, they pushed political forces into making concessions.

Gender equality commissions or women

cross-party caucuses can help build a culture of gender equality in political life and strengthen the presence and voice of women in legislative bodies. They have proven to be key mechanisms to monitor political achievements on gender equality. They have an impact not only on public policies that effectively respond to women demands and interests, but they also have an effect on the consolidation and progress of women's political leadership. Many gender caucuses often sponsor programmes, meetings, activities and workshops to help women in parliament become stronger political actors, acquire skills and legislate efficiently, understand and work within internal parliamentary rules, bring about change in male political cultures and practices, and build solidarity

"One of the keys to success in my country was women's cooperation across party lines. It would have not been possible without this cross party cooperation among women".

Heidi Hautala (Finland), Member of the Committee on Development, European Parliament



and gender awareness.

4. Women legislating for gender equality, opportunities and ways forward

Discussion at the international conference *Spring Forward for Women* focused on three key areas that could support women's political empowerment: working with the media to change societies' perception of women parliamentarians, working with civil society organizations to promote gender

equality and women's rights, and collaborating with women parliamentarians to develop networks of support and advocacy to advance gender equality issues at the regional level.

4.1. Changing cultures and attitudes, media and women lawmakers

Attitudes and social norms with regard to women's role in society are rapidly changing. According to a 2014 survey by the Anna Lindh Foundation and Gallup, across Europe and on both shores of the Mediterranean, roughly six in ten interviewees thought that women now play a more important role in their society

“The media discourse is consolidating the traditional role of women. The media should be more even handed vis vis women”.

**Dr Muna Juma Essa Jassim Al Bahar Al Sulaiti;
Member of the Federal, National Council of the
UAE**

than five years before. In particular, in the Southern Mediterranean region 66% believed the role of women in their society would become even more important in the next five years, compared to 56% in Europe.⁶⁷ The time is ripe and long overdue for the media to take an active stance on promoting women's political empowerment and gender equality issues more broadly. **Proactive public outreach campaigns** can counter cultural and societal biases against women, and can highlight the benefits of women's political participation for society as a whole.

By working with the media, women lawmakers can reach out to citizens in an effort to change mind-sets regarding their role within modern societies. Support from male political leaders is a key ingredient in creating a political climate that encourages women's political participation.⁶⁸

Participants at the conferences suggested possible avenues for women lawmakers and the media to better work together in the future; including:

Raise awareness among journalists about the harmful consequences of the way women lawmakers are covered in the media. Training should be provided with regard to gender-sensitive media coverage, in particular during election periods.

Develop joint strategies between women lawmakers at the local and the national level to better engage the media and work towards creating awareness among the population about the role of women politicians as effective decision-makers.

Document good media practices for better coverage of women's roles in the legislative assemblies and within the broader political spectrum and showcase good practices and lessons identified.

4.2. A strong partnership for gender equality; women parliamentarians working with civil society organizations

A strong partnership between women lawmakers and civil society organizations is mutually beneficial and can help advance common causes. Without much institutional support, women in office need the expertise and resources issue-focused groups have available and the public support that membership-based groups can rally. Lawmakers can in this way also access direct information from the ground to which they sometimes do not otherwise have access. In many cases, in particular when seeking to change the constitution or enact legislation to promote women's political empowerment, women parliamentarians have worked closely with civil society organizations to put pressure on governments and build public demand for reform. **In Tunisia** women lawmakers supporting women's empowerment worked hand in hand with civil society organizations to put pressure on the government and amend the Constitutional draft.

Morocco⁶⁹

For many years civil society organizations advocated for increased social and political participation, including in women's sections of political parties. In Morocco, the struggle for women's rights traditionally focused on reforming the code on personal status. Women lawmakers and representatives of civil society organizations worked to raise awareness about the value of women's political participation and provisions for women's equal rights, through public seminars and lectures and training activities. Among the demands were those for the establishment of a women's caucus and a quota system for women to gain access to legislative office. A public discourse began to form around women's exclusion from decision-making, women's right to equal participation, and the potential role of quotas.

However in the run-up to the 2002 legislative elections, some 20 entities (women's organizations, human rights groups, and women's wings of political parties) mobilized themselves and undertook advocacy and consciousness-raising campaigns and lobbied party leaders, cabinet ministries, and the public to raise support for political and legal proposals granting women greater political participation. Representatives from all political parties were brought together by civil society organizations. Throughout their quota campaign, women civic and party leaders leveraged international protocols, such as the Convention on the Elimination of All Forms of Discrimination against Women (CEDAW), and the opportunity to improve Morocco's standing in the international community.

Ahead of the 2002 elections the list-based proportional representation system was introduced and the Chamber of Representatives was to comprise 325 members elected by direct universal suffrage based on list voting of whom 295 members were elected in the districts (set by decree) and 30 members elected nationally. The coordinated advocacy efforts of gender equality activists from inside and outside parliament resulted in an agreement among political parties to set aside 30 seats in the lower house of parliament for women, filled from a national list.

The quota was not formalized into law, and instead existed as an "agreement" among the political parties. Immediate effects led to 35 women being elected to the legislature of which 30 women were elected via the national lists and five women were elected via local lists. This measure led to the mobilization of women on a scale that had not been seen before.

Constitutional reforms in 2011 doubled the number of national seats reserved for women from 30 to 60 out of the 395 seats in parliament (15%). The electoral code was also amended to increase the number of seats and reform the ballot structure. As a result of these changes, and the active role of civil society and women's groups, the proportion of women members of parliament increased from 10 to 17 per cent in the 2011 elections.

