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Press Release
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iKNOW Politics Partners Launch Arabic-Language Website to Support Women in Politics

Amman, Jordan: iKNOW Politics, an online network dedicated to the advancement of women in politics, launched a new Arabic language version here today, opening it up to potentially millions of new users in a region where women are underrepresented politically.

About 150 women leaders, political candidates, activists and representatives of women's organizations primarily from the Middle East and North Africa are attending the two-day launch event, which continues into Wednesday and focuses on the impact of media and information technology on the number and effectiveness of women in politics in the region. It is designed to initiate an ongoing dialogue that will be carried out through iKNOW Politics, the International Knowledge Network of Women in Politics, www.iknowpolitics.org.

The event's keynote speaker Her Royal Highness Princess Basma Bint Talal of Jordan, is keenly involved in local and international processes that aim to advance the status of women. Princess Basma's role as an advocate for women's rights is well recognized in Jordan and the Arab region as well as internationally as a Goodwill Ambassador for UNIFEM. At the conference HRH Princess Basma said:

"If Arab women in politics are the realization of the possible, then promoting their political roles promises to be one of the outcomes of a new technology and media landscape, in addition to highlighting the important responsibilities that women have always assumed in our society. Not only will iKNOW politics Arabic website draw attention to these achievements, it will help to set positive change in motion by engaging its members in an open dialogue, and creating a forum in which information and knowledge exchange can consolidate the voices of women from all over the world".

This year, at least 200,000 people are expected to visit iKNOW Politics, which began in 2007 and also operates in English, French and Spanish. It is a partnership of International IDEA, the Inter-Parliamentary Union, the National Democratic Institute, the UNDP and UNIFEM.

While women face numerous obstacles around the world in their efforts to achieve political parity, they have a particularly difficult climb in the Arab

URL: www.iknowpolitics.org



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region. For example, the global average of women in parliaments is 18.5 percent, compared to 9.7 percent in the Arab states.

The value of iKNOW Politics and the diversity of its uses and users were reflected by the participants at the launch event.

"The iKNOW Politics project gives women an opportunity to talk to each other across regions and languages," said Gisele Khoury, host of "Bil Arabi" on Al Arabiya TV in Lebanon and the director of ceremonies for the two-day event. "It is an innovative way to use new technologies to help women to be more active in decision-making positions."

Geraldine Fraser-Moleketi, director of the Democratic Governance Group of the UNDP and formerly a minister for public service and administration in South Africa, said, "iKNOW Politics is an important resource for all women in politics in developing and developed countries. It assists you from the sublime to what could be considered mundane and basic. It also gives you the reassurance that no obstacle is insurmountable even when confronted by cultural, religious or other challenges, as another woman has confronted it and is ready to share her experience! iKNOW Politics provides that support that every woman politician needs, whether in a post-conflict environment or one that is considered normal."

"Women must trust each other," said the Hon. Milouda Hazeb, chair of the Al Nakheel Municipality in Morocco. "There should be some kind of solidarity among them, and there must be channels of communication to help share experiences."

The official launch program began with a ceremony at the Jordanian Parliament hosted by the Speaker of the House of Representatives, Abdulhadi Al Majali. During other parts of the program, participants of all ages examined issues regarding women and politics in the Arab media, overcoming stereotypes and campaign messaging.

The introduction of Arabic as an iKNOW Politics language widens an ongoing dialogue on the site, which provides access for women across the world to resources and expertise, and allows women to expand their knowledge and share and benefit from each other's political experiences. It is, in effect, a network of networks, where women who use the site share what they have learned with political networks in their own countries.

The resources of iKNOW Politics are open to anyone who visits the website, which about 15,000 people did last month. There they can read online discussions, review a wide and expanding selection of articles on political topics, view links to more than 210 organizations and have access to a library



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of 1,500 free resources, including skills training manuals, sample legislation, and many other materials in Arabic, English, French and Spanish.

Last month, among the pages that were looked at most were on the involvement of young women in politics, tips for writing better speeches and a political campaign manual that included a step by step guide to winning elections.

Those who register as iKNOW Politics members, of which there are currently 6,000, can post information to the site and have access to the network's 70 experts from 30 countries who are available to answer individual questions.

They can also be participants in periodic online E-discussions, which have attracted submissions from 148 members in 35 countries in the past year. Topics have included strategies for fundraising, gender quotas in politics, involving men in promoting women in politics, the impact of women in local government and eliminating violence against women in politics.

iKNOW Politics also provides examples of role models. As part of today's conference, the site launched a video of women political leaders in the region, which can be found on the Arabic iKNOW Politics homepage at www.iknowpolitics.org/ar.

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