



Arab Declaration

Issued by the Arab Regional CSW Preparatory Meeting for the 63rd Session of Commission on the Status of Women

"Social protection systems, access to public services, sustainable infrastructure for gender equality and the empowerment of women and girls "

4 February 2019, Cairo- Egypt

Under the chairmanship of the People's Democratic Republic of Algeria, Chair of the Arab Women Committee (38th Session), and the leadership of the League of Arab States, we have gathered on February, 4th 2019 in Cairo, within the framework of collaboration between the League of Arab States, UN Women, the Arab Women Organization, and the United Nations Economic and Social Commission for Western (ESCWA) to coordinate and reach a common Arab position and identify priorities of the region towards the priority theme of the CSW63 to be held between 11 to 22 March, 2019 in New York.

We, ministers and women's authorities representatives of Member States of the League of Arab States participating in the Arab Regional Preparatory Meeting for the 63rd Session of the Commission on the Status of Women (CSW63),

We appreciate the achievements accomplished by Arab women in economic, social, political, and cultural aspects, and acknowledge the substantial progress by Arab women through the determination of Arab states governments to ensure a decent life and women's empowerment,

We applaud the establishment of Arab women authorities and women related agencies that have developed national strategies to empower women and pushed forward legislations, policies and services responsive for women's rights and needs, that have further paved way for women to attain leadership positions,

Noting that the social, economic, and political situations in some Arab states greatly threaten the achieved gains of women-related development plans adopted by these states in previous years and lead to challenges for women and girls, as they have caused poverty and lack of basic health, education and other services,

Taking into account the increase in terrorism, armed conflicts in the Arab region and their increasing severity and consequences on citizens, such as the high loss of lives, particularly of women and children, who live under hard conditions given the absence of social services, health, and education on the increased numbers of displaced persons and refugees, and their implications on the rise in the number of refugees and internally displaced persons (IDPs), in addition to the constant suffering of Palestinian women under the Israeli occupation,

Emphasizing the importance of strengthening a joint Arab action based on a clear plan with solid foundations, presented through the Arab Women Committee established by the League of Arab States, which aims to empower women in the Arab region,

We renew our commitment towards implementing the provisions of the Arab and international conventions, including the Convention on the Elimination of All Forms of Discrimination Against Women (CEDAW), Beijing Platform for Action concerned with the advancement of the status of women in order to ensure the achievement of women and girls' equal fundamental rights throughout their life cycles,

We affirm our determination to work in collaboration with national, regional, and international mechanisms in following up on the progress in implementing these conventions at the national, regional, and international levels as well as to find solutions to the challenges that interrupt the implementation of these regional commitments in accordance with the particularity of the Arab States,

Appreciating the significant responsibility placed the Arab countries in implementing the Sustainable Development Goals Agenda amid these circumstances, **we confirm** the commitment of our countries in working to implement the Cairo Declaration for Arab Women (2017) and the Strategic Executive Action Plan: Development of Arab Women 2030, and localize national development plans within the framework of implementing the sustainable development goals 2030 especially SDG 5 on gender equality and empowerment of women and girls all its related targets, while being consistent with the exceptional circumstances that our region is experiencing,

Acknowledging the importance of integrating women into the labor market, and the reinforcing relationship between achieving women's economic empowerment, eradicating poverty, ensuring access to health and education service, and the importance of interlinkages between social protection policies, and infrastructure and public services - to improve gender equality and women's empowerment for sustainable development,

Recognizing that women undertake a disproportionate share of unpaid care and domestic work, and that this is a significant constraint on women's and girls' completion of or progress in education, on women's entry, retainment, re-entry and professional advancement in paid labor market as well as on their access to entrepreneurship opportunities and business development activities, which can result in gaps in both social protection such as health insurance, pensions etc), and pay gaps,

Reaffirming that the full achievement of the right to the enjoyment of the highest attainable standard of physical and mental health is vital for women's and girls' lives and well-being and for their ability to participate in public and private life, and is crucial for gender equality and the empowerment of women,

Noting the urgent need to ensure that women and girls have access to social protection systems, public services and infrastructure as a base for strengthening their access to economic opportunities in the changing environment of work to improve their livelihood, sources of income, and their welfare according to the national context and priorities,

Emphasizing the relation between achieving social protection for women and consolidation of security and stability in the Arab region,

Reaffirming our commitment to continue the efforts for the advancement of the status of women and enhancing their roles within the framework of achieving gender equality as well as the empowerment of all women and girls in collaboration with the regional and international organizations

and civil society organizations to strengthen the unity of the Arab position in international forums, and to harmonize our stance at the regional level towards the agreed recommendations of CSW 63.

