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INTERACTIVE EXPERT PANEL

**Regional Perspectives in Progress Achieved and Remaining Gaps and
Challenges in the Implementation of the Beijing Platform for Action**

Written Statement

Mr. Chairman,
Mr. Secretary-General,
Excellencies,
Distinguished representatives,

Arab countries have all made progress in the implementation of the Beijing Platform for Action. The Arab region has witnessed significant advances in women's education in particular. Arab countries invested in adopting national education strategies that guarantee free public education to all citizens without discrimination. The gender parity index (GPI), (which measures the ratio of girls to boys), increased at all levels of education in most Arab countries, reaching a GPI of 1.63 in tertiary education in the GCC countries as women's enrolment rates exceeded those of men.

Advances have also been made in improving the quality of and accessibility to public health services. As a result of the progress made, women's life expectancy has increased considerably, while fertility rates and maternal mortality rates have dropped sharply. In the United Arab Emirates for example, maternal mortality ratio reached 0.01 % (per 100,000 births), and 98.2 % of all births in the GCC countries are supervised by medical skilled workers.

The region also witnessed legislative reform revising laws that discriminate against women and enacting new laws to provide them with protection and increase their participation in public life.

The legal reform that took place in recent years in the Arab region is an indication of a strong political will at the leadership and grassroots levels for the reversal of discriminatory legislation and the increased involvement of women in the public domain.

Favourable measures included the promulgation of new Family Laws, the creation of Family Courts and the amendment of discriminative labour laws, Personal Status Laws, and the penal code.

Citizenship Laws were also amended to enable women to pass on their nationality to their children in countries such as Algeria, Egypt, Morocco, Sudan, Tunisia and Yemen.

In view of the low level of women's political representation in most of the Arab countries, some governments have adopted special measures, such as the quota system, to remedy this situation. This was done in Egypt, Jordan, Iraq, Morocco, Mauritania, Palestine, Sudan and Tunisia.

In this context, many countries witnessed a substantive increase in the number of women in the electoral force, parliaments and local councils. In the ESCWA region, Iraq has the highest level of female representation in parliament at 25.5%; followed by United

In addition, member countries were urged to integrate women in conflict resolution and peace building processes and to pay special attention to women victims of violence in Iraq and Palestine, through the adoption of local action plans in accordance with Security Council resolution 1325 (2000).

In this context, ESCWA continues to work closely with member countries to assist them in bridging gaps and overcoming challenges, towards the full implementation of the Platform for Action in the ESCWA region.

The ESCWA Centre for Women will continue to assist member countries in the challenging task of empowering women and unlocking their potential to contribute to the realization of sustainable human development in equitable societies.