

ASCAME-AFAEMME joint statement on the occasion of the International Women's Day

Women entrepreneurs are an increasingly consolidated and present reality in the Mediterranean region. **To promote the participation of women in the labour market has a huge impact on the economy and to promote women's entrepreneurship plays an important role in creating active and dynamic economies.** The commemoration of the International Women's Day, this year under the slogan "For a Planet 50-50 in 2030", offers the opportunity to reflect the progress made by women entrepreneurs who have had an extraordinary role in the Mediterranean countries and to make an appeal to support the participation of women in the economic sphere.

The Association of the Mediterranean Chambers of Commerce and Industry (ASCAME) and the Association of Federations and Associations of Business Women of the Mediterranean (AFAEMME) advocate a joint work of the private sector, public sector and civil society to ensure that the **Mediterranean region fully use the growing potential of women entrepreneurs**, who are essential for the economic growth at local, national and regional level. This active collaboration firstly requires reducing barriers encountered by entrepreneurs, such as funding opportunities or training, and enhancing the image of business women starting new businesses. In parallel, **a long-term strategy based on specific programs to promote the participation of women entrepreneurs** in the economic life of the Mediterranean countries and that can face the rapid changes of the environment, should be prepared.

Investing in women also means creating enormous social and economic benefits. Women are the driving force of change and generate wealth, often through new activities that generate employment. **Their contributions and leadership are and will be fundamental for the region to reach the Sustainable Development Goals (ODS) by 2030.** Despite significant progress made by women entrepreneurs, **there are still important social gaps to be eradicated, such as the educational shortages, high feminine illiteracy rates and unequal opportunities** in the region.

ASCAME together with AFAEMME have been working for years in various initiatives promoting the role of women in the regional economic environment. The Mediterranean Forum of Women Entrepreneurs, which this year celebrates its 8th edition, is today a unique international platform for interaction and exchange of experiences and recommendations, as well as the implementation of economic initiatives launched by entrepreneurs of the region, which discovered new markets and niches where fit new ideas.

The commitment to the Mediterranean and entrepreneur women is key to reach the ODS and integration of the region. It's not only impossible for the Mediterranean to advance without the joint construction of a society based on equal opportunities, but also **entrepreneurs should be the catalyst for a new socio-economic era for the Mediterranean.**

Presidency

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