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The Hashemite
Kingdom of Jordan

**Union for the Mediterranean
5th Ministerial Conference on Strengthening the Role of Women in Society
Madrid, 26 October 2022**

Adopted Declaration as of 26.10.2022

1. The Ministers of the Union for the Mediterranean (UfM) gathered at the Ministerial Conference on Strengthening the Role of Women in Society, held in Madrid, Spain on 26 October 2022, under the Co-Presidency of **H.E. Ayman Riad Al-Mufleh**, Minister for Social Development of the Hashemite Kingdom of Jordan and **H.E. Helena Dalli**, in representation of the European Union, in the presence of the UfM Secretary General, **H.E. Nasser Kamel**, and hosted by the Ministry of the Gender Equality of the Kingdom of Spain in the presence of **H.E. Irene María Montero Gil**.
2. Ministers agreed that the 2017 Cairo Declaration and its four interrelated pillars are still key to strengthening the role of women in society.
3. Ministers agreed that in light of the various crises, including those relating to health, climate change, and more recently emerging needs (food, water and energy security), special efforts are needed to strengthen Women's Economic and Political Empowerment and to end Violence against women and girls in the Euro-Mediterranean region.
4. Ministers acknowledge that women in rural areas are at a particular disadvantage and that particular efforts are needed to create equal opportunities and strengthen their position in society.

Ministers are recalling

5. The UfM Ministerial meetings on Strengthening the Role of Women in Society (Istanbul 2006, Marrakech 2009, Paris 2013 and Cairo 2017);
6. The Conclusions of the Conference of Civil Society Organisations organised back-to-back with the Ministerial Conference held in Cairo in 2017;
7. The strong political commitment manifested on the occasion of the 25th anniversary of the Barcelona Process, the 5th UfM Regional Forum held on 27 November 2020, and the 6th UfM Regional Forum on 29 November 2021, to empower women and girls and promote gender equality, in terms of rights and opportunities, as well as to create space for civil society engagement;
8. The renewed partnership between both shores of the Mediterranean with the adoption on 9 February 2021 of the Joint Communication of the European Commission and the High Representative of the Union for Foreign Affairs and Security Policy on a "New Agenda for the Mediterranean" and its Economic and Investment Plan;
9. The commitments taken by the European Commission in the framework of its [EU Gender Equality¹ Strategy](#) and [EU Gender Action Plan in its external relations \(GAP III\)²](#) launched in 2020;

¹ COMMUNICATION FROM THE COMMISSION TO THE EUROPEAN PARLIAMENT, THE COUNCIL, THE EUROPEAN ECONOMIC AND SOCIAL COMMITTEE AND THE COMMITTEE OF THE REGIONS A Union of Equality: Gender Equality Strategy 2020-2025, COM/2020/152 final, <https://eur-lex.europa.eu/legal-content/EN/TXT/?uri=CELEX%3A52020DC0152>

² The EU Gender Action Plan (GAP) III is a Joint Communication of the European Commission and the High Representative of the Union for Foreign Affairs and security policy.



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10. The mandate given to the UfM Secretariat (UfMS) to establish a follow-up mechanism backed-up with indicators to monitor progress, evaluate the gender gap and provide recommendations to policy-makers and stakeholders, in order to improve policies impact. The first intergovernmental Monitoring Mechanism on Gender Equality was endorsed in July 2020 and the first reporting exercise was carried out in 2021;
11. The main gaps and challenges, both in terms of legal frameworks and implementation of national policies, as highlighted by the 2nd UfM Regional Progress Report on Gender Equality and its policy recommendations on the four areas of the Cairo Declaration;
12. Promoting access of women to the labor market and closing gender gaps in the changing world of work are key to achieving the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development. Women's economic empowerment boosts productivity and increases economic diversification and income equality, in addition to other positive development outcomes. Companies greatly benefit from boosting employment and leadership opportunities for women;
13. The commitments of UfM Member States, taken in the framework of the 2nd UfM Ministerial Declaration on Environment and Climate Action, adopted in 2021 in Cairo as well as of the 5th UfM Ministerial Declaration on Labour and Employment, adopted in Marrakech in May 2022 and focused on the employment and employability of youth and women.

