



EUROMED GENDER EQUALITY PROGRAMME

REGIONAL ROUNDTABLE REPORT

Situation Analysis: Women's Rights and Gender Equality in the Southern Mediterranean

Regional Euro-Mediterranean Roundtable
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Enhancing Equality between Men and Women in the Euromed Region (2008-2011)
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List of Acronyms and Abbreviations

CAWTAR	Centre of Arab Women for Training and Research (Tunisia)
CEDAW	Convention for the Elimination of all forms of Discrimination against Women
CSO	Civil Society Organisations
EC	European Commission
ECE	Economic Commission for Europe (United Nations Organisation)
EGEP	Enhancing Equality between men and women in the Euromed region programme
Euromed	Euro-Mediterranean
EWL	European Women's Lobby
FGM	Female Genital Mutilation
GBV	Gender-Based Violence
MD	Millennium Declaration
MDG	Millennium Development Goals
NGO	Non-Governmental Organisation
NWM	National Women's Machinery
PA	Palestinian Authority
POA	Plan of Action
RWEL	Role of Women in Economic Life programme
SCR	Security Council Resolution
TOR	Terms of Reference
UN	United Nations Organisation
UNDP	United Nations Development Program
UNFPA	United Nations Population Fund
UNIFEM	United Nations Development Fund for Women
UNICEF	United Nations Children Fund
VAW	Violence against Women
WB	World Bank
WHO	World Health Organisation

1. Background and Introduction

1.1 Regional Context

All partner countries of the Programme *Enhancing Equality between Men and Women in the Euromed region* have been full and active participants in international fora as concerns the Convention for the Elimination of Discriminations Against Women (CEDAW) (1979), the International Conference on Population and Development (ICPD) (1994), the Beijing Conference (1995), the Millennium Declaration (MD) and Millennium Development Goals (MDGs) (2000) and more recently the Euromed Ministerial Conference on "Strengthening the Role of Women in Society", Istanbul (2006), and in subsequent reporting and follow-up meetings.

Yet, gender gaps still exist between men and women in access to opportunities at the political, economic and social levels. In some countries, the situation of women has improved following legal breakthroughs in personal status and citizenship laws. Women's political participation has increased with several high-level appointments across the region and the adoption of female quotas by some parliaments. Yet despite such affirmative action, women currently hold less than 10 per cent of parliamentary seats across the region. At the same time, accumulated gains in women's education have not translated into effective labour force participation.

Eight partner countries have ratified the CEDAW and the Occupied Palestinian Territory has made serious efforts to follow the principles of this so-called international bill of rights for women. An issue of concern has been that some State Parties have ratified the CEDAW whilst making reservations on certain articles particularly with reference to women's personal status. This means that though women may have universally recognised public rights, in some countries their private and social rights are limited as a result of family laws and Personal Status Codes.

In addition, women remain subject to all kinds of violence both in the private and public sphere. Domestic violence remains largely unreported and therefore underestimated. Some countries have conducted surveys, both quantitative and qualitative, to assess the incidence and prevalence of violence against women. Several countries have reformed Penal Codes and adopted national strategies and measures to combat gender-based violence.

1.2 Programme Context

The regional programme *Enhancing Equality between Men and Women in the Euromed region* (EGEP) has been developed within the framework of the Istanbul Ministerial Conclusions on "Strengthening the Role of Women in Society" and is of three years duration (May 2008-May 2011). It is funded through the European Neighbourhood and Partnership Instrument (ENPI) of the European Union. The programme is implemented in the nine countries of the southern part of the EU neighbouring area: Algeria, Egypt, Israel, Jordan, Lebanon, Morocco, the Occupied Palestinian Territory, Syria and Tunisia.

The **overall objective** of the programme is to support current dynamics to promote equality between men and women and to provide follow-up for the Istanbul Ministerial Conclusions, by building capacity of key actors -particularly **State actors**- and by supporting positive trends related to women's role in decision-making in the public as well as in the private domain.

The programme is based on **3 main purposes**:

- Purpose 1: Support and reinforce current dynamics that favour both de jure and de facto gender equality and that provide support to the promotion of women's rights in the region;
- Purpose 2: Improve understanding and knowledge of the various forms of violence against women;
- Purpose 3: Ensure that the Istanbul Ministerial Conclusions on "Strengthening the role of women in society" are being followed up.

The regional roundtable "Situation Analysis: Women's Rights and Gender Equality in the Mediterranean region" is implemented under the 1st Purpose of the programme. It builds on a process launched in 2009.

1.3 Process and Method

With the view of supporting current dynamics and strengthening the capacity of qualified actors in order to promote equality between men and women, **National Situation Analyses** have been conducted in eight partner countries: Algeria, Israel, Jordan, Lebanon, Morocco, the Occupied Palestinian Territory, Syria and Tunisia. The process has been twofold: the drafting by an independent expert of a *National Situation Analysis* report and the presentation, debating and validation of the findings of the report during a national multi-stakeholder workshop.

