



Campaign to Ensure Women’s Political Representation in Yemen kicks of Roundtable Series.

October 2014 – The Yemen Organization for Defending Rights and Democratic Freedoms, in partnership with Karama and the Yemeni Women’s Network for Peace and Security and with the support of the UN Women Fund for Gender Equality, held the first three of a series of roundtables in an effort to build awareness on and solidify support for women’s political participation across a diverse groups of governorates in Yemen.

The National Dialogue conference in Yemen, which concluded in early 2014, saw a 30 percent quota for women’s political participation adopted among its concluding recommendations. Civil society organizations, led by the Yemen Organization for Defending Rights and Democratic Freedoms, in the governorates of Dhamar, IBB, and Hajjah and in Yemen in general are attentively following up the outcomes of the National Dialogue, and preparing for the adoption of the quota and other related provisions in the constitution as an initial step in promoting women’s equality and advancement in Yemen.

The first roundtable meeting brought together civil society leaders, political parties, and the local administration in the governorate of Dhamar. In this meeting, Mr Ali Al-Dailami from the Yemen Organization for Defending

Rights and Democratic Freedoms provided a briefing on the campaign for the quota and the stressed the importance of consolidating all the societal efforts in this pivotal time period during which the constitution drafting committee is addressing the new constitution. He also stressed that any attempt to circumvent the clauses of the national dialogue outcomes document would be challenged by civil society leaders.

Activist Dalal Sayadi presented a paper at the roundtable meeting on the guarantees for the political representation of Yemeni women. In this document, she touched on the status of women in Yemen and the obstacles facing her active participation. She also illuminated the consequences of the weak female participation and concluded with a number of measures and recommendations to help put in place real and constitutional guarantees for the political representation of women.

The second roundtable was held October 23rd in the IBB governorate and the third was held on October 29th in the Hajjah governorate in order to follow up on the adoption of the “Together campaign to ensure women’s political representation” and solidify collaborative support for activation of a quota for women’s political participation.

Dr .Abdel Aziz El Wahsh, a well known academic, presented a paper to guarantee the political participation of Yemeni women at the second roundtable. The paper illuminated the situation of women in Yemen, the obstacles that hinder their participation, and the impact that resulted on this low participation. Participants at the meeting discussed the challenges and obstacles they will face in applying the quota system and deepened discussion on solutions to help strengthen women’s presence and role in the constitution and the elections.

Mr. Qadeer Khalid Hameed, human rights activist and trainer who facilitated the third roundtable, presented the importance of the participation of women in forming the road map of Yemen, stressing that men and women are both key factors in the future of Yemen. He shared the goals of the UN Security Council Resolution 1325 on women, peace, and security, along with successful examples of countries where women successfully participated in decision-making and held leadership positions.

Participants of the first three roundtables agreed that this is an urgent, crucial time in Yemen's history to ensure that women are not left behind and that the National Dialogue outcome document is adopted in the constitution, particularly with regards to women's inclusion and rights.

Joint recommendations suggested the following priorities:

- 1) The constitution must explicitly include articles that guarantee women's rights;
- 2) Women's organizations must work together to raise awareness of the outcomes of the national dialogue, as regarding women; and
- 3) Women's organizations must foster coordination between all women's sectors and women's committees in political parties to support the outputs of the national dialogue.