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## Beirut Int'l Conference Highlights Women's Participation in Peace, Security Initiatives

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Editor: Candy Liao

An international conference on "prioritizing women, peace and security on the Arab agenda" called on Thursday for actions to ensure the participation of women in all aspects of peace and security initiatives across the Arab world.

The conference was organized by the Institute for Women's Studies in the Arab World at Lebanese American University and the United Nations Economic and Social Commission for Western Asia (ESCWA) from August 8 to 10 in Beirut.

According to a statement by the ESCWA, the conference concluded by launching the Beirut Call for Action and urged the Arab states, the UN, the League of Arab States, civil society, policymakers and practitioners to fulfill their commitments.

Participants called for "introducing a new paradigm that promotes a culture of peace, active protection of women from violence, as well as tackles issues of violent extremism, radical religious discourse and political repression," the statement said.

The conference brought together more than 40 high level experts, academics and practitioners from the United Nations and 11 Arab countries to discuss women's participation in regional peace and security initiatives.

(Source: Xinhua)

<http://www.womenofchina.cn/womenofchina/html1/news/international/1608/1527-1.htm>

## Conference stresses women's role in conflict resolution

Tamara Blanche | The Daily Star

BEIRUT: A conference held in Beirut this week produced a new framework that emphasized the importance of national action plans to address the role of women in conflict and its resolution in the Arab world.

The Institute for Women's Studies in the Arab World and the U.N. Economic and Social Commission for Western Asia wrapped up Wednesday a three-day international conference entitled "Towards Prioritizing Women, Peace, and Security on the Arab Agenda."

"[This] is a very powerful thing because we need national action plans on the ground. We have a regional action plan, but we only have four countries that have created [their own] plans," Mehrinaz El Awady told The Daily Star.

Awady is the deputy director of the ESCWA Centre for Women (ECW), who partnered in the conference with the institute and the Danish Center for Research and Information on Gender, Equality, and Diversity (KVINFO).

"Having a separate action plan advocating women, security and peace gives it more power. You can use it as a tool to allocate a budget to implement it, but another mechanism ... is the inclusion of women [in the process]," she said.

The new framework promotes localizing the promotion and implementation of UN Security Council Resolution 1325, a central document of the three-day conference. Adopted in October 2000, the resolution reaffirms the importance of women in the prevention and resolution of conflicts and urges countries to facilitate their increased participation. It further calls on all parties to take special measures to shield women from gender-based violence in conflict zones.

Throughout the three-day conference, held at the Lebanese American University, it was argued that one of the more pressing issues is a lack of documentation and evidence-based research. Standardizing measurable indicators could help quantify the level of implementation of the U.N. resolution. The new framework is aimed at incorporating the gathering of such data into national action plans and domestic legislation across the Arab world.

The conference drew experts, activists, academics, members of civil society, and government and U.N. representatives to discuss the extent to which the resolution is being implemented in the region.

"I think the conference was very successful and effective in bringing together different groups of people, different dynamics ... the different representation was very enriching for the conference," Awady said.

Participants debated the role of U.N. SCR 1325 in responses to conflict and the role of women in contemporary peace processes. Panel discussions were geared towards creating a new paradigm on women, peace, and security, both in the region and beyond.

"One of the main accomplishments of the conference is the call for action that we came up with, which ... calls upon U.N. agencies, Arab states, academia, and different organizations to take different measures to implement the recommendations that came out of [the talks]," Awady said.

"The idea is that the other countries that have not made action plans [will] have [legislation]-embedded articles and activities to implement U.N. SCR 1325 in their [national contexts]."

He said participants had developed a new model for addressing the role of women in peace and security matters, which goes beyond U.N. SCR 1325.

It recognizes that such issues require more than one solution, and must be addressed at both the international and local level.

The proposed mechanism for achieving this is new research into the sociopolitical dynamics of women and men in day-to-day situations and changes in the way women are viewed and treated.

Such research could be facilitated by the resources and authority of domestic judicial, military, academic, and parliamentary institutions. By documenting various indicators, research and analysis could act as vehicles to coordinate and implement national progress on women's roles.

Moreover, research into such indicators could function as an early warning system, informing governments and helping them promote a culture of equality and peace, particularly within displaced and other vulnerable populations. Such information is paramount in fulfilling the ultimate goal of gender equality. Participants of the conference emphasized that addressing this knowledge gap is the first practical step forward.

Panelists also advocated greater cooperation, supporting inclusive cross-sector, cross-cultural dialogue to encourage national, regional, and triangular coordination. This could promote policy discourse, further engage women in capacity development activities, and facilitate the design and funding of the new national action plans.

### **This article was amended on Tuesday, August 16 2016**

This article has been modified to correct the title and gender of Ms. Mehrinaz El Awady, who is the deputy director of the ESCWA Centre for Women (ECW). A previous version of this article erroneously stated her title as deputy director of U.N.-ESCWA's Convention on the Elimination of all Forms of Discrimination Against Women. It also referred to her as a man when in fact she is a woman. The Daily Star regrets these errors.

<http://www.dailystar.com.lb/News/Lebanon-News/2016/Aug-12/366847-conference-stresses-womens-role-in-conflict-resolution.ashx>