Civil society organizations can play a significant role in women's political empowerment by supporting women candidates and those who stand for gender equality, by advocating gender equality legislation and by holding governments and parliamentarians accountable for their campaign promises. **In Jordan**, women's organizations are actively supporting women wishing to run for parliament. Ahead of the elections they organize training sessions, seminars and workshops and try to provide women with the necessary tools to help them be elected into parliament. They contribute financial resources for the campaign, help candidates run their campaigns and provide support with networks of volunteers and administrative staff.⁷⁰

In the framework of the Spring Forward for Women programme, **the UN Women office in Jordan in cooperation with local NGOs**, supported women as candidates and voters for the national and local

elections. They developed national political forums and coalitions supporting women candidates, public awareness campaigns at national and local (governorate) levels to mobilize and educate voters and provided technical support as well as mentoring local municipal councils' female members. In addition, National Observatory Teams were established to monitor the election-day process, and a Technical Facility was created, within the JNCW Advocacy unit to support female MPs and local councils' female members with expertise.

Libya

In Libya, women's rights organizations have played a critical role in the adoption of the quota provision and the zipped electoral system for the 2012 elections. In January 2012, the National Transitional Council's Election Committee released a draft Electoral Law for public comment that foresaw the establishment of a majoritarian system in which individuals would compete for election to the General National Council. A *"ten per cent quota of the total number of members of Congress is reserved for women, unless the number of women candidates does not reach the ten per cent quota"*.⁷¹

Civil society organizations raised serious concerns regarding the wording of the quota provision and called for an increase of the number of seats allocated for women as well as for redrafting of the wording to ensure clarity of purpose and implementation. They organized numerous advocacy events, including lectures and media shows, street protests and open letters for the attention of the NTC Election Committee, and held a national "Day of Anger".

In February 2012 the NTC Election Committee released a revised version of the election law that introduced new special measures for women's participation. A closed-list zipper system was adopted which required political parties to alternate men and women on their candidate lists and to place a woman candidate at the top of half of their lists. These new measures put women in an unprecedented position of being sought out by the political parties that had previously relegated them to the sidelines. This system was inspired by the Tunisian experience, where the Electoral Law also contained a zipper-system. The Libyan Committee did take into account the lessons learned from the Tunisian experience and also requested women be at the heads of lists. The zipper system is widely considered to be among the most advantageous special measures available to ensure that women are elected.

A total of 647 women registered as candidates. 559 women stood as candidates on political party lists (running for a total of 80 seats allocated to political parties), compared to 711 men. Of the 2,501 candidates who contested the 120 individual seats, only 88 were women. 33 women were elected to the GNC and it is clear that the horizontal and vertical zipper system played a decisive role. Only one of the 88 women competing for the 120 individual seats won.⁷²

By helping build networks of women, developing relationships and sustaining communication between citizens and government officials at the grassroots level, a cycle can be created that both empowers citizens and makes democracy deliver for all. Civil society organizations, by working with women lawmakers, are able to raise the profile of certain issues that might not otherwise make it on to the political agenda.⁷³

4.3. Women parliamentarians building national, regional and international networks



“What we need is empowered women’s networks, and this is why we came together here today at this conference”

***Vice-President of the
European Parliament, Ulrike
Lunacek***

Although women remain significantly underrepresented in today’s parliaments, it is important to look beyond the numbers and to focus on what women legislators present in national assemblies can accomplish and how they can support the advancement of women’s rights and women’s participation in public life. Regional and international networks are important tools for strengthening women’s political participation. Within such a framework, women lawmakers can share experience and knowledge from successful or less successful gender equality work in their respective parliaments, good practices and lessons identified, the challenges they faced and be inspired by fellow parliamentarians from the region. Mentoring and networking with other women lawmakers is important as well. These connections provide quick access to the informal rules and procedures that enable effective legislating and invaluable support to new MPs entering the institution.⁷⁴

The Arab States participants decided to form a women’s regional network specifically dedicated to gender equality issues.

Conclusions

This report gives a brief overview of the challenges faced by women lawmakers in both the European Union and the Arab World and existing opportunities to advance women’s political empowerment based on experiences from both regions. The report, as has been the conference itself, is a testimony to the commonality of challenges women parliamentarians from both these regions face, in spite of any cultural or socio-economic differences they might have. While it is acknowledged from the outset that each of the factors that influences women’s access to political office – electoral systems, party politics and internal organization, cultural traditions, socio-economic conditions, institutional and legal frameworks – has a different impact in each country, it is clear from the contributions made to the conference that the solutions to women’s political empowerment are frequently the same in both regions.

‘I thought that the issue of gender equality was an Arab one, but I found that was an international issue’.

***Participant from the Arab world
during the discussions in the focus
group***

Participants shared numerous encouraging success stories on the advancement of gender equality issues from their respective countries and assemblies, some of which are presented in the pages above. To continue this exchange and build towards the development of a regional network of women parliamentarians, the participants agreed to meet again in the coming months, under the auspices of the Spring Forward for Women programme.

The key takeaways which emerged during the discussions at the conference are:

The international community, should:

- **Actively support, in close cooperation with women lawmakers, the development of women's rights bodies, gender equality commissions or cross-party caucuses** in countries that do not yet have such bodies. These have proven to be successful in monitoring legislation and advocating for gender equality issues.
- **Continue to provide technical expertise to countries that are currently redrafting their institutional frameworks, such as the constitution or electoral law.** This support, such as that provided by the United Nations for the redrafting of a new Tunisian Constitution has been welcomed and appreciated.
- **Continue to provide training to and support journalists** in the development of a gender-sensitive approach in their coverage of national legislatures and in particular of women parliamentarians.
- **Commission research** to showcase successful media initiatives that were undertaken and helped change societal perceptions of women lawmakers.
- **Continue to provide training to** women lawmakers at the national and local level on strategies to engage with the media.
- **Commission in-depth case studies to identify good practices** with regard to women's political empowerment and gender equality in the Arab World, in particular since the 2011 revolutions. Moreover there is a dire need of research on women in the parliaments of the Gulf Cooperation Council countries, where women entered politics in the last decade and are making strides within their legislative assemblies.

