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REPORT

Regional Forum

Advancing the Women, Peace and Security Agenda (WPSA)

6 – 7 May 2025

Movenpick Hotel, Amman, Jordan



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List of acronyms

ADWAR	Roles for Society Change Association
AFD	Agence Française de Développement (French Agency for Development)
AI	Artificial Intelligence
AWO	Arab Women Organization of Jordan
CBO	Community-Based Organisation
CRSV	Conflict-Related Sexual Violence
CSO	Civil Society Organisation
CSW	Commission on the Status of Women
CVAWG	Cyber Violence Against Women and Girls
DRC	Democratic Republic of the Congo
EFI	EuroMed Feminist Initiative
EU	European Union
GE	Gender Equality
HDA	Himaya Daeem Aataa
INGO	International Non-Governmental Organisation
ISIS	Islamic State of Iraq and Syria
IWN	Iraqi Women Network
KRG	Kurdish Regional Government
KR-I	Kurdistan Region of Iraq
JARASIA	Jarasia Charitable Society for Women
JNCW	Jordanian National Commission for Women
M&E	Monitoring and Evaluation
MEAL	Monitoring, Evaluation, Accountability and Learning
MENA	Middle East and North Africa
MoSD	Ministry of Social Development
NAP	National Action Plan
PWWSD	Palestinian Working Women Society for Development
RCSO	Regional Civil Society Observatory
SDGs	Sustainable Development Goals
UN	United Nations
UNFPA	United Nations Population Fund
UNICEF	United Nations Children's Fund
UNRWA	United Nations Relief and Works Agency for Palestine Refugees in the Near East
UNSCR	United Nations Security Council Resolution
VAWG	Violence Against Women and Girls
WG	Working Group
WEO	Women Empowerment Organization
WPSA	Women, Peace and Security Agenda
WR	Women's Rights
YPSA	Youth, Peace and Security Agenda

INTRODUCTION

The First Regional Forum “Advancing the Women, Peace and Security Agenda (WPSA),” organised under the patronage of H.E. Ms Wafaa Bani Mostafa, Jordan’s Minister of Social Development and the Head of the Inter-Ministerial Committee for Women’s Empowerment, was held on 6-7 May 2025 in Amman, Jordan, aiming to advance the WPSA in the region. It took place within the framework of the regional project *Strengthening Feminist CSOs for the Implementation of the Women, Peace and Security Agenda in Iraq, Lebanon, Jordan and Palestine*, funded by the Support Fund for Feminist Organisations of the Agence Française de Développement (AFD) and the French Ministry for Europe and Foreign Affairs. The Forum was organised by EuroMed Feminist Initiative (EFI) in partnership with the consortium of EFI member organisations: Arab Women Organization (AWO) in Jordan, Association Najdeh in Lebanon, Women Empowerment Organization (WEO) in Iraq and the Palestinian Working Women Society for Development (PWWSO) in Palestine.

The Forum was a key step in advancing the collaboration among feminist civil society organisations (CSOs), women-led community-based organisations (CBOs) and policymakers involved in the implementation and monitoring of the WPSA in the four countries. It aimed to follow up on progress made in the implementation of the WPSA, identify existing gaps and barriers and address both country-specific and shared regional challenges, particularly regarding the role and engagement of CSOs in the development, implementation and monitoring and evaluation (M&E) of policies and measures related to the WPSA. The *2024 Regional Index on Violence Against Women and Girls (VAWG)* and the *Regional Guidelines on the Implementation of the WPSA*¹ served as tools to assess achievements and inform recommendations for concrete actions.

The First Regional Forum received broad media attention across national and regional platforms. Coverage included news articles, video reports and visual content shared by institutional partners, media outlets and participating organizations. This visibility reflects the Forum’s relevance and the strong engagement of stakeholders committed to promoting the WPSA in the region. The event’s online content reached a total of 74,298 users from the four countries on social media.

Objectives

The Forum aimed to:

- Assess progress made and discuss specific barriers and gaps in the implementation of the WPSA at the national level and highlight shared challenges at the regional level.
- Explore existing opportunities to advance the implementation of the WPSA in the current context and identify best practices to enhance the role of feminist CSOs and women-led CBOs in advocacy, implementation and monitoring efforts. Regional and cross-regional exchange of experiences is intended to foster dialogue and enhance mutual learning.
- Use evidence and data from the *Regional Index on VAWG* and the *Regional Guidelines for the Implementation of the WPSA* to support advocacy efforts and promote stronger, more concrete commitments from national and regional stakeholders.

¹ The Regional Guidelines for the Implementation of the WPSA <https://www.efi-rcso.org/publications/guidelines/regional-guidelines-implementation-women-peace-and-security-agenda-south>

Outcomes

- **Assessment of progress and challenges:** A comprehensive review of WPSA implementation highlighted both progress and challenges in each country and identified shared regional challenges.
- **Exchange of best practices:** Regional and cross-regional sharing of experiences helped strengthen networking, promote solidarity and enhance collective capacity.
- **Recommendations for advocacy:** Concrete recommendations were developed to support advocacy efforts and promote accountability in the implementation of the WPSA.
- **Strengthened regional collaboration and sharing of experience:** Regional networking sustained momentum and fostered collaboration on women's rights and equality, while cross-regional exchange and the sharing of best practices contributed to enhanced mutual learning.
- **Documentation and dissemination:** The Forum's outcomes and recommendations were documented and will be disseminated to strengthen advocacy and inform policy development for the implementation of the WPSA at both national and regional levels.

The outcomes of the Forum will be disseminated to decision-makers, civil society and relevant stakeholders to support the development and improvement of laws, policies and measures related to the WPSA at both national and regional levels.

Participants

The Forum gathered over 80 participants from the four project countries, including representatives from 13 leading CSOs in the field of the WPSA and 23 women-led CBOs, project partners, stakeholders involved in the implementation and monitoring of the WPSA, women's rights experts and academics, members of national and regional observatories on VAWG, capitalisation consultants and the media, as well as representatives from AFD and the French Embassy to Jordan.

FORUM PROCEEDINGS – DAY ONE

Tuesday, 6 May 2025



Opening Session: Political will, institutional commitment, and strategic direction for the implementation of the WPSA



In her opening remarks, **Ms Lilian Halls-French, political advisor to EFI**, highlighted the importance of implementing the WPSA and the long-standing work of EFI in advocating for women's participation and leadership in peacebuilding and policy-making processes.

"From the multi-year regional campaign on Zero Tolerance for VAWG to the Regional Index documenting laws and public services and the first NAP on UNSCR

1325 in the MENA region, EFI has remained fully and consistently engaged in combating all forms of VAWG. The Regional Guidelines on the Implementation of the WPSA, developed through wide national and regional consultations, stressed that women's rights CSOs have knowledge and competence on the situation and status of women and girls on the ground." She reaffirmed that *"the participation of women's rights organisations is essential at all levels and in all stages of the process."*



H.E. Mr Alexis Le Cour Grandmaison, French Ambassador to Jordan, emphasised France’s firm commitment to women’s rights and to supporting the role of feminist CSOs in advancing the implementation of the WPSA across the region.

“France remains resolute in its support for the full and equal participation of women in all stages of peace processes, conflict prevention and reconstruction. Gender equality is not only a goal—it is a prerequisite for lasting peace. This Forum aligns closely with France’s feminist diplomacy strategy, which places gender equality at the heart of our foreign policy and development cooperation, particularly through the AFD. France will continue to stand by feminist CSOs and national partners, especially in contexts marked by grave human rights violations, such as those affecting women and girls in Gaza and the West Bank.”



In his remarks, delivered on behalf of **H.E. Ms Wafaa Bani Mostafa, Dr Ahmad Abu Haidar, Assistant Secretary-General at the Ministry of Social Development in Jordan**, expressed deep appreciation for the resilience of Palestinian women in the face of ongoing war crimes and collective punishment in Gaza and the West Bank. He commended EFI for its long-standing commitment to advancing the WPSA and for its leadership in coordinating regional and national efforts.

“This Forum highlights the critical role of women in building peace and stability and the importance of enabling their active participation in leadership, policymaking and development. The WPSA is not only a global commitment but also a national priority in Jordan, and our government has taken concrete steps to advance women’s rights, including constitutional reforms, legislative amendments and economic empowerment programmes. We welcome the continued partnership with feminist civil society to push this agenda forward and ensure that peace and security efforts are inclusive, equitable and grounded in human rights.”

Panel One: Progress made in the implementation of the WPSA in the current context and stakeholders' commitments



This high-level panel provided the space for stakeholders and policymakers to reflect on and evaluate the process of developing, implementing and monitoring the NAPs for UNSCR 1325, as well as other tools supporting the implementation of the WPSA, such as the *Regional Index on VAWG*, in which all countries participate. The main challenges faced, lessons learned and best practices from each context were shared, along with key recommendations for advancing the WPSA at both national and regional levels.



Mr Hanna Nakhleh, Adviser to the Minister of Women's Affairs and the National Observatory on VAWG in Palestine, provided an assessment of the development and implementation processes of the two NAPs in Palestine. He highlighted key lessons learned and best practices from the Palestinian context, emphasising the importance of contextualising the WPSA in light of the ongoing occupation. Among the best practices, Mr Nakhleh underlined the mainstreaming of UNSCR 1325 in other national strategies, which contributed to elevating the WPSA at the political level.