Ministers acknowledge that

On progress made:

14. Since the launch of the UfM Regional Dialogue Process on Women's Empowerment in 2015, important progress in achieving Gender Equality has been made in the Euro-Mediterranean region. Legal frameworks in many countries were reinforced, new programs and policies were developed in order to increase effective and meaningful women's participation in political and economic and social spheres and to protect women from all forms of discrimination and gender-based violence. However, the persistence of gender stereotypes, negative social norm and discriminatory practices and laws, especially towards women in the most vulnerable situations, as well as different perceptions on issues related to gender inequality and empowerment of all women and girls and divergent priorities in this area, continue to stall women's advancement in all areas of civil, economic and political life.
15. At European Union level, since 2015, many legal and policy developments took and are taking place, such as the strengthening of the legal framework in areas such as work-life balance, pay transparency in order to end the gender pay gap, gender balance in decision making bodies, and preventing and combatting violence against women and girls and domestic violence, and combatting trafficking of humans (incl. trafficking for sexual exploitation that disproportionately affects women and girls).
16. There is the endeavor of the League of Arab States to review "Cairo Declaration for Arab Women: the Development Agenda for Arab Women 2030," adopted in 2017, by incorporating gender equality in environmental and climate action and disaster response.
17. The Anna Lindh Foundation Multiannual Programme 2022-2025 puts gender equality and gender/youth empowerment across the Euro-Mediterranean region center stage, building on the strengths of its National Civil Society Networks and large scale youth initiatives

On challenges:



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18. There is also a pressing need to respond to global challenges and trends through the achievement of the 2030 Agenda, thereby addressing gender inequalities to ensure that no one is left behind.
19. The challenges identified in the Cairo Declaration in 2017 on the four priority areas have unfortunately been exacerbated by the COVID-19 pandemic, as stressed by the UfM High-Level Conference on Women in the Mediterranean in November 2020.
20. The economic and social fallouts of the COVID-19 pandemic and, in a short, medium and long-term, the effects of conflicts in the region, including the consequences of the Ukraine war, have compounded the impact of the climate and environmental crisis, of cyberviolence and unregulated migration flows, as well as induced a food crisis by pushing further behind and into extreme poverty women and girls in massive numbers.
21. Women and girls suffer disproportionately from the consequences of these crises, which affect them in a negative and multidimensional way, ranging from economic impoverishment to rampant gender-based violence, including trafficking of women and girls that too often remains invisible and unpunished.
22. Building forward better and leaving no one behind includes acknowledging the role of women and girls as key agents of change, transcending the victim-centred approach to crisis preparedness, response, management and leadership. It also includes the understanding that failure to support and realise women's progress and full use of their capacities in socio-economic, political and cultural spheres of life will hinder national social and economic growth.

On violence against women and girls (VAWG)

23. Violence against women and girls (VAWG), as a major impediment to the achievement of gender equality and the empowerment of all women and girls in its all forms, continue to be a major issue in the region. The situation victims of domestic violence in its all forms has remarkably worsened since the beginning of the pandemic, as many countries registered spikes of domestic violence. Following initial difficulties caused by lockdowns, many countries in the Euro-Mediterranean region improved their victims' support mechanisms within relatively short timeframes, a progress to be celebrated but that needs to be reinforced and sustained in the short, medium and long term. VAWG violates and prevents women' and girls' full enjoyment of all human rights and fundamental freedoms.
24. The achievement of more sustainable societies, including the green and digital transitions, requires the elimination of all forms of VAWG. Integrating VAWG prevention and response and reparation interventions into climate change and environmental adaptation, mitigation and resilience-strengthening policy, programming and finance is still a less acknowledged, but yet critical need.

On women in public life and decision-making

25. Women's full and equal access to leadership and decision-making is essential for promoting resilient, fair and sustainable democracies and the effective execution of its principles. The issue of women's balanced representation becomes even more significant within a crisis context, as in crisis it is necessary to be aware and take into account needs of all women, including those that belong to more vulnerable groups.



