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Regional Dialogue¹ on Gender Justice & the Law

Based on Assessment of laws affecting gender equality in the Arab States region

| 10-11 December 2018 | Beirut, Lebanon |

- Objectives**
- Launch the reports on *Gender Justice & the Law: Assessment of laws affecting gender equality in the Arab States region* in 18 countries.
 - Encourage media interest in the findings of the country studies and promote them as a baseline for measurement of progress on gender equality within the 2030 Agenda
 - Explore with champions and legal advocates to identify most relevant issues for which the momentum is ripe to promote change in laws and mindsets in region

Organizers UNDP, UN Women, UNFPA and ESCWA

- Participants**
- Government representatives; prominent judges, prosecutors and lawyers; parliamentarians; women's machineries; women, youth and human rights activists; NGOs and CSOs working on women's rights and access to justice; academia and think tanks from the region;
 - Local diplomatic community and donors;
 - Arab and international media representatives based in Beirut; and
 - UN Agencies (regional and country offices)

Background

In the Arab states region, multiple sources of law, the persistence of customary practices, the lack of coordination of the judicial and security sectors to effectively deliver justice, as well as economic, cultural and socio-political factors act as serious impediments for women to access justice, hindering the achievement of gender equality and therefore the Sustainable Development Goals, especially goals 5, 10 and 16. ²

Sexual and Gender Based Violence (SGBV) including domestic violence, rape and other forms of sexual assault, sexual harassment, child and forced marriage, female genital mutilation/cutting (FGM/C), trafficking in persons, sexual slavery and so-called honour-based crimes are prevalent in the region.

Furthermore, gender norms centred around preserving family honour perpetuate impunity towards perpetrators of violence. This is manifested through discriminatory laws that provide inadequate protection of women (for example: in several countries in the region, the penal code exonerates a rapist from punishment if he marries his victim and honour crimes allow for mitigating circumstances to reduce their criminal sentence), and even when such rights and protection are recognized in the law, their inconsistent enforcement or implementation reinforced by patriarchal norms that view women and girls in a subordinate role often impede access to justice, and obstruct women's empowerment.

To support identifying the legal measures that prevent GBV and to encourage policy and institutional reforms that bring down structural barriers to women's empowerment, UNDP worked together with UN Women,

¹ The organization of the launching event, has partially been supported by the government of Japan..

² SDG 5: Gender Equality, SDG 10: Reduced Inequalities, SDG 16: Peace, Justice, and Strong Institutions

UNFPA in 18 countries in the Arab region, and the 3 agencies collaborated with ESCWA at regional level to produce a regional report on *Gender Justice and the Law in the Arab Region – What will it take to achieve the SDGs?*

Each country report highlights the main legal barriers preventing women's access to justice and legal protection from GBV in the Arab States. Furthermore, country level findings are summarized in a 2 pager to highlight the deficits between national laws and international standards and the steps that will be needed to achieve many of the targets agreed upon in the Sustainable Development Goals.

Objectives of the Consultative Dialogue and accompanying workshop

The objectives of the Dialogue are to widely share and disseminate the country findings with key government representatives; judges, prosecutors and lawyers; parliamentarians; women's machineries, women and youth rights activists from the Arab region and beyond.

The discussions organized during the launch event (day 1) and subsequent technical workshop (day 2) will provide an opportunity to highlight the key challenges in the region to eliminate gender discrimination in the law and ensure women's access to justice and their legal protection.

In particular, the dialogue and workshop will aim to:

- A) Highlight the status of gender justice and the law in the region, and stress that law reform will constitute a key driver for achieving SDGs across the Arab region;
- B) Facilitate the ownership by national governments and encourage their commitments to introduce potential future reform in the penal codes, family law, nationality law and labor laws;
- C) Create media interest in the topic to support future advocacy for law changes and reforms;
- D) Identify potential regional and national evidence based advocacy initiatives to improve gender justice in the region;
- E) Leverage strategic regional partnerships on gender justice with regional structures;
- F) Raise awareness of the [online legal database](#) (e-platform) launched by UNDP, UN Women, and CAWTAR in 2016. It includes more than 3600 laws, as well as legal profiles from 20 Arab Countries, all of which are searchable through an online portal.