The overall objective of the *National Situation Analysis* is to improve the awareness of ongoing reforms (legislation, strategies, social and political dynamics and mechanisms) in the countries covered by the programme through a participatory diagnosis and to identify priorities for future action. It is based on a desk review and on interviews conducted with key actors. It identifies progress, constraints and perspectives in the following areas:

- The legal framework on women's human rights and gender equality, including the efforts made towards the ratification and accession to international Conventions and Conferences (CEDAW, CRC; Vienna, Cairo, Beijing, MD/MDGs) and legal reforms undertaken to align national legislation with international commitments. This also includes looking at existing institutional mechanisms in favour of women's rights and gender equality as well as initiatives taken by the State to promote awareness among the public and relevant authorities on women's rights;
- National policies, programmes and strategies as well as current dynamics in favour of women's rights and gender equality with a focus on women's civil and political rights, women's participation in decision-making and combating gender-based violence. This includes gender mainstreaming, national strategies and looking at resources allocated to promote gender equality as well as follow up and evaluation mechanisms;
- The synergy between CEDAW and the Istanbul Process.

In this sense, the National Situation Analysis provides a comprehensive overview and a baseline of the situation of women's human rights and gender equality in the southern Mediterranean countries. The findings and priorities, as validated by the participants of the national multi-stakeholder workshops, a total of 240 participants, are the basis of the **Regional Situation Analysis** report.

The *Regional Situation Analysis* report compiles the findings at the regional level. It gathers the main efforts undertaken in partner countries (legal reforms, policy measures, institutional mechanisms) but also the limits and constraints and proposes a set of perspectives for future action.

The **Regional Roundtable** held on 15, 16, 17 of March 2010 in Brussels (Belgium) aimed at presenting the aggregated regional findings in order to debate, consolidate, deepen and validate findings and priorities. Among others, the *Regional Situation Analysis* findings will inform the planning base of the activities of the EGEP programme to be conducted in 2010-2011, particularly in support of strengthening the capacity of State actors.

1.4 Objectives and Expected Results

The **specific objectives** of the Regional Roundtable were:

- To consolidate and update the Regional Situation Analysis report on the status and rights of women and gender equality in the Euromed region;
- To agree on a set of regional priorities and strategies relative to equality between men and women within the framework of the Istanbul and Marrakesh Ministerial Conclusions;
- To develop a participatory and comprehensive planning base for the EGEP programme in the nine partner countries (2010-2011) within the framework of the Istanbul and Marrakesh Ministerial Conclusions.

The **expected results** of the Regional Roundtable were:

- The endorsement of the findings of the Situation Analysis and related priorities at country and regional levels;
- The identification of the main capacity-building needs to support the implementation of national and regional priorities (EGEP, 2010-2011).

1.5 Participants

Eighty two (82) participants from Southern and Northern Euromed countries participated in the Regional Roundtable. The participants included representatives of:

- National Women's Machineries and other institutions in-charge of women's and gender equality issues;
- Government bodies and sectoral Ministries;
- Civil society organisations and women's organisations at national and regional levels;
- Donors and international organisations;
- Media;
- Independent experts that conducted the situation analysis studies and reports;
- Gender Focal Points of the European Union Delegations in the partner countries;
- European Commission.

2. Proceedings of the Roundtable

2.1 Opening Ceremony

The Regional Roundtable started with a welcoming ceremony and opening presentations made by the European Commission and the EGEP programme.

The EC (M. Ville, Head of Unit, Centralised operations for Europe, the Mediterranean and Middle-East, DG EuropeAid Co-operation Office) recalled the technical nature of the meeting, the importance to build consensus on the regional priorities and strategies for implementation in the context of the EGEP programme and the EC commitment with the promotion of gender equality, among others in the Euromed context.

The EGEP programme introduced the objectives, expected results and the process leading to the regional roundtable, emphasizing the role of the programme in the context of the follow up of the Istanbul Ministerial Conclusions and the key stakeholders of the programme: the National Women's Machineries and other State actors engaged in the promotion of women's rights and gender equality in the partner countries.

2.2 Introduction to the Istanbul Process

The EGEP programme contextualized and introduced what has become known as the Istanbul Process, encompassing the first Euromed Ministerial Conference on Women organized in Istanbul and its Conclusions on "Strengthening the Role of Women in Society" (2006), the implementation and the follow up processes and the second Marrakesh Ministerial Conference and Conclusions (2009).

The presentation emphasized the commitments towards women's rights and gender equality made since the establishment of the Euromed partnership in 1995 (the Barcelona process) and the EU framework in support of gender equality. It conducted an analysis of the Istanbul and the Marrakesh Ministerial Conclusions in terms of the civil, political, economic, social and cultural rights of women, highlighting the added value of the Istanbul Process to promote women's rights in the region.

Based on the implementation and follow up of the Ministerial Conclusions, the presentation illustrated the existence of a regional consensus around a set of priorities and perspectives for future action at the Euromed level. These are:

- Combat all forms of violence against women;
- Implement and monitor institutional strategies and dynamics for gender equality;
- Enhance women's participation in economic life.

2.3 Presentation of findings: National Situation Analysis

The presentations of the findings of the National Situation Analysis reports focused on the de jure and de facto situation of women in the partner countries, on main efforts undertaken to promote women's rights and gender equality, on the constraints, challenges and risks, and on the priorities and perspectives for future action. Each presentation was followed up by a debate with the plenary.

