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Access of Women & Girls to Education, Training & End Violence against Women

Oral Statement Middle East Caucus by:

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Mr. Chairman

Excellencies, Distinguished Guests,

I would like to sincerely appreciate giving me this opportunity.

The Universal Declaration of Human Rights emphasized education's importance as a fundamental human right and a necessary element of development.

The right to education is recognized as necessary for women in the Middle East and North Africa. The importance of education for women is to enable them become good mothers for the future and active members in society. Although the Arab countries have made significant strides in making education available over the past few decades, but challenges remain. Access to education has improved, and the illiteracy rate among the adult population (people ages 15 and up) is half that of the adult population (people ages 15 and up). More women are now pursuing higher education, reflecting their ability to graduate from secondary school. In some countries women make up a large proportion of university enrollment but still illiteracy remains high for some countries, and a significant gender gap in the region. Women are twice as likely to be illiterate as men and make up one-third of the region's illiterate adults. The gender gaps in education vary greatly across countries in the region but are generally wider in countries where overall literacy and school enrollment are lower. Quality of the education is a major concern throughout the region. School dropout rates are very high in some countries like Sudan. Co-education is one factor which contributed to the reduction of high drop out of girls from school especially from grade 5 and 6 of the primary school. Still information about the quality of education in the region is scarce and the available data is often inadequate and unreliable. In this regard, more efforts are needed to improve female educational attainment. Governments need to make an extra effort to ensure that education is more accessible to low-income families and rural populations, with special attention to the quality of the education provided and the need for girls to complete their school. Knowledge both inside and outside the region are encouraged to help resource-poor countries improve their educational systems and collect data on their progress. Improving access to and the quality of education is the most rewarding investment a country can make. Investing in female education can accelerate economic, political and social development by enhancing human capital, slowing population growth, and alleviating poverty and this has inspired the involvement of grass roots NGOs as main actors.

Zenab for Women Development (ZWD) is a Sudanese women rights organization founded in 2000 to empower women through education. Based in Khartoum and Gedarif State East Sudan, ZWD has a Special Consultative Status with the Economic and Social Council of the United Nations since 2009. Zenab was named after a pioneer woman educator (Mrs. Zenab Mohamed Nour) who dedicated herself to girls' education in Eastern-Sudan since 1941. To empower women through education, in recognition of her exerted efforts she was nominated as one of the 1000 Peace Women across the globe for the Nobel Peace Prize 2005.

Zenab is proceeding forward and made a successful works during 2010 that includes, Zenab's partners, donors & target groups, in different areas, after identifying social groups, the organization will further its missions towards achieving its strategic objectives.

A remarkable positive impact & changes in behavior and attitudes occur due to Zenab interventions at various levels. In the education Sector:

Empowering women through education is a top priority of Zenab's priorities. Girls' education especially, in Eastern Sudan face a lot of hindrances. Economical/social/traditional factors impede girls' education, improving education environment requires immense efforts to make education attractive for girls and boys at elementary level.

Zenab so far improve the educational environment in 10 girls schools in Rural Areas, last year, in collaboration with the French Embassy in Khartoum, Zenab construct two primary schools in two villages (Rufaa & Waha) in Gedarif State East Sudan whereas education, specially girls' education is deteriorating and face many setbacks, the project is considered a further step towards reducing illiteracy and school dropout rates & has tremendously improved the education environment and it will reach education process for more than 600 girls & boys, the project starts in April and completed by Dec. 2010. In 2010, Zenab has achieved further milestones towards achieving its strategic objectives through women through education.