National governments and political parties could:

- **Consider the adoption of proportional electoral systems when electoral Laws or constitutions are being revisited.** Proportional electoral systems have proven to be more favourable for women's political participation and the recent elections in Tunisia and Libya are a case in point.
- **Strictly regulate campaign financing and provide, if possible, financial incentives for parties that include women in their electoral lists, in winnable positions.**
- **Revise, where necessary, the internal rules and regulations of parliamentary assemblies** to accommodate the needs of women parliamentarians as fully as they do those of men. This bias must be acknowledged and addressed so as all members of the legislative assemblies can participate fully.



Annex 1. List of Participants

Aimée Pouezat, Office Manager, Women in Parliaments Global Forum (WIP)

Alena Kern, Partnership Analyst, UN Women Brussels Office,

Alexandra Rosen, Senior Director, Women in Parliaments Global Forum (WIP)

Alynn Cappon, Database Manager & Regional Manager Latin America, Women in Parliaments Global Forum (WIP)

Amal Mohamed Abdel Salam Baeiou, Member of Parliament, Libya

Dr Amat-alrazk Ali Humad, Minister of Social Affairs and Labour, Yemen

Ana Gomes, Member, Subcommittee on Security and Defence, European Parliament

Ana Daniela Sanda, Parliament Officer, EU-Logos Athena

Anna Hedh, Member, Committee on Women's Rights and Gender Equality, European Parliament

Anna Frederike Mitri, Program Coordinator, Parliamentarians Network for Conflict Prevention, Regional Security Program, EastWest Institute

Anna Maria Corazza Bildt, Member, Committee on Women's Rights and Gender Equality, European Parliament

Aretha Francis, Communications & Social Media Manager, Women in Parliaments Global Forum (WIP), The Spirit of Women in Parliaments: Advancing Society,

Bahia El Hariri, Member of Parliament, Lebanon

Barbara Lochbihler, Vice-chair, Subcommittee on Human Rights, European Parliament

Barbara Matera, Vice-chair, Committee on Women's Rights and Gender Equality, European Parliament

Caroline Henrion, Policy Manager, EUROMIL aisbl, (European Organisation of Military Associations)

Caroline Petit, Deputy Director, United Nations Regional Information Centre

Caroline Barbara Mangold, United Nations Human Settlements Programme (UN-

HABITAT), Office for Liaison with European Institutions

Caroline VRANCKEN Vrancken, Manager/Burson Marsteller

Catherine Bearder, Member, Committee on Women's Rights and Gender Equality, European Parliament

Ceciel Shiraz Raj, Journalist

Chiara Giordano, Advocacy Officer, Aidos, Italian Association for Women in Development,

Chiara Bellani, Brussels Desk, LUISS University

Christine Medycky, Journalist, UNHCR

Christophe Ingels, Directorate-General for Development Cooperation, European Commission

Claudine Hitimana, Project Manager, Women in Parliaments Global Forum (WIP)

Constance Le Grip, Substitute member, Committee on Women's Rights and Gender Equality, European Parliament

Dagmar Schumacher, Director, UN Women Brussels Office

Daniela Aiuto, Member, Committee on Women's Rights and Gender Equality, European Parliament

David Campbell Bannerman, Chair, Iraq Delegation, European Parliament

Amb. Delphine Borione, Deputy Secretary General for Social and Civil Affairs in the Union for the Mediterranean

Dieverda Maria Terlien, Interim co-ordinator, European Network of Migrant Women,

Elena Valenciano Martínez-Orozco, Chair, Subcommittee on Human Rights, European Parliament

Emad Karim, UN Women Regional Office for the Arab States, UN Women

Emmanuel Baron, Chargé de Projets de Coopération, Direction de la dignité humaine et de l'égalité, DG II – Démocratie, Conseil de l'Europe

Faddeya Salem, Former Member of Parliament, Egypt

Fatima Al Gharbi Mamoghli (Tunisia), League of Arab States, Member of Parliament,

Fatima Abu Baker Omer, Member of Parliament, Morocco

Fatima Mazzi Gouaima, Member of Parliament, Morocco

Francisca Yogo, Business Lawyer, President of Jaada Network asbl

Frederik Bordon, Assistant to the Director, United Nations Regional Information Centre (UNRIC), Informing and Engaging Europeans,

Gudrun Held, Head of DFS Office Brussels/DFS Deutsche Flugsicherung GmbH

Hafida Benchehida, Member of Parliament, Algeria

Heidi Hautala, Member, Committee on Development, European Parliament

Henrik Westman, European Parliament, DG External Policies – Policy Department,

Hesham Farrag, UN Women Regional Office for the Arab States, UN Women

Huda Shushad Al Mahmoud, Member of Parliament, Iraq

Ibtassim Saed, Member of Parliament, Egypt

Ibtisam Abdul Rahman Hijris, Member of Parliament, Bahrain

Inês Cristina Zuber, Vice-chair, Committee on Women's Rights and Gender Equality, European Parliament

Iratxe García Pérez, Chair, Committee on Women's Rights and Gender Equality, European Parliament

Irene Carpini, UNRWA, Representative office to the European Union

Irène Mingasson, Head of Unit, Regional Programmes Neighbourhood South, Directorate General for Development and Cooperation European Commission

Irina Bratosin D'Almeida, Consultant, UN Women

Isabelle Van de Gejuchte, Senior Manager External Relations and European Affairs, British Council Brussels

