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Press release

UfM Ministerial Conclusions on Women's Role in Society Promoting Gender Equality Strategies and Policies: Priorities and Opportunities in Lebanon

On 18 May 2016, the Euromed Feminist Initiative IFE-EFI held the national roundtable discussion on “*Union for the Mediterranean (UfM) Ministerial Conclusions on Women's Role in Society Promoting Gender Equality Strategies and Policies: Priorities and Opportunities in Lebanon*”, under the Patronage of H.E. Mr. Nabil De Freige Minister of State for Administrative Reform. The roundtable, which was organised in the frame of the project “*Gender Regional Platform*” funded by the European Union, gathered major actors and sought to enhance national cooperation, and consolidate policy dialogue between civil society, State actors and politicians on advancement of women's rights and gender equality. The discussion followed up on the UfM Ministerial Conclusions (Paris 2013) on strengthening the role of women in society and elaborated recommendations for the process on the preparation for the 4th UfM Ministerial Conference on women's rights.

Ambassador Christina Lassen, Head of the Delegation of the European Union to Lebanon, opened the roundtable, addressing major regional challenges to gender equality. She stressed the importance of women's participation in the political decision making, underlying different options that can improve it and encourage women to more actively participate in political life.

In his speech read by his representative, H.E. Nabil De Freige, Minister of State for Administrative Reform, emphasised his support to women's participation in public life. He reminded the Lebanese constitution which affirms equality in rights and obligations among all Lebanese citizens and expressed his expectation that the roundtable will come up with comprehensive recommendations to strengthen gender equality policy making in Lebanon.

Mrs. Leila Al Ali, Co-President of Euromed Feminist Initiative, underlined the importance of utilising the UfM Ministerial Conclusions as a gender equality policy making instrument in Lebanon and in the whole region, and recalled the need of a continuous dialogue with decision makers in this regards.

The participants noted that progress in women's rights has been made. However, the rate of change is very slow. They identified main priorities to be addressed in a changing context impacted both by radicalisation and the refugee crisis. Among them is the urgent need of change of discriminative legislation, in particular the personal status law, mainstreaming of gender equality policies and international commitments in all the ministries, introducing gender quota at political decision making level, and approaching security policies always from the perspective of human rights of both women and men and democracy. The recommendations from the roundtable will be handed to the Ministry of State for Administrative Reform and other relevant ministries and institutions, as well as to the civil society actors. They will be part of the regional recommendations to the UfM 4th Ministerial Conference on women's rights.