



Draft agenda



LAUNCH OF THE MENA-OECD WOMEN'S ECONOMIC EMPOWERMENT FORUM

Closing the gender gap for competitiveness

7-8 October 2017

Cairo Marriott Hotel & Omar Khayyam Casino
Zamalek, Cairo, Egypt



Context

No country has fully closed the gender gap. Gender inequalities continue to hinder countries' efforts to foster inclusive growth and social well-being while building prosperous economies. All economies stand to gain from empowering women to use their full economic potential, as this directly impacts countries' competitiveness, productivity and social well-being. In the Middle East and North Africa (MENA), the gender gap in economic participation is significant, and women's participation rates in the labour force are the lowest in the world, with an average of 24% compared to over 60% in OECD countries.

The [MENA-OECD 2016 Ministerial Meeting in Tunis](#) called for a better understanding of the challenges facing women in the region and highlighted the need to identify the right policy measures to empower women and allow them to fully contribute to their economies. The MENA-OECD Initiative, through its two pillars on Competitiveness and Governance, works closely with MENA countries to translate gender equality goals into concrete results, guided by the standards enshrined in the 2013 OECD *Recommendation on Gender Equality in Education, Employment and Entrepreneurship* and the 2015 OECD *Recommendation on Gender Equality in Public Life*.

Within this framework, the OECD is pleased to launch the **MENA-OECD Women's Economic Empowerment Forum (WEEF)** under the aegis of H.E. Dr Sahar Nasr, Minister of Investment and International Co-operation, Egypt and H.E. Marie-Claire Swärd Capra, Ambassador of Sweden to Algeria.

Objectives of the MENA-OECD Women's Economic Empowerment Forum:

- **Provide a regional platform** for government and non-government representatives from OECD and MENA economies to foster discussions, exchange experiences and good practices on methods and actions that enable women's economic empowerment;
- **Monitor countries' policy actions and regulatory developments** to advance equality, non-discrimination and women's economic and social inclusion;
- **Advance gender mainstreaming** in critical policy areas such as investment, trade, employment, skills, entrepreneurship and support to conflict-affected economies;
- **Identify strategic data collection needs** to assess women's economic empowerment and provide support for strategic gender data development and collection.

About the conference

The conference will open with the launch of the Women's Economic Empowerment Forum and a presentation of the new OECD publication ***Women's Economic Empowerment in Selected MENA Countries: The impact of legal frameworks in Algeria, Egypt, Jordan, Libya, Morocco and Tunisia***. Subsequent sessions will focus on different challenges and opportunities for closing the gender gap in the region.

The event will bring together a range of experts on women's economic empowerment and gender-sensitive governance from MENA and OECD countries, including high level government officials and representatives from the private sector, international organisations, civil society and academia.

We are especially pleased that this event will take place in Cairo during the Year of the Egyptian Woman, which has been underpinned by the newly released "Egyptian Women Vision 2030: Women Empowerment Strategy". The organisers are also grateful for the support of the Arab Administrative Development Organisation (ARADO), the Swedish International Development Cooperation Agency, UN Women and the Union of Arab Banks.

This meeting will be followed, later this year, by a high-Level Regional Conference in Cairo on "**Breaking Barriers: Towards equality between women and men in politics**". It will be organised by the National Council for Women (NCW) in Egypt and the MENA-OECD Governance Programme within the framework of the G7 Deauville Partnership MENA Transition Fund.

Event Overview

Saturday, 7 October

Welcoming remarks

Launch of the OECD publication
Women's Economic Empowerment in selected MENA Countries: The Impact of legal frameworks in Algeria, Egypt, Jordan, Libya, Morocco and Tunisia

Coffee break & press briefings

Session I: Women's Economic Empowerment and the Sustainable Development Goals

Lunch

Session II a:
Balancing Personal Responsibilities and Career Opportunities for Women

Session II b:
Women and the Informal Economy

Coffee break

Session III: Institutional Set-up and Best Practices in Support of Gender Equality