Providing flexible support and linking protection and prevention in the context of occupation was also a necessity in order to address the diverse needs of all segments of the population.

He emphasised the importance of government cooperation with civil society and the indispensable role that women's and feminist CSOs played in designing, implementing and monitoring the WPSA. He also stressed the importance of having a unified body to monitor progress, with the participation of civil society. The WPSA should be mainstreamed and implemented in all humanitarian responses and relief efforts, with progress monitored in relation to other international mechanisms on women's rights such as the Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs). Moreover, other forms of VAWG should be considered in the NAPs, including VAWG under occupation and the emerging phenomenon of cyber violence against women and girls (CVAWG).

Among the challenges, Mr Nakhleh mentioned the lack of budget for the NAPs for UNSCR 1325, limited awareness, as well as security-related challenges linked to the fact that Palestine is not a member State of the United Nations (UN).



Ms Hana Gorgis, Director General of the Department of Women's Affairs in the Presidency of the Republic of Iraq, emphasised how Iraq's inclusion in the *Regional Index on VAWG* has served as a tool to support the implementation of the WPSA in the country. It has enhanced data collection and facilitated coordinated action among stakeholders and women's rights organisations.

She emphasised the importance of combating VAWG as central to the implementation of the WPSA and highlighted the link between VAWG and women's participation in decision-making, highlighting that one cannot be isolated from the other, and that coordinated efforts are needed to address the root causes of VAWG in order to promote women's meaningful participation.

Among the challenges, she highlighted the general perception that the WPSA is a "Western product," as well as the lack of funding, which is linked to insufficient political will for its implementation. Ms Gorgis underlined the importance of continued work on awareness-raising and on activating the role of the Arab League.



Dr Khanzad Ahmed, Secretary-General of the High Council of Women Development in the Kurdistan Region of Iraq (KR-I), elaborated on the lessons learned from the development, implementation and monitoring of the WPSA in the KR-I, noting that the Kurdistan region has gained valuable experience in this regard. She emphasised that collective efforts and coordination between governments, civil society and donors have been crucial in advancing the implementation of the WPSA in the KR-I.

Among the best practices, she emphasised the adoption of gender equality policies by the Kurdish Regional Government (KRG), which have supported better data collection and increased awareness of the need to apply a gender-sensitive budget. Dr Ahmed also underscored the importance of contextualisation and flexibility in both developing and implementing the NAP for UNSCR 1325. Contextualising the UNSCR to the KR-I has allowed the NAP to address the needs of all segments of society, including minorities, such as refugee and internally displaced women.

Among the challenges, she underlined key issues related to budgeting and the adoption of a M&E mechanism to support follow-up.



Dr Huda Ayash, Director of the Policies and Observation Unit at the Jordanian National Commission for Women (JNCW), highlighted that the government remains committed to implementing the WPSA in line with national priorities and international obligations. Despite the challenges posed by regional conflicts in Syria, Iraq and Palestine, progress has been made, particularly through the development of two NAPs under the leadership of the JNCW and with broad participation from government, security sectors and civil society. The first NAP (2018–2021) established a framework to enhance women’s participation in peace and security and included a specific objective to combat violent extremism. It led to a significant increase in women’s participation in the security and military sectors: public security by 30%, military sectors by 41%, UN peacekeeping missions by 132% and leadership roles in security by 37%.

Lessons from the first NAP shaped the second NAP (2022–2025), which expanded to include the diplomatic and judicial sectors, climate change and its impact on women and improved access to services in remote areas. Best practices included cross-sector collaboration, engagement with young women and men, civil society and educational initiatives such as *Madrasati*, which targets awareness among boys and girls on equality between women and men.

Among the main challenges hindering full implementation are limited funding, lack of expertise and stereotypical representation of women by the media.

Main points of discussion

The panel was followed by a lively and engaging discussion. Participants shared experiences from the four countries regarding the implementation of the WPSA and exchanged views on how to further advance it. In addition to the shared challenges linked to limited funding, low awareness and lack of unified M&E mechanisms, participants highlighted another common challenge: the limited presence of women in political leadership within ministries, which restricts their ability to exercise decision-making power. As a result, the WPSA has yet to become a political priority for many policymakers.

Participants emphasised the necessity of strengthening cooperation between civil society and decision-makers and ensuring sustained, structured dialogue at both national and regional levels—through platforms such as this Forum.

The discussion also underscored the importance of adopting policies to advance women’s rights and enable their meaningful participation, alongside the need for governments to develop inclusive budgets that integrate the implementation of the NAPs for UNSCR 1325.

In the area of M&E, participants stressed the importance of systematic data collection. They highlighted the critical role of women’s rights organisations in linking data with lived realities, providing evidence-based recommendations for informed policymaking and monitoring the implementation of the WPSA.

Panel Two: National commitment to the WPSA – Gaps in implementation, country specific concerns and shared challenges



Representatives from the consortium organisations provided their analyses on the WPSA implementation in their respective countries. Drawing on their experience, they highlighted gaps and challenges, and raised concerns relevant to the national contexts, as well as to global trends of militarisation, the shrinking of funds and the space for civil society action. All panellists emphasised the importance, necessity and relevance of the WPSA in the tense regional and international context and the critical role feminist and women-led CSOs play in its development, implementation and M&E.



Ms Leila Al Ali, Executive Director of Association Najdeh in Lebanon, joined the panel online and highlighted the social, political and security challenges that hindered the implementation of Lebanon's first NAP for UNSCR 1325 (2019–2022). These challenges included the COVID-19 pandemic, Lebanon's ongoing socio-economic crisis, widespread poverty and lack of public services, political deadlock, delayed presidential elections and the impact of the war on Gaza and southern Lebanon.

She emphasised that legal reforms in Lebanon are often constrained by the country's sectarian and religious power dynamics, which frequently block progress on women's rights. Ms Al Ali also pointed out gaps within the NAP itself, such as its limited reference to Palestinian refugee women—mentioned only in relation to UNRWA and not integrated across the plan's pillars—as well as the lack of sustainability. The second NAP has not yet been developed to address women's needs during the recent conflict.

Despite these shortcomings, she affirmed that the WPSA remains relevant and necessary. Women's rights organisations continue to use it to engage stakeholders, advocate for the inclusion of all women

in Lebanon and promote the integration of the WPSA into crisis response and recovery frameworks. However, the war on Gaza and Lebanon has eroded civil society's trust in international treaties and institutions, due to the international community's failure to protect women's rights and ensure accountability for violations.

Ms Al Ali concluded by stressing the critical responsibility of international institutions and women's rights actors to ensure the consistent, non-discriminatory implementation of the WPSA worldwide, including for women in Gaza and southern Lebanon. She called for the development of a second NAP in Lebanon that builds on the lessons learned from the first and addresses the identified gaps.



Ms Amal Khreisheh, General Director of the Palestinian Working Women Society for Development (PWWSD), emphasised the need to re-evaluate UNSCR 1325, 25 years after its adoption, to assess who benefits from it and to what extent. She noted that the resolution does not adequately reflect the Palestinian reality, as it overlooks the Israeli occupation as a root cause of conflict. Despite this fundamental gap, the Palestinian women's movement has worked to nationalise the resolution by interpreting it through international law and treaties that define and

recognise occupation. While the Palestinian government has adopted two NAPs, Ms Khreisheh pointed out that the resolution has failed to deliver critical humanitarian aid, protect women in Gaza or stop the genocide unfolding in plain view. She highlighted an ongoing debate within the Palestinian feminist movement about how UN Security Council resolutions often reinforce existing power structures rather than challenge them. Ms Khreisheh underscored the importance of contextualising the implementation of the WPSA within the reality of the occupation, linking it to Palestine's specific context and to a progressive national liberation narrative. This includes confronting the occupation, pressuring Israel to comply with international law as well as calling for elections in Palestine to end the internal political division.

The implementation of the WPSA has been also seen as a tool to advocate for the development of a global feminist political agenda to promote a progress culture of women's human rights in response to the rise of ultra-right ideologies worldwide. According to her, the struggles for liberation, democracy and women's rights are interconnected. Ms Khreisheh highlighted the critical role that women's rights and feminist CSOs play across all these areas and praised the role of the Regional Observatory on VAWG, hosted by EFI in Amman, for its work in data collection, the development of the *Regional Index on VAWG* and the *Regional Guidelines for the Implementation of the WPSA*. She stressed the importance of combating VAWG in schools and universities, State institutions and economic institutions, and emphasised the need for monitoring, evaluation and documentation.



Ms Wathba Altayar, a consultant with the Women Empowerment Organization (WEO) in Iraq, presented the progress made on the country's three NAPs for the implementation of UNSCR 1325: the first covering 2014–2018, the second 2020–2024, and the third currently under development for 2025–2030. She emphasised the critical role civil society played in developing the first NAP through a participatory process with the government. Ms Altayar stressed the importance of maintaining a participatory approach between civil

society and the government in order to ensure effective implementation and monitoring of the NAPs. She also highlighted the value of networking among civil society actors to strengthen advocacy efforts, and the contribution of the Regional Index in identifying country-specific gaps in addressing VAWG, with inputs from both civil society and governmental bodies. She noted the positive role played by relevant departments and ministries, particularly in the KR-I, in advancing women's rights.

