

## **CHAPTER IV**

### **THE ADVOCACY FOR WOMEN IN THE UNITED ARAB EMIRATES TO POLITICAL PARTICIPATION**

Women in the United Arab Emirates have made a significant progress in the higher level of governments for the last ten years. The UAE's policy to introduce the election by Federal National Council (FNC) has successfully allowed one woman ran as a candidate. Following after, eight women were appointed by the *emirs* to their positions in this advisory body. Advocacy involves numbers of actors, which at least it consists of the advocacy actors from the international level, state level as well as the civil society level. In this chapter, there are three main actors who have been responsible towards gender equality promotion, particularly in women's empowerment in politics in the United Arab Emirates. These actors have been engaged to one another for one goal, which is creating a proper sphere of advocacy and political empowerment for the Emirati women.

Although UAE has been the second country to perform the gender equality promotion in the Arab region, United Arab Emirates does not apply a democratic election system. All of the political decisions are under the hereditary rules of the seven rulers of each emirate, who formed the Federal Supreme Council, the highest level of the executive and legislative body in this country. however, the respective state United Arab Emirates has been considered lack of deliberate consideration towards Emirati women to flourish their performance in political

sphere, particularly in their access to general political participation. As their capacities in politics are somewhat limited and they can only enter the political arena by the rulers' appointment, there are several parties that are responsible to the gender equality promotion. The existence of these advocacy actors is not for nothing but to make sure that there has to be a set of concrete actions to increase the opportunity of Emirati women to take role in politics.

In order to empower the Emirati women to take role in politics to be as equal as men, there are several important actors that support the increasing of women's access for political participation, encompassing the UN Women as the respective international women's organization, the UAE government as the national actor as well as the key actor whose power in the policy-making. Also, the General Women's Union (GWU) as the official women movement within the UAE border.

#### A. Raising the awareness and shaping public opinion

In order to keep the advocacy process going on track, particularly on women empowerment, surely many are involved. An advocacy requires recognition towards the issue from the external parties widely. Should the international, national and civil society actors build their own partnership with the targeted advocates so that the promoted issue experiences an ease access to be brought to the surface. Furthermore, in the government's case, the policies, government provisions as well as the adoption to certain law should be the most prominent action from the United Arab Emirates' government in the advocacy

process to underpin the goals of shaping public's opinion towards women's empowerment for Emirati women.

#### 1. UN Women

As the most prominent international women organization under the United Nation, UN Women is actually one of the legal divisions whose domain task in women affairs. UN Women visited the United Arab Emirates few years back then as the international organization which have witnessed the positive feedback from the respective states towards the UN agendas related to women empowerment. The mother of women organizations has held many annual meetings worldwide and the United Arab Emirates have been considered very responsive towards these agendas.

Similar with promoting gender equality, building a partnership means striving for the implementation of Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs) in which United Nations has designed along with the participation and consensus of more than one hundred countries, including the United Arab Emirates (UAE). The United Arab Emirates is an example of a rapid and successful development in the entire region, in terms of both infrastructure and economy, also the progress of its people. The respective state's achievement is probably best symbolized in the growing prominence of Emirati women as partners and actors who contribute in the nation-building process.

a. *International Women's Day 2015, the "High-Level Thematic Debate: Advancing Gender Equality and Empowerment of Women and Girls for a Transformative Post-2015 Development Agenda"*

The international meeting held by the United Nations has successfully received a tremendous feedback from the respective state, United Arab Emirates. To take the action very seriously, the UAE launched its statement<sup>27</sup> through the *Permanent Mission of the United Arab Emirates to the United Nations*, where the federation has fully recognized and has been very supportive towards the United Nations *HeforShe* campaign. The support was shown by the United Arab Emirates as its Foreign Minister, His Highness Sheikh Abdullah Bin Zayed Al Nahyan, was the very first foreign minister in the Arab world to sign onto such initiative.

b. *The Partnership of UN Women and UAE Government in Opening UN Women Liaison Office in Abu Dhabi*

In order to support the role of Emirati women in political sector, UN Women along with the government of the United Arab Emirates (UAE) committed to the opening of the new UN Women Liaison Office for Gulf Cooperation Council (GCC) in Abu Dhabi. The agreement was signed in 2016 between the Assistant Minister of Legal Affairs for the State of Abu Dhabi and the Deputy Executive Director of the UN Women<sup>28</sup>. According to the official

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<sup>27</sup>Permanent Mission of the UAE to the UN. (2015). *High-Level Thematic Debate: Advancing Gender Equality and Empowerment of Women and Girls for a Transformative Post-2015 Development Agenda*. New York: Permanent Mission of the United Arab Emirates to the United Nations.