2.3.1 Algeria

Algeria ratified CEDAW in 1996 and submitted the last CEDAW Report in 2005. The ratification of the African Charter for Human Rights took place in 1987 but Algeria did not yet ratify its Protocol on women's rights (2003).

According to the study, the main efforts related to legal and institutional frameworks are:

- The reform of the Constitution (2009) and the introduction of article 31bis on the promotion of women's political rights through measures to enhance women's representation in elected assemblies (organic law foresees a quota of 30%);
- The reform of the Family Code in 2005, reinforcing the role of the judge and the public ministry, setting the age of marriage at 19 for both sexes and requiring mutual consent, reforming regulations for guardianship and suppression of women's obligation to obedience (except for dimensions related to tutorship and inheritance), among others;
- The reform of the Nationality Code in 2005, allowing women married to foreign men to transmit their nationality to their children;
- The amendment of the Penal Code (2005-2006) incriminating, among others, sexual harassment; and
- The creation of the delegated Ministry in charge of the Family and Women's Condition and National Council for Women and the Family (2006).

Progress is more tangible in the fields of education and legal frameworks, while slow and limited on political participation and representation.

Some of the identified priorities are:

- Continuing the efforts to harmonize the national legal framework with the international standards;
- Guarantying the application of the new laws in favour of gender equality;
- Introducing gender equality principles and concepts to education programs;
- Economic empowerment of women;
- Combating negative stereotypes;
- Improving the level of women in decision making; and
- Criminalizing domestic violence.

Further, the presentation also highlighted the lack of visibility and knowledge about the Istanbul Process.

Perspectives for future action include:

- Institutional strengthening of the National Women's Machinery: enhance the status of the Machinery from a delegated Ministry to a Ministry and enhance institutional, legal, human and financial resources;
- Conferring the National Council for Women and the Family the role of observatory by monitoring and national periodic reporting on the implementation of legal and policy commitments.

2.3.2 Israel

Israel signed CEDAW in 1980 and ratified it in 1991 with two reservations to two separate articles, Article 7(b) and 16(2). Reservation to Article 7(b) was entered because, according to Jewish law,

women are not qualified to give evidence in religious court and cannot be appointed as judges in religious courts. Reservation to Article 16(2) was entered because certain personal status matters, such as marriage and divorce, are currently exclusively governed by the religious courts. Israel has not signed or ratified the Optional Protocol to CEDAW.

While political participation and representation is still limited women's participation in the judiciary is fairly equal to men. Women judges composed 50 percent of all judges in 2008. In the work sphere despite the fact that women present half of the workforce, they earn, on average, 79 percent of men's salaries per hour. Israel passed amendments and adopted several mainstreaming tools to empower women in politics and in the workplace.

The fact that the personal status matters are still governed mainly by religious courts leaves margin to discriminations against women. In 2006, a landmark decision was handed down by the Supreme Court which allows same-sex couples who have been legally married abroad to have their marriages legally registered in Israel.

Gender-based violence is another abuse against women. However, after peaking in 2004, trafficking in women has since decreased due to series of measurements and efforts. The study recommends that the government strengthens tracking, prosecution and sentences of human traffickers to stem the amount of human trafficking in Israel, as well as provides adequate shelter, medical and psychological services for trafficking victims.

Another concern highlighted has been the situation of Jewish and Arab women. According to the Central Bureau of Statistics, only one in five Arab women participate in the civilian labour force. There is a shortage of jobs available to Arab women in Arab localities, a shortage of day care services, and a lack of transportation infrastructure within Arab cities and towns that impedes the mobility of Arab women. The study recommends a development policy targeting Arab Women, which should be designed and implemented within Arab localities to create more jobs.

Further priorities for future actions include enforcement of existing laws, enacting of civil laws for personal status, decreasing violence against women and creating a gender-responsive budget.

2.3.3 Jordan

Jordan ratified CEDAW and published it in the Official gazette on August 1st, 2007, and lifted the reservation on article 15, paragraph 4, which gives men and women the same rights with regard to the movement of persons and the freedom to choose their residence and domicile. It ratified the Convention on the Rights of the Child (16.10.2006).

Further, the Jordanian National Commission for Women started a holistic project in order to adopt gender-sensitive budget in 7 ministries.

The study identifies progress in the field of education, at the level of basic, secondary and higher education. Yet, there is a need to provide special support to the girls in small towns and rural areas.

Jordan adopted a law protecting from domestic violence and established a special department in the courts to deal with family issues and domestic violence but the protection mechanisms need regulations, training and awareness to implement their mandate. The study also states the need to conduct quantitative and qualitative studies on GBV.

Some of the priorities and perspectives identified are:

- Developing and using media means in order to affect costumes and combat stereotypes;

- Disseminating the results of the Istanbul Conference;
- Harmonizing national legislations with international agreements;
- Activating the role of the judiciary bodies in the implementation of the conventions at the national level;
- Adopting necessary measures to eliminate gender stereotypes and to modify the social and cultural patterns of conduct, for both men and women.