Despite the progress made, she pointed out that major obstacles to the implementation of the first and second NAPs included insecurity and internal displacement. In these challenging circumstances, CSOs were often the first responders, delivering humanitarian aid and addressing women's needs at the community level. Ms Altayar underscored the need to raise awareness about the WPSA and the NAPs, to localise their implementation using a context-specific narrative and to invest in data collection and comprehensive research. Such efforts are crucial to assessing the impact of NAP implementation and to identifying and addressing existing gaps.



Ms Layla Naffa Hamarneh, Director of Programmes at the Arab Women Organization (AWO) in Jordan, highlighted the global trend of shrinking civic space and the growing restrictions on civil society. She also noted the increasing withdrawal of international organisations and donors from supporting civil society, particularly those working on women's rights. This global regression is mirrored at both regional and national levels across the Arab region.

In response, she emphasised the need to strengthen networking, foster the exchange of experiences and explore alternative and sustainable sources of funding. Ms Hamarneh underscored the pioneering role that feminist and women-led CSOs have played in defending women's rights and combating VAWG, often long before the UN itself. She stressed the importance of involving CBOs in awareness-raising, service delivery and advocacy efforts, particularly at the grassroots level. She also highlighted the experience of the project supported by AFD, which created opportunities for collaboration between large and small organisations, both experienced and emerging, to jointly advance the implementation of the WPSA.

Main points of discussion

Participants highlighted several key points, including the vital role of civil society not only in implementing the WPSA, but also in monitoring its progress.

They emphasised the need to establish civil society-led observatories to ensure effective and independent monitoring and accountability.

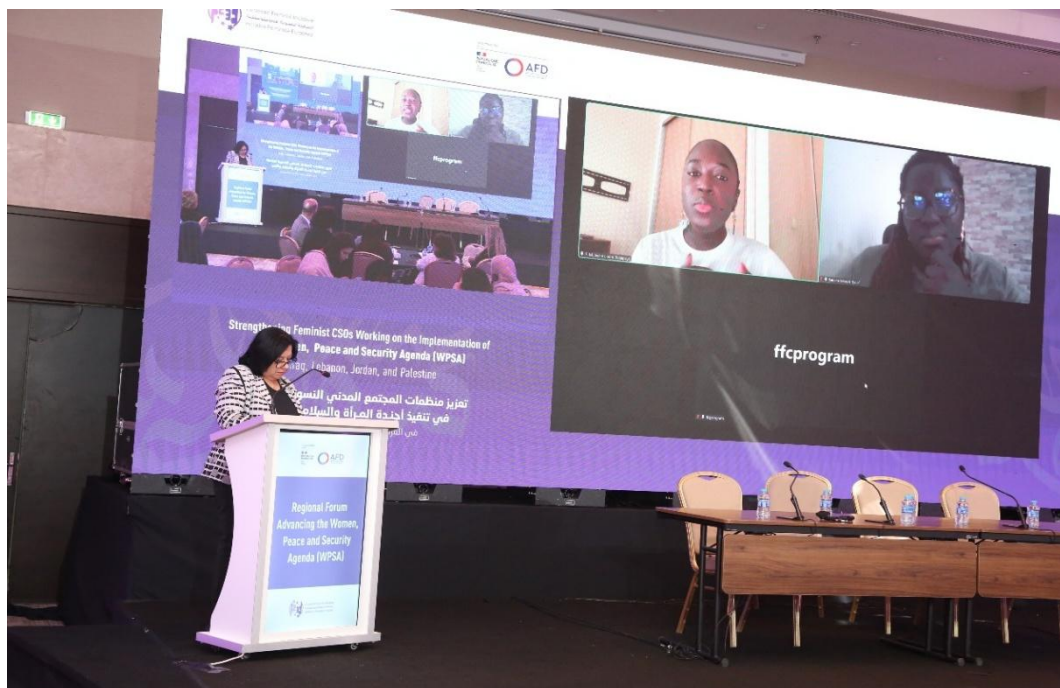
Some participants proposed using the Forum as a platform to promote the establishment of a regional feminist lobby, drawing on the experiences, partnerships and networking exchanges established through the project.

Others pointed to the ongoing funding challenges and the broader crisis within international and regional human rights mechanisms, which have failed to protect civilians in Gaza.

Many participants reiterated that the feminist movement in the region is fundamentally a social movement rooted in the rejection of injustice, occupation and colonisation. They stressed the importance of linking the fight for women's liberation and equality with the wider struggle for democracy.

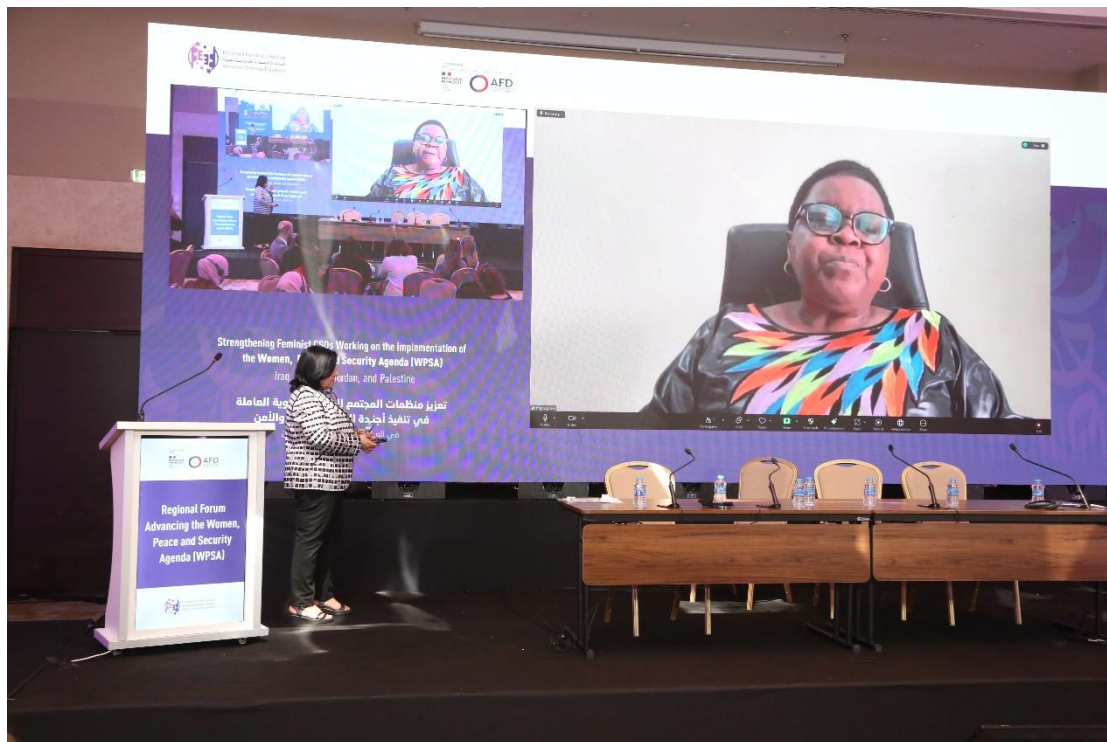
Panel Three: The role of feminist CSOs in following up on the implementation and monitoring of the WPSA – Cross-regional exchange of experiences with Africa

Cross-regional exchange of experiences was used as a key mechanism for promoting learning and fostering solidarity among women's rights advocates. Main lessons learned from the development, implementation and monitoring of the WPSA in West and Central Africa were shared during this panel. Key challenges affecting women's participation in peacebuilding processes were presented, and best practices were shared along with concrete recommendations for advancing the WPSA.



Ms Simone Mbodé Diouf, a member of the strategic committee for the project *Pour des agendas Féministes, Paix et Sécurité* and African Union Youth Ambassador for Peace for West Africa, highlighted key challenges facing the implementation of the WPSA in West Africa. She pointed to significant contextual obstacles, including ongoing conflict, terrorism and political instability. These challenges are compounded by insufficient funding for women-led initiatives and critical funding gaps that hinder the implementation of NAPs. Despite the fact that 12 countries in West Africa have adopted NAPs for the implementation of UNSCR 1325—some already on their third generation—there remains a lack of clear and effective M&E mechanisms. Ms Diouf recommended strengthening collaboration between feminist and youth-led organisations and called for increased and sustained funding for women-led groups to support and enhance their role in advancing the WPSA.

Ms Aïcha Loum, Advocacy Officer at Equipop, Bureau de Dakar from Senegal, underscored the imperative to tailor the WPSA to address women's specific needs. She highlighted the importance of adopting an intersectional feminist approach to the implementation of the WPSA at every stage, and the need to invest in monitoring, effective implementation and funding. Ms Loum stressed that meaningful participation hinges on providing women's rights actors with both financial and technical support. She urged stakeholders to advance the WPSA alongside the Youth, Peace and Security Agenda (YPSA) to achieve not only the formal inclusion of young women and men, but deep, transformative change.



Ms Nzale Thérèse, Programme Officer at Fonds pour les Femmes Congolaises, presented the experience from the Democratic Republic of Congo (DRC), Central Africa. She provided an overview of her organisation’s work in supporting women-focused initiatives, including emergency responses during the COVID-19 pandemic and Ebola outbreaks. In relation to the WPSA, she emphasised the organisation’s focus on collaboration, monitoring and follow-up mechanisms, particularly in supporting CSOs and offering tailored recommendations. Ms Thérèse highlighted a best practice from the implementation of the second NAP in the DRC, where civil society played a central role in establishing steering committees at both local and national levels to oversee the implementation and monitoring processes. These committees issued regular reports and helped ensure accountability.

