

**Recommendations of the Eighth General Conference
of the Arab Women Organization
“Arab women and cultural challenges”**

23- 25 February 2021

The conference stopped at three obvious facts:

1. Women and men are from the unity of the original human soul, and they naturally possess the same human characteristics.
2. Culture is a historical given, dynamic and changeable in nature.
3. Culture is a soft tool through which societal values flow into our minds unconsciously, affecting our perception, understanding and evaluation of the lived reality, and it subconsciously dictates behaviors that reflect those values. Consequently, it is natural to strive to counteract the negative images of women and girls by producing and disseminating positive images and values of gender equality.

This conference, with its theme, "Arab Women and Cultural Challenges", is an important station for measuring the transformations that our Arab societies are going through. Whether on the cognitive or realistic level, it is evident that the cultural dimension and “the collective imagination that it embodies still permeate all societal structures (social, political, economic, legislative, educational, ...) and impede their development, especially in relation to the status of women. And this phenomenon is resistant to change despite the enthusiasm of activists and the adoption of various government initiatives to expand opportunities to include women as well as men in various fields.

The conference proceedings came to confirm that culture is the product of experiences, history, places, policies and people. It is characterized by a cultural character, which produces its diversity and supports the development of nations. The history of culture explains, on the one hand, the difference in societal paths, and on the other hand, it returns the ball to the hands of the nations and the initiative to their leaders, from officials to opinion leaders, to pioneers and activists of both sexes for a future that follows the path of equality in all rights and all opportunities between women and the men.

Accordingly, it is imperative to deal with culture as a matter of this reality in order to be aware of its characteristics and to hold the aspiration to develop it in a sustainable manner with the aim of elevating our Arab societies to the highest levels of respect for the human being, man or woman, and providing all the necessary conditions for that.

In this context, cultural diversity reflects human richness and encourages people to continue their journey and pursue acculturation for the benefit of mankind.

Based on the above, the recommendations came as follows:

1- In the field of field studies and scientific research:

- Encouraging research concerned with re-reading religious texts that relate to the image of women and their roles, with the aim of de- conflicting the entanglement between the text and its interpretation, and liberating the Arab mind from readings that are a product of the historical context and far from the intentions of the correct religious principles.
- Inviting the Arab feminist discourse to reject the categorized approach of raising women's issues, and to reconstruct women's issues as general societal issues that overlap with all societal issues.
- Promoting studies and scientific research from a gender perspective to monitor the status of women and men in the Arab region, with the aim of eliminating the gender gap in terms of needs, and reaching equality between women and men in opportunities to enhance equal participation in decision making.
- Inviting national and private universities to work on introducing (women's studies) courses in academic education to contribute to deepening scientific knowledge in this field.

In the field of cultural, artistic and media production:

- Establishing an Arab observatory to follow up on the image of women in cultural, art and media production.
- Encouraging joint Arab media production in order to spread the value of gender equality and positive images of women.
- Organizing forums and workshops for women and men working the field of media to provide them with the skills of dealing with a balanced approach in women's issues, as a part of the general societal issues, as well as the skills of using the gender approach in their work.
- Reconsidering educational programs and books to remove all the stereotypes and symbolic contents that play a major role in reproducing the stereotypical culture of new generations, especially among children and adolescents of both sexes.
- Inviting the Arab Women Organization to link its program (Education for the Future) with the outcomes of the conference in order to enhance efforts, in cooperation with the relevant national authorities, to promote teacher training in the field of gender, and support

children's literature devoted to the values of equality and rejecting stereotypes and discrimination.

- Inviting governments to give full attention to the subject of reviewing educational curricula and courses at all levels of education, pre-school, primary, intermediate and secondary, in order to implement them from all negative images of women and girls and adopt positive, alternative images.
- Inviting governments to redouble their efforts in the field of enhancing the capacities and skills of teachers and trainers to contribute positively to spreading the values of gender equality, especially among children and young people.
- Networking with the makers of Arab cultural production to build bridges in order to improve the image of women in the cultural works presented to the public.
- Documentation the influential roles of women in the cultural field, which have been obscured over the ages.
- Paying attention to independent cultural projects that try to deconstruct stereotypes about women by highlighting them and provide them with productive and marketing solutions for their continuity in the cultural arena.

In the field of sustainable development, poverty eradication and marginalization:

*Inviting governments to formulate public policies, programs and development plans in accordance with a holistic vision and a comprehensive approach that takes into account the needs and roles of both sexes in society, and aims to provide opportunities and resources for all on the basis of justice and equality.

- Inviting Arab governments to address deficiencies in Arab legislation in terms of ensuring full gender equality, and adhering to the articles of the International law of Human Rights and relevant international conventions.

*Inviting Arab governments to review labor laws and regulations from the perspective of gender roles, including provisions related to maternity leave and childcare to motivate private employers to adopt remote work mechanisms and flexible working hours for both genders in order to reduce burdens on women and enhance partnership between Both sexes bear the burdens of family life.

- Intensifying governmental and civil society efforts in the field of educating women about their economic and legal rights and building their capacities in the economic field.
- Encouraging the establishment of local and regional women's networks of women working in the virtual market to exchange experiences and develop skills.

- Encouraging the establishment of virtual markets to market the products of Arab women, and inviting the Arab Women Organization to activate its project, "the electronic portal for small women entrepreneurs."