<sup>28</sup>UN Women. (2016, July 15). *United Arab Emirates and UN Women Sign New Agreement to Open Liaison Office in Abu Dhabi*. Retrieved from UN Women:

source, the Liaison Office will have a strategic focus on partnership's development in the area of policy advice and political advocacy with Gulf and Arab institutions. The office will also assist to advance the status of women in the region, support national governments in the Gulf Cooperation Council and strengthen collaboration on gender-responsive implementation of the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development.

UAE has been committed to promote gender equality and to empower women and girls. The respective state is also a top contributor for UN Women in the Arab Region. With Headquarters in New York, liaison offices in Belgium, Denmark, Japan and now UAE, and 89 country offices around the world, UN Women works to remove barriers to equal opportunities for women and girls and to ensure that laws and commitments on gender equality and women's empowerment are fully implemented.

*c. Spring Forward for Women Conference*

In November 2014, UN Women along with the European Commission, and the European Parliament arranged two-days conference in Brussels with the title '*Spring Forward for Women Conference*' which brought together the Arab lawmakers and members of the European Parliament. The intention of the conference was to support the women's empowerment in political realm, as well

as the opportunity to share their experiences in advancing the gender equality and women's empowerment within the Arab states and European Union.

The Spring Forward for Women<sup>29</sup> was initiated during the uprising tension in the Arab peninsula back in 2010. The situation was viewed by the UN Women as a perfect momentum to advocate the Arab women, especially in their political empowerment, which was perceived at the lowest political participation among women in the global level. This four years programme started in 2012 to 2016 by the UN Women was initially a programme to empower the economy of women in the Southern Mediterranean region, as well as to assist them to alter themselves in the political and decision making spaces, so that women in the targeted region may have a greater influence in shaping the future of their countries.

In the conference, the delegation of women Parliamentarians from the Arab states region included the representatives from the United Arab Emirates, Algeria, Bahrain, Qatar, Egypt, Iraq, Jordan, Lebanon, Libya, Morocco, Palestine, Yemen, as well as the Arab Parliament. As the conference involved the Arab lawmakers, this conference was there to influence the Arab region in a direct way, as well as the United Arab Emirates indirectly as a part of the Arab states.

## 2. UAE Government

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<sup>29</sup>UN Women. (2012). *About: Spring Forward for Women Programme*. Retrieved from UN Women: <http://spring-forward.unwomen.org/en/about>

The UAE Government which entitled to the most significant actor for the nationals as well as the key actor to enable the policy has three main councils that are responsible to increase the numbers of women in politics, particularly in the UAE parliament.

*a. UAE's Federal Supreme Council*

Federal Supreme Council (FSC) in which consists of the seven rulers or *emirs* of each Emirate is the highest level of the executive and legislative body in the country. Should the Supreme Council as an actor in the government level role as one of the actors who is responsible to create an opportunity for the UAE women in entering the political arena. The FSC is the only council in the federation whose power to create and enable a policy. Regarding to the policy, the act of the government to support the gender equality promotion, particularly in politics, lies under the provision in the UAE Constitution.

*“All persons are equal before the law, without distinction between citizens of the Union in regard to race, nationality, religious belief or social status.”*

***Article 25, UAE Constitution***

It has been a challenge for the UAE Government's entity that this provision encounters criticism coming from the human rights NGOs. Regardless, the UAE is working hard to bring the provision into reality. The respective state has been working hard in applying the provision since it was coined as a part of the UAE

Constitution, proven by the entrance of the Emirati women in the government sector since 2006.