In addition, her organisation supported the creation of women’s committees within local communities to raise awareness about the NAP, disseminate information on available services and lead local advocacy campaigns. This community-based approach fostered localisation, ownership and meaningful participation in the implementation of the second NAP.

Main points of discussion

The discussion revolved around different experiences with the implementation of the NAPs for UNSCR 1325 in each country, highlighting challenges, best practices and recommendations.

Participants from **Lebanon** shared insights from a country characterised by the presence of over 19 sectarian groups, a history of civil war and repeated episodes of conflict. They emphasised the complexity of addressing legislation—particularly personal status laws—as Lebanon has 19 different legal frameworks in this area. They also highlighted the need to thoroughly investigate the crimes, violations and violence experienced by women and girls during the civil war and subsequent conflicts. The participants noted that the prolonged absence and weakness of State institutions has severely impacted protection and prevention services. As a result, CSOs—especially feminist and women-led

organisations—have had to step in and fill these gaps, despite facing significant challenges during the most recent war in September 2024. These challenges included meeting diverse and urgent needs, limited funding and donor bureaucracy. They stressed the importance of accelerating donor response mechanisms in times of crisis, so that efforts can focus on delivering timely and comprehensive support to affected communities, rather than being delayed by excessive paperwork. Participants also highlighted the importance of engaging young women and men and exploring ways to integrate the YPSA with the WPSA, drawing on the experiences and contributions of young people.

Participants from **Palestine** focused on sharing their unique experiences under occupation. They highlighted the challenges faced in the West Bank, including roadblocks, closures and checkpoints, which restrict the movement of people, delay the implementation of activities and often force a shift in priorities. They stressed the importance of involving rural women in the implementation of the WPSA through targeted awareness-raising and capacity-building initiatives. The role of civil society was also emphasised, particularly in addressing needs at the local level, where CSOs often step in to fill gaps left by the absence of governmental services. Participants underscored the need to strengthen accountability mechanisms by advocating for the monitoring and documentation of Israeli violations at the national level, in order to compile comprehensive evidence that can support prosecution efforts at the international level. They underlined the importance of applying lessons learned from previous NAPs to the implementation of the ongoing NAP, in order to address gaps and make M&E more efficient.

Participants from **Iraq** discussed challenges they face related to the use of language, particularly terminology linked to women's rights and equality. A debate emerged around the most effective approach to address these challenges, but participants agreed that, regardless of the method, the priority must be to protect existing gains and explore pathways for continued progress. They noted that these tendencies reflect a global backlash on women's rights. Another challenge linked to limited funding was also highlighted, along with the need to explore national funding alternatives to reduce dependency on international donors. The importance of civil society engagement in both the first and second NAPs was underscored as critical to their successful implementation. Participants also raised concerns about smear campaigns targeting feminists, women's rights activists and organisations. In response to these attacks, they emphasised the need to strengthen regional solidarity and enhance cross-sector cooperation. This would enable the sharing of experiences across countries and bolster advocacy efforts at the regional level. Suggestions were also made to engage religious and community leaders as allies in promoting women's rights and equality through the WPSA.

Participants from **Jordan** emphasised the critical importance of fostering collaboration between civil society, government officials, members of parliament and the senate, as well as academics, media professionals, grassroots leaders and municipalities in both the development and effective implementation of the WPSA. They stressed that meaningful progress requires a multi-stakeholder approach, ensuring inclusive participation across sectors and governance levels. Participants also proposed leveraging global UN events and forums—particularly the Commission on the Status of Women (CSW)—as strategic platforms to advocate for the implementation of the WPSA. These spaces can be used to amplify calls for sustainable and long-term funding to civil society, greater inclusion of women at negotiation and decision-making tables and the promotion of women's economic independence as a cornerstone of peacebuilding efforts. Additionally, they encouraged exploring the use of emerging technologies, including artificial intelligence (AI), as innovative tools to advance women's rights. This includes harnessing digital platforms for awareness campaigns, data collection and storytelling, as well as using AI to analyse gaps and support evidence-based advocacy and policymaking.

Reception

After the first day's proceedings, a reception was organised, inviting the participants in the Regional Forum to meet with international institutions such as UNFPA and UNICEF, donors such as the EU and AFD and embassies, including that of Lebanon.

The guests were welcomed by EFI and AFD. The reception provided an informal atmosphere for networking and the exchange of experiences and connections.



FORUM PROCEEDINGS – DAY TWO

Wednesday, 7 May 2025



During the second day, the discussion continued through two panels: one on how to influence legislation and policymaking and drive change, and another on how to use evidence-based advocacy for the implementation of the WPSA.

Following the panels, and using a participatory approach, participants worked in three working groups (WGs) to collaboratively identify concrete recommendations for advancing the implementation of the WPSA.

Panel Four: Influencing legislation and policymaking – How civil society can drive change: Best practices and lessons learned from the region

This panel explored the critical role civil society has been playing in shaping legislation and policymaking, focusing on best practices and lessons learned from across the region. Drawing on concrete examples, the discussion highlighted how women-led organisations have successfully mobilised grassroots movements and diverse actors to influence policy agendas, engage decision-makers and drive reforms in favour of women's rights.

Panellists reflected on several key shared challenges—such as conservative resistance, co-optation and the limited civic space available to civil society—and shared strategies for overcoming these and continuing effective advocacy.

Among these strategies were coalition-building, coordinated advocacy efforts, solidarity actions and support, raising awareness and engaging broader human rights and peace movements in WPSA-related advocacy.



Ms Jeanne Frangieh, Executive Director of Himaya Daeem Aataa (HDA) in Lebanon, emphasised that



real change begins at the community level. She highlighted the importance of engaging women not merely as beneficiaries, but as active change-makers—participants rather than passive recipients of services. She shared best practices from HDA's work in Lebanon, including:

- Empowering women with knowledge: Raising awareness among women about their rights and providing the necessary support enables them to become agents of change.
- Linking protection with participation: HDA works to bridge protection and participation by strengthening dialogue between civil society, decision-makers and government actors. Recognising that women affected by violence are often excluded from public life, the organisation integrates awareness on VAWG with leadership training and engagement with policymakers. For example, in northern Lebanon, a group of women successfully advocated for improved street lighting near a local health centre—a tangible outcome that strengthened their belief in their ability to effect change.
- Community dialogue and male engagement: In patriarchal contexts, where men often hold decision-making power, it is essential to involve them in the change process. HDA initiated structured dialogues in conservative areas, starting with separate awareness sessions for men and women, followed by joint discussions and ultimately, engagement with local authorities. Treating men as partners rather than adversaries accelerates progress.
- Policy influence through stories and evidence: Turning lived experiences into actionable evidence is key for policy advocacy. HDA combines qualitative and quantitative data with powerful personal

stories, shared through national coalitions. This approach has proven more impactful with decision-makers and can significantly influence policy outcomes.

- Partnership and collective action: Strengthening feminist and professional coalitions is critical to unify efforts. Building partnerships between CSOs, CBOs and international non-governmental organisations (INGOs) ensures that the voices of women from local communities are heard at decision-making tables. Engaging local actors is vital to this inclusive process.



Ms Sahar Qawasmeh, General Director of Roles for Social Change Association (ADWAR) in Palestine, focused on the coping and resilience mechanisms adopted by CSOs in Palestine. They created committees to work in local communities and address the needs of the whole society in terms of education, vocational training, economic activities—especially in agriculture and food production—and protection. ADWAR established reconciliation councils to monitor and respond to violations and attacks, including those related to VAWG. These grassroots committees evolved into broader networks with other CSOs, enabling the production of studies on VAWG, the provision of protection services and improved economic security for target groups. Ms Qawasmeh underscored significant developments in legislation and women's rights within Palestine. She emphasised the longstanding role of women-led CSOs in addressing women's needs, well before the Oslo Accords. Key milestones include the establishment of the Women's Studies Center at Birzeit University, the founding of women's CSOs and women's participation in elections.

Due to Palestine's fragmented legal system—where the West Bank follows Jordanian law, Gaza follows Egyptian law and Jerusalem is subject to Israeli law—legal reform has been especially complex. Among the highlighted legal amendments were the adoption of the law on family protection from violence, the 20% quota for women in the elections in 2004, amendments to the penal code to eliminate mitigating circumstances of femicide and raising the age of marriage to 18 in 2019. These gains were made possible through the sustained mobilisation of the Palestinian women's movement.

However, Ms Qawasmeh pointed out to the recent backlash against feminist activists, who are increasingly accused of being "Westernised" and undermining traditional values. She countered this narrative by affirming that human rights and women's rights have been intrinsic to the Palestinian liberation movement from its inception, led by both men and women fighting for the collective rights and dignity of the Palestinian people.



Ms Jalila Smadi, Director of the Jerasia Charitable Society for Women in Jordan, focused her speech on women's economic empowerment and its critical link to political participation and peacebuilding. She highlighted her organisation's work in promoting women's economic engagement through raising awareness about labour rights, facilitating income-generating projects, supporting women in registering home-based businesses with municipalities and connecting them to funding opportunities. Ms Smadi emphasised that economic violence, often underrecognized, remains a major barrier to the meaningful implementation of the WPSA in Jordan. Structural and institutional challenges, such as limited economic autonomy, unequal pay and discriminatory labour laws, continue to hinder progress. Economic VAWG, embedded at multiple levels of society, undermines women's capacity to participate meaningfully in decision-making and public

life. Without economic independence and security, many women remain dependent and excluded from roles in peacebuilding, conflict resolution and community leadership.

