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Governing Council
Item 7

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REPORTS ON RECENT IPU SPECIALIZED CONFERENCES AND MEETINGS

(a) REGIONAL CONFERENCE AND iKNOW POLITICS PARTNERS ARABIC WEBSITE LAUNCH
THE ROLE OF THE MEDIA AND TECHNOLOGY IN INCREASING THE NUMBER AND
EFFECTIVENESS OF WOMEN IN POLITICS
(Amman, 27-28 October 2009)

1. The International Knowledge Network of Women in Politics (www.iknowpolitics.org) partners hosted a regional meeting to launch the Arabic version of the website. The partners - the IPU, International IDEA, the National Democratic Institute for International Affairs (NDI), UNDP and UNIFEM - have collaborated since 2007 on the iKNOW Politics Project in English, French and Spanish. In 2009, an Arabic version of the website was created, and launched at the Conference *The role of the media and technology in increasing the number and effectiveness of women in politics* on 27 and 28 October in Amman, Jordan.

2. The official launch programme began with a ceremony at the Jordanian Parliament, hosted by Mr. Abdulhadi Al Majali, the Speaker of the House of Representatives. This was followed by a day-and-a-half conference on the issue of women in the media. Some 150 women leaders, parliamentarians, candidates, activists and representatives of women's organizations, primarily from the Middle East and North Africa, attended the event. Her Royal Highness, Princess Basma Bint Talal of Jordan, provided the keynote address at the conference. Also in attendance as participants and speakers were several ministers, members of parliament, local councillors and senior partner representatives. The conference was also attended by several young women leaders from across the Arab States.

3. The purpose of the two-day event was to showcase the Arabic iKNOW Politics website in the region, and to initiate a dialogue on how women in politics can use the media and new technologies, such as iKNOW Politics, to enhance their participation in decision-making. The presentations and debates covered topics such as utilizing new technology in political campaigns for women and overcoming media stereotypes of women in politics in the Arab region. The Arabic film entitled *Getting ahead: Testimonials of Arab women political leaders*, was also launched during the event. This film showcases the successful paths of women in politics from the region and encourages other women to enter politics and serve as role models for them.

4. The launch of the Arabic version of the iKNOW Politics website is particularly timely. While women face numerous obstacles in accessing parliament, this is particularly evident in the Arab region, where women hold 9.7 per cent of seats in parliament – half the world average. The introduction of Arabic as an iKNOW Politics language widens an ongoing dialogue on the website, providing access for women around the world to resources, expertise and knowledge.