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26. Although an increase in women's participation in public life is observed since 2017 in many countries, women in some countries continue to experience restricted access to and participation in economic leadership. Despite the success of legally binding gender equality objectives in several countries, which have raised and strengthened women's participation in politics since 2016, gender equality objectives in corporate boards are yet to be broadly implemented to support gender balance and women's full effective and meaningful participation at this level.
27. Increased and de facto participation of women in politics and decision-making on an equal footing with men meaningfully allows for the eradication of gender roles and stereotypes. Constant exposure to female leadership in all spheres of life contributes to a trickle-down effect in society, normalising and integrating the image of women as leaders, minimising the harmful effects of gender stereotyping, and enabling the social understanding that work, creativity and business, leadership and potential are a significant added value for societies and economies as a whole.
28. Balanced participation of women in decision-making processes in the private sector broadens the perspectives, translating into better and sustainable financial results, a greater capacity to innovate, and a more efficient use of resources.
29. Equal rights, opportunities and responsibilities for women and men in all areas of human life and decision-making, to which women are entitled are a vital condition to create stronger institutions and societies, enhance economic and social well-being for women and men, and eliminate stereotypical views on women that arrests such growth.
30. Regional and local governments have the potential to be catalysts for change in respect of gender equality and women's empowerment.
31. The crucial role of the civil society and in particular the women's rights organizations, and their contribution in the development of policies and measures in line with the UfM Ministerial Declarations and other international women's rights mechanisms.

On employment and education

32. Women are active drivers for economic and human growth, and key agents of change also in COVID-19 and other crisis economic recovery scenarios. However, women's access and participation in the labour market, and their engagement as entrepreneurs in the Mediterranean region remain significantly low. In addition, women in the region often work in temporary and part-time employment in less valued jobs and sectors with worse working conditions, including less paid, and in the informal economy, which deepen the significant gender gap in wages, working conditions, and pensions.
33. Women's job insecurity has further intensified through lockdowns, business closures, and society's needs for performing care work, mostly unpaid and traditionally perceived as a "woman's issue". Women have limited access to the formal labour market, leading to their unemployment and financial exclusion all together.
34. A gender-responsive just transition has the potential to create decent and sustainable jobs for women, being aware that discriminatory social norms and role and persistent gender gaps in secondary and tertiary education in science, technology, engineering and mathematics, as well as occupational segregation, keep young women from attaining quality jobs in the green economy and in climate, environment and disaster risk areas.

On climate issues



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35. Tackling the root causes of gender inequalities once and for all and removing structural barriers and gender gaps are *sine qua non* to unfolding and displaying women and girls' full capacities to take action and build resilient futures. In view of the current climate emergency, it is of outmost importance to strengthen rural and indigenous women's access to and control over land and natural resources, in order to integrate fully their participation and leadership as critical for making climate, environmental and disaster risk action more effective.
36. There is need to significantly increase gender-responsive investment in the framework of climate change and in environmental and disaster risk reduction policies and programmes, through the mobilization of financial resources from all sources, including public, private, national and international resource mobilization and allocation.

In conclusion

37. The commitment to the financing and achievement of the United Nations Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs) in the region, in particular SDG 4 on inclusive and equitable quality education and lifelong learning, SDG 5 on gender equality, SDG 8 on decent work and economic growth, SDG 10 on reducing inequalities and SDG3 on ensuring universal access to sexual and reproductive health-care services, including for family planning, information and education, and the integration of reproductive health into national strategies and programmes shall be reinforced.
38. To advance women's meaningful participation in decision making in the field of peace and security, prevention and resolution of armed and social conflicts, as well as to strengthen the role of women in preventing violence and extremism as stated in the UfM Cairo Declaration, National Action Plans for carrying out of UNSCR 1325 and the subsequent resolutions within the Women, Peace and Security (WPS) agenda, and monitoring mechanism to evaluate the implementation of such national plans shall be adopted.
39. To achieve all of the above, available, accessible, reliable, comparable data and statistics disaggregated by sex are critical for evidence-based and context-specific informed policies and reforms aimed at structural and sustainable changes. In so doing, well-functioning gender responsive national monitoring processes and mechanisms need to be in place to assess such policy analysis
40. In light of all the above, it also highly needed to integrate gender responsive and transformative approaches in all recovery strategies, as well as in risk management and resilience-building in face of global, regional and local shifting geopolitical realities, aiming at increasing accountability and accelerating implementation of commitments to gender equality with a human rights-based approach at international, national and community level. A sharp focus on areas with the strongest decline in gender equality is very much needed.