*“Equality, social justice, ensuring safety and security and equality of opportunity for all citizens shall be the pillars of the Society.”*

***Article 14, UAE Constitution***

The opportunity in the provision which rather implicit apparently bears a fruitful result. There are at least more than 60% of Emirati women who have entered the workforce in public sectors nowadays, and 30% are filled by Emirati women in the decision-making positions within the government sector.<sup>30</sup>

The Federal Supreme Council in which among them there is the Vice President, as well as the Prime Minister and ruler of Dubai, HH Sheikh Mohammed bin Rasyid Al Maktoum, had declared his support by assigning the formation of UAE Gender Balance Council during the second day of the Government Summit 2015<sup>31</sup>. The UAE’s Vice President claimed that the United Arab Emirates is keen to enable woman and to put her in the right position, as it implies to the Emirates that they would fully support the role of women towards

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<sup>30</sup>Statement of Dr. Shamsa Saleh, the CEO of Dubai Women Establishment as well as the General Coordinator of Gender Balance Council, in one important occasion, in which the *11th Women’s Forum Global Meeting*.

<sup>31</sup>Arabian Business. (2015, February 10). *UAE Sets Up New Council to Tackle Gender Gap*. Retrieved from Arabian Business: <http://www.arabianbusiness.com/uae-sets-up-new-council-tackle-gender-gap-581747.html>



the national development. His Highness had also appointed the Chair for this federal entity.

*b. UAE Gender Balance Council*

Ever since Gender Balance Council was assigned by the UAE's Vice President in 2015, it has become the special team in the United Arab Emirates to overcome the issues of women. Furthermore, it becomes one of the agents in promoting gender equality within the United Arab Emirates. Sheikha Manal bint Mohammed bin Rashid Al Maktoum, president of Dubai Women Establishment and wife of Deputy Prime Minister and Minister of Presidential Affairs Sheikh Mansour bin Zayed Al Nahyan, had been appointed to become the Chair for this Council. The President of the GBC had her statement very clear to then drafting the framework for the council, as soon as possible introducing the needs of women's empowerment agenda, as well as narrowing the gender gap in the respective state the United Arab Emirates.

In order to enlarge the opportunity for Emirati women to take role in the government sector, the UAE Gender Balance Council has announced its initiative in establishing the *Gender Balance Index*. The Gender Balance Index in government entities aims at measuring the performance of these entities in achieving balance through a series of indices which include developing policies in support of women, applying these policies optimally, ensuring equal opportunities between men and women in leadership positions and decision-making positions as

well as launching initiatives that will provide excellent services in the workplace, such as, creating women's committees that serve women<sup>32</sup>. According to Dr. Shamsa Saleh, the General Coordinator of Gender Balance Council, Emirati women has covered up to 30 per cent in the government sector, as well as 66 per cent in the workforce. It means the United Arab Emirates should nurture their efforts in empowering women to elevate their contribution in national development. Through the establishment of Gender Balance Council, the United Arab Emirates strives for the brighter future of Emirati women to be as equal as their male counterparts.

In terms of political, economic and cultural empowerment of women, the UAE continues to elevate the working quality. The establishment of the UAE Gender Balance Council in 2015 where the idea was brought by His Highness Sheikh Mohammed bin Rashid Al Maktoum, Vice President and Prime Minister and Ruler of Dubai, increases the role of women in leadership positions and strengthens institutional capacity. The Gender Balance Council seeks to address issues in the UNDP's Gender Inequality Index which demonstrates the UAE's commitment to narrowing the economic gender gap and promoting the role of women in the workplace, political sphere and society on both local and global scale.

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<sup>32</sup>WAM. (2015, July 6). *Gender Balance Council a new step toward empowering UAE women: Mohammed*. Retrieved from Khaleej Times Government: <http://www.khaleejtimes.com/nation/government/gender-balance-council-a-new-step-toward-empowering-uae-women-mohammed>

*c. Federal National Council*

Federal National Council is the only electoral body in the federation's entity. The very milestone for women in the United Arab Emirates was in the 2006 election by the Federal National Council. Eleven years ago was the first time for Emirati women to run a political campaign and signed themselves as a candidate in the national election.

Federal National Council has experienced an excellent progress in introducing women's role in political representation, proven by the increasing of the percentage of women in the parliament in the next two elections since 2006. In 2006, women covered 17.5 per cent in the parliament and nine women out of forty FNC members were elected. Since the United Arab Emirates has had a commitment to expand the access to political participation for the citizens in a measured and sustained way, the next FNC election in 2011 showed the increasing numbers of the Electoral College members from only around 6,995 voters in 2006 (in which did not cover even 1% from the whole UAE citizens) to 135,308 voters.

