



United Nations Entity for Gender Equality
and the Empowerment of Women

UN Women Executive Director Marks Launch of Egyptian Union, Meets Libyan Activists

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UN Women Executive Director Michelle Bachelet travelled to Cairo, Egypt, in mid-October to celebrate the historic launch of the Egyptian Women's Union and to meet with women's advocates from Libya.

The union comprises 500 non-governmental women's organizations (NGOs), and will focus initially on mobilizing five million women voters in the upcoming parliamentary and presidential elections, and constitutional referendum. It will also advocate for changing party agendas to include women.

"Political awareness will not start tomorrow. It started with member NGOs months ago. They will continue what has been previously started," said newly elected chairperson Hoda Badran.

The union honoured Ms. Bachelet for her efforts in supporting Egyptian women. "We have all the pleasure to honour a woman who has supported at the back stage with all possible ways. She talked to officials, showed interest and was the motivation for us to continue what we have achieved today," Ms. Badran said.

Ms. Bachelet said that she is proud of Egyptian women. "I came from a country that had a dictatorship regime and we organized ourselves to achieve democracy," she said. "Democracy is much more than voting; it is about ensuring rights for all the citizens, men and women, boys and girls. This union will be an incredible force to realize women's' rights in Egypt. People will be looking at you with so much expectations and a lot of dreams."

She concluded, "You are not only serving Egypt, you are serving the whole world by moving Egypt to a democratic transition as the world will follow too."

Ms. Bachelet met separately with Libyan women from 10 civil society organizations to discuss their challenges, opportunities, and aspirations. They aim to form a network to empower Libyan women, and asked for UN Women's assistance on different issues related to political participation, economic empowerment, access to justice and humanitarian assistance.

Ms. Bachelet pledged UN Women's support for "what you need and what you think important, at the time at which you think is right."

She stressed that uniting voices is extremely essential for women's organizations in the transitional period. "We do not need a soloist, we need a choir, but one that sings the same song," she

explained.

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