2.3.4 Lebanon

As presented by the programme, Lebanon ratified CEDAW in 1996 with reservations related to article 9 and Article 16. This was followed by the Creation of the National Commission for Lebanese Women to follow-up the implementation of CEDAW and the coordination with the international commission. Despite the fact that the Lebanese Constitution acknowledges equality of all citizens before the law as well as democratic freedoms, and despite legal reform efforts, discriminations persist against Lebanese women in family codes, labour laws, penal laws and the nationality law.

Lebanese society suffered and still suffers of diverse types of violence. While political violence has attracted attention on national and international levels, gender-based violence is often not considered a priority. The first efforts to combat GBV were initiated by Lebanese NGOs; organisations recently drafted legislation against domestic violence and lobbied to ensure its adoption. The Lebanese government in its statement of July 2008 emphasized the vital role of women in development and called for enforcing legislation and implementation of mechanisms to combat all forms of violence.

The study highlights low participation and representation of women on politics. Against this background, the Ministry of Interior launched a campaign to promote and raise women's participation in elections.

Among the priorities and perspectives for future action, the study identified:

- The removal of reservations to CEDAW and conducting campaigns and trainings about its provisions, especially at the governmental level;
- Coordinating efforts of all governmental and non-governmental, national, regional and international actors in order to federate resources and actions; r
- Reforming and adopting the legislation to ensure gender equality and combat GBV;
- Adopting a national strategy that clearly promotes gender equality and women human rights.

2.3.5 Morocco

Morocco ratified CEDAW in 1993 with reservations related to rights and obligations of spouses and nationality. It was noted that the last one is not relevant anymore since the adoption of the new nationality law. In legal matters, the main advances in Morocco are the adoption of new family and labour laws, the amendment of nationality and penal codes, and the introduction of the draft law addressing domestic violence.

At the policy level, Moroccan decision makers expressed a high commitment to achieve gender equality, a national strategy for equity and gender equality was adopted with a focus on women's political representation, combating violence against women and dissemination of a culture of equality in schools, religious spaces and the family. Morocco launched a gender-responsive budgeting initiative within which a Prime Minister's circular was sent to all departments calling for the integration of a gender approach in policy and planning. Further, measures to enhance

women's political participation were adopted. The study highlights that Moroccan civil society organizations are also playing a major role on combating discrimination and violence against women.

Yet, discriminations and challenges remain. Such as:

- Discrepancies between women's situation in rural and urban areas
- High levels of illiteracy;
- Economic and social discrimination and exploitation of little girls as domestic workers;
- Insufficient infrastructures to protect and help victims of violence; and
- Low political representation especially at the decision making level.

2.3.6 Occupied Palestinian Territory

Despite the fact that the Palestinian National Authority is not an independent state and cannot sign or ratify international conventions, there is a symbolic signature of CEDAW by the President of the Palestinian Authority (PA), Mahmud Abbas, on 8 March 2009. The Palestinian Basic Law also states that human rights and fundamental freedoms must be respected and protected and the education law emphasizes compulsory and free education for both females and males till the tenth grade. Yet, personal status laws are still discriminating against women.

An important measure taken by the PA is the adoption of the 'Document of the Rights of Palestinian Woman' by the President. The document prepared by the Ministry of Women's Affairs and women's organizations proposes steps to improve women's human rights in terms of political, social and economic rights and in the personal status law.

Violence is one of the major problems in Palestine. In addition to violations of the rights of Palestinian women linked to occupation, women also suffer from other forms of GBV in the public and private spheres and particularly domestic violence. The study identifies constraints with respect to stereotypes and traditional customs that downplay the impact of existing social and legal protection mechanisms. Some efforts are noted, especially on behalf of civil society.

Government efforts to address GBV include:

- The establishment of special units in the police stations to deal with the gender-based violence cases;
- The formation of the National Committee for Combating Violence against Women in 2008;
- The creation of the Presidential Committee to amend the articles in the Penal Code which relate to honour killing;
- The drafting of a law on domestic violence.

A special department in the Palestinian Bureau of Statistics specializes in conducting surveys and studies at the national level. In 2005, it conducted a survey on domestic violence. Yet, the presentation highlighted the concerns with early marriage, honour killings and persistent VAW.

The priorities highlighted by the study encompass:

- Ending Israeli occupation;
- Amending discriminatory laws and legislations;
- Raising awareness and changing stereotypes;
- Increasing women's political participation;

- Coordinating the efforts of all the governmental and non-governmental stakeholders to build up synergies and to avoid overlapping or conflicting work.

In addition, the study also highlighted the need to raise the visibility of the Istanbul Process and Conclusions.

2.3.7 Tunisia

Tunisia ratified CEDAW in 1985 with reservations to article 9 (nationality) and articles 15-16 (marriage). It ratified the facultative Protocol to CEDAW in 2008.

Gender equality and women's rights have been one of Tunisian decision makers' priorities for years. The Constitution of 1959 recognized women's rights since independence and the Personal Status Code (1956) and its subsequent reforms abolished polygamy, recognized civil marriage and judicial divorce, acknowledged the right of women to manage their belongings, and created family judges for legal divorce procedures and conciliation. Still, some discriminatory rules persist related to dowry, the father's parental authority, limited tutorship and guardianship for women, inheritance rights, and the lack of legal recognition of single mothers and their children.