Ismahane Benguesmia, Member of Parliament, Algeria

Jana Žitňanská, Vice-chair, Committee on Women's Rights and Gender Equality, European Parliament

Dr. Jessica Wright, Johanniter International Enterprises of the Orders of St John, Brussels,

,

Jessica Pressler, GIZ Representation Brussels,

,

Johanna-Pamela Rodriguez-Guerra, Executive Assistant, Women in Parliaments Global Forum (WIP)

Jouhara Hamoud Thabet, Minister of State for Cabinet Affairs, Yemen

Julie Levy Abegnoli, Journalist, Editorial Assistant, The Parliament Magazine

Juncal Diez Garcia, Oficina del Gobierno de Cantabria en Bruselas

Karen Davies, Communications Officer for the UK and Ireland, United Nations Regional Information Centre (UNRIC), “Informing and Engaging Europeans”

Karima Zahi, Director, Pro Firmus

Khadija Ezzoumi, Parlement Morocco

Laurence Gillois, Programme and Resource Mobilization Specialist, UN Women Brussels Office,

Linda McAvan, Chair, Committee on Development, European Parliament

Luca Friedrich, Maison Européenne de la Protection Sociale

Madi Sharma, EESC, President of section on EIDHR

Magda Nuwaishy, Former Member of Parliament, Egypt

Malin Björk, Member, Committee on Women's Rights and Gender Equality, European Parliament

Maria Arena, Member, Committee on Women's Rights and Gender Equality, European Parliament

Marisa Matias, Chair, Delegation for relations with the Mashreq countries, European Parliament

Martin Schulz, President, European Parliament,

Mary Honeyball, Member, Committee on Women's Rights and Gender Equality, European Parliament

Maryse Guimond, Programme Manager, UN Women Regional Office for the Arab States, UN Women

Dr Michael A. Köhler, Director for EU-Neighbourhood Policy, Directorate-General for Development Cooperation, European Commission

Michela Mizzi, Desk Office for Italy, the Holy See, Malta and San Marino, UNRIC - United Nations Regional Information Centre for Western Europe,

Michèle Alliot-Marie, Chair, Arab Peninsula Delegation, European Parliament

Miryam Ibanez Mendizabal, Directorate-General for Development Cooperation, European Commission

Mona Selim, UN Women Regional Office for the Arab States, UN Women

Dr. Muna Juma Essa Jassim AlBahar, Member of Parliament, UAE

Myassar Al-Sardeyah, Member of Parliament, Jordan

Nadia Ihdadene, Member of Parliament, Algeria

Dr. Najat Astal, Member of Parliament, Palestine

Dr. Nawal Al Faouri (Jordan), League of Arab States, Member of Parliament

Nina Lange, Policy Officer – National expert in Professional Training (NEPT), European Commission, DG Justice, Unit D2 – Gender Equality

Orsolya Dèzsàn, File Manager, Budgetary Policies Unit, Members' Research Service, EPRS | European Parliamentary Research Service

Dr. Phumzile Mlambo-Ngcuka, Executive Director, UN Women

Pier Antonio Panzeri, Chair, Delegation for relations with the Maghreb countries, European Parliament

Pierre Golbach, Cabinet of the President of the European Parliament

Rabeeha Diab Hamdan, Member of Parliament, Palestine

Rachida Tahri, Member of Parliament, Morocco

Raheela Bint Amer Al Riyamia (Oman),

League of Arab States, Member of Parliament

Rajaa Abdulla Ahmed Al Masabi, Chairperson for the Arab Corporation for Human Rights, Ministry of Social Affairs and Labour, Yemen

Rima Tarabay, Lebanon Association for Women NGO, Official representative, French & European Parliament

Rosanna Lewis, Funding and Advocacy, British Council Brussels

Dr. Rula Al-Huroub, Member of Parliament, Jordan

Dr. Sahar Al Qawasme, Member of Parliament, State of Palestine

Dr. Sameera Altuwaijri, Regional Director, UN Women Regional Office for the Arab States, UN Women

Sara Borracino, Libero

Shirin Hermanns, Researcher, Strategis Communications

Sophie Dehareng, Administration & Policy Assistant, European women's lobby

Stefano Valentino, Director, FreeReporter

Teresa Jimenez-Becerril Barrio, Member, Committee on Women's Rights and Gender Equality, European Parliament

Terry Reintke, Member, Committee on Women's Rights and Gender Equality, European Parliament

Thomas Fillis, Regional Manager Europe, Asia and North America, Women in Parliaments Global Forum (WIP)

Ulrike Lunacek, Vice-President, European Parliament, European Parliament

Victoria Hansen, Pour la solidarité European Think & do tank, Brussels

Vien Nguyen, Policy Officer in Gender and Development, CNCD

Vilija Blinkėvičiūtė, Vice-chair, Committee on Women's Rights and Gender Equality, European Parliament

Violeta Berisha, Team of Kosovo activists on humanist gender matter

Viviane Teitelbaum, President, European Women's Lobby / Lobby européen des femmes,

Wael Abdul Shafi, Program Assistant –
Regional Security Program, EastWest Institute
– Brussels Center

Xénia Malà, Employment and Social Policy
Attaché, Permanent Representation of the
Slovak Republic to the EU

Yara Sharif, UN Women Regional Office for
the Arab States, UN Women

Zita Gurmai, President, Party of European
Socialists Women

Zoubida Bouyad, Member of Parliament,
Morocco

Annex 2. Agenda

“Spring Forward for Women” Conference European Parliament, Brussels 5 - 6 November 2014

Agenda

This high-level conference is part of the EU – UN Women joint regional programme for the Southern Mediterranean region, “Spring Forward for Women”, implemented with funding from the European Commission.