Ministers are willing to

In terms of legal frameworks covering the fours area of the Cairo Declaration:

41. Assess gender impact of existing regulations, policies, plans and strategies where relevant.



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42. Implement and strengthen gender responsive budgeting, sex and age disaggregated data and gender mainstreaming into all relevant regulations, policies and practices, and ensure financial means and budget allocation to effectively implement specific gender equality policies and programmes.
43. Promote women's full meaningful and effective economic participation on an equal footing with men. This perspective calls for the understanding that women's full economic participation importantly depends on eradicating all VAWG, harmful gender stereotyping and social norms.
44. Reinforce the legal framework to prevent and effectively fight against sexual harassment in the public space as well in the workplace and create control mechanisms to ensure their implementation.
45. Invest in analysing the root causes of the gender employment gap, the gender pay gap, the sectoral and vertical segregation in the labour market being part of them. The analysis should also cover gaps in employment, promotion, training and working conditions.
46. Consider developing and implementing pay transparency measures and actions with the aim to eliminate pay discrimination and, ultimately, to reduce the gender pay and pension gap.
47. Provide comprehensive legal counselling, legal services, and social support for victims of VAWG including legal counselling as well as access to medical, housing, child-care, education and training, to allow victims' access to justice and redress, social reintegration and employment opportunities. Invest in professional training programmes for service providers to victims of VAWG, including women and girls with disability, refugee and displaced.
48. Prevent and respond to VAWG all areas, in particular in the contexts of health, geo-political, climate and environmental crises and disasters, ensuring the provision of essential services to victims and survivors of violence.
49. Develop, promote and implement work-life balance measures to ensure more equal share of household between men and women as well as to reduce, recognize and redistribute women's and girls' disproportionate share of unpaid care and domestic work.

In terms of raising women's participation in economic life

50. Recognise the vulnerability of employment in many female dominated sectors, as demonstrated during the COVID-19 crisis and include gender-responsiveness in recovery policies, measures and strategies, as well as gender-responsive budgeting.
51. Promote the transition to formal employment for informal workers, especially women, employed in the shadow economy, home-based work, care activities and in micro-small and medium-sized enterprises, as well as work in the agricultural sector and own-account and part-time work, by providing incentives for enterprises and families to ensure transition from informal to formal economy, promoting pilot projects to encourage and support the transition from informality to the formal market, extending social protection and ensuring equal pay for equal work or work of equal value that provide for decent working conditions and living standards.
52. Strengthen the provision of adequate and accessible care-giving services and infrastructures and facilitate the employment of care services at home, as well as related work-life balance policies for all women and men, promoting a more equal sharing of care responsibilities between them. Promote regulations guaranteeing adequate working conditions, including pay and social rights for carers.



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53. Support and encourage women's entrepreneurship, through incubation programmes for the early, seed and growth stages, investments on entrepreneurship education, by enabling access to networks and promotion of role models and mentoring as well as through mechanisms to facilitate access to finance, relevant banking, and non-banking tools and create and invest on specific entrepreneurship programmes for victims of VAWG.
54. Boost the implementation of targeted gender-sensitive financial services as well as to facilitate access to Guarantee Funds, which cover risks incurred by banks in providing loans to entrepreneurs, and last but not least increase women's financial literacy and demystifying finance.
55. Promote the establishing of regional platforms aiming at supporting Women Economic Empowerment in the Euro-Mediterranean region.
56. Stimulate the creation of business networks for women in sectors with high productivity and added value, including technology.
57. Seek for regional solutions to increase internationalisation of women-owned or women-led companies through public-private partnerships. The investments on key regional value chains should be envisaged in a trilateral approach involving UfM EU and non-EU Member states and Africa.
58. Stimulating the financial institutions to adopt a gender-smart lens in their investment, especially for the Venture and Equity funds.
59. Create and invest in programmes increasing digital and financial literacy of women in order to tackle the digital skills gap and the digital gender divide, as well as the digital accessibility gap for women with disabilities. Explore pathways for accelerating digital transformation as a vehicle for the creation of more decent jobs, economic growth, and an important vector of innovation and creativity. Promote the access of women to natural resources, financing mechanisms and land ownership, where these have not been achieved yet.
60. Create the enabling condition to and full, equal and meaningful participation of women in the green economy and digitalization to comply with global trends.