By 2015, 78 out of 252 candidates were women, as well as the increasing numbers of voters up to 224,279 which covered 66 per cent increase. This has been another success for the Federal National Council in its task to increase Emirati women's participation in politics. The increasing numbers in national elections for the last three periods has been the achievement of the United Arab

Emirates in advocating the Emirati women's representation in politics which was started by allowing women to run as candidates since the FNC's first election in 2006.

Women successfully ran as candidates and performed an effective political campaign at that time, as well as the 2015 election, Naama Al Sharhan from R'as Al Khaimah was the only woman who was elected directly to pickup 1,400 voters<sup>33</sup>. From an article published by The National, Emirati women who joined the general election as voters expressed their dissatisfaction as Naama was the only woman from R'as Al Khaimah who managed to gain seat from being elected by the voters. These Emirati women expected more effective campaign as they stated that the other women candidates were lack of approach to the people as there was no display but a mere picture of them as candidates. The women voters further claimed to The National that they expected at least each woman from each emirate would gain parliamentary seats in 2015 election.

Such headline and the expression of dissatisfaction clearly proved that Emirati women have been very actively involved in politics, as they showed their concern by speaking up their minds. This phenomena has remarked the positive outcome from the government's provision along with the UAE's commitment to empower women, particularly in political representation. Although, the UAE

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<sup>33</sup>The National. (2015, October 4). *Emirati women disappointed in lack of female representation in FNC*. Retrieved from The National: <https://www.thenational.ae/uae/government/emirati-women-disappointed-in-lack-of-female-representation-in-fnc-1.70913>

Government would have to work more to preserve the greater chance for women to gain more seats in the parliament.

From the FNC's side, the appointment by the Supreme Council of Dr. Amal Al Qubaisi as the permanent speaker as well as the President for the Federal National Council since 2015 has succeeded the UAE's effort to empower the Emirati women in politics. Especially, knowing that Amal Al Qubaisi is the first woman in the history of the United Arab Emirates, as well as the history of the Arab region, to hold such honorable position in terms of women's representation in a high-level government sector.

### 3. General Women's Union (GWU) of the United Arab Emirates

The UAE General Women's Union (GWU) is the senior legal umbrella woman's organization within the federal entity. GWU was intimately involved in the *National Strategy for the Advancement of Women*, a joint initiative with the UNDP, the United Nations Development Fund for Women, a number of local government agencies and NGOs. The strategy aimed to activate the role of women and their positive participation in education, economy, information, social work, health, legislature and environment, also political and executive fields.

#### a. *GWU's National Strategy for the Advancement of Women*

The joint-program with the UNDP, The United Nations Development Fund for Women and several local government agencies and NGOs had drawn the

UNDP to publish an executive report on the program in 2007. The report confirmed the joint program, as well as the recognition for the General Women's Union as the leading partnership in implementing this program<sup>34</sup>, particularly in the gender mainstreaming, as well as the implementation of the Convention on the Elimination of all Forms of Discrimination against Women (CEDAW).

The joint-program had resulted to the proposal from the UNDP to the respective state, United Arab Emirates, in gender mainstreaming, especially in political participation. The UNDP stipulated in the draft-country that although gender mainstreaming is still perceived under governance, UNDP would support the national priority of empowering women to contribute to the economic, social and political spheres. In addition, the UNDP would recommend the implementation of independent activities to raise the awareness and capacity for gender mainstreaming<sup>35</sup>.

*b. GWU Workshop on National Gender Gap Report*

In accordance with the United Nation's Development Programme (UNDP), gender gap report is very essential in completing the efforts of a state to gender balance study. Also, seeing that report would be the achievement of the development program in the social studies of the UAE in empowering women has strengthen its importance to be exercised. From such significant reason, the

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<sup>34</sup>UNDP. (2007). *Draft Country Programme Document for the United Arab Emirates*. New York: United Nations.

<sup>35</sup>Ibid.