Conclusions of the day

Sunday, 8 October

Welcoming remarks

Session IV a:
Financial Literacy for Women

Session IV b:
Data Collection and Informed Policy Decisions

Coffee break

Conclusions of all sessions

Closing remarks

Background documentation

- ▶ OECD (2017) *Women's Economic Empowerment in Selected MENA Countries: The impact of legal frameworks in Algeria, Egypt, Jordan, Libya, Morocco and Tunisia*.
- ▶ OECD brochure on *Women's Economic Empowerment in Selected MENA Countries: The impact of legal frameworks in Algeria, Egypt, Jordan, Libya, Morocco and Tunisia*
- ▶ OECD (2017) *The Pursuit of Gender Equality: An Uphill Battle*, Executive Summary.
- ▶ *USB key with major OECD gender publications*

Programme

| Saturday 7 October 2017 | |
|-------------------------|---|
| 9.00 – 9.45 | <p>Welcoming remarks</p> <p><i>H.E. Dr Sahar Nasr</i>, Minister of Investment and International Co-operation, Egypt, Co-Chair of the Women’s Economic Empowerment Forum (WEEF) <i>H.E. Marie-Claire Swärd Capra</i>, Ambassador of Sweden to Algeria, Co-Chair of the Women’s Economic Empowerment Forum (WEEF) <i>Ms Gabriela Ramos</i>, OECD Chief of Staff, G20 Sherpa and Special Counsellor to the Secretary-General</p> <p>Other remarks:</p> <p><i>Dr Maya Morsi</i>, President, the National Council for Women, Egypt <i>H.E Jean Oghassabian</i>, Minister of State for Women's Affairs, Lebanon</p> <p>Group Picture</p> |
| 9.45 – 10.45 | <p>Launch of the OECD publication <i>Women’s Economic Empowerment in Selected MENA Countries: The Impact of Legal Frameworks in Algeria, Egypt, Jordan, Libya, Morocco and Tunisia</i></p> <p>This session will provide an overview of the key findings of the publication, followed by presentations on key developments and commitments by governments of countries covered by the publication.</p> <p>Chair: <i>H.E. Dr. Sahar Nasr</i>, Minister of Investment and International Co-operation, Egypt, Co-Chair of the WEEF</p> <p>Moderator: <i>H.E. Marie-Claire Swärd Capra</i>, Ambassador of Sweden to Algeria, Co-Chair of the WEEF</p> <p>Key note address: <i>Ms Gabriela Ramos</i>, OECD Chief of Staff, G20 Sherpa and Special Counsellor to the Secretary-General</p> <p>Panellists:</p> <p><i>Mr Mustapha Mekideche</i>, Vice President, National Council for Economic and Social Affairs, Algeria <i>Ms Nuha Zaideh</i>, Deputy General Secretary, National Commission for Women, Jordan <i>H.E. Asma Alostta</i>, Minister of Women and Social Development Affairs, Libya <i>H.E. Lahcen Daoudi</i>, Minister of General Affairs and Governance, Morocco <i>Ms Imen Zahouani Houimel</i>, Director of Women’s affairs, Ministry of Women, Family and Childhood, Tunisia <i>H.E. Dr. Nasser Al-Qahtani</i>, Director General, ARADO</p> |