On the political level, women's participation is significant if compared to other countries but still limited and not equal to men.

To combat GBV, an inter-ministerial commission was established to draft a national strategy to combat violence against women, under the leadership of the National Women's Machinery (MAFFEPA) and comprising representatives of civil society and donors.

Despite the efforts, inequalities persist especially in rural areas. There is also persistence of gender stereotypes and of the traditional division of roles between women and men. In practice, there exists a gap between legislation and the reality of the status of women, with a gap between legislations and the facts.

Against this background, the study identifies the following priorities:

- Gender mainstreaming;
- Combating VAW;
- Promote women's entrepreneurship;
- Strengthen capacities and participation of women in public and political life.

Among the perspectives for future actions, the presentation identified:

- Lifting CEDAW reservations;
- Strengthen the follow up of the Istanbul Process;
- Adopt legislation on VAW and strengthen measures to combat it.

Emphasis was also given to the lack of knowledge and visibility of the Istanbul Ministerial Conclusions and Process.

2.4 Presentation of findings: Regional Situation Analysis

The presentation introduced the objectives, process and method for conducting the regional situation analysis and the report. Based on the compilation of the national reports, a series of priorities emerge at the regional level. These are:

- **Legislation and legal reform** which includes removal of CEDAW reservations and reform of all aspects of national legislation to bring it into line with international commitments;
- Concerted actions against **gender-based violence** including in legislation, establishing institutions, plans and strategies, work to change public perceptions and train the judiciary and other service-deliverers to deal with domestic violence;
- Strengthening of **women's participation** in public life and their access to decision-making.

Other priorities mentioned by countries relate to the need to strengthening NWMs and related structures and ensuring that they are properly staffed and resourced to drive the work forward in collaboration with a wide range of government and civil society partners.

Based on the findings and priorities, a series of future perspectives for common work at the regional level can be identified in different areas. These include, among others:

- Combat discriminations in the overall legislative framework ;
- Withdraw reservations to CEDAW and adopt its Optional Protocol ;
- Reform of the Personal Status Codes ;
- Strengthen the application and enforcement of legislation ;
- Enforce women's civil and political rights;
- Support women's political participation and access to decision-making through quotas and other measures;
- Combat gender-based violence, including honour killings.

The findings also highlight the value added by the Istanbul Process and the need to strengthen the visibility and role of the Istanbul Ministerial Conclusions as a framework to support the promotion women's rights in the region.

The debate on the presentation of the regional findings raised a series of comments and recommendations:

- Update and crosscheck some of the information contained in the report;
- Bring greater visibility to and disseminate the Istanbul and Marrakesh Ministerial Conclusions;
- Raise awareness on legislation in favour of equality;
- Include EU Member States in the debates, programme and activities to learn from European experiences, consolidate exchanges and dialogue across the Euromed region and avoid isolation of Mediterranean countries.

2.5 Workgroup sessions

Based on the priorities debated and validated at the national and regional levels, **three major areas** were identified and parallel workgroup sessions were set up in each of the areas:

- **Workgroup 1: Legal frameworks and legal reforms, including CEDAW**
- **Workgroup 2: Gender-based violence**
- **Workgroup 3: Political participation and women in decision-making**

The **objectives** of the workgroups were:

- Deepen and update knowledge on the situation in the workgroup area by complementary, more accurate information coming from the participants;
- Validate the aggregated findings and priorities at the regional level;

- Identify good practices and experiences for learning and exchange in the workgroup area;
- Provide concrete inputs (needs, opportunities, resources) for programme planning (2010-2011) in the workgroup area with an emphasis on strengthening the capacity of State actors.

The main **outcomes** of the workgroups are as follows:

2.5.1 Workgroup 1: Legal frameworks and legal reforms

The workgroup gathered participants from southern Mediterranean partner countries and from EU countries, from national governments, civil society, and donor agencies. All participated actively in the debates which underlined the importance of CEDAW and of concentrating efforts on lifting the reservations to the Convention. A consensus was built on the central role of National Women's Machineries in this process and on the need to raise such bodies to a Ministerial status.

The **proceedings** of the workgroup were:

- The introduction of participants and their motivation to participate to the group and designation of a reporter;
- The presentation of the objectives, method and proceedings by the facilitator;
- The update by the respective country delegates of the situation concerning the legal situation of women especially about issues not yet included in the national report;
- The presentation of good practices concerning legal framework and reforms;
- Based on the good practices presented, the identification of maximum 5 to 8 priorities areas for common actions in the framework of the programme of other regional instruments.

The debates centred on the implementation of legal frameworks and on the adoption of new laws. The role of and cooperation with religious authorities was highlighted. A consensus was reached on the following **strategies**:

- Strengthen dialogue between governments and civil society at the regional level and exchange experiences;
- Consider national specificities;
- Establishing a legal framework that acknowledges participation of civil society;
- Investing in legal literacy and education;
- Developing advocacy and awareness-raising campaigns at the national level;
- Implementing/consolidating national follow up mechanisms;
- Partnerships with the media.