We agreed to reaffirm our commitment to:

1. Proceed with harmonizing laws and legislations to implement United Nations Security Council Resolutions on Women, Peace, and Security starting with UNSCR 1325 (2000) and subsequent resolutions, as well as the Arab Regional Strategy and Executive Action Plan "Protection of Arab women: Peace and Security"

- 1.1 Emphasize the need to address all threats and dangers to the safety and security of women and girls, to develop mechanisms to counter terrorism in all its forms and manifestations, to promote peace and security in the Arab region, to prevent all forms of extremism.
- 1.2 Promote the full and equal participation of women in decision-making related to all areas of peace and security, to ensure that women's voices and priorities are addressed, that special measures are taken and that the necessary funding structures are in place to protect women and girls and to safeguard their dignity and protect their rights in conflict and post conflict.
- 1.3 Call upon the international community to commit to its responsibilities in order to reduce the tragedy of internally displaced persons (IDPs) and refugees and to pay special attention to the situation of women and girl refugees in host countries. To empower them, improve the living conditions of refugee women and girls and to ensure they have access to social protection, employment opportunities, education and to live a life free from violence.
- 1.4 Encourage the international community to support political solutions for crises and conflicts that in the Arab Region, and support in bearing the burden and the consequences of flows of refugees and IDPs, to provide support to host states in the provision of public services and infrastructure to ensure the access of refugees and IDPs to inclusive and comprehensive systems of social protection.
- 1.5 Condemn the withdrawal of the US assistance and aid to the Palestinian people under the guise of combatting terrorism, which deprives the Palestinians from basic services including health and education.
- 1.6 Extend international support to IDPs and refugees in host states, facilitate their safe return to their home countries and provide necessary assistance to secure living conditions that allow them to live safely in their home countries.
- 1.7 Call upon the international community to bear its responsibilities to prevent the sufferance of the Palestinian women in Jerusalem, the occupied territories, on borders and checkpoints across the occupied west bank, which hinders women's access to health, educational services, and social protection systems.

2. Strengthening the normative and legislative frameworks to enhance links between social protection schemes, public services, and sustainable infrastructure in order to achieve gender equality and promote women's and girls' economic empowerment.

- 2.1 Scaling up the implementation of the right to social protection related articles in national constitutions and legislative frameworks by developing national strategies and action plans with gender equality and the empowerment of women at their core.
- 2.2 Ensure women's meaningful and equal participation in developing the design, implementation, monitoring and evaluation of adequately financed social protection schemes, public services and sustainable infrastructure as well as in reconstruction processes.
- 2.3 Strengthen coordination across various government agencies, formal institutions, private sector, and civil society, for the integrated implementation of gender-responsive social protection systems, public services and sustainable infrastructure.
- 2.4 Develop policies that ensure women have equal access to decent work in the public and the private sector, eliminate occupational segregation, enable women's career advancement, take

measures to reduce gender pay gaps, promote productive employment for women and strengthen women's bargaining power.

- 2.5 Take all appropriate measures to recognize, reduce, and redistribute women's and girls' disproportionate share of unpaid care and domestic work in rural and urban areas, ensure that unpaid caregivers have access to social protection, including health coverage and pensions, and take steps to measure the value of unpaid work in order to determine its contribution to the national economy.
- 2.6 Enforcement of policies and mechanisms to ensure a robust inspection system that focus on monitoring of working conditions, ability to make complaints, and to seek redress and justice.
- 2.7 Seek to harmonize national standards to international conventions regarding the protection of migrant workers and immigrants, in accordance with the international commitment of member states.
- 2.8 Work with ministries of health to develop and provide health services, medical treatment and medical assistance to migrant women workers and immigrants and to establish adequate national policies.
- 2.9 Build an enabling societal culture that supports women through encompassing the values of equality and justice, promotes independent leadership roles for women and recognizes the contribution of women to society. This shall begin with childhood through educational programs, and be linked to the role of media and cultural agencies in disseminating accurate gender aware information.
- 2.10 Establish mechanisms to identify and act in respond to women and girls that are particularly vulnerable to or at risk of becoming victims of trafficking.
- 2.11 Take steps to transform discriminatory social norms and stereotypes related to women, including women migrants and refugees and recognize their socio-economic contribution to sustainable development and growth of countries of origin and destination, especially through transfers and investments of remittances, knowledge sharing, labor skills, social and financial capital contributions.