| | |
|---------------|---|
| 10.45 - 11.15 | Coffee break and press briefing |
| 11.15 - 12.30 | Session I: Women’s Economic Empowerment and the Sustainable Development Goals |
| | <p>The internationally-agreed “Agenda 2030 for Sustainable Development” holds great promise for achieving gender equality and empowering women and girls. Sustainable Development Goal 5 (SDG5) recognises gender equality as a universal driver of sustainable development and asserts the need to accelerate efforts to end gender inequality. This session will discuss the importance of advancing gender equality and women’s empowerment as a means towards achieving SDG 5 and the other SDGs. The concept of women’s economic empowerment in the MENA region will be unpacked and MENA countries will share challenges, opportunities and current actions to advance women’s economic empowerment in the framework of the SDGs. The role of OECD in general and the WEEF in particular to contribute to the acceleration of progress on gender equality and women’s empowerment in the framework of the SDGs will also be discussed.</p> <p>Chair: Mr Andreas Schaal, Director, OECD Global Relations Secretariat</p> <p>Panellists: H.E. Dr. Sahar Nasr, Minister of Investment and International Co-operation, Egypt, Co-Chair of the WEEF H.E. Bassam Al Khatib, Deputy Minister of Women’s Affairs, Palestinian Authority Mr Mohammad Naciri, Director, UN Women Regional Office for the Arab States Ms Nada El Agizy, Director, Sustainable Development and International Cooperation, League of Arab States Ms Samira Hadjdilani, President, Algerian Network of Businesswomen and Vice-President, Network of Women Maghreb Leaders Ms Charlotte Goemans, Policy Analyst, OECD Global Relations Secretariat</p> |
| 12.30 – 13.30 | Lunch |
| 13.30 – 15.00 | Session II A: Balancing Personal Responsibilities and Career Opportunities for Women (Parallel to Session II B) |
| | <p>This session will revolve around the importance of creating an enabling environment for women to engage in the economy and achieve a healthy work-life balance. Women’s higher levels of training and their aspirations to labour force participation would benefit economies at large. However, their ability to fully engage in the economy may be hampered by their role as care providers. Gender-sensitive family and labour law provisions and their social interpretation impact women’s rights and positions in the family and in the workplace. Would legal amendments pertaining to social roles, including leadership and social protection measures, suffice to ensure that women and men can access decent jobs and lead a productive work life or are complementary measures necessary to support women's economic participation?</p> |

| | |
|----------------------|---|
| | <p>Chair: <i>Mr Majdi Hassan</i>, Executive Director, Arab Institute for Business Leaders, Tunisia</p> <p>Panellists: <i>Ms Gabriela Ramos</i>, OECD Chief of Staff, G20 Sherpa and Special Counsellor to the Secretary-General <i>Ms Nicola Ehlermann</i>, Head of the MENA-OECD Competitiveness Programme <i>H.E. Amal Jaddou</i>, Assistant Minister on European Affairs and Head of the European Department, Ministry of Foreign Affairs, Palestinian Authority <i>Ms Abir Chebaro</i>, Advisor to the Minister of State for Women's Affairs, Lebanon <i>Ms Nathalie Pilhes</i>, Special Adviser, Interministerial Delegate for International Technical Cooperation, Prime Minister's Office , France</p> |
| 13.30 – 15.00 | Session II B: Women in the Informal Economy (Parallel with Session II A) |
| | <p>Informal employment constitutes a significant proportion of employment in the MENA region, with women making up a disproportionate percentage of workers in the informal sector. This is due to the scope of the informal sector but also to the limited engagement of women as formal employees, which is hindered by employers' assumptions that women will withdraw from, or reduce their engagement in, employment due to family commitments. In addition, certain sectors are not regulated. Informal sector workers and informal employees in most cases do not have access to an official social protection scheme. Participants will discuss the necessity to introduce legal amendments, including the extension of social protection provisions, to specific sectors and categories of workers. They may also consider the desirability of revisiting the impact of social protection measures allocated to men and women as well as the implementation of policy reforms aimed at facilitating the transition into the formal economy.</p> <p>Chair : <i>Ms Nadareh Chamlou</i>, Board member, Cawtar, Tunisia</p> <p>Panellists : <i>Mr Carlos Conde</i>, Head of the Middle East and North Africa Division, OECD <i>Ms Emanuela Pozzan</i>, Senior Gender Specialist, ILO Regional Office for the Arab States <i>Ms Ekram El-Huni</i>, Co-founder of Jusoor, Egypt <i>Ms Nuha Zaideh</i>, Deputy General Secretary, Jordanian National Commission for Women</p> |
| 15.00 – 15.30 | Coffee break |

