**Welcoming Remarks for the Launch of Gender Justice and the Law: Regional Report**

**Talking points for UNFPA ASRO Regional Director**

**Excellencies, Ladies and Gentlemen,**

**Dear Colleagues,**

* I am pleased to welcome you to the **launch of the report on Gender Justice and Equality Before the Law in the Arab States Region**.
* This report is the result of **an extensive collaboration between UNFPA, UNDP, UN Women, and ESCWA** and it is the culmination of an ambitious four-year project that engaged governments, civil society organizations and UN agencies in 19 Arab States, as well as regional agencies.
* Today is a well-suited day to launch this report, **as we celebrate Human Rights Day** and as we all know - women’s rights are human rights - **yet gender inequality still globally prevents women and girls from enjoying the full extent of their fundamental rights.**
* **Today also marks the end of the 16 Days of Activism against Gender-Based Violence**. And again, this is highly topical for the launch of this report, as gender-based violence is the gravest manifestation of gender inequality and, at the same, contributes to perpetuating it.
* We know that, globally, one in every three women has experienced physical and/or sexual violence, mostly by an intimate partner, **and that the rate is slightly higher - at 37 per cent - in the Arab States Region.**
* In addition to gender-based violence being an obstacle to women’s and girls’ equality, **discriminatory laws and practices shape the lives of women and girls in many countries.**
* **UNFPA is working against gender-based violence** as part as our core mandate and we are taking this matter very serious. In fact, we have set ‘ending gender-based violence’ as one of our transformative goals we are aspiring to achieve by 2030.
* The Gender Justice Report we are launching today:
	+ addresses **four areas in which women and girls often experience discrimination** and that are therefore of particular importance for gender justice**: rights within the family, property rights, rights at work, and protection from violence.**
	+ **Examines laws and law enforcement practices, as well as the social and economic contexts in which the laws are made and access to justice is exercised.**
	+ **By highlighting examples of good practice from across the region, the report encourages the sharing of experiences and cross-fertilization of ideas.**
* I believe that this can be an **immensely valuable resource for Arab States** as it brings a unique regional lens to the issue of gender justice and highlights what is achievable by building on the strengths of existing legal frameworks.
* Let me wrap up by saying that in our joint global effort to attain the goals of the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development, **achieving gender equality is not only a stand- alone goal, but indeed necessary to achieve any of those goals**. If we are, as we committed, to leave “no one behind”, we have to make sure that women and girls, who indeed constitute even the majority of today’s population, fully benefit from the progress made.
* A couple of weeks ago, **the Nairobi Summit on ICPD25** concluded in the Kenyan capital, with **partners making bold commitments to transform the world by ending all maternal deaths, unmet need for family planning and gender-based violence** and harmful practices against women and girls by 2030.
* Over 9,500 delegates from more than 170 countries took part in this radically inclusive conference, uniting behind the Nairobi Statement, which establishes a shared agenda to complete the ICPD Programme of Action.
* There should be no ICPD50 - Women and girls around the world have waited long enough to have rights and choices. Looking towards 2030, we now enter a decade of delivery during which we will walk the talk and implement the commitments made in Nairobi.
* Together, we have to strive for a world in which women can live free of violence and fear and can reach their full potential in societies free from gender discrimination and harmful stereotypes, so that all human rights can be enjoyed by all.
* I am convinced that this report can contribute to reaching this goal in our region and I sincerely hope that it will be utilized by governments and civil society alike to inform legal and policy change, based on experiences from the region.
* I wish all a fruitful discussion and a successful event.

**Thank You**