In areas such as Rumtha, economic VAWG manifests in various forms—including early marriage, denial of inheritance rights, occupational segregation and stigma associated with women’s employment. These challenges are compounded by weak enforcement of protective laws and limited access to financial services and childcare support.

Addressing economic VAWG is therefore integral to realising the WPSA’s goals. By empowering women through community-led research, capacity building and advocacy, Jerasia Charitable Society for Women is not only responding to women’s immediate economic needs but is also contributing to the long-term goal of inclusive and sustainable peace in Jordan. Bridging economic justice with the WPSA ensures that women are not only protected but are also positioned as active agents of change in their communities.



Ms Amal Kabashi, Executive Manager of Iraqi Women Network (IWN) from Iraq, focused on the role played by civil society in the development, implementation and monitoring of the NAPs for the implementation of UNSCR 1325 in Iraq. She emphasised the critical role that women-led CSOs played in the development and monitoring of Iraq’s first NAP. However, she noted with concern that these organisations were excluded from the formulation of the second and third NAPs.

She also shared key best practices identified in Iraq, including the importance of having clear objectives and a focused vision, engaging local communities, building networks with other stakeholders and fostering dialogue with decision-makers.

She concluded by underscoring the urgency of raising awareness on the dangerous consequences the proposed amendments to Personal Status Law No. 188 could have on women and stressed the need for continued advocacy and collective action to safeguard the achievements of the women’s movement and prevent the erosion of hard-won rights.

Main points of discussion

Participants emphasised the importance of engaging young women and men, including university students, in advancing women’s rights and equality between women and men.

They underscored the need to promote dialogue around women’s rights and to find common ground across sectors and differing political affiliations, as a necessary strategy to confront the global backlash and regression in women’s rights.

Participants also highlighted the urgency of investing in the development of feminist platforms and establishing national observatories focused on women’s rights, VAWG and the WPSA.

Strengthening networking and coalition-building at national, regional and international levels was identified as essential to sustaining and advancing the feminist movement.

Panel Five: Evidence-based advocacy – Using data collection and research, such as the *Regional Index on VAWG*, to advocate for the implementation of the WPSA



This panel brought together academics and researchers from across the region to explore how evidence, data and research can inform advocacy efforts, shape policy development and promote the implementation of the WPSA. From strengthening women's participation in peacebuilding in the Palestinian context to enhancing women's economic participation in Jordan, addressing VAWG in Iraq, and fostering strategic collaboration between civil society, academia, and policymakers in Lebanon, the participants discussed examples of local and national initiatives that contribute to advancing the WPSA.

The panel was moderated by Mr Thaker AlZghool, Research Manager at the Regional Observatory on VAWG. He presented the Observatory's work on developing indexes related to VAWG and the WPSA, covering nine countries in the MENA region. He emphasised the significance of the scoring process, which involves both government officials and civil society representatives in a participatory approach to assess their countries' responses to VAWG, highlighting achievements, identifying gaps and offering recommendations.

Mr AlZghool also underscored the critical work undertaken to develop the Regional Guidelines for implementing the WPSA. This effort included national and regional consultations as well as expert group meetings. The Regional Guidelines both offer a comprehensive framework for policymakers and stakeholders and serve as an advocacy and awareness-raising tool for CSOs promoting the WPSA in the region.

Dr Ilham Makki, an Iraqi researcher conducting a study on VAWG in Iraq, emphasised the power of studies and research in revealing community transformations and predicting future trends. She



presented preliminary findings from the study, noting that all data collection was carried out by women to create a safer space for survivors to speak openly—something often more difficult with male researchers.

The study delved into personal stories of violence and revealed generational differences in attitudes toward it: older women tended to show more tolerance for VAWG compared to younger women and girls. Dr Makki underscored the importance of coupling awareness-raising efforts with legal protections, arguing that in the absence of effective protection mechanisms, awareness alone could, in the short term, increase women's vulnerability to violence. She also highlighted that a significant number of respondents were aware of and willing to speak about sexual violence, an encouraging shift in attitude towards this type of violence. When examining factors that contributed to increased awareness, particularly among young women, social media emerged as a

far more influential tool than government initiatives.

Finally, Dr Makki drew a strong link between tolerance for VAWG and women's socio-economic status, noting that many survivors remain with their abusers due to financial dependence and a lack of alternatives in a country where women's economic participation remains below 10.5%.



H.E. Dr Maysoon Otoom, former Senator and Associate Professor at the Women's Studies Center at the University of Jordan, drew on her academic expertise to highlight the critical role of academia in examining social dynamics, uncovering power relations and revealing societal contradictions. She referenced Hannah Arendt's theory of the *vita activa* (active life), which distinguishes between three fundamental human activities: labour, work and action. According to Arendt, *labour* pertains to biological survival, such as reproduction, food, and meeting basic needs; *work* refers to the creation of durable objects that shape the human world and provide a sense of permanence, a negotiation with the environment; *action* is the most distinctively human activity—public and political engagement involving speech, cultural expression and political participation. It is through action that humans shape events, contribute to knowledge and uphold cultural and political life.

Dr Otoom emphasised that neglecting this level of engagement threatens existential human security and underscored the vital role of academic work in guiding societies towards a better future, particularly by analysing women's issues through the lens of citizenship. She posed critical questions: How can women actively create citizenship? How can they contribute to knowledge production, participate in the economy and politics and be included in systems of production?

Unequal economic distribution, where women are denied ownership, she argued, undermines social security because power is concentrated among those who own resources, leaving others, including women, subject to their control. This imbalance fundamentally contradicts the principles of citizenship. Dr Otoom pointed out that the capitalist economic system inherently produces inequality and disrupts social peace. The humanities and social sciences are often marginalised because they challenge injustice, inequality and exclusion. She referred to recent pro-Palestinian movements in US universities as an example, where academic voices advocating for justice have been silenced. She emphasised that science and education are powerful tools for exposing contradictions and fostering critical awareness. For women in particular, education and knowledge serve as a "weapon" to raise

consciousness, empower resistance and enable them to challenge injustice. She concluded by linking democracy to development, asserting that development requires production, which in turn enables citizenship, and that true citizenship fosters a sense of belonging.



Dr Luna Shamieh, a Palestinian Professor at the National University of Public Service in Budapest, focused in her intervention on human security and its connection with the WPSA within the Palestinian context. She emphasised that human security extends beyond the traditional concept of national security to encompass economic security, environmental health, personal safety and other fundamental dimensions of well-being. She posed a critical question: Does the WPSA truly adopt this comprehensive understanding of security?

Dr Shamieh then examined whether the WPSA adequately ensures the representation of Palestinian women—those from the West Bank, Gaza (enduring genocide and repeated displacement), Jerusalem, refugee camps in neighbouring countries and Israeli prisons. Each group experiences distinct realities and has unique security concerns. Her analysis revealed that the WPSA largely fails to ensure meaningful representation of Palestinian women. For example, the monitoring of the first NAP for UNSCR 1325 excluded Gaza entirely. Given the political division, she questioned how the Palestinian Authority in the West Bank could monitor implementation in Gaza.

She also pointed to the exclusion of women from post-conflict reconstruction efforts. Women are often left out of decision-making processes because they typically do not hold legal ownership of the homes being rebuilt, as ownership tends to rest with male family members. This exclusion reflects a broader oversight in the WPSA, which does not account for the realities of women living under occupation, experiencing displacement or imprisonment or affected by geographic and political fragmentation. Dr Shamieh stressed the importance of using indicators to monitor the implementation of the WPSA but cautioned that these indicators must be based on reliable and inclusive data. In the Palestinian context, however, data is often incomplete, unrepresentative or excludes marginalised groups—especially women in Gaza.

She concluded by underscoring that the inequality Palestinian women face is not rooted solely in cultural or social factors, but also in the structural violence of the Israeli occupation. This unique context demands grounding the WPSA in local realities, developing context-specific indicators, adopting the concept of human security and moving beyond a narrow focus on humanitarian aid.



Ms Myriam Sfeir Murad, Director of the Arab Institute for Women at the Lebanese American University, introduced the work of the institute and its engagement with civil society and the government. She highlighted the crucial role collecting, expanding, analysing and employing data play in steering any process, including the WPSA. Ms Murad highlighted several key challenges facing Lebanon, including the lack of reliable and comprehensive data, the sensitivity of relevant policies, the marginalisation of civil society in decision-making processes and the absence of political will.

She underscored the unique role of academia in generating and presenting data, while CSOs play a vital role in contextualising this data and using it to advocate for change. It is then the responsibility of decision-makers to respond to the demands of civil society and translate them into action. She

concluded by stressing the importance of building and accumulating knowledge and experience and sustaining efforts to ensure the effective implementation and monitoring of the WPSA. She also called for strengthened collaboration and networking at the regional level to advance shared goals.

Main points of discussion

The open discussion underscored the importance of engaging women from diverse local communities and backgrounds to ensure accurate assessments of their needs.

Participants emphasised the value of research and studies that foster collaboration between local communities, civil society and decision-makers.

They highlighted the significance of the regional indexes on VAWG and the WPSA, particularly in light of existing gaps in comprehensive data across the four countries.

