



**Expert Group Meeting on the UN-ESCWA Study
“Women in the Judiciary: Removing Barriers, Increasing Numbers”**

28-29 November 2018

UN House, Beirut, Lebanon

Information Note

1. Background

The principle of women’s equal participation in all forms of decision-making is well-established in international frameworks adopted by Arab States, including the 2030 Agenda (through Sustainable Development Goals 5 and 16) and the Beijing Platform for Action, as well as treaties such as the Convention on the Elimination of all Forms of Discrimination Against Women (CEDAW).¹

In line with these commitments, all Arab states have taken visible steps to enhance women’s presence in political life and public institutions, including the judiciary. Such efforts, combined with the rising number of women entering the legal profession, have led to a rise in the number of female judges, public prosecutors and women in other key roles in judicial institutions over the last decade.

Nevertheless, the representation of women in the judiciary remains uneven at the regional level. Some states, such as Algeria, Lebanon and Tunisia, appear to be on track to achieve gender parity in judicial institutions within a few years. In other states, notably in the Gulf, female judges and prosecutors remain rare, although some progress has been witnessed. There are also clear gender disparities within national judicial systems, with many fewer women serving in intermediate and higher courts than in courts of first instance. In addition, women are less likely to sit on courts dealing with personal status issues, with some Arab States continuing to ban female judges from practicing in such courts altogether.

This lacklustre regional picture suggests that despite the efforts of Arab states, strong barriers to women’s full and equal participation in judicial institutions remain in place. In response to this challenge, ESCWA has developed a study on women’s presence in the judiciary in the Arab region in partnership with the Office of the United Nations High Commissioner for Human Rights (OHCHR) and the International Commission for Jurists (ICJ). The publication aims to inform and support efforts by Arab states toward more representative judicial institutions and build a regional information base on women’s presence in the judiciary.

The publication offers a regional overview of women’s presence in judicial institutions and identifies barriers to women’s full and equal participation. Case studies conducted in five states with a comparatively high presence of women (Lebanon, Tunisia, Jordan, Palestine and Sudan) unveil some successful steps taken by Arab states to remove these barriers. Based on these findings, the publication offers evidence-based policy recommendations to increase women’s presence in the judiciary, with an emphasis on replicating successful practices at the regional level.

¹ The notable exceptions are Somalia and the Sudan, which have not ratified CEDAW.

2. Objectives of the Expert Group Meeting

Over the course of two days, the EGM aims to achieve the following four objectives:

- Presentation of the first draft of the study “Women in the Judiciary: Removing Barriers, Increasing Numbers”.
- Discussion of the draft study’s main findings.
- Discussion of trends and best practices in the region regarding women in the judiciary.
- Provision of comments, critiques and recommendations to augment the draft study.

Confirmed participants in the EGM will receive a draft of the publication (in English) two weeks ahead of the meeting and are expected to provide written general or specific comments on the publication, as well as engage in discussing the publication at the EGM.

3. Date and venue

The Expert Group Meeting will be hosted by ESCWA at the United Nations House, in Beirut, on 28 and 29 November 2018. A detailed agenda will be sent to confirmed participants ahead of the meeting.

4. Language of the meeting

The official language of the meeting is English. Simultaneous translation to Arabic will be available.

5. Travel arrangements

ESCWA Secretariat will make the necessary arrangements for all participants’ travel (flight reservation and ticket issuance). Important notice: Please do not purchase your own tickets as ESCWA cannot reimburse self-tickets.

6. Entry visas

Participants are kindly requested to send a coloured copy of their valid passport, a passport photo, along with contact details (telephone and e-mail) to Ms. Iman Bakkar, Administrative Assistant (Bakkari@un.org), no later than 15 November 2018, in order to secure the required entry visa to Lebanon

7. Accommodation (for participants travelling from outside Lebanon only)

Participants are responsible for making their own hotel bookings in Beirut. ESCWA Secretariat has taken the necessary arrangements to provide accommodations at discounted prices. Kindly refer to the attached list of hotels. Please note that Al Markazia Suites is the nearest hotel to the UN House, although most hotels listed are also within commuting distance.

Participants should contact the hotel directly for reservations and indicate that they are participating in an expert group meeting at ESCWA, which will entitle them to a reduced corporate UN rate. Participants are also responsible for settling their own accommodation bills and other expenses directly with the hotel before departure.

ECW will cover travel and accommodation expenses of participants residing outside Lebanon, in accordance with United Nations rules and procedures. According to UN rules and regulations, ESCWA provides a daily allowance of \$246 per participant during the period of the meeting to cover accommodation and incidentals in addition to \$188 to cover miscellaneous costs of transportation to and from the airport. Transportation arrangements to and from the airport are organized directly by the participants themselves.

Daily subsistence allowance and terminal expenses will be paid to the experts via bank transfer in US Dollars (2 weeks after the meeting).

Participants are kindly asked to fill the attached bank information form and send it back to Ms. Iman Bakkar (bakkari@un.org).

Participants are also kindly requested to present the following documents to the ESCWA representative at the registration desk on the day of the meeting: original passport, copy of airline ticket and original boarding pass. Review of these documents is necessary to allow for the issuance of DSA.

8. Contact information

For inquiries regarding the programme on women in the judiciary, please contact:

David Krivanek (Mr.)	Associate Social Affairs Officer, ESCWA Centre for Women	david.krivanek@un.org	+961-1-978638
----------------------	---	--	---------------

For inquiries regarding logistical arrangements, please contact:

Iman Bakkar (Ms.)	Administrative Assistant, ESCWA Centre for Women	bakkari@un.org	+961-1-978812
-------------------	---	--	---------------