We, women parliamentarians in the Arab states participating in the Arab Women Parliamentarians Network for Equality “Ra’edat” Forum, which was held in Rabat on 9 and 10 February 2016 under the slogan *Hand in hand towards justice and equality*, declare our commitment to working towards amending legislation to expand the sphere of women’s participation in all decision-making positions until we achieve parity, and to support public policies aimed at empowering women and to monitor government programmes, plans and projects to achieve justice, equality and equal opportunities in our societies, and until we achieve a state of citizenship and law, in which freedom, rights, and human dignity of all people are safeguarded.

We commit ourselves to adopt positive dialogue and effective communication with all stakeholders and visions on national, regional and international levels, who advocate the rights of women as an inherent human right that is worth protecting. We call for the adoption of strategic plans for reviewing legislation and practices in order to close the gender gap by 2030. This is through the implementation of relevant international and regional resolutions and charters including the Cairo Declaration of 2014, the Arab Strategy for the Advancement of the Status of Women post 2015, Security Council Resolution No. 1325, the Convention to Eliminate All Forms of Discrimination against Women (CEDAW), and the Beijing Platform for Action.

We as women parliamentarians regard with deep concern the status of women in the light of the recent deterioration of peace and stability and the spread of waves of violence and extremism for which women pay double. This has led to a decline in development in many societies and the prevalence of security priorities over development ones. We demand the support of women in places affected by armed conflict. At the head of these priorities are Palestinian women, who suffer from all forms of systematic violence under the fire of the Zionist occupation and unjust blockade. We demand that international protection be provided for the unarmed Palestinian people, women and children, young people and men, and that all male and female prisoners held in prisons of the occupation be released.

We call for the unification of international rescue and relief efforts for refugees, internally displaced people and emigres, the cessation of systematic violations against women and children, and the establishment of comprehensive plans to help them, especially since they constitute the overwhelming majority of refugees...
and internally displaced people. We also call for observation of the necessary support for victims of war, terrorism and conflicts in Arab regions, especially in Syria, Iraq, Libya, Yemen, Somalia and Sudan.

We affirm that the involvement of women in decision-making circles strengthens security, peace and welfare, restores balance to the vital components of society, and contributes to the achievement of sustainable and comprehensive development.

Based on the above, we call upon governments, the League of Arab States, the Arab Parliament and regional partners to take the following steps to strengthen the involvement of women in elected institutions and decision-making circles:

Ensure the achievement of equality, justice and equal opportunities between genders.

- Amend election and party regulations to create the appropriate quotas in laws and regulations that do not adopt the principle of quotas, and increase women’s share to achieve parity as a transitional stage in changing the culture of society and political parties and broadening the participation of women in leadership positions.
- Establish and activate women’s parliamentary networks and blocs, and activate partnerships on the national and regional levels.
- Strengthen programmes for enhancing the capacities of women parliamentarians to enhance their legislative, oversight and representative performance.
- Put in place an institutional framework to ensure women’s access to executive, academic, and media decision-making positions, as well as such positions in the private sector.
- Create government and party programmes and funds to help electoral candidates to gain access to financial support, and invite Arab businessmen and businesswomen to contribute to these funds.
- Combat corrupt political funding and ensure the holding of free, fair and transparent elections.
- Draw up comprehensive strategic plans to change the prevalent culture of society, which prevents women from growing and gaining access to leadership positions. This includes positions in the media, education, the universities, culture, and political and parliamentary affairs.
- Strengthen partnership programmes with the media in such a way as to enhance the image of women in the media and highlight women’s achievements in parliaments and positions of responsibility.