They also stressed the critical role of women in knowledge production—especially in developing alternative strategies and approaches to address the challenges they face—emphasising that these contributions should be further studied, explored and integrated into policy and practice.

Group Work: Identifying recommendations to advance the implementation of the WPSA

Using a participatory approach, participants divided into three WGs to collaboratively identify concrete recommendations for advancing the implementation of the WPSA. Each group explored a key aspect of the agenda, drawing conclusions and formulating recommendations.

The working groups discussed the following topics:

- The role of civil society in implementing and monitoring the WPSA at local, national and international levels
- Opportunities to advance the implementation of the WPSA at local, national and international levels
- Lessons learned and best practices from the implementation of NAPs for UNSCR 1325

Following the group work, each group presented its outcomes during a plenary session, where all participants contributed to the discussion and enriched the recommendations.

WG 1: The role of civil society in implementing and monitoring the WPSA at local, national and international levels



Civil society plays a pivotal role in implementing the WPSA at each level through the following key actions:

Local Level	National Level	International and Regional
1. Conducting surveys and field studies to identify women's needs and assess the challenges they face. 2. Providing training courses and raising awareness on the WPSA's content and its importance in achieving inclusive security and peace. 3. Developing awareness-raising and media campaigns aimed at raising community awareness on the role of women in peacebuilding. 4. Empowering women, particularly women in conflict-affected communities, through	1. Strengthening partnerships with local CBOs across governorates and rural areas. 2. Building bridges of cooperation with the central government through constructive dialogue aimed at adopting and implementing the WPSA. 3. Providing technical support to government agencies, including preparing reports, analysing data and drafting actionable recommendations.	1. Exchanging expertise and best practices with international and regional organisations operating in the field. 2. Confronting challenges through shared learning with other communities having similar experiences. 3. Securing international funding and support from donors to build and implement a sustainable agenda. 4. Engaging in global networks and alliances to unify efforts and share information. 5. Participating in the preparation and submission of

capacity-building programmes on the WPSA, VAWG, conflict resolution and leadership. 5. Using early warning mechanisms to monitor indicators of stress and VAWG. 6. Providing psychosocial support to survivors of armed conflict, with a focus on employment and enhancing economic participation. 7. Combating hate speech and promoting a culture of community peace. 8. Establishing a safe legal environment to protect women and guarantee their rights. 9. Monitoring the performance of media, technology and social media platforms to serve women's issues. 10. Drafting follow-up reports, documenting violations and submitting them to relevant authorities, while developing performance evaluation indicators. 11. Supporting the active participation of women in local and national committees related to the WPSA.	4. Lobbying the government to formulate policies and national plans related to the WPSA and to monitor their implementation. 5. Advocating for amendments to existing laws or enacting new ones that comprehensively address VAWG and support women in the context of peace and security. 6. Ensuring the protection of women working on the WPSA from threats and violations. 7. Advocating for the allocation of official budgets to implement the WPSA effectively and sustainably. 8. Ensuring inclusiveness by involving women with disabilities and marginalised groups in the decision-making process, especially those working on the front lines. 9. Preparing alternative plans to address women's needs in times of war and crisis. 10. Proposing and drafting appropriate laws in cooperation with official bodies to ensure the sustainability of ongoing efforts.	reports and studies to international bodies and donors, enhancing opportunities for access to international funding and cooperation. 6. Ensuring international and UN oversight of the implementation of States' commitments to the WPSA, thereby enhancing transparency and accountability.
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WG 2: Opportunities to advance the WPSA at local, national and international levels

The implementation of the WPSA can be advanced through the following key actions:



Local Level	National Level	International/Regional Level
1. Work with local communities to integrate the YPSA into the national plan and invest in the potential and capacity of young women and men. 2. Mobilise local communities, especially women survivors of violence, to take on roles of responsibility, leadership and active participation in peace and security processes. 3. Organise and support shadow councils as a mechanism to prepare women and young women for leadership roles and participation in formal governance structures.	1. Enhance prevention efforts and ensure accountability mechanisms are applied for sexual VAWG, particularly in conflict and post-conflict settings. 2. Adopt and enforce a women's quota in decision-making bodies and peacebuilding processes to ensure meaningful participation. 3. Adapt more flexible, context-based approaches by CBOs and CSOs to respond to emerging needs, especially during times of crisis. 4. Strengthen the capacity of CSOs to advocate and lobby for the enactment of laws and	1. Leverage the Regional Observatory on the WPSA to amplify civil society voices and support advocacy efforts. 2. Support solidarity and networking among women's rights activists and peace actors to strengthen coordination and collective advocacy at regional and international levels. 3. Prepare a report on the implementation of the WPSA in the four countries to be submitted to the UN Secretary-General.

4. Focus on raising awareness within local communities and enhance the outreach to women, young women and men and community leaders.

to guarantee the right of access to information.

WG 3: Lessons learned and best practices from the implementation of NAPs for UNSCR 1325



The outcomes of the group work on lessons learned and best practices are as follows:

Lessons Learned	Best Practices
• Civil society, particularly women's rights CSOs, plays an indispensable role in the development, implementation and M&E of the NAPs for UNSCR 1325 and the WPSA. • Cooperation and coordination between CSOs and State actors can be sustained through institutionalisation and enhanced efforts. • Engaging men as supporters of women's rights, especially in contexts where they hold decision-making power, accelerates progress. Structured dialogues with local	• In Lebanon, awareness sessions were provided to both women and men to support women's participation in the first phase of municipal elections. This was the first time an approach targeted both women and men, and it had a positive impact on shifting public attitude towards women's participation in local elections. • In northern Lebanon, bridging protection and participation through strengthened dialogue between civil society, decision-makers and government actors proved effective. This approach recognised that women affected by violence are

authorities—beginning with separate awareness sessions for men and women in conservative areas, followed by joint discussions—have yielded positive results.

- Empowering women with knowledge, by raising awareness of their rights and providing necessary support, enables them to become agents of change.

- Providing opportunities for women to participate in UNSC sessions strengthens CSOs' international advocacy efforts.

- Intergenerational exchange of experiences between the older, more experienced CSOs and newly established CSOs bridges gaps and fosters collaboration.

- Including the WPSA and NAPs for UNSCR 1325 in the State budget is essential to ensure implementation.

- Integrating women with disabilities into decision-making positions is crucial to ensure their perspectives are included in the development, implementation and M&E of the WPSA.

- Recommendations, based on data generated by civil society that includes grassroots needs, are vital for effective policy development.

- Establishing reconciliation councils with women in leadership roles promotes women's participation in reconciliation and conflict resolution and enhances their leadership skills.

often excluded from public life and strengthened their self-confidence to effect change.

- In **Palestine** and **Lebanon**, forming women's and youth committees at the local level and within refugee communities, proved to be a successful model of participatory leadership.

- The development of **Iraq's** first NAP for UNSCR 1325 resulted from a participatory process between civil society and decision-makers, with civil society playing a leading role. As a result, the NAP was comprehensive, responsive to the critical needs of women and girls at the time and ensured local ownership and shared responsibility.

- The current NAP for UNSCR 1325 in the **KR-I** was developed through a participatory process involving all regions, drawing on lessons learned from previous NAPs. In this way, it addressed the needs of women from all segments of the society.

- Creating and strengthening the gender departments in ministries and women's empowerment units in municipalities in **Jordan** has enhanced the mainstreaming of women's needs across all levels of governance.

- In **Jordan**, established cooperation between civil society and decision-makers—such as the Royal Committee for the Development of the Political System—supported the development of policies and regulations, notably the *Political Parties and Elections Law*.

Closing panel: Strengthening regional solidarity for the implementation of the WPSA



At a time when shared challenges—such as conflict, displacement, backlash against women’s rights and shrinking civic space—transcend national borders, regional cooperation offers a powerful avenue for collective action, mutual learning and policy alignment. Cross-border exchange of experiences and joint advocacy efforts can help amplify women’s voices, strengthen accountability mechanisms and ensure a more coordinated and impactful implementation of WPSA commitments.



In her closing remarks, **Ms Boriana Jonsson, Executive Director of EuroMed Feminist Initiative**, summarised key recommendations from the two days of deliberations. She emphasised the importance of reinforcing solidarity, collective action and mutual learning across countries and regions to accelerate the implementation of the WPSA at the national level and to enhance policy development. Among the main outcomes of the discussions, she highlighted the value of cross-border exchange of experiences and joint advocacy efforts, which can help amplify women’s voices, strengthen accountability mechanisms and ensure a more coordinated and impactful implementation of WPSA commitments.

Conclusions

During the two days of deliberations, participants unanimously agreed on the crucial role that women-led and feminist CSOs play in advocating for the implementation of the WPSA, contributing to inclusive policy development and reforms that advance women's rights.

They also emphasised the important role of women's organisations in designing awareness-raising and media campaigns to promote women's participation in decision-making and peacebuilding processes at all levels.

Participants reflected on key lessons learned and best practices identified within the framework of the project and formulated a range of recommendations for the future.

Lessons Learned

1. Political will and institutional support are critical for success

- National progress on the WPSA requires strong political and financial backing, institutionalised M&E mechanisms and the integration of women's representation and equality across all government bodies.