Wednesday, 5 November 2014

Hosted by the Committee on Women's Rights and Gender Equality, European Parliament

09:00 – 09:30	Registration at the European Parliament Main entrance Altiero Spinelli building, Place du Luxembourg
09:30 – 10:30	Official opening Room: Altiero Spinelli A3E-2 Speakers: Mr Martin Schulz, President of the European Parliament Ms Phumzile Mlambo-Ngcuka, Executive Director, UN Women Dr Michael A. Köhler, Director for Neighbourhood, European Commission Chair: Ms Iratxe García Pérez, Chair of the Committee on Women's Rights and Gender Equality, European Parliament
10:30 – 11:00	Coffee Break
11:00 – 12:30	Session I: Challenges and opportunities to women’s political participation Room: Altiero Spinelli A3E-2 Speakers: Ms Linda McAvan, Chair of the Committee on Development, European Parliament

	<p>Ms Sanaa Gamaleldin, Former Member of Parliament, Egypt</p> <p>Ms Heidi Hautala, Committee on Development, European Parliament</p> <p>Ms Rachida Tahri, Member of Parliament, Morocco</p> <p>Co-Chairs</p> <p>Ms Iratxe García Pérez, Chair of the Committee on Women's Rights and Gender Equality, European Parliament</p> <p>Dr Sameera Altuwaijri, Regional Director, UN Women Regional Office for Arab States</p>
12:30 – 15:00	<p>Lunch with members of the European Parliament, hosted by Ms. Iratxe García Pérez, Chair of the Committee on Women's Rights and Gender Equality, European Parliament <i>(by invitation only)</i></p> <p>Venue: European Parliament Members' Restaurant (ASP zone G level 0)</p>
15:00 – 16:30	<p>Session II: Mainstreaming gender in legislation</p> <p>Room: Altiero Spinelli A3E-2</p> <p>Speakers:</p> <p>Ms Vilija Blinkevičiūtė, Vice-Chair of the Committee on Women's Rights and Gender Equality</p> <p>Ms Amatalrazzak Al-Hawri, Minister of Social Affairs and Labour, Yemen</p> <p>Ms Malin Björk, Committee on Women's Rights and Gender Equality, European Parliament</p> <p>Ms Rabeeha Hamdan, Member of Parliament, Former Minister of Women's Affairs, Palestine</p> <p>Co-Chairs</p> <p>Ms Iratxe García Pérez, Chair of the Committee on Women's Rights and Gender Equality, European Parliament</p> <p>Ms Hafida Benchehida, Member of Parliament, Algeria</p> <p>Coffee Break</p> <p>Celebration of the 30th anniversary of the Committee on Women's Rights and Gender Equality of the European Parliament</p>

16:30 – 17:00	Session III: Networks and networking: Fostering alliances with women lawmakers, with the media and with civil society organizations
17:00 – 18:30	<p>Room: Altiero Spinelli A3E-2</p> <p>Speakers:</p> <p>Ms Ulrike Lunacek, Vice-President of the European Parliament</p> <p>Dr Rula Al-Farra, Member of Parliament, Jordan</p> <p>Ms Ana Gomes, Subcommittee on Security and Defence, European Parliament</p> <p>Ms Fatima Gharbi Mamoghli, Member of the Arab Parliament, Tunisia</p> <p>Co-Chairs</p> <p>Ms Iratxe García Pérez, Chair of the Committee on Women's Rights and Gender Equality, European Parliament</p> <p>Ms Ebtisam Hejris, Member of Parliament, Bahrain</p> <p>Cocktail reception, offered by Ms Ulrike Lunacek, Vice-President of the European Parliament on behalf of Mr Martin Schulz, President of the European Parliament (<i>by invitation only</i>)</p> <p>Venue: Presidential dining room, 12th floor Paul-Henri Spaak building</p>
19:00 – 20:00	

Thursday, 6 November 2014

	Registration at the European Parliament
08:30 – 09:00	Main entrance Altiero Spinelli building, Place du Luxembourg
09:00 – 13:00	Participation in Delegation/Committee work, European Parliament
13:00 – 14:30	<p>Lunch with members of the European Parliament, hosted by the European Commission and UN Women (<i>by invitation only</i>)</p> <p>Venue: European Parliament Members' Restaurant (ASP zone G level 0)</p>
14:30 – 16:00	Moving forward on priority issues (internal meeting)
16:00 – 17:30	Visit of the European Parliament

Annex 3. CEDAW Convention Reservations

Countries	Article 2 ⁷⁵	Article 9 ⁷⁶	Article 15 ⁷⁷	Article 16 ⁷⁸	Article 29 ⁷⁹
Algeria	The provisions of this article will be applied as long as they do not conflict with the provisions of the Algerian Family Code.	para 2	para 4	The provisions of this article will be applied as long as they do not conflict with the provisions of the Algerian Family Code.	para 1
Bahrain	The provisions of this article will be applied within the bounds of the provisions of the Islamic Shariah	para 2	para 4	The provisions of this article will be applied as long as they are not incompatible with the provisions of the Islamic Shariah;	para 1
Egypt	The Arab Republic of Egypt is willing to comply with the content of this article, provided that such compliance does not run counter to the Islamic Sharia.	para 2		The provisions of this article will be applied as long as they are not incompatible with the provisions of the Islamic Shariah;	para 1 and 2
Iraq	para. f and g	para 1 and 2		The reservation to this article shall be without prejudice to the provisions of the Islamic Shariah	para 1
Jordan		para 2	para 4	Para 1 c, d and g	
Kuwait		para 2		16 (f)	para 1
Qatar	para a	para 2	para 4	para 1 a, c and f	para 1
Lebanon		para 2		16 (1) (c) (d) (f) and (g)	para 1 and 2