In terms of improving women's access to leadership and decision-making positions

61. Promote the voice and leadership of women, especially of young generations by working closely with media and social media providers.
62. Analyse existing obstacles to women's access to leadership and decision-making and where it is deemed necessary create action plans to tackle identified obstacles.
63. Establish the exchange of good practices among countries.
64. Advocate for gender equality objectives both in politics as well as in decision-making positions in the private sector.
65. Support women participation in diplomatic efforts regionally and internationally gearing towards institutionalizing women's contribution to peace processes.
66. Recognise companies that are strongly involved in promoting gender equality, by creating alliances and incentives and promoting gender equality in public procurement in line with national legislations.
67. Promote gender equality and inclusive models of leadership since early-age education and in all fields, including STEMs education and skills, allowing girls to demonstrate their leadership abilities.
68. Encourage women's leadership by designing capacity-building programmes and promoting networks for future female leaders.



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In terms of combatting and preventing violence against women and girls (VAWG)

69. Reviewing laws and policies to ensure that key aspects of the international legal obligations are being addressed and implemented, when applicable.
70. Spread knowledge, when it is appropriate, of the Council of Europe Convention on preventing and combating violence against women and domestic violence (Istanbul Convention), as well as the Council of Europe Convention on Action against Trafficking in Human Beings (Warsaw Convention) and the Convention on the Elimination of All Forms of Discrimination Against Women (CEDAW) in case of adhesion or signature of these Conventions by Member Countries as well as other relevant regional and international instruments and documents.
71. Supporting women and girls to assert their rights, including their right to sexual and reproductive health, and reproductive rights, in accordance with the Programme of Action of the International Conference on Population and Development.
72. Support adoption of comprehensive laws on VAWG that define and criminalize all forms of VAWG, including cyberviolence .
73. Raise awareness on VAWG, including raising awareness in education, develop national campaigns for zero tolerance towards all forms of violence against women and girls; establishing national observatories to identify key gaps to be addressed as a matter of urgency and to promote the best examples of legislation on violence against women and girls in the region.
74. Reinforce legal, economic and social protection and support for victims of domestic violence and insure adequate financial and other forms of support for prevention and combatting VAWG
75. Boost reporting tools and systems for victims of violence in the context of crisis and conflicts, with particular attention to migrant women.
76. Tighten the collaboration with civil society organisations as well as with religious and local authorities who are in direct contact with victims of violence.

In terms of monitoring and implementation of the Ministerial Declaration

77. Pay particular attention to well-functioning monitoring processes in the four priority areas of the Cairo Declaration as well as to the quantitative and qualitative evaluation of the impact of actions undertaken. In this respect, welcome the presentation of the second Regional Progress Report, as a result of the pilot phase. Confirm the importance of continuing and consolidating the work with the volunteering UfM Member States on the national monitoring processes. Urgently call for more UfM Member States to join this exercise. Welcome the increase of the quality and, if conditions allow, the scope of gender specific information, analysis, strategy, and sex disaggregated data aiming at better understanding the impact of the policy actions on women.
78. Confirm the role of the UfM Secretariat to accompany labelled projects related to both women's economic empowerment and VAWG as well as to ensure appropriate co-ordination with the various stakeholders with a focus on projects that support the women's access to decent jobs in both urban and rural areas and boost the capacities of all the actors involved in the protection of victims of physical, psychological and economic violence.



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79. Enhance the UfM monitoring mechanism of the new Ministerial Declaration by paying special attention to the identification of the target values of the selected indicators. The monitoring mechanism should be supported by a RoadMap for action.
80. Express their strong support for the UfM Regional Dialogue on Women Empowerment and mandate this UfM Regional Platform to elaborate and support the implementation of a Roadmap for Action 2023-2025 in line with the objectives of this Declaration.
81. Agree to convene the 6th UfM Ministerial Conference on Strengthening the Role of Women in Society in 2025.
82. Express their gratitude to the Government of the Kingdom of Spain for its warm hospitality and to the UfM Secretariat for helping convene the meeting.