UAE's General Women Union has organized a workshop on national gender gap report at its headquarters in Abu Dhabi. The workshop was one of the executions of the GWU's *Strategy for Empowerment of Emirati Women in the UAE 2015-2021* in strengthening the role of women in both regional and international level.

Noura Al Suwaidi, the Director-General of the General Women's Union, stated in her interview with WAM (UAE National News Agency)<sup>36</sup>, that the union cooperates with the United Nations Development Programme (UNDP), to prepare the national report about the gender gap with the aim of identifying the proper measurement to gender advancement as well as to strengthen the country's competitiveness in related international reports.

Still in Noura's words, the goals of the workshop is to find a systematic frameworks to prepare periodic international reports related to women's rights and advancement, completing the UAE's intense efforts in the field of gender balance that aim to achieve pioneering in the participation and empowerment of the Emirati woman in the journey of sustainable development. She then added that the report represents a quantitative study on the social gender gap, which benefits the monitoring and evaluation of these efforts.

B. Opening the access to an accurate data related to the women in the parliament

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<sup>36</sup>WAM News Agency. (2017, May 25). *UAE's General Women's Union Organizes Workshop on National Gender Gap Report*. Retrieved from Thomson Reuters Zawya: [https://www.zawya.com/mena/en/story/UAEs\\_General\\_Womens\\_Union\\_organizes\\_workshop\\_on\\_national\\_gender\\_gap\\_report-WAM20170524181043858/](https://www.zawya.com/mena/en/story/UAEs_General_Womens_Union_organizes_workshop_on_national_gender_gap_report-WAM20170524181043858/)

1. UN Women’s website publication on Gender Gap Index 2014 for UAE

Along with the Spring Forward for Women Programme, the UN Women published the Gender Gap Index for the United Arab Emirates in its official website.

*Table 4. 1 UAE’s political empowerment ranked 96 out of 142 countries*

Gender Gap Index 2014							
Overall		Economic Participation		Political Empowerment		Educational Attainment	
Rank	Score	Rank	Score	Rank	Score	Rank	Score
115	0.644	123	0.515	96	0.111	83	0.988

According to the table above, United Arab Emirates that ranked 96 out of 142 countries was safe from the 100 rank. However, the score needs to be elevated if the federation goals for the higher equality in which determined to be 1.00. Despite from the respective state that ranked 96 globally, according to the Inter-Parliamentary Union’s press release on March 2017<sup>37</sup>, the joint-program between IPU and UN Women namely ‘*Women in Politics Map*’ has found that in the **Arab States**, women’s representation in senior executive posts reached 9.7 per cent (from 9.5 per cent in 2015).

<sup>37</sup>Inter-Parliamentary Union. (2017, March 15). *New IPU and UN Women Map shows women’s representation in politics stagnates*. Retrieved from Inter-Parliamentary Union: <https://beta.ipu.org/news/press-releases/2017-03/new-ipu-and-un-women-map-shows-womens-representation-in-politics-stagnates>



Tunisia's rate of women's representation rose significantly from 10.5 per cent in 2015 to 23.1 per cent in 2017, after two additional women joined the government, while the UAE increased women's presence in government to 26.7 per cent; these are the only two countries in the region to surpass 20 per cent in the MENA region.

The recent appointment of Her Excellency Lana Zaki Nusseibeh—the UAE Ambassador, as well as the first Emirati woman to be the permanent member of the UN—as the Executive Board for UN Women 2017 added more to the woman's achievement in representing UAE in the global arena. Her Excellency later claimed that being appointed has challenged herself to then aim to demonstrate the key role that women play in senior leadership and decision-making in her homeland.

## 2. The UAE Government's Publication System

To support the advocacy of Emirati women's participation in the parliament, the UAE Government should at least take an action to ease the broad access for people to know more about the women empowerment in the United Arab Emirates. Especially, for women who are becoming the primary subject of the discussion. As the UAE Government has to make sure that they are trusting the right partner, they collaborate with the trustworthy News agencies. There are only few news agencies which are considered trustworthy for the United Arab Emirates. Some of the top trusted media are WAM (Wakalat Anba'a Al Emarat)

in which the state's news agency, Gulfnews, Khaleej Times, and The National Arab Emirates.