Based on these, **4 sub-priority areas** were defined and work evolved on developing perspectives for future action in each of the areas. In each of the areas, the **outcomes** were:

(1) **Adopt new legislations** to promote women's rights and gender equality, including:

- Ratify international conventions and amend national laws accordingly;
- Adopt an equal opportunities act;
- Change legal procedures;
- Use twinning schemes and study tours to support legal reform;
- Conduct studies and surveys for change;
- Undertake advocacy work and hearings;
- Disseminate good practices.

(2) **Lift CEDAW Reservations**, through the combination of different approaches:

- Workshops to discuss challenges and problems;
- Learning from reservations removal in other countries (EU and Mediterranean);
- Comparison papers;
- Work with parliamentary groups;
- Alliance with human rights groups and media;
- Enforcement of CEDAW by building coalitions, networks and committees;
- Promotion of legal work, rule of law, law literacy and legal aid.

(3) **Promote equality in law enforcement**, through:

- Setting up adequate tools and procedures;
- Allocating appropriate budgets to do the work;
- Raising awareness about rights;
- Training of law professionals;
- Monitoring bodies to check compliance;
- Promotion of the culture of the rule of law;
- Setting up legal aid services for women;
- Monitoring the implementation of judgements.

(4) **Ensure compliance with international norms** by:

- Strengthening the rule of law to insure international standards;
- Ratifying and respecting international commitments;
- Producing arguments for lifting the reservations.

2.5.2 Workgroup 2: Gender-based violence (GBV)

The workgroup gathered participants from southern Mediterranean and from EU countries, from governmental and non-governmental organisations, donor agencies and the media. The participants shared experiences on strategies and challenges implemented in the different countries to combat all forms of GBV. The debates and experiences addressed the definition of GBV, its prevalence, the legal framework, policy measures, services and other protection instruments as well as constraints and obstacles faced and ways to overcome them.

The **proceedings** of the workgroup were:

- The introduction of participants and institutions and the designation of a reporter;
- The presentation of the ToR of the workgroup: the objectives and the methods;
- The update by country delegates of the situation and of policies/measures concerning GBV;
- The exchange of experiences and good practises concerning institutional protection instruments;
- The presentation of good practices concerning legal frameworks and reforms on GBV;
- A discussion on the role of the media in combating GBV;
- A discussion of national and regional needs and priorities to combat GBV;
- The identification of priority areas for common actions in the framework of the programme and of other regional instruments.

The **main observations** were:

- Violence against women takes many forms: verbal, psychological and physical assault, rape, sexual violence and mutilation;

- It can take place in many different locations: in the home, the street, the workplace, in prison, in refugee camps, in the war zone; and at the hands of various perpetrators known or unknown to the victim;
- There is increasing recognition of the various forms of violence against women in the region despite the taboo character of the issue;
- NGOs and civil society have been the first to take initiatives in addressing GBV;
- All the partner countries of the programme have taken steps to address gender-based violence, for instance establishing national plans and strategies, although the impact and results are mixed;
- The main persisting gap is the lack of appropriate legislation to combat GBV and the enforcement of existing laws;
- There is a lack of quantitative research and data on GBV.

Although several efforts are underway, participants stressed the need to consolidate efforts and to build synergies between the different initiatives: national, government, civil society and international, donor-driven initiatives. There was a consensus on the importance to build/strengthen capacities of the different actors and on selecting **5 key strategies** for future actions. For each strategy, the **recommendations** are the following:

(1) Legal and institutional reform

- Implement institutional, political and legal reforms and procedures to, among others, criminalise domestic violence and support witness-protection;
- Criminalise of all forms of GBV;
- Set up/develop institutional mechanisms, both government and independent, to monitor law enforcement, and establish penalties and sanctions for non-compliance and/or rewards for full compliance;
- Create and strengthen public services in charge of psychological support, legal assistance, counselling, implement special programmes and train service providers.

(2) Policies and dynamics

- Design a communication strategy to prevent GBV and raise awareness, sensitise and mobilise social partners and the general public;
- Establish a national consensus on a clear and complete definition of GBV as a manifestation of power imbalance which embraces sexual harassment, conjugal violence, 'honour killing' and female genital mutilation (FGM);
- Address GBV in a coordinated and multi-sectoral way (legislation, awareness-creation, research, training, social protection), including government and civil society actors;
- Build capacity and train actors, with a specific focus on social workers, law enforcement officials and journalists.

(3) Data and analysis

- Conduct surveys and quantitative studies on GBV;
- Conduct researches and analysis to define the role of the different institutions (mosques, schools, media, family, etc.).

(4) Build synergies at national and regional level

- Exchange experiences between countries to share good practices and support decision-making;
- Support the establishment of national and regional civil society networks on combating GBV.

(5) **Public awareness and media**

- Engage boys and men in discussions and programmes to address GBV and combat practices such as female genital mutilation and honour killing;
- Increase awareness/knowledge of judges, lawyers, magistrates and law administering officers on women's human rights;
- Mainstream gender equality principles into university courses and training for students;
- Use media and public figures to combat GBV.

