



قطاع الشؤون الاجتماعية

Summary Report High Level Meeting on 20th anniversary of the adoption of the United Nations Security Council Resolution 1325

On November 4, 2020, the Economic and Social Commission for Western Asia (ESCWA), in partnership with League of Arab States (LAS), UN Women and the Arab Institute for Women (AiW) at the Lebanese American University, held an online meeting, on the occasion of the twentieth anniversary of UN Security Council resolution 1325 on the Women, Peace and Security (WPS) agenda. The meeting was part of a regional project entitled “SCR1325@20: Towards a renewed engagement with the Women, Peace, and Security Agenda in the Arab Region” and funded by Deutsche Gesellschaft für Internationale Zusammenarbeit (GIZ) GmbH and the Swiss Confederation and aimed at assessing the progress made in implementing the WPS agenda and the role of the agenda in preparing member States to address issues related to emergency conditions, environmental and health developments, and conflict.

During the Opening Session, Ms. Mehrnaz El-Awady, emphasized that the COVID-19 pandemic created an opportunity to assess the situation and develop tools to contribute to improving the response to natural disasters and epidemics. She highlighted that National Action Plans (NAPs) on the implementation of the WPS agenda must be considered as a tool in facing emerging challenges and containing the impact of COVID-19 on member States. Ms. Dina Douay, representing the LAS, stressed the importance of discussing ways to mitigate the negative impact of the pandemic on women and girls. Ms. Myriam Sfeir, of AiW, explained how the economic and health-related issues in Lebanon have worsened after the Beirut Port explosion. She highlighted that although women are impacted in different ways compared to men, the proposed solutions lack a gender perspective and gender equality lens.

Session two provided an opportunity to present existing efforts on the WPS agenda from a regional perspective. Ms. Dina Douay presented on LAS’s efforts in developing a regional strategy on WPS, as well as an updated Regional Action Plan on the “Protect Women in the Arab Region: Peace and Security 2015- 2030”. Ms. Heba Zayyan, from UN Women presented the results of the analytical study conducted by UN Women to assess the relevance of NAPs during the pandemic. Analysis findings highlight the importance of fully implementing the WPS agenda, as well as a gender perspective, in national responses to the pandemic to mitigate some of its negative impacts. Findings also highlighted the importance of women’s organizations and the need to ensure that they play a role in protecting women in national responses to the pandemic. Ms. Nada Darwazeh of ESCWA presented the findings of a report that examines the Arab region’s

engagement with the WPS agenda. She noted that the Arab States are witnessing a gradual increase in the preparation of NAPs, although there is a disparity between States with regard to the official entity responsible for following up on the agenda. Additionally, there is a difference in how they embark on implementing their NAPs whereby some States prepare specialized NAPs while others opt for integrating the pillars of the WPS agenda in existing national strategies and plans.

Representatives from Arab States presented their State's involvement in the implementation of the WPS agenda during the COVID-19 pandemic. Ms. Laila bint Ahmed bin Awad Al-Najjar, the Minister of Social Development in Oman, elaborated on the Sultanate's efforts to enhance the role of women and advance women's rights in all fields. She highlighted the importance of adhering to international conventions and UN principles, as peace and human rights are interdependent. Ms. Noura Al Suwaidi, the General Secretary of the General Women's Union in UAE, stated that the WPS agenda, along with the NAP that the UAE is currently developing, will reinforce the UAE's commitment to the security and peace agenda and build women's capacity and increase their participation in different security sectors. She also shed light on some of the government's gender sensitive initiatives to mitigate the impact of COVID-19, explaining that the government allowed pregnant women and those with children younger than 9 years old to work remotely.

Dr. Sheikha Rana bint Isa Al Khalifa, Undersecretary of the Minister of Foreign Affairs in Bahrain, indicated that there is an urgent need more than ever to lay the foundation for peace. She explained that the government of Bahrain has exerted efforts to ensure the delivery of social security initiatives of the highest standards to ensure the equal participation of women in decision-making positions and public affairs, and emphasized women's role as an equal partner in addressing current and future challenges and opportunities. She explained the importance of inclusion and equal opportunities, education in empowering of women and girls, and the importance of combating human trafficking.

Dr. Amal Hamad, the Minister of Women's Affairs in Palestine, stressed the need to address displacement and asylum, and the particular nature of Palestine in the context of the WPS agenda. She called for clear condemnation of the international human rights violations exerted by the Israeli occupation, highlighting the importance of strengthening the resilience of communities.

Dr. Turki Abdullah Zaid Al Mahmoud, Director of the Human Rights Directorate at the Ministry of Foreign Affairs in Qatar, presented his State's role in supporting the global study on the participation of women in peace, which concluded that the inclusion of women in peace processes has positive and sustainable effects and contributes to preventing conflicts.

Ambassador Mahmoud Afifi affirmed that, since its adoption, the Arab Republic of Egypt has supported the goals and principles of UNSCR 1325 as an empowering tool for women in the economy, culture, politics and society. He pointed out that the pandemic impedes the achievement of the Sustainable Development Goals and will disproportionately affect women and girls, especially in conflict, armed and post-conflict areas. He noted that Egypt is currently preparing its NAP.

Ms. Huda Al-Shaiji, Chair of the Family Committee at the National Diwan for Human Rights, indicated that the State of Kuwait was keen to provide food, economic and social security for all during the pandemic. In addition to the several relevant decisions issued by the Council of Ministers to mitigate the negative impact of the pandemic, including the recently adopted law on Protection from Domestic Violence. Dr. Laila Al-Lafi, Director of the Women's Empowerment Unit at the Presidential Council in Libya, indicated that women in Libya suffer the most from the scourge of war and conflict. She indicated that decisionmakers in Libya believe that enhancing women's participation in peace processes can only be achieved through empowerment and through programs and strategies that build and upgrade women's capabilities and provide them with real opportunities to assume decision-making positions.

Ms. Faten El Sebei, in charge of WPS at the Ministry of Women, Family and Elderly in Tunisia, explained that the Tunisian NAP was developed through a participatory process and was approved by the Cabinet and Prime Minister. Tunisia added another dimension to their NAP, which included a focus on awareness, advocacy and media. Finally, Ms. Rita Chemaly of the National Council for Lebanese Women, elaborated on the need for a strong national authority to implement UNSCR1325 once a NAP is already approved. She also highlighted some of the adverse impacts of COVID-19 and the associated lockdowns on women and girls, including the high increase of incidents of violence against women.

During the closing session, the recommendations included developing detailed and joint plans to combat crises like the current pandemic. Recommendations included:

- Developing NAPs that enable work to address the COVID-19 pandemic;
- Providing adequate financial support to implement NAPs;
- Creating an electronic platform for all partners that will include all relevant materials related to the WPS agenda;
- Providing an online regional platform to exchange experiences among Arab States; and
- Ensuring that national indicators are made available for monitoring and follow up.