3. Ensure access to and meaningful participation of women in social protection systems, public services and infrastructure

- 3.1 Identify barriers to women's access to key social protection schemes and develop mitigation measures, including support for research, knowledge production, policy reform and advocacy on women's equitable access to social protection systems.
- 3.2 Identify and address economic and financial barriers that constrain women's and girls' access to public services, such as physical distances and transportation, lack of information and discriminatory social norms.
- 3.3 Develop social protection for women in the formal and informal sectors including social insurance, universal health coverage, sickness cash compensation, maternity benefits from paid leave, old-age and invalidity allowances, and pension and compensation, on work-related injuries, unemployment benefits and family allowances, and ensure universal health coverage, especially for non-regulated workers.
- 3.4 Work towards establishing or strengthening inclusive and gender-responsive social protection systems, including facilitating the transition from informal to formal work.
- 3.5 Promote legal and administrative measures that ensure women's full and equal access to pensions independent from their employment trajectories and reduce gender gaps in benefit levels.
- 3.6 Ensure that public services are of adequate quality, taking into account the rights of all women and girls, age sensitive, and disability-sensitive, culturally relevant and physically accessible and free from violence.
- 3.7 Raise the standards of education by reviewing educational curricula to take into account the rights of women and girls and eliminate harmful stereotypes.

- 3.8 Ensure the implementation of employment standards for women workers in all sectors and expand social and legal protection to cover all public service workers.
- 3.9 Improve the security and safety of women on the journey to and from work and educational facilities through gender-responsive rural development strategies, urban planning and infrastructure, including sustainable, safe, accessible and affordable public transportation systems, street lighting, and separate and adequate sanitation facilities, in order to facilitate women's access to places, products, services and economic opportunities.
- 3.10 Strengthen gender-responsive social protection and care infrastructure, such as equitable, quality, accessible and affordable early childhood education, childcare, elderly care, health-care, and care and social services for persons with disabilities, displaced and refugee women and girls, which meet the needs of both caregivers and those in need of care and disabilities.
- 3.11 Ensure the provision of infrastructure, technology and public services, such as water and sanitation, renewable energy, transport and information and communications technology, as well as accessible, affordable and quality childcare and care facilities for mothers;
- 3.12 Reinforce the outreach efforts which target men and youth on the importance of gender responsive social protection.

4. Continuing capacity-building, resource mobilization, access to data, and raising advocacy and awareness

- 4.1 Strengthen the capacity of formal institutions, national women authorities and relevant government agencies and provide the necessary human and financial resources, to ensure complementarity of institutional frameworks for mainstreaming women and girls' rights in designing social protection and provision of public services and sustainable infrastructures in order to achieve gender equality and women's and girls' empowerment.
- 4.2 Increase investment in social protection systems, including social insurance, comprehensive health care, public services and sustainable infrastructure, and ensure that all women and girls, especially women working in the informal sector, have equal access same men and boys to reduce unpaid work, to prevent the exclusion of women and to reduce inequalities.
- 4.3 Allocate sufficient funds, scale up of investments, and mobilize resources to ensure the provision of social protection systems, quality public services, and sustainable infrastructure that are responsive to the needs of women and girls.
- 4.4 Emphasize the importance of engaging the private sector to implement social protection systems, provide public services, and develop infrastructure through developing binding laws and frameworks to promote gender equality and the empowerment of all women and girls.
- 4.5 Improve the collection and use of disaggregated data by gender, with regard to the access to adequate social protection benefits, including childcare allowance, pensions, disability allowance, and unemployment benefits.
- 4.6 Documenting Arab successful experiences in developing social protection schemes for women for knowledge sharing and lessons learned.