2. Civil society is a driving force for accountability and policy reform

- CSOs play a pivotal role in raising awareness, providing evidence-based policy recommendations to decision-makers, and in the monitoring and implementation of NAPs. Governments are more likely to respond when CSO advocacy is organised, data-driven and grounded in community needs.

3. Integration of equality principles must be systemic, not fragmented

- Mainstreaming women's participation and equality is most effective when fully institutionalised through the creation of dedicated units in ministries and municipalities and supported by accessible services such as hotlines for reporting violations.

4. Inclusion must be comprehensive and intersectional

- Meaningful progress requires the inclusion of marginalised groups—such as women with disabilities, refugees and young women—in planning, decision-making and M&E processes. Their participation should be enabled through both formal mechanisms and targeted empowerment initiatives and leadership pipelines. Diverse women must be engaged not merely as “victims” or “beneficiaries,” but as active agents of change.

5. Sustainable implementation depends on reliable and long-term funding

- A lack of dedicated financial resources hampers the implementation of NAPs for UNSCR 1325. Integrating the WPSA into the State's general budget is essential for sustainability. Funding should support both direct programming and institutional capacity (e.g. women's empowerment units, CSO support and data collection).

6. Cultural change is as important as policy reform

- Raising awareness among both women and men and fostering community support for women's roles in peacebuilding and governance is crucial for shifting social norms. Early engagement—such as awareness-raising prior to elections—can help transform resistance into support.

7. Openness, realism, and accountability enable effective partnerships

- Transparent, structured and sustained dialogue between women's CSOs and decision-makers on women's rights and equality strengthens trust and enables constructive collaboration towards the shared goals of improving the safety and security of women's lives.

Best Practices

1. Contextualising the WPSA, providing flexible support and linking protection and participation in erupting armed conflicts fostered a safer and more inclusive environment for women and girls to engage in peacebuilding.

- The war in Gaza and in Lebanon underscored the importance of the WPSA in addressing the specific challenges women face in protracted crises. Feminist CSOs and women-led CBOs quickly shifted from advocacy to urgent service provision, aligning their efforts with the WPSA's goals to protect women and girls—particularly from sexual violence. Their flexible and responsive actions not only met immediate needs but also promoted women's participation in peacebuilding and decision-making, contributing to long-term stability and recovery.

2. Building strategic alliances with decision-makers enabled the development and implementation of more inclusive policies, strategies and NAPs for UNSCR 1325.

- Feminist and women-led CSOs play an indispensable role in designing, implementing and monitoring the WPSA through their knowledge and expertise from the ground. Fostering long-term structural cooperation between CSOs and decision-makers enabled development and implementation of inclusive policies, strategies and NAPs that more efficiently addressed women's needs and upheld their rights.

3. Mainstreaming UNSCR 1325 into other national strategies helped elevate the WPSA on the political agenda.

- While all States have developed NAPs for UNSCR 1325, gaps in implementation remain and awareness of their importance—particularly among decision-makers— is still lacking. Mainstreaming UNSCR 1325 into other national strategies has proven to be a best practice for elevating the WPSA on political agendas.

4. Ensuring budgetary allocations for the WPSA, particularly for NAPs for UNSCR 1325, supported its effective implementation and long-term sustainability.

- Advocating for the inclusion of the WPSA in national budgets and tracking related expenditures has helped ensure meaningful implementation and sustainability, while also enabling documentation of achievements and monitoring of progress.

5. Organising women and youth for collective power promoted participatory and inclusive local governance.

- The project's success demonstrates that well-targeted, locally driven feminist initiatives can catalyse broader societal transformation, even in complex and conservative environments. Using a women's organising approach—centring local leadership, collective voice and solidarity—to mobilise for social and political change has proven effective. Forming women's and youth committees at the local level, in conflict-affected and refugee communities, both during war and in peace, is considered the best application of participatory leadership in peacebuilding. These

committees have led local peacebuilding, recovery and policy dialogue, enhanced responses to emerging needs and promoted women's participation at the local level.

6. Creating women-led councils advanced inclusive peace and reconciliation.

- Supporting the formation of reconciliation councils with women in leadership roles enhanced the resolution of community disputes and fostered inclusive peace.

7. Establishing and supporting dedicated units enhanced governmental awareness of women's needs and equality.

- Creating and strengthening gender units in ministries in some countries, and women's empowerment units in municipalities in others, helped mainstream women's needs and equality across all levels of governance.

8. Institutionalising intergenerational leadership and sharing of experiences enhanced the sustainability of feminist and women-led CSO actions.

- Encouraging intergenerational knowledge exchange between long-standing women peacebuilders and young activists strengthened continuity, mentorship and innovation. This approach enhanced the sustainability of actions, encouraged collaboration and eased the intergenerational tension between activists.

9. Engaging men as allies helped address social norms and stereotypes.

- Building alliances with men for women's rights promoted the transformative potential of male champions in shifting norms and supporting women's leadership. Awareness-raising activities targeting both women and men have been beneficial in addressing patriarchal norms and stereotypical roles. This can lead to long-term change.

10. Grounding CSO advocacy in evidence and community voices enhanced cross-sector cooperation and policy dialogue on NAPs for UNSCR 1325 and related national strategies.

- Using community-driven data collection—such as surveys, statistics, participatory research—to support CSO advocacy and provide policy recommendations has proven to be a best practice. It has enhanced cross-sector cooperation and policy dialogue with decision-makers. This approach highlighted local needs and concerns, bringing them into policymaking through evidence-based data and analysis, and contributed to improved NAPs for UNSCR 1325 and national strategies that support inclusive policy reform.

11. Using social media for advocacy created space for a bold digital feminist voice.

- During the Gaza war, partner organisations in Jordan responded to the emotional toll and shifting public priorities by pausing in-person activities and redirecting their efforts towards digital advocacy. Social media became a powerful platform for feminist expression and solidarity. Through Instagram, Facebook and other channels, more than 76% of those engaging online were women—many advocating for labour rights, equality and protection for the first time. This marked the emergence of a bold, digital feminist voice within conservative communities, using online spaces to raise awareness, share personal stories and mobilise support.

12. Monitoring and evaluation are as important as implementation.

- The monitoring and follow-up approach adopted under this project allowed for optimal cross-sector sharing of experiences across countries. It enhanced cooperation between feminist CSOs, women-led CBOs and policy makers, strengthened coordination among feminist actors, and improved institutional and organisational capacities in M&E, documentation and reporting.

RECOMMENDATIONS

for the advancement of the WPSA on local, national and international levels

Throughout the discussions and group work, Forum participants developed a range of recommendations to advance the implementation of the WPSA. These recommendations respond to context development and the evolving needs of women, while promoting widespread dissemination, localisation and ownership of the agenda. They address actions at the local, national, regional and international levels.

I. Local Level

1. Institutionalise WPSA implementation mechanisms at the local level

- Establish local coordination platforms or committees (involving CSOs, local authorities, and women leaders) to implement and monitor WPSA commitments.
- Explore ways to integrate the YPSA with local WPSA strategies through joint planning and programming, drawing on the experiences and contributions of young women and men.

2. Invest in community-based capacity building

- Develop multi-tiered training programmes for women, including young women, in leadership, advocacy, conflict resolution and transitional justice, ensuring sensitivity to and inclusion of women's diverse needs and concerns.
- Support shadow councils, youth parliaments involving young women and women's leadership simulations as entry points into formal political and peacebuilding roles.
- Promote capacity-building and joint initiatives between established CSOs and smaller or emerging community groups and CBOs.
- Strengthen the capacity of local women-led CSOs and CBOs to monitor the implementation of laws, advocate for reform and access public information related to WPS.
- Support the development and dissemination of training and toolkits to enhance local advocacy skills in policy engagement, community organising and media work.

3. Strengthen local and community-based participation centred around women

- Continue targeting rural and underserved areas through well-designed, locally driven feminist initiatives. Incorporate psychosocial support services and strengthen partnerships with local authorities, including municipalities and local councils, to promote women's participation in planning, decision-making and the M&E of policies and actions linked to the WPSA. This will help sustain the momentum generated by the project's success in catalysing broader societal transformation, even in complex and conservative environments.
- Expand outreach to CBOs and local initiatives to ensure the WPSA is rooted in local realities and reaches women at the grassroots level.
- Ensure meaningful participation of women-led CSOs and grassroots organisations in all stages of WPSA development, implementation and monitoring.

- Engage women as active agents of change, not merely as victims, survivors or beneficiaries, by integrating leadership training and linking women's protection services with their access to political participation.
- Facilitate women's access to decision-making platforms at the local and national levels, particularly in peacebuilding and conflict resolution processes.

4. Engage young women and men in WPS discussion

- Actively involve young women and men, including university students, in WPS dialogue and related actions.
- Facilitate intergenerational and cross-sector dialogues to build shared feminist narratives and ensure sustainability of the feminist action.
- Promote inclusive civic education and feminist consciousness-raising in schools, universities, and community spaces where possible.

5. Enhance protection and support services

- Integrate VAWG prevention and response into WPSA implementation by providing referral pathways and widen psychosocial support and legal aid to rural areas and local communities.
- Link protection with participation by connecting survivors of violence with leadership and advocacy opportunities.
- Establish reconciliation or community monitoring councils to address women's rights violations at the local level.

