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New York



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What's next for Women, Peace and Security in Middle East and North Africa: The Potential of National Action Plans Concept Note

The Permanent Missions of Germany, the United Kingdom and Peru will co-host an Arria Formula meeting of the Security Council on Women, Peace and Security on **Thursday, January 24th, at 3 PM in the Trusteeship Council Chamber**.

Heiko Maas, Federal Minister for Foreign Affairs of Germany, Retno L.P. Marsudi, Minister of Foreign Affairs of Indonesia, Miguel Vargas, Minister of Foreign Affairs of the Dominican Republic and Lord Ahmad of Wimbledon, Minister of State of the United Kingdom are expected to speak at the meeting. **Participation by other delegations at the ministerial level is welcome.**

Background

In a context of increasing attacks on global peace, the Middle East and North Africa region (MENA) remains particularly volatile. While the rights and opportunities of women and girls in the region have been severely impeded by violence and insecurity, the Women, Peace and Security agenda has been gaining visibility in the last few years. Women's organizations and activists have defied the risks to organize across the region and demand their inclusion in peace talks, conflict resolution, national dialogues, constitution drafting, transitional justice, post-conflict recovery and stabilization, and initiatives to prevent conflict or violent extremism. As recently as five years ago no National Action Plan on Women, Peace and Security existed in the MENA region. Since then, Iraq, Jordan, Tunisia, and the Occupied Palestinian Territories have adopted National Action Plans, and Lebanon will likely be the next in the region to follow suit. The League of Arab States has also adopted a regional action plan.

Across the region, the development and adoption of National Action Plans presents an opportunity for national stakeholders to advance the Women, Peace and Security agenda, and for the international community and civil society to support. The Security Council has referred to National Action Plans in several of its resolutions on Women, Peace and Security (e.g. 1889, 2122, 2242), and meets regularly to discuss situations in the MENA region, including in the format of the Security Council's Informal Expert Group on Women, Peace and Security, of which Germany and Peru are Co-Chairs and which was co-founded by the United Kingdom. However, it has thus far not provided sufficient attention to National Action Plan implementation.

Two examples of National Action Plans in the MENA region, in Iraq and Lebanon respectively, shall be highlighted in this Arria Formula meeting.

Iraq was the first country to adopt a National Action Plan in the MENA region and is already developing its second National Action Plan, focused on enhancing gender equality and women's rights, as well as peacebuilding and rehabilitation of survivors of sexual violence post-Da'esh. In addition, several provinces have adopted local action plans. A record number of women ran as candidates in the recent election (37 percent of all candidates), but challenges remain for women's participation in the political process. Furthermore, the Government of Iraq launched a new National Strategy to Combat Violence Against Women in December 2018. In another positive development, a Yazidi human rights activist, Ms. Nadia Murad, was awarded the 2018 Nobel Peace Prize for her efforts to end the use of sexual violence in conflict.



Lebanon is developing its own National Action Plan on Women, Peace and Security. As in other cases, the inclusion of civil society in the design, development, and monitoring of this plan has been essential. A costing exercise was crucial for the development of the draft National Action Plan. Similar to Iraq, a record number of women also ran as candidates last year in the first parliamentary election in almost ten years, but this did not translate to increased representation of women in politics (only 6 of 128 MPs are women). Implementation of Women, Peace and Security commitments will be crucial for a country that hosts the highest number of refugees per capita in the world and is affected by prolonged conflict in the region.

Objective

National Action Plans on Women, Peace and Security, in this region and elsewhere, have not reached their potential yet, and face shortcomings both in their dissemination and implementation. If implemented effectively by national stakeholders with support from the international community and civil society, National Action Plans can become strong vehicles to galvanize support for the implementation of many initiatives on Women, Peace and Security.

The purpose of this meeting therefore is to elevate the visibility of National Action Plans on Women, Peace and Security in the Middle East and North Africa region. Member States are invited to use the Arria Formula meeting to discuss National Action Plans' potential, recommend ways for the Security Council and the international community to support governments in the region in implementing the plans, and encourage other countries in the region to adopt such plans in the lead up to the 20th anniversary of Resolution 1325 in 2020. Panelists will provide examples from the oldest National Action Plan in the region (Iraq) and from a plan that will soon be adopted but is still under development (Lebanon). However, participants are encouraged to speak about NAPs across the region, adopted or in development, and their potential to address key WPS issues there. In particular, participants are encouraged to answer the following questions:

- What are the specific and immediate needs in terms of advancing implementation of National Action Plans on 1325 in the Middle East and North Africa region?
- What can the Security Council do to support adoption and use of these plans in the region, as called for in multiple previous resolutions of the Council?
- How can National Action Plans become effective tools to address the many WPS challenges in the region, including in contexts affected by active conflicts and complex humanitarian emergencies?

Format

Speakers from the region, including from civil society, will brief on the topic of the Arria Formula meeting. The floor will then be opened for Council Members, starting with the co-hosts, and other Member States, with priority given to governments from the region, who may express their interest in participating by writing to katharina.kalaschnikow@diplo.de. The speaking time is set to a **maximum of three minutes** and participants are encouraged to be as interactive as possible in their interventions.

The Arria is open for all UN Member States, Permanent Observers, non-governmental organizations and the press. Interpretation will be available in all official languages of the United Nations.

The discussion will be summarized in a brief co-hosts' summary.