2.5.3 Workgroup 3: Political participation and women in decision-making

The workgroup gathered participants from southern Mediterranean partner countries and from EU countries, from national governments, embassies, civil society, research institutes, donor agencies and the media. All participated actively in the presentations and the debates and shared a wide array of practical experiences, strategies, barriers and ways to overcome them in enhancing women's participation in decision-making. The debates and experiences addressed women's participation in various spaces: political parties, local associations, Parliament, government, trade unions, among others.

The **proceedings** of the workgroup were:

- The introduction of participants and designation of a reporter ;
- The presentation of the objectives, method and proceedings by the facilitator ;
- Building a consensus and common understanding of "political participation and women in decision-making" ;
- Identify the main challenges and issues related to "political participation and women in decision-making" ;
- Presentations of lessons learned from practice made by each participant ;
- Presentation of the activities of CAWTAR in this field and recommendations ;
- Identify and validate a set of 3 sub-priorities in this area ;
- Draw up and validate a draft framework for conducting activities in each of the 3 sub-areas.

The **main outcomes** of the workgroup were:

(1) **Building a consensus**

The workshop started with a rapid presentation by the facilitator of the main elements related to women in decision-making encompassed in the national situation analysis reports. These were debated, updated and complemented by participants and a consensus was reached on a common understanding and basis for future work in this area. This is: although women's political participation is a larger area, most experiences and interests center on **women's participation in decision-making**.

The importance of a series of approaches to enhance women's participation was underlined by participants. These can be summed up as:

- Enhancing women's skills and capacities for leadership;
- Building role models to present alternatives to traditional norms and values;
- Combating stereotypes in education materials and other vehicles of norms;
- Adopting legislation underpinning equality in the private sphere and reform Family Codes;
- Raising awareness of other actors: political parties, institutions, men, the electorate;

- Adopting measures in support of participation: positive action, quotas;
- Supporting local engagement of women at the community level and building a support basis for women political candidates.

(2) Identifying key strategies

Based on the presentations of experiences by participants and by CAWTAR, a mapping of the key strategies to support women's political participation and women in decision-making, such as:

- Awareness-raising of all stakeholders;
- Enhance the capacity of women through trainings;
- Share learning and experiences at the regional level;
- Lobby government and institutions for the adoption of measures such as quotas and equality; policies (role of civil society)
- Networking and alliance-building among women candidates and representatives, both through formal and informal networks;
- Monitoring developments and strategies in this field through the creation of an Observatory and a comprehensive database.

(3) Define perspectives for future action

Based on the above, the facilitator wrapped up the debates into 3 different approaches which were validated by all participants. The group worked on selecting, detailing and validating the beneficiaries, focus, method and recommendations for each approach in order to provide concrete inputs for future action in this area. The 3 selected approaches are:

(3.1) Awareness-raising activities

- *Beneficiaries:* decision-makers (political, economic, media; public and private sectors), women and youth, the general public;
- *Focus:* presenting models of women different from traditional norms and values and disseminate a culture of rights;
- *Method:* campaigns, media spots, public opinion polls, thematic days, sms campaigns, use of the internet and social networks such as Facebook and others, exploit the political calendar at regional and national levels to attract attention, include youth in the production of messages;
- *Recommendation:* work with the media.

(3.2) Capacity-building and training activities

- *Beneficiaries:* NWM, gender focal points, women's caucuses in elected assemblies, political parties, regional organizations, media, universities, women's organizations, professional organizations, NGOs;
- *Focus:* enhance capacities of women in decision-making by strengthening knowledge and skills on gender, leadership, communication, negotiation, networking, technical issues (budgets), and ICT;
- *Method:* training of trainers and networking at the regional level, including e-training methodologies, review of good practices and practical exercises, and the adaptation/revision of existing training materials (manuals, video, audio);
- *Recommendation:* engage national and regional research centres and institutions to build on existing work (f.i. CAWTAR).

(3.3) **Regional learning and networking activities**

- *Beneficiaries:* NWM, universities, NGOs, regional/national resource centres, political parties, media
- *Focus:* Establish a catalogue of good practices and existing practices in the Euromed region, build a knowledge platform and share information on experiences at the Euromed level
- *Method:* virtual locus that can function as an observatory and resource base, international experts to set/validate criteria and definition for good practices and identify and compile them, edition of a website with on-line discussions
- *Recommendation:* build on and enhance the cross-regional scope of the work of national and regional resource centres

2.6 Wrap up of the proceedings and Closing Ceremony

The wrap up of the plenary and working group sessions and of the debates pointed at 5 main issues debated during the roundtable:

(1) **Rule of law and culture of rights:** it is a central issue when it comes to legal frameworks, the basic for every action to improve equality. It concerns the bringing in line of national with international law, the removal of old laws or enacting of new laws, and raises the question of universality and the indivisibility of equality laws.

(2) **Complementarity:** it means the relation between regional and national programmes or schemes, between actors: governmental and NGO, between different EU policies and programmes or countries policies.

