



Security Council

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Letter dated 7 February 2019 from the Permanent Representatives of Germany, Peru and the United Kingdom of Great Britain and Northern Ireland to the United Nations addressed to the President of the Security Council

The Permanent Missions of Germany, Peru, and the United Kingdom have the honour to transmit herewith a summary by the co-hosts of the Arria formula meeting of the Security Council held on 24 January 2019, on the theme “What’s next for women and peace and security in the Middle East and North Africa: the potential of national action plans”.

The concept note for the meeting is available as a document of the Security Council under the symbol [S/2019/39](#).

We should be grateful if the present letter and its annex could be distributed as a document of the Security Council.

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Permanent Representative of Peru to the United Nations

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Summary of the Arria formula meeting on the theme “What’s next for women and peace and security in the Middle East and North Africa: the potential of national action plans”, held on 24 January 2019

The Permanent Missions of Germany, Peru and the United Kingdom co-hosted an Arria formula meeting of the Security Council concerning women and peace and security on 24 January 2019 on the potential of national action plans for the implementation of Security Council resolution [1325 \(2000\)](#) in the Middle East and North Africa region. Participants included the Foreign Ministers of Belgium, the Dominican Republic, Germany, Indonesia and Kuwait, the United Kingdom Minister of State for the Commonwealth and the United Nations and Special Representative on Preventing Sexual Violence in Conflict, and representatives of the other States members of the Security Council, as well as Finland – which delivered a joint statement with Jordan – Iraq, Lebanon, Libya, Qatar, Sweden, Tunisia, the United Arab Emirates and the European Union. The Federal Minister for Foreign Affairs of Germany, Heiko Maas, chaired the event. After opening remarks from the co-hosts, the event began with presentations by guest speakers: the Deputy Executive Director of the United Nations Entity for Gender Equality and the Empowerment of Women (UN-Women), Åsa Regnér; and Suzan Aref and Lea Baroudi, representing civil society from Iraq and Lebanon, respectively. In addition, Ms. Nada Makki came from Beirut to represent the Minister of State for Women’s Affairs of Lebanon.

The purpose of the meeting was to raise the visibility of national action plans on women and peace and security in the Middle East and North Africa region, recommend ways for the Security Council and the international community to support Governments in the region in implementing those plans, and encourage other countries in the region to follow suit, especially in the lead-up to the twentieth anniversary of resolution [1325 \(2000\)](#) in 2020. As recently as five years ago, no national action plan on women and peace and security existed in the region. Since then, Iraq, Jordan, Tunisia and the Occupied Palestinian Territories and the League of Arab States have adopted action plans, and Lebanon has prepared a draft plan that is awaiting adoption.

Recommendations

Speakers highlighted the importance of national action plans on women and peace and security and the role of the Security Council in supporting their implementation, and made several recommendations:

- The Security Council can make greater use of its periodic meetings and regular briefings by both United Nations officials and civil society representatives on country-specific situations to raise questions about the status of national action plans, and to follow up in greater detail at meetings of the Informal Expert Group on Women and Peace and Security and in Council visits.
- When it comes to national action plans, one size does not fit all, and the plans must be tailored to the context and driven by the national authorities. However, some common traits are essential to enhance effectiveness: partnering with civil society organizations at all stages of the plan; embracing a truly participatory and inclusive approach; costing and financing the plan; and monitoring,

evaluation, and accountability systems. The new pooled funding mechanism of Jordan, backed by national financing and the support of international partners, was highlighted as a good practice.

