Your Excellency the Minister of Political and Parliamentary Affairs,

Members of the diplomatic community

Scholars and graduates

Members of civil society

Ladies and gentlemen, dear friends,

It’s a great pleasure to be here this evening, to take part in the graduation ceremony of the 5th and 6th classes from the Jordanian Institute for Women's Leadership here at the Jerusalem Hotel.

The European Union has a long and well-established partnership with Jordan and its civil society in support for women, human rights and participatory governance.

The European Union believes in human rights principle and universal values and this is the basis of our policies with partner countries in our neighbourhood area. The value of this programme of the Jordanian Institute for Women Leaders is as timely and relevant as ever.

The recent Gender Gap Index for 2015 showed that Jordan is falling backwards for the 7th consecutive year to a position of 140 out of 145 countries. A positive remark in that respect is that Jordan has reached almost full gender equality
when it comes to literacy rate and enrolment in primary, secondary and tertiary education.

However, as you know, the participation of women in the labour market is among the lowest in the world touching only 16%. Especially, when it comes to women as legislators, senior officials, and managers Jordan has still an important task ahead to come closer to equality between men and women.

Now, there is a lot of debate about quota systems for women. But one thing is for sure: Qualifications is a pre-requisite for improving the situation and that is why I'm very honoured to be here with the graduates here today who have taken up the challenge of studying.

Today's graduation and the presence of distinguished guests from Jordan confirm that qualified women can be true drivers of change also beyond borders. And from the EU perspective we welcome the efforts of civil society since it is putting in the spotlights with basis for solutions to gender inequality namely ambitious and well-qualified women committed to change Jordan for the benefit of its entire population.

I am also very excited that this performance includes other Arab Nationals in particular from Syria; I would like on the behalf of the EU to commend Jordan for its generosity in hosting Syrian refugees and also from other Arab countries.

The EU support to gender equality is part of a much wider support to Good Governance, Democracy and Human rights. This support is aligned with the Government of Jordan's agenda for deepening the political and democratic reforms in the Kingdom under the vision of his Majesty King Abdullah.

So far, and over the last four years to Jordan, the EU has committed more than €100 million euros in this area, including support to justice reforms, decentralisation rule of law and capacity building for a vibrant civil society.

Allow me to finish by congratulating both the graduates and their professors for your excellent achievement.

Thank you very much for your attention.