(3) **Enlarging the scope:** the roundtable has highlighted the insisting demand from participants to exchange with more and other stakeholders especially from EU countries, to encourage peer learning and the exchange of knowledge and experiences.

(4) **Resources:** several debates took place during the roundtable, expressing concerns with sufficient and adequate human and financial means. There is an urgent need to enhance capacities of: NWM, professionals (judges, health, education, media), to train, exchange and educate. Financial resources are a central issue. The findings have highlighted that NWM lack sufficient budget allocations, that they have a weak status, and that they are over-dependent on international donors.

(5) **Methods and tools:** the roundtable has highlighted that there are many ways to address the needs and priorities: legal, institutional and policy means, but also educational and communication techniques such as advocacy, coalition building and media work, and knowledge building and research means such as data gathering and surveys. A variety of tools and techniques was presented and discussed during the roundtable, highlighting the complementarity of different approaches and actors.

After giving an overview of the next steps and follow up of the roundtable, the EC and the EGEP programme thanked all participants and concluded and closed the roundtable by underlining the importance of consolidating ownership over the programme process and activities at the country level and by reiterating the commitment of the EC to address the issues raised and debated during the roundtable in the context of the EGEP programme and through other existing mechanisms.

3. Outcomes of the regional roundtable

3.1 Agreements and next steps

The participants of the regional roundtable have agreed on the following:

- **National Situation Analysis reports**

The findings of the National Situation Analysis, already validated at the country level, have been presented, debated, commented and updated. Based on the inputs of participants during the regional roundtable, the EGEP programme will finalize and harmonize the national reports which will be shared with the programme's primary beneficiaries, the National Women's Machineries, in each partner country for eventual updates. The final reports will be shared with all participants of the roundtable. They will be available on the programme's website (<http://www.euromedgenderequality.org/>).

- **Regional Situation Analysis report**

Based on the national reports, the findings of the Regional Situation Analysis have been presented, debated and commented. The EGEP programme will finalize the regional report based on the inputs from the roundtable and on the latest updates from the partner countries. The final regional Situation Analysis report will be shared with all participants of the roundtable. It will be available on the programme's website (<http://www.euromedgenderequality.org/>).

- **3 priority areas for future work**

Three priority areas have been identified and validated at the regional level:

- *Legal frameworks and legal reform;*
- *Gender-based violence;*
- *Women's political participation and decision-making.*

Workgroup sessions have outlined future perspectives for action in each of the priority areas. These include building a consensus on a common understanding and approach, identifying experiences and lessons relevant to each priority area, mapping key strategies, actors, beneficiaries and providing recommendations to address them.

The process will include consultations with National Women's Machineries in the partner countries on the most relevant way to integrate the roundtable's findings/recommendations into activities to enhance the capacity of national actors, primarily State actors. These activities will be conducted at the regional level.

3.2 Recommendations

The debates and evaluation of the roundtable and of the Situation Analysis process have pointed out a series of recommendations:

- **Peer learning**

The most useful elements cited by participants have been the workgroup sessions and the regional exchanges, dialogue and networking. Participants have underlined the importance to share experiences and concrete tools in order to deepen their strategies and work in favour of gender equality and women's rights in their countries. They have emphasized the added value of learning from others on approaches to overcome traditional barriers to gender equality, particularly at the legal, institutional and policy levels. Being able to reflect jointly on common challenges, although in different contexts, is also valued as a way to build support networks beyond one's own reality.

In this sense, participants have recommended that the programme further supports the organisation of regional learning events, for instance by working more in-depth on concrete experiences and good practices on a specific topic, a particular thematic areas and/or strategy to promote gender equality.

- ***Dialogue and exchange with European actors***

Building on the above, participants have expressed a particular interest in promoting dialogue and learning with participants from EU Member States. They expressed interest in sharing experiences with Northern countries and recommended the inclusion of European participants in the debates, programme and activities of the programme. The objective is twofold: to consolidate exchanges and dialogue across the Euromed region and to avoid isolation of Mediterranean countries, particularly in a context of rising conservatism.

- ***Visibility of the Istanbul and Marrakesh Ministerial Conclusions***

The National Situation Analysis reports and the roundtable proceedings have highlighted the limited visibility and knowledge of stakeholders about the Istanbul Process. Participants agreed that the value added by the Istanbul Process to address gender equality and women's rights needs to be stressed and shared with a broader audience in order for it to reach its potential. Participants recommended to bring greater visibility to and to disseminate the Istanbul and Marrakesh Ministerial Conclusions on "Strengthening the role of women in society". They welcomed the presentation given during the roundtable to this end.

- ***Ownership of the programme***

The EC and the EGEP programme emphasized the importance of consolidating ownership of national actors and particularly of primary stakeholders, the National Women's Machineries, over the programme and outputs. While reiterating the EC commitment with the programme and with gender equality, it was acknowledged that only through full ownership of the programme at the country level will it be able to support national and regional dynamics in favour of gender equality. In this sense, the roundtable participants also emphasized the complementarity between different actors and approaches, governmental and non-governmental. Recommendations were made to avoid duplication of efforts and to strengthen collaboration and build synergies with initiatives implemented in the region and in the partner countries by national and international actors.