Countries	Article 2 ⁷⁵	Article 9 ⁷⁶	Article 15 ⁷⁷	Article 16 ⁷⁸	Article 29 ⁷⁹
Libya	General reservation so as to upheld Shariah law			16 (c) and (d)	
Morocco	General reservation so as to upheld Shariah law	para 2	para 4	General reservation so as to upheld Shariah law	para 1
Oman ⁸⁰		para 2	para 4	para a, c and f	para 1
Tunisia ⁸¹					
Saudi Arabia ⁸²		para 2			para 1
UAE	para f	✓	para 2	✓	para 1
Yemen					para 1

Annex 4: Media Coverage of “Spring Forward for Women” Conference

1. ONLINE ARTICLES, BLOG POSTS AND SPEECHES

04/11/2014: PRESS RELEASE by the European Parliament:

[Conference: Empowering women on both sides of the Mediterranean](#)

(<http://www.europarl.europa.eu/news/en/news-room/content/20141103STO77102/html/Conference-empowering-women-on-both-sides-of-the-Mediterranean>)

5/11/2014: ARTICLE by UN Women

[Arab and European parliamentarians to meet at ‘Spring Forward for Women’ Conference](#)

(<http://www.unwomen.org/en/news/stories/2014/11/spring-forward-for-women-conference#sthash.6VECJUNu.dpuf>)

5/11/2014: VIDEO of Opening Speech by Martin Schulz, President of the European Parliament

[Opening Speech by Martin Schulz at "Spring forward for women" Conference in the FEMM Committee](#)

(<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=vGGtUYyBmj0>)

5/11/2014: TEXT of Opening Speech by Martin Schulz, President of the European Parliament

[Opening Speech by Martin Schulz at "Spring forward for women" Conference in the FEMM Committee](#)

(http://www.europarl.europa.eu/the-president/en/press/press_release_speeches/speeches/speeches-2014/speeches-2014-november/html/opening-speech-at-the--spring-forward-for-women--conference-by-martin-schulz--president-of-the-european-parliament;jsessionid=202F9C7992999E1D88692C2A4CBB4D01)

5/11/2014: VIDEO of Speech by Linda McAvan, Chair of the European Parliaments FEMM Committee

[Spring Forward for Women: Linda McAvan's testimony in the EP Committee on Women's Rights](#)

(<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=7F5Sqt85DQ4>)

5/11/2014: BLOG POST by Johannes Hahn, EU Commissioner for European Neighbourhood Policy & Enlargement Negotiations

[Arab and European parliamentarians to meet at ‘Spring Forward for Women’ Conference](#)

(http://ec.europa.eu/commission/2014-2019/hahn/blog/arab-and-european-parliamentarians-meet-spring-forward-women-conference_en)

5/11/2014: BLOG POST by Madi Shamra, Member of the European Economic & Social Committee

[Spring Forward for Women FEMM European Parliament](http://madisharma.org/eesc/spring-forward-for-women-femm-european-parliament/)

(<http://madisharma.org/eesc/spring-forward-for-women-femm-european-parliament/>)

5/11/2014: ARTICLE on enpi-info.eu by the EU Neighbourhood Information Center

[Empowering women on both sides of the Mediterranean: conference brings together Arab and European parliamentarians](http://www.enpi-info.eu/mainmed.php?id_type=1&id=39020&lang_id=450)

(http://www.enpi-info.eu/mainmed.php?id_type=1&id=39020&lang_id=450)

5/11/2014: BLOG POST by Michaela Sojdrova, Member of the European Parliament

[Konference Spring Forward for Women přinesla svěží pohled na ženy v politice](http://www.sojdrova.cz/evropsky-parlament/femm/2014/11/konference-spring-forward-for-women-prinesla-svezi-pohled-na-zeny)

(<http://www.sojdrova.cz/evropsky-parlament/femm/2014/11/konference-spring-forward-for-women-prinesla-svezi-pohled-na-zeny>)

6/11/2014: ARTICLE in The Parliament Magazine by Julie Levy-Abegnoli

['Long way to go' on achieving gender equality](https://www.theparliamentmagazine.eu/articles/news/long-way-go-achieving-gender-equality)

(<https://www.theparliamentmagazine.eu/articles/news/long-way-go-achieving-gender-equality>)

6/11/2014: ARTICLE on agora-parl.org, Portal for Parliamentary Developments (Repetition of Article on enpi-info.eu)

[Empowering women on both sides of the Mediterranean: conference brings together Arab and European parliamentarians](http://www.agora-parl.org/news/empowering-women-both-sides-mediterranean-conference-brings-together-arab-and-european)

(<http://www.agora-parl.org/news/empowering-women-both-sides-mediterranean-conference-brings-together-arab-and-european>)

19/11/2014: ARTICLE by Hariri Foundation for Sustainable Human Development

[Spring Forward for Women](http://www.hariri-foundation.org/news.php?nid=286)

(<http://www.hariri-foundation.org/news.php?nid=286>)

2. TWEETS (others than mentioned in the TweetReach Report)



Phumzile Mlambo @phumzileunwomen · Nov 5

#emma watson President of EU parliament quotes Emma Watson 'no country has reached gender equality'



FEMM Committee Press @EP_GenderEqual · Nov 5

.@MartinSchulz opening 'spring forward for women' @EP_GenderEqual and UN_Women conference



European Parliament @Europarl_EN · Nov 5

Join @EP_GenderEqual & @UN_Women conference on women participation in politics and law-making. Live now <http://www.europarl.europa.eu/ep-live/en/committees/video?event=20141105-0900-COMMITTEE-FEMM> ...



