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EuroMed Feminist Initiative  
المبادرة النسوية الأورومتوسطية  
Initiative Féministe EuroMed



## Press Release

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Tunis, Tunisia

### Regional Forum on Combating Discrimination in Legislation Stresses Need to Respect Women's Rights

One hundred and fifty-four participants from eighty-seven civil society organisations, together with decision makers, ministerial representatives, legal and gender experts, as well as media from twelve countries from the South Mediterranean gathered on 10-11 December in Tunis for the **Regional Forum on Combating Discrimination in Legislation**. The participants discussed ways to better implement international women's human rights conventions and agreements, especially the [4<sup>th</sup> UfM Ministerial Declaration on women's rights](#) (Cairo, 27 November 2017) and the Council of Europe Convention on preventing and combating violence against women and domestic violence ([Istanbul Convention](#), 2011). In addition to raising awareness about the importance of the conventions to protect women's rights, the Forum also aimed to engage decision makers in taking action.

The Regional Forum was held under the **Regional Campaign on Zero Tolerance for Violence Against Women and Girls (VAWG)**, which was launched by EuroMed Feminist Initiative (EFI) with a consortium of nine women's rights organizations in Algeria, Egypt, Jordan, Lebanon, Morocco, Palestine, and Tunisia. The campaign is part of the regional project "**Combating Violence against Women in the Southern Mediterranean Region**", funded by the European Union (EU).

Mr. Jean-Pierre Sacaze, Head of Sector at the EU Delegation to Tunisia, stressed the alarming scale of the problem: "One in three women in Europe has experienced physical and/or sexual violence. Therefore, our goal stays clear: eliminate violence against women and girls. The EU will stay at the forefront of this international mobilization to defend the rights of every woman and every girl to live free and safe."

Ms. Salwa Kennou, President of AFTURD, Tunisia underlined that the adoption of comprehensive equality laws and the allocation of mechanisms and ways to implement them are the cornerstone for the protection of women's rights. Ms. Lilian Halls-French, Co-President of EuroMed Feminist Initiative emphasized the importance of the Forum as a major step to engage with decision makers in the process of policy dialogue for developing comprehensive laws addressing all forms of VAWG on national level.

Participants also discussed regional priorities for abolishing and amending the legal discrimination of women in Personal Status Laws and Penal Codes, in alignment with international norms and legal frameworks such as the Istanbul Convention, and the UN Convention on the Elimination of Discrimination against Women (CEDAW). They agreed on the need to develop and adopt comprehensive laws combating



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VAWG in each country and discussed common advocacy actions. The central role of the Regional Civil Society Observatory on VAWG, launched in March 2019 in Jordan was highlighted as a key to supporting the adoption and the implementation of such laws, and to follow up on the governmental commitments to the implementation of the 4<sup>th</sup> UfM Ministerial Declaration on women's rights.

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