Regional Dialogue on Gender Justice and the Law

DAY 1 – December 10

Dialogue on Assessments of laws affecting gender equality in the Arab States region

Time	Subject
8:30 – 9:00	Registration
09:00 – 09:45	Welcome Statement Mounir Tabet , Executive Secretary, a.i., Economic and Social Commission for Western Asia Opening Remarks: Gender Equality and the 2030 Agenda Mourad Wahba , UNDG Chair and UNDP Regional Director Presentation of main findings of the Gender Justice & the Law John Godwin , Lead Author of the study Key Note Address Asma Khader , Lawyer and Human Rights Activist
09:45 – 11:15	Panel 1 - Gender discrimination in Nationality laws and Personal Status Recent reforms in personal status to eliminate gender discrimination Besma D. Boussida , Chargé de Mission to Minister of Women, Family, Children & Seniors, Tunisia Guardianship and custody Salma Nims , Secretary General, National Commission for Women, Jordan Nationality Laws Counsellor Sanaa Khalil , Jurist & National Council for Women Board Member, Egypt Child Marriages Amal Basha , Women's Rights Activist & Chair of Sisters Arab Forum for Human Rights, Yemen Model Law on Domestic Violence Zoya Jureidini Rouhana , KAFA Co-founder and Director, Lebanon Moderator: Rula Amin, Senior Communications Advisor and Spokesperson UNHCR
11:15 – 11:45	Coffee Break
11:45 – 13:15	Panel 2 - Penal Codes in the region – Prosecution of perpetrators and protection of victims of violence So-called Honour Crimes Rana Husseini , Journalist and Human Rights Activist, Jordan Domestic violence law in Morocco & problems of impunity for domestic violence against women Najat Razi , Researcher and Women's Rights Activist, Morocco Campaigning against FGM and sexual harassment Azza Kamel , Women's Rights and Civil Society Activist, Egypt Prosecution of sexual violence in conflict Zirak Abdulkareem , Judge, Iraq Moderator: Lina Sinjab, Journalist with BBC
13:15 – 14:30	Panel 3 - Women's economic rights in the Arab States region Legal and technical barriers to women's advancement. Rana G. Salhab , Talent & Communications Partner - Regional Exec. Committee Member, Deloitte Labour Rights for Women Samir Aita , President of the Arab Economists Circle, Economist at Le Monde Diplomatique Inheritance & Property rights Rafic Khoury Advisor to the President of international development, Union of Arab Surveyors How Kuwait supports the private sector to empower women, and how this is changing society Lubna Ahmed Al-Kazi , Founder & director of the Women's Research and Studies Center, Kuwait Moderator: Mona Salman, Journalist and former Al-Jazeera anchor
14:30 – 14:45	Closing Remarks Enshrah Ahmed , Gender Advisor, Regional Office for Arab States, UNFPA Begona Lasagabaster , Special Representative of UN Women's Regional Director in Lebanon
14:45	Lunch

Regional Dialogue on Gender Justice and the Law

DAY 2 – December 11

Workshop with Practitioners, Civil Society Activists, Experts, Governments, and UN Agencies in the region
Priorities & Avenues for Action

Time	Subject
9:00 – 9:30	Welcome and Objectives of the workshop Gender Justice & The Law Marta Vallejo Mestres , Rule of Law Specialist, UNDP Regional Hub for Arab States Gender & the Law E-Platform Hedia bel Haj Youssef , CAWTAR Moderator: Lina Abirafeh , Director Institute for Women’s Studies in the Arab World (IWSAW)
9:30 – 11:00	Session 1 - Changing laws – changing realities Sharing of successful experiences in the region on changing laws; applying international law in courts; and changing social perceptions and mindsets on key topics related to gender justice Working with government & civil society Ihsan Barakat , Judge, Jordan Changing laws, implementing reality Salim R. Al-Makasseess , Judge, Iraq Advocacy Campaigns: Engaging the public & men Ghida Anani , Director, ABAAD, Lebanon Engaging men, changing laws Raid Asfour , High Judiciary council, Palestine. Evidence-based Advocacy Salwa Hamrouni , Law Professor, Tunis Changing laws, responding to advocacy Khalid Ramadan , MP, Jordan Moderator: Diana Moukalled , Journalist and Film Maker
11:00 - 11:30	Coffee Break
11:30 – 13:30	Session 2 – Group Work and Plenary Presentations Examining issues raised in the report and suggesting practical recommendations (strategies, actions and tools) on how to introduce legal reform and social changes to address existing inequalities in: <ul style="list-style-type: none">▪ Labour rights▪ Equal right to pass nationality▪ Harmful Practices (Child marriage, FGM, So-called honour crimes)▪ Domestic violence laws
13:30 – 14:30	Lunch
14:30 – 16:30	Session 3 – Group Work and Plenary Presentations Examining issues raised in the report and suggesting practical recommendations (strategies, actions and tools) on how to introduce legal reform and social changes to address existing inequalities in: <ul style="list-style-type: none">▪ Marriage and divorce▪ Inheritance▪ Sexual harassment▪ Guardianship
16:30 – 17:30	Way Forward and Conclusions