Heidi Hautala @HeidiHautala · Nov 5

I had the honour to meet Ms. Phumzile Mlambo-Ngcuka, head of UN Women today in a conference with Arabic women.



Laura Ballarin @lauballarin · Nov 5

@IratxeGarper preside en @Europarl_ES la inauguración con @MartinSchulz de jornada "Spring Forward for Women" #Gender



Ulrike Lunacek @UlrikeLunacek · Nov 5

Today at the "Spring forward for Women" conference: we need empowered women networks and 1/2 /HG



Ulrike Lunacek @UlrikeLunacek · Nov 5

2/2 economic independence for women! Women must be able to combine family wishes with professional life /HG



Malin Björk @MalinBjork EU · Nov 5

Deltar i UN Women möte i EP om kvinnors rättigheter i 'Arab countries' - jubel över att SV erkänt Palestina!





Mariya Gabriel @GabrielMariya · Nov 6

Il n'y a pas de #démocratie sans #paix, #sécurité, #étatdedroit, #égalité hommes-femmes
#Libye Délégation #Maghreb



Mariya Gabriel @GabrielMariya · Nov 6

Délégation #Maghreb, transitions démocratiques: il faut aussi des #femmes têtes de liste
sur les listes électorales



Frederick M @FrederickMEAGSR · Nov 6

#Album "Spring #forward for #Women & 30th anniversary of the #FEMM Committee
@EP_GenderEqual"



3. ARTICLES IN ARAB MEDIA

2/11/2014: In the parliamentary conference in Brussels: MP Hejres chairs sessions "Spring Forward for Women"

[النائبة هجرس تترأس جلسة في مؤتمر برلماني في بروكسل "قفزة للأمام للنساء"](http://www.bna.bh/portal/news/639497)

(www.bna.bh/portal/news/639497)

4/11/2014: Algerian parliamentarians tomorrow participate in a conference of women parliamentarians in Brussels

[البرلمان الجزائري يشارك غدا في مؤتمر للنساء البرلمانيات ببروكسل](http://onaeg.com/?p=2007764)

(<http://onaeg.com/?p=2007764>)

5/11/2014: «Federal National» participates in the European Conference

"الوطني الاتحادي" يشارك في مؤتمر أوروبي

(<http://www.albayan.ae/across-the-uae/news-and-reports/2014-11-05-1.2237133>)

5/11/2014: FNC participate in an international conference in Brussels

المجلس الوطني الاتحادي يشارك في مؤتمر دولي ببروكسل

(<http://www.alittihad.ae/details.php?id=97806y=2014>)

6/11/2014: Arab and European women parliamentarians meet in "Spring Forward for Women" Conference

البرلمانيات العرب والأوروبيات يلتقون في مؤتمر "قفزة للأمام للنساء"

(http://www.gomhuriaonline.com/main.asp?v_article_id=203169)

6/11/2014: Attorney Amal M. A. Bayou involved an international conference on women in Brussels

النائب د.آمال بعيو تشارك في مؤتمر دولي حول المرأة في بروكسل

(<https://www.facebook.com/hor.libyaa/posts/1488195708128878>)

8/11/2014: Bahrain choose a member of the founding of the Euro-Arab Parliamentary Network

اختيار البحرين عضواً لتأسيس الشبكة البرلمانية العربية الأوروبية

(<http://www.alwatannews.net/PrintedNewsViewer.aspx?ID=EcwzGUGLjSqBXWY0Dd833338spA933339933339>)

9/11/2014: Alnuichi participates in the conference «Women Spring forward» Brussels

النويشي تشارك في مؤتمر قفزة للأمام للنساء في بروكسل

(<http://www.vetogate.com/1318449>)

10/11/2014: A member of the National Council engaged in a "leap forward for women" conference in Brussels

عضوة في المجلس الوطني تشارك في مؤتمر "قفزة للأمام" في بروكسل...

(<http://www.gccpw.net/ar/Pages/default.aspx>)

11/2014: People's National Assembly in Brussels participate in high-level conference of women parliamentarians

المجلس الشعبي الوطني يشارك في مؤتمر رفيع المستوى للنساء البرلمانيات

(<http://www.aps.dz/ar/breves-algerie/>) رفيع المؤتمر في بروكسل يشارك الوطني الشعبي المجلس (5765-البرلمانيات للنساء المستوى)

9/11/2014: Alnuichi speaks in the EU for Egyptian women and their role in the revolution

النويشي في الاتحاد الأوروبي تتحدث عن المرأة المصرية ودورها في الثورة

(<http://www.ismailiaonline.com/pages.php?option=browse&id=238603>)