Through the news, article and publication by the trusted media, the UAE Government has been opening an access to the accurate data and information related to the federation, the women's empowerment, particularly about Emirati women in politics. The chosen media are there to avoid the inconsistency or false information that might destabilize the federation country and lead to a distrust between the UAE Government and the Emirates' citizens. According to the article of The National news agency, the UAE Government took a trust test in 2015, invited 1,200 Emirati correspondents and the result shows that ninety per cent of the correspondents trust the government<sup>38</sup>. By examining the result, both the UAE Government and the media partners are motivated to elevate their professional work in publication.

Aside from the Government's commitment to the media, Gender Balance Council assigned by the Prime Minister of the United Arab Emirates, which was officially launched in 2015 had launched its publication in the national level by publishing the *Gender Balance Guide*<sup>39</sup>. The Gender Balance Guide was the initiative of the council to introduce the gender mainstreaming agenda in 2017 within the UAE border which comes in a form of printed guide book. The guide

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<sup>38</sup>The National. (2015, April 26). *90 per cent of UAE residents surveyed trust Government*. Retrieved from The National: <https://www.thenational.ae/uae/government/90-per-cent-of-uae-residents-surveyed-trust-government-1.72785>

<sup>39</sup>Emirates Woman. (2015, February 13). *UAE Companies Will Get A Guidebook On How To Adopt Gender Equality*. Retrieved from Emirates Woman: <http://emirateswoman.com/uae-companies-are-getting-a-guidebook-on-how-to-adopt-gender-equality/#>

book would be the assistance for companies in the UAE to adopt the gender approach in the workforce. This program will also become the publication media where women should also be recognized more in terms of gender role in their society and that female should be given the equal access to their male counterparts in the United Arab Emirates. Gender Balance Guide has been scheduled to launch in September 2017<sup>40</sup> as well as the following agenda of the Gender Balance Council to continue drafting the necessary frameworks and to discuss the action plan of Gender Balance Index.

### 3. UAE General Women's Union

The UAE's General Women's Union has been established since 1975 and chaired by the wife of the founder as well as the first President of the United Arab Emirates. The women organization that appears rather unique compared to the other women's organizations in the democratic countries is ran under the government's rule. The UAE's General Women's Union has been very dedicative towards the future of Emirati women and it attempts to influence the other Arab states and to become the important contributor to gender equality promotion, particularly in women's participation in politics.

Through publication, the General Women's Union attempts to broaden the access for the local, national as well as the international entities to the activities of

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<sup>40</sup>Gulf News. (2017, March 13). *UAE Gender Balance Council discusses initiatives for 2017: 'UAE Gender Balance Guide' will be officially launched in September*. Retrieved from Gulf News Society: <http://gulfnews.com/news/uae/society/uae-gender-balance-council-discusses-initiatives-for-2017-1.1993304>

the union. The General Women's Union has also gained a professional partner to publish the statistic data related to the women's representation in the parliament. It is the Federal Authority for Competitiveness and Statistics which carries the task as a basic reference for the General Women's Union in the survey of various statistics related to the indicators of women's empowerment. The women's union works closely with the center to build a database on gender indicators and conduct relevant surveys.

### C. Funding the needs of women's empowerment

#### 1. UN Women's Donor Funding

During the Spring Forward for Women conference in 2014, UN Women along with the European Commission and European Parliament had been very straightforward towards the publication of their funding. The Spring Forward for Women Programme has gained fund donors from the UN Women's core budget had spent € 1.2 million from its core budget and the funding also came from the European Neighborhood Partnership Instrument (ENPI) worth € 7 million<sup>41</sup>. European Union and UN Women joint regional programme for the Southern Mediterranean region "The Spring Forward for Women", programme implemented with funding by the European Union.

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<sup>41</sup>UN Women. (2014, November 5). *Arab and European Parliamentarians to Meet at 'Spring Forward for Women' Conference*. Retrieved from UN Women: <http://www.unwomen.org/en/news/stories/2014/11/spring-forward-for-women-conference>

As the UN Women and the United Arab Emirates signed the agreement to open the UN Women Liaison Office in Abu Dhabi, the international women organization was funded by the respective state USD 5 million or worth 18,35 million in UAE Dirham, to support the work of the United Nations organization.