- The Security Council can play a complementary role to the Committee on the Elimination of Discrimination against Women, as the application of general recommendation No. 30 on women in conflict prevention, conflict, and post-conflict situations has been instrumental in encouraging the development of the plans, and can help to eliminate discriminatory laws in countries in the region, which speakers identified as a major obstacle. Speakers encouraged countries in the region to examine and withdraw any reservations made in connection with the Convention on the Elimination of All Forms of Discrimination against Women.
- Regional organizations, such as the League of Arab States and the African Union, and global networks, such as the Women and Peace and Security Focal Points Network, were highlighted as important partners in monitoring the national implementation of women and peace and security commitments.
- The Security Council can do more to stand with women in the region when they demand to be included in peace talks, political dialogues, national conferences, the drafting of constitutions or decision-making on reconstruction priorities. Only a quarter of peace agreements in the region address gender equality in any way, which is significantly below the global average. This is especially relevant in the light of the insufficient presence of women in recent talks and diplomatic efforts to find a political situation to conflicts in Yemen and Libya. It is equally important for the Security Council to take action when women ask for justice, whether through national or international mechanisms, in response to the atrocities committed against them, and when they call for international support when women human rights defenders and activists in the region are killed, targeted, or imprisoned.
- It is important that national action plans on women and peace and security either include or are linked closely to other commitments to tackle sexual and gender-based violence, such as the Joint Communiqué of the Republic of Iraq and the United Nations on Conflict-related Sexual Violence. This is crucial because armed conflict is exacerbating all forms of violence in the region, from the use of women and girls as slaves by Da'esh, to human trafficking in Libya, early marriage in Libya, Syrian Arab Republic and Yemen, and increased rates of intimate partner violence in situations of prolonged displacement.
- With regard to Iraq and Lebanon specifically, both guest speakers from civil society highlighted the importance of ending laws that discriminate against women. Ms. Aref recommended the establishment of machinery for the advancement of women in Iraq, the adoption of quotas for women by the political parties, the enactment of a comprehensive law to criminalize all forms of violence against women, and wider access to services for survivors of gender-based violence, including free legal and psychosocial assistance, and education and work opportunities for displaced women. Ms. Baroudi, drawing from her own organization's peacebuilding experience, encouraged the Government to make better use of non-governmental organizations (NGOs) as operational actors to implement national action plans, rather than just as people to consult with, and requested the Security Council to devote greater and broader attention to the situation in Lebanon beyond following up on resolutions [1559 \(2004\)](#) and [1701 \(2006\)](#).

Beyond these recommendations, the meeting provided a good opportunity to hear information about ongoing work and upcoming plans in the region. Iraq is

already developing its second national action plan, which is focused on peacebuilding and the rehabilitation of survivors of sexual violence post-Da'esh, including the participation of women in reconstruction plans and the management of displacement camps. The current plan's national coordination structure is backed by follow-up teams in 23 different ministries, and even though its implementation was affected by the start of the attacks by Da'esh and the subsequent financial crisis, some results were already shown in its first implementation report. The legal committee of the national action plan task force worked to identify laws that discriminated against women and obstructed the implementation of resolution 1325 (2000), and it subsequently submitted amendments to the penal code and several other laws. The process and structure of the national action plan has inspired other action plans and strategies in Iraq. The number of female judges in Iraq has increased tenfold, and the 2018 parliamentary elections saw a record number of female candidates. The Ministry for Labour and Social Affairs issued social welfare stipends to 1,500 Yazidi survivors, and the judicial authorities have received and investigated 13,500 complaints of domestic violence. In December 2018, Iraq launched a new national strategy to combat violence against women. Fourteen Iraqi NGOs are being supported through the Women's Peace and Humanitarian Fund. The European Union and the North Atlantic Treaty Organization will conduct a joint gender analysis later in 2019 in Iraq, and the United Nations Assistance Mission for Iraq has established a Women's Advisory Group on Reconciliation and Politics.

In Lebanon, even though adoption of the draft national action plan is awaiting the formation of a Government, national stakeholders are already working on elements of the plan, including by pushing for several pieces of legislation in parliament. Although only six women won seats in the first parliamentary elections in 10 years, there was a record number of female candidates in 2018 and the sense that women's representation was bound to increase significantly in the future, after decades of stagnation. Actors in Lebanon may also benefit from stronger language and mandates on women and peace and security in the most recent instructions of the Security Council to the United Nations Interim Force in Lebanon. In Tunisia, 30 per cent of parliamentarians are now women, and a comprehensive law on violence against women was passed in February 2018. The Government has also removed its reservations to the Convention on the Elimination of All Forms of Discrimination against Women and has begun a dialogue on equality in inheritance.

Tunisia partners with seven United Nations agencies in a joint programme on violence against women and girls, and hosted a regional workshop on national action plans in the Arab region in November 2018, as part of the UN-Women regional programme, funded by Finland, on national action plans in Iraq, Jordan, Tunisia and the League of Arab States.

Several Member States highlighted their ongoing efforts to fund and support some of these national action plans and other initiatives, from helping NGOs in Iraq through the Women's Peace and Humanitarian Fund, to refurbishing girls' schools and enrolling millions of girls in crisis-affected areas, helping Yazidi refugees and prosecuting Da'esh. Others shared their future plans. For example, all bilateral and multilateral assistance programmes of the United Arab Emirates will include a gender equality component by 2021. All of the new members of the Security Council pledged their support for the women and peace and security agenda and their intention to help to advance it during the next two years.