| | |
|----------------------|---|
| 15.30 – 16.30 | Session III: Institutional Set-Up and Best Practices in Support of Gender Equality |
| | <p>Most MENA governments have established institutions mandated to advance the gender equality agenda. Such institutions play an important role in supporting the development of policies, programmes and tools enabling greater gender equality and targeting remaining gender gaps. Concerted policy dialogue and policy development involving the public and private sectors, civil society and academia, under the leadership of governments, and particularly of national gender equality institutions, is critical to realising greater women’s agency and economic empowerment. This session will explore the role of gender equality institutions in advancing the gender equality agenda while also hearing how diverse players in society can contribute to meaningful change. Participants will also share their experiences and good practices for the establishment of effective and efficient women's machineries involving central government leadership as well a range of diverse stakeholders.</p> <p>Chair: <i>Ms Tatyana Teplova</i>, Deputy Head, Governance Reviews and Partnerships Division, OECD</p> <p>Panellists: <i>Ms Imen Zahouani Houimel</i>, Director General of Women and Family Affairs, Ministry of Women, Family and Children, Tunisia <i>Ms Nahla Zeitoun</i>, Senior Social Protection Specialist, World Bank <i>Mr Maher Al Mahrouq</i>, Director General, Jordan Chamber of Industry <i>Lara Ferguson Vázquez de Parga</i>, Legal Advisor- Support Unit Director, Institute of Women and for Equal Opportunities, State Secretariat of Social Services and Equality, Spain</p> |
| 16.30 – 16:45 | Conclusions of the Day |
| | <p><i>Ms Nicola Ehlermann</i>, Head of the MENA-OECD Competitiveness Programme, OECD</p> |

| Sunday 8 October 2017 | |
|------------------------------|--|
| 9:00 – 9.30 | Opening of the second day |
| | <i>H.E. Marie-Claire Swärd Capra</i> , Ambassador of Sweden to Algeria, WEEF Co-Chair |
| 9.30 – 11.00 | Session IV A: Access to Finance and Financial Literacy for Women (Parallel with Session IV B) |
| | <p>Access to financial products and services has been identified by many as a major challenge facing women entrepreneurs, and studies have shown that this problem originates both in the financing practices of banks as well as the level of financial knowledge of women entrepreneurs in the MENA region. This session will discuss how financial institutions' may adapt their lending policies focused on collateral, credit history, business experience and the business strategy of prospective borrowers to business women's specific needs. It will also consider how to increase women's financial and economic knowledge and confidence through financial literacy, which will allow them to successfully approach banks and other financial institutions to solicit funding.</p> <p>Chair: <i>Mr Ali Awdeh</i>, Director of Research Department, Union of Arab Banks</p> <p>Panellists:</p> <p><i>Ms Nahla Khaddage Bou Diab</i>, Chief Operating Officer of Al-Mawarid Bank, Lebanon</p> <p><i>Ms Monica Carco</i>, Senior Industrial Development Officer, UNIDO</p> <p><i>Ms Adele Atkinson</i>, Senior Policy Analyst, Financial Education, OECD</p> <p><i>Ms Ahlam Janahi</i>, Board Member, Bahrain Chamber of Commerce & Industry, Bahrain</p> <p><i>Ms. Sammar Al-Glid</i>, Microfund, Jordan</p> <p><i>Ms Merit Al Sayed</i>, Strategy and Projects Implementation Manager, Arab African International Bank, Egypt</p> |

| | |
|----------------------|--|
| 9.30 - 11.00 | Session IV B: Data Collection and Informed Policy Decisions (Parallel with Session IV A) |
| | <p>In order to measure gender inequality and assess the impact of the latter, data and evidence are crucial. National statistics offices have made progress collecting gender-disaggregated data, which are used by international agencies to develop internationally comparable data series and indicators. However, the overall availability of gender-disaggregated data in the MENA region is still limited. This session will address the necessity to produce gender-disaggregated data on economic participation in order to enable governments to enact informed policies that support female employment and entrepreneurship and to monitor these policies on a systematic basis. Ongoing efforts in terms of data collection to report against the SDGs will also be a topic of discussion.</p> <p>Chair: Ms Wafaa Maged, General Manager of Gender Statistics, Central Agency for Public Mobilization And Statistics, Egypt</p> <p>Panellists: Ms Zsuzsanna Lonti, Senior Head of the statistics and indicators unit in the Budgeting and Public Expenditures Division, OECD Governance Directorate Ms Chadia Larhrari, Head of Division, Equality Programmes, Ministry of Women's Affairs, Morocco Ms Randa AbulHosn, UNDP Director Egypt (tbc) Ms Marie-José Char, Team Leader, Enhancement of the Business Environment in the Southern Mediterranean, GIZ Ms Reem El Saady, European Bank for Reconstruction and Development (EBRD) Ms Mayyade Abu Jaber, Founder & CEO World of Letters (WoL), Jordan</p> |
| 11.00-11.30 | Coffee break |
| 11.30 - 12.30 | Reporting of all sessions and Conclusions |
| | <p>Chairs will present the summaries of the different sessions and the resulting recommendations followed by closing remarks.</p> <p>H.E. Marie-Claire Swärd Capra, Ambassador of Sweden to Algeria</p> <p>OECD representative</p> |