## 2. UAE Funds for UN Women

According to the statement of Her Excellency Dr. Maitha Salem Al Shamsi, the Minister of State for the United Arab Emirates, through the Committee of the Elimination of all forms of Discrimination Against Women in Geneva 2015<sup>42</sup> she stated that the respective state, United Arab Emirates, was elected to serve on the UN Women's Executive Board for two terms, in which from 2013 until 2015, as well as 2016 until 2018 term. Her Excellency Dr. Maitha Salem Al Shamsi continued to stipulate that the respective state, the United Arab Emirates, has been financially contributing up to almost USD 12 million to the United Nations Entity for Gender Equality and the Empowerment of Women (UN Women) since 2012<sup>43</sup>.

The agreement between UAE and the UN Women to open Liaison Office in Abu Dhabi had been signed in July 2016. UAE was chosen as the place for the liaison office for the Gulf countries since the respective state has been giving positive feedbacks and outputs from almost all of the UN-sponsored agendas, conventions and meetings. Basically, the UAE had created its positive image in

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<sup>42</sup>UAE Ministry of State. (2015). *Statement of Her Excellency Dr. Maitha Salem Al Shamsi*. Geneva: Committee of the Elimination of all forms of Discrimination Against Women.

<sup>43</sup>Ibid.

supporting and empowering the gender mainstreaming. The respective state had pledged to finance the opening of the UN Women Liaison Office in Abu Dhabi where the UAE has donated US\$5 million (Dh18.35m) to promote the work of the United Nations organisation dedicated to the empowerment of women<sup>44</sup>.

The United Arab Emirates has been in the *Top Donor List* for the United Nations Development Programme (UNDP)<sup>45</sup>, aside from Saudi Arabia and Egypt. The data was taken from the official site of UNDP and the table below was the data that has been processed by the author of this undergraduate thesis.

*Table 4. 2 List based on total income received for regular and other resources in 2016*

<b>No.</b>	<b>Country</b>	<b>Total Fund</b>
1	United Arab Emirates	\$54,179,242
2	Egypt	\$44,298,926
3	Saudi Arabia	\$42,157,684

United Arab Emirates has been one of the top contributing donors for the UNDP Programmes in the specific issue ranged in gender equality. The respective state ranked first among three Arab states in which two of the other donors were coming from Egypt and Saudi Arabia. The fact that United Arab Emirates is included as the top contributing donors shows the positive image of the respective state in addressing gender mainstreaming. The federation has been very

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<sup>44</sup>The National Staff. (2014, June 19). *UAE gives \$5m to promote work of UN Women*. Retrieved from The National: <https://www.thenational.ae/uae/government/uae-gives-5m-to-promote-work-of-un-women-1.322942>

<sup>45</sup>UNDP. (2017, July 31). *Top Contributing Donors*. Retrieved from UNDP: Our Projects: <http://open.undp.org/#top-donors/total>

supportive in funding any UNDP projects and one of them is the *National Initiatives for Gender Mainstreaming Program in the United Arab Emirates 2006* in collaboration with the UNDP.

### 3. GWU's donors

The UAE General Women's Union is the oldest women organization in the United Arab Emirates. The fact that it was established in 1975 have shown the significant role of Emirati women in the society. The GWU has done numerous activities in introducing and promoting gender equality in the national and regional level. UAE General Women's Union as one of the most significant women's organizations within the UAE border has been engaging with its strategic partners in terms of funding. The United Nations Development Fund for Women (UNIFEM) is the GWU's donor in financing the union's program of the *National Strategy for the Advancement of Women in the United Arab Emirates 2002*<sup>46</sup>. The program was initiated by Her Highness Sheikha Fatima bint Mubarak Al Ketbi, the President of the UAE's General Women's Union.

The same donor for GWU's program comes for the sponsorship of the *Program of Strengthening the Role of Women Parliamentarians in the United Arab Emirates* in cooperation with the United Nations Development Fund for Women (UNIFEM) during the period 2006-2008, with the aim of enhancing the

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<sup>46</sup> GWU. (2017). *Prominent Figure*. Retrieved from General Women's Union: <http://www.gwu.ae/president.aspx>

role of women parliamentarians and the empowerment of women to participate in political and parliamentary life<sup>47</sup>.

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<sup>47</sup>Ibid.