



Strengthening women judges in the southern and eastern Mediterranean region

EBRD and IDLO lay foundations of regional women judges' platform

FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

 www.ebrd.com/news



Date: 15/12/2017
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Keywords: EBRD, IDLO, SEMED, gender, women, justice, regional networks



The European Bank for Reconstruction and Development (EBRD) and the International Development Law Organization (IDLO) are promoting gender equality in the southern and eastern Mediterranean (SEMED) by developing a regional advocacy platform to help reduce gender barriers to women in the judicial profession and related strategic areas.

In cooperation with the International Association of Women Judges, the Union of Moroccan Women Judges and under the patronage of the Supreme Judicial Council of Morocco, the EBRD and IDLO organised a regional forum taking place in Casablanca on 14 to 15 December 2017.

The forum gathered about 50 women judges, academics and representatives of women lawyers' associations from Jordan, Lebanon, Morocco, Poland, Sri Lanka, Tunisia, USA, and West Bank and Gaza to discuss women's experiences, knowledge and opportunities in the justice sector, and formulate the vision, objectives and action items of the first regional women judges' network.

Ms Marie-Anne Birken, General Counsel at the EBRD, said: "The EBRD is committed to promoting gender equality and equality of opportunities in its countries of operations. This initiative contributes to the achievement of goals set out in the EBRD Strategy for the Promotion of Gender Equality. We are working hard with various stakeholders in the region to promote this important agenda."

Ms Irene Khan, Director-General at IDLO, said: "Creating and supporting a fair, equitable and accountable justice system where women and girls are treated equally, where their concerns and situations matter and where they can not only seek justice but actually get justice, is a true manifestation of the rule of law. Women are not only justice seekers, women are also justice providers. Women's full participation in the justice system is an important benchmark for determining the true work of a justice system."

Ms Kim O'Sullivan, Senior Counsel at the EBRD's Office of the General Counsel, is leading this initiative under the EBRD Legal Transition Programme. Ms O'Sullivan said: "Women judges' networks play an important role in reducing gender barriers and advancing gender reforms. We hope that the forum will lay the foundations for the establishment of a broader regional women judges' network in the SEMED region and that the forum will meet annually."