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- 1 Celis, K. (2008). Studying Women's Substantive Representation in Legislatures: When Representative Acts, Contexts and Women's Interests Become Important. *Representation*, 44(2), 111–123.
- 2 Phillips, A. (1995), *The politics of presence*, Oxford, Clarendon Press.
- 3 Celis, K. (2009). Substantive Representation of Women (and Improving it): What it is and should be about? *Comparative European Politics*, 7(1), 95–113.
- 4 Markham S. (2013). Women as Agents of Change: Having Voice in Society and Influencing Policy. *Women's Voice, Agency and Participation*, Research Series 2013, No. 5.
- 5 This report only refers to the Arab States that are represented in the women's parliamentary delegation to travel to Brussels for the 'Spring Forward for Women' Conference. The states include: Algeria, Bahrain, Egypt, Iraq, Jordan, Libya, Morocco, Palestine, United Arab Emirates and Yemen.
- 6 <http://www.hrw.org/news/2014/04/30/tunisia-landmark-action-women-s-rights>.
- 7 Security Council resolutions 1820 (2008), 1888 (2009), 1889 (2009), 1960 (2010), 2106 (2013), 2122 (2013).
- 8 <http://www.unwomen.org/en/what-we-do/leadership-and-political-participation/global-norms-and-standards>.
- 9 <http://www.unwomen.org/en/what-we-do/leadership-and-political-participation/global-norms-and-standards>.
- 10 <http://www.europarl.europa.eu/elections2014-results/en/gender-balance.html>
- 11 Freedman, J. (2002). Women in the European Parliament. *Parliamentary Affairs*, 55(1), 179-188.
- 12 This denomination refers to the Arab States region according to the IPU regional database for women in parliaments: <http://www.ipu.org/wmn-e/world.htm>
- The UN Women Regional Office for Arab States covers 17 of the 22 members of the League of Arab States.
- 13 <http://www.ipu.org/wmn-e/arc/world010914.htm>.
- 14 Algeria's Parliament is bicameral. The Council of the Nation has 144 members out of which 10 are women. The members are partly indirectly elected (96) and partly appointed (48).
- 15 International Institute for Democracy and Electoral Assistance (2014), *Countries and Territories: Summary profiles of 85 countries and territories with detailed description of types of legislated quotas used and related sanctions*; available at: http://www.idea.int/publications/atlas-of-electoral-gender-quotas/upload/Atlas-on-Electoral-Gender-Quotas_7.pdf and: http://www.ipu.org/parline-e/reports/2003_E.htm
- 16 <http://carnegieendowment.org/2008/08/20/women-s-political-status-in-gcc-states/f9ny> ; <http://www.electionguide.org/elections/id/2483/> and http://www.ipu.org/parline-e/reports/2372_A.htm
- 17 In the 2012 elections only eight women were elected to the New Egyptian parliament. The Supreme Council of the Military Forces appointed 10 extra members, among which 2 were women, bringing the total number of women to 10.
- 18 Numbers are according to the information available, as of November 2014, on: <http://www.quotaproject.org/uid/countryview.cfm?CountryCode=EG>
- 19 Information retrieved November 2014 at: http://www.ipu.org/parline-e/reports/2163_E.htm
- 20 In Kuwait members of Cabinet are entitled to sit ex-officio in the National Assembly. Two women were directly elected in the July 2013 elections. The 16-member Cabinet comprises two women. As Cabinet members (including one MP) sit in parliament ex officio, there are four women out of 65 members. No women were elected in the by-elections held on 26 June 2014. The National Assembly thus comprised only one woman (Cabinet member) out of 65 members. For more information please refer to http://www.ipu.org/parline-e/reports/2185_A.htm.
- 21 At the time of writing this report, the National Legislative Council is based in Tobruk. The Libyan Supreme Court declared on 6 November the parliamentary elections held during the summer illegitimate. The military powers in Tripoli reinstated the General National Council. The House of Representatives and the government of Abdullah al-Thinni are the only internationally recognized Libyan institutions to date.
- 22 International Institute for Democracy and Electoral Assistance (2014), *Countries and Territories: Summary profiles of 85 countries and territories with detailed description of types of legislated quotas used and related sanctions*; available at: http://www.idea.int/publications/atlas-of-electoral-gender-quotas/upload/Atlas-on-Electoral-Gender-Quotas_7.pdf
- 23 http://www.ipu.org/parline-e/reports/2185_A.htm
- 24 http://www.ipu.org/parline-e/reports/2221_E.htm
- 25 Members of the State Council are appointed by the Sultan and the members of the Consultative Council are elected. More information at http://www.ipu.org/parline-e/reports/2378_E.htm. Information also available at: <http://carnegieendowment.org/2008/08/20/women-s-political-status-in-gcc-states/f9ny>

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- ²⁶ http://www.ipu.org/pdf/publications/wmnmap14_en.pdf and http://www.idea.int/gender/quotas_special_areas.cfm?country=183
- ²⁷ <http://dohanews.co/new-emir-appoints-female-cabinet-member-in-qatar/>
- ²⁸ The King's decree also included granting women the right to vote and run in municipal elections in 2015. For more information visit: <http://www.ipu.org/pdf/publications/WIP2013-e.pdf>.
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⁷⁵ Article 2 refers to the elimination of all forms of discrimination against women, to the inclusion of equality between men and women in national constitutions or other appropriate legislation; to the adoption of necessary measures, including sanctions, for the prohibition of all discrimination; and to the establishment of legal protection measures to uphold women's rights;

⁷⁶ Article 9 refers to (para 1) the equal right of women to acquire, change or retain their nationality and (para 2) equal rights between men and women with respect to the nationality of their children.

⁷⁷ Article 15 makes reference to the right of women to equality with men in all civil matters, to the interdiction to restrict the legal capacity of women and (para 4) their right to move freely and to choose their residence and domicile.

⁷⁸ Article 16 refers to women's right to freely decide in all matters relating to marriage and family relations, including their right to choose their spouse, to enter and dissolve marriage, the same rights as men with regards to children and guardianship, and equal rights in respect of the ownership, acquisition, management, administration. It also forbids child marriage.

⁷⁹ Article 29 refers dispute resolution between states concerning the interpretation of the convention. All disputes should be referred, if not solved through arbitration, to the International Court of Justice.

⁸⁰ General reservation with regards to all provisions of the Convention not in accordance with the provisions of the Islamic sharia and legislation in force in the Sultanate of Oman;

⁸¹ Tunisia lifted all its reservations in May 2014.

⁸² Saudi Arabia upheld a general reservation *In case of contradiction between any term of the Convention and the norms of Islamic law, the Kingdom is not under obligation to observe the contradictory terms of the Convention.*



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