The OECD: supporting women's economic empowerment in the MENA region and across the world

Building on its expertise, the OECD launched the **2010 Gender Initiative** and set a number of standards on policy reforms to enhance gender equality. The *Council Recommendation on Gender Equality in Education, Employment and Entrepreneurship* was adopted in 2013, followed by the OECD 2015 Recommendation of the *Council on Gender Equality in Public Life* and by the 2015 update of the *G20/OECD Principles of Corporate Governance*.

In 2017, recent policy developments on gender equality were reported to the OECD Ministerial Council Meeting. They are discussed in detail in the OECD publication *The Pursuit of Gender Equality: An Uphill Battle* which illustrates that progress in OECD countries has been slow and that there is a strong need for further policy action to close gender gaps in education, employment, entrepreneurship and public life.

The OECD's engagement to advance gender equality spans a variety of OECD committees and regional initiatives such as the G20 and through the **MENA-OECD Initiative on Governance and Competitiveness for Development**. The work by the MENA-OECD Programmes on Competitiveness and Governance are complementary and build on each other's findings to supporting gender equality in the MENA region. Going forward, they will increasingly collaborate and develop synergies.

www.oecd.org
www.oecd.org/gender
www.oecd.org/mena

The **MENA-OECD Competitiveness Programme** has been working for over a decade to advance women's economic empowerment in the region. Building on the 2007 *Declaration on Fostering Women's Entrepreneurship* (English | and the 2009 *Action Plan on Fostering Women's Entrepreneurship and Employment*, the Programme created a OECD-MENA Women's Business Forum (WBF), which grew to become a network of over 700 participants from MENA and OECD countries governments, the private sector, academia and civil society.

The **MENA-OECD Women's Economic Empowerment Forum (WEEF)**, launched in October 2017, will build on this work, seeking to address critical issues such as: equal access to economic opportunities, challenges in implementing legal reforms, gendered data collection, and achieving Sustainable Development Goals and benefit from the input of reputed experts from other regional and international organisations.

www.oecd.org/mena/competitiveness

In the framework of the **MENA-OECD Governance Programme**, the MENA-OECD Gender Focus Group has provided a forum for policy dialogue and capacity building since its inception in 2009. It promotes legal equality as well as equality of opportunity and political voice, building on the 2015 *OECD Council Recommendation on Gender Equality in Public Life*.

The OECD publication *"Women in Public Life: Gender, Law and Policy in the Middle East and North Africa"* provides recommendations on how to eliminate gender-based discrimination, strengthen the institutional framework for gender equality and enable women's access to decision making posts in the public sector.

The OECD *Policy Toolkit for Gender in Governance* targets OECD member and partner countries while aiming to support them in the implementation of the OECD Recommendation on Gender Equality in Public Life. The Toolkit draws a road map to strengthen gender equality results through putting in place good governance frameworks and tools; for each Recommendation's provision it provides: a priority checklist; a set of self-assessment questions; a rationale explaining the importance of various governance aspects to achieve gender equality; key actions and pitfalls to avoid; and good practice examples.

www.oecd.org/governance

Contacts

Ms. Nicola EHLERMANN

Head of the MENA-OECD Competitiveness Programme
OECD Global Relations Secretariat
E: Nicola.EHLERMANN@oecd.org

Mrs. Charlotte GOEMANS

Policy Analyst
MENA Division, Global Relations, OECD
E: Charlotte.GOEMANS@oecd.org

Ms. Vanessa VALLEE

Communications Manager
Global Relations, OECD
E: Vanessa.VALLEE@oecd.org

Ms. Julie PILATO

Project Assistant
MENA Division, Global Relations, OECD
E: Julie.PILATO@oecd.org