6. Address all forms of VAWG, including conflict-related sexual violence (CRSV), and promote a culture of prevention.

- Create and support community protection networks to monitor and respond to all forms of VAWG, including sexual violence and CRSV, particularly during armed conflict and in post-conflict areas.
- Engage men, boys, and traditional leaders in local communities in prevention and protection programmes on all forms of VAWG, including sexual VAWG and CRSV, to transform harmful norms and behaviours.

7. Ensure the meaningful inclusion and participation of diverse women.

- Develop holistic programmes that offer psychosocial support, legal aid, economic participation and leadership pathways for women survivors of violence.
- Ensure the meaningful inclusion and participation of diverse groups of women—including marginalised women, women with disabilities and those from rural areas—in the design, implementation and monitoring of the WPSA.
- Address intersectional inequalities by recognising how political status, displacement, occupation and socio-economic factors uniquely shape women's security needs.
- Promote the role of women survivors and marginalised groups not merely as victims, but as active agents of change.

8. Promote governance responsive to the needs and concerns of women at the local level.

- Advocate for the adoption and enforcement of quotas for women in local peacebuilding bodies, reconciliation committees and local governance structures.
- Encourage local authorities to institutionalise inclusive practices and participatory planning that actively involve women.

9. Expand awareness and media engagement

- Leverage CSOs' community reach to lead targeted awareness campaigns on women's roles in peacebuilding, using local media, digital platforms and peer education.
- Support community media outlets and citizen journalists to document WPSA-related issues and challenge patriarchal norms and stereotypes.

10. Develop local early warning and crisis preparedness systems

- Activate community-based early warning systems to detect risks of violence or instability, using indicators that are inclusive of women's rights and sensitive to their needs and concerns.
- Prepare alternative response plans for times of war or displacement, with a focus on protecting women in the community and upholding their human rights.

II. National Level

1. Nationalise, contextualise and mainstream the WPSA.

- Ensure that the implementation of UNSCR 1325 and the WPSA is fully contextualised to reflect the realities of each country, including occupation, conflict, displacement and political instability in the region.
- Link the WPSA with the broader goals of democracy, justice and decolonisation (and the national liberation of Palestine) and adapt it to specific contexts to foster connection with local communities, promote localisation and ownership and enhance overall impact.
- Adopt the concept of “human security” and its principles—including combating all forms of VAWG—to promote peaceful and political solutions to all conflicts.
- Mainstream the NAPs for UNSCR 1325 and the WPSA into all relevant national strategies and action plans, ensuring they are integrated across sectors rather than remaining as standalone documents with limited institutional impact.
- Develop a unified monitoring system and designate a body responsible for the M&E of the implementation of the WPSA and the NAPs for UNSCR 1325 and for producing annual progress reports.
- Ensure the inclusion of all forms of VAWG in NAPs for UNSCR 1325, including VAWG under occupation and newly emerging forms such as CVAWG.

2. Address economic barriers to women's security and participation in peacebuilding.

- Integrate economic justice and women's economic participation into the WPSA, recognising that financial dependence is a key driver of vulnerability to violence and exclusion.
- Strengthen women's labour rights, access to funding and economic opportunities, particularly in home-based businesses and agriculture.
- Improve and enforce laws protecting women from economic violence, including early marriage, job segregation and denial of inheritance.
- Expand access to financial services, social protection and childcare to support women's active participation in public life.
- Incorporate inclusive economic policies and programmes that promote women's access to resources, employment and social protection.

3. Strengthen civil society participation.

- Institutionalise a participatory approach in the development, implementation and monitoring of NAPs for the implementation of UNSCR 1325, ensuring structural—and therefore sustainable—engagement of feminist and women-led CSOs at all stages.
- Create national or civil society-led national observatories to support the M&E of the WPSA implementation.

4. Strengthen cross-sector collaboration on the WPSA.

- Strengthen dialogue between civil society, governments, decision-makers, academics, experts and security institutions to advance the WPSA. This may include establishing formal cross-sector dialogue mechanisms between CSOs and relevant ministries to develop, implement, evaluate and report on the NAPs for UNSCR 1325 and the WPSA.
- Support multi-stakeholder national WPSA platforms that bring together government entities, civil society and academia to ensure continuous dialogue and joint accountability, coordinate actions, share data and track commitments.
- Advocate for stronger political commitment to the WPSA at national and regional levels, including the allocation of sufficient human, technical and financial resources for its implementation.

5. Strengthen legal and policy frameworks and reforms.

- Support national coalitions to advocate for:
 - Enacting or amending laws to enhance women's protection in conflict.
 - Adopting and enforcing laws, such as those on family protection from violence, quotas for women's political representation and raising the legal age of marriage.
 - Enforcing protective and preventive legal frameworks for combating VAWG, including the integration of awareness-raising efforts, service provision and mechanisms for follow-up and accountability.
 - Implementing and enhancing existing protective legislation and preventing its regression (e.g. Iraq's Personal Status Law No. 188).

- Supporting the reform and harmonisation of discriminatory legal frameworks, particularly in contexts with fragmented legal systems (e.g. Palestine).
- Spreading information about laws and guaranteeing access to it to ensure transparency.
- Address structural gaps in the NAPs for UNSCR 1325 through:
 - Ensuring inclusivity in the NAPs by engaging marginalised group—such as refugee women, displaced populations and women in conflict-affected areas—in the development process.
 - Embedding WPSA and YPSA priorities in national peace and security policies.
 - Improving the sustainability and responsiveness of NAPs to emergency situations and ongoing crises (e.g. the 2015 Emergency NAP of Iraq addressing the conflict caused by ISIS/Daesh) and wars in Gaza and southern Lebanon).
 - Developing future NAPs to be inclusive, participatory, budgeted and responsive to the diverse needs of women across different geographies and socio-political borders.

6. Use data and storytelling for policy influence.

- Collect and disseminate both qualitative and quantitative data to document women's experiences and inform policymaking.
- Combine evidence with personal stories to humanise the data and enhance its impact on decision-makers.
- Encourage collaborative research and knowledge production using participatory approaches with local communities.

7. Integrate the WPSA into crisis response and recovery.

- Ensure that the WPSA is mainstreamed into humanitarian aid, crisis management and post-conflict recovery plans, with specific measures enhancing both the protection and participation of women.
- Develop emergency protocols within NAPs to address the needs of women during armed conflict and natural disasters.

8. Promote inclusive budgeting that responds to the needs of women and men across all segments of the population as a core requirement for good governance.

- Provide training programmes for CSOs and government stakeholders in gender-responsive budgets, taking in account the unequal opportunities of women.
- Advocate for dedicated budgetary allocation to support WPSA implementation.

9. Protect women activists and peacebuilding efforts.

- Develop national protocols—formalised and standardised procedures—by the government in collaboration with civil society and donors to protect women's rights defenders working on peace and security. These protocols should guide institutions and professionals such as the police, healthcare workers, social workers and lawyers in preventing, responding to and managing cases of violence or threats.

- Encourage donors, INGOs and civil society to establish emergency response funds or hotlines for activists under threat.

10. Coordinate national shadow reporting.

- Build the capacities of civil society to draft assessment reports on the implementation of national WPSAs for submission to UN bodies. These reports should include input from local communities.
- Support and facilitate the compilation and submission of civil society reports to the UN Secretary-General on the status and implementation of the WPSA in the region.

11. Promote flexibility and adaptability in WPSA implementation.

- Promote the development and implementation of a flexible WPSA that is responsive to the emerging needs of women and girls.
- Contextualise all UN resolutions linked to the WPSA to ensure they address specific gaps and challenges and respond to the actual needs of women and girls at both local and national levels.

12. Promote sustainable and long-term funding, including alternative funding mechanisms.

- Develop and support alternative funding mechanisms to reduce reliance on traditional donors, particularly in light of funding withdrawals and shifting global priorities.
- Advocate for more flexible, long-term and core funding to sustain feminist movements and grassroots work.
- Sustainable, long-term funding is essential for building on achievements and contributing to lasting change. Realising the full potential and impact of the WPSA depends on continued investment, capacity strengthening and deeper institutional integration of approaches that are responsive to the needs and concerns of women and girls at all levels.

13. Improve data collection, research, knowledge and documentation.

- Invest in the collection, analysis and use of comprehensive and disaggregated data and research to assess the impact of WPSA implementation on women and men and inform policy development and reform.
- Support CSOs in documenting human rights violations and VAWG, particularly during armed conflict and displacement.
- Encourage collaboration between academia, civil society and government actors to produce evidence-based policies and interventions.
- Follow up on the scoring results of the *Regional Index on VAWG* and the WPSA, and address identified gaps at the national level to enhance data collection and support informed policymaking.

III. Regional and International Level

1. Leverage regional mechanisms for advocacy.

- Engage regularly with the Regional Observatory on VAWG to monitor progress made in policy development, identify remaining gaps, elevate local concerns and support State commitments to eliminate VAWG.

2. Strengthen regional feminist solidarity, campaigning and advocacy.

- Foster solidarity and strengthen coordination and collective evidence-based advocacy among feminist CSOs, women-led CBOs, networks, experts, academia and others.
- Support regional advocacy and campaigning on the implementation of the WPSA and the *Regional Guidelines for the Implementation of the WPSA*, including the recommendations emerging from this regional Forum.

3. Support regional learning and exchange of experiences.

- Promote mutual learning and exchange of experiences at national, regional and cross-regional levels to identify common challenges, lessons learned and best practices.
- Facilitate regional knowledge exchange and networking between CSOs to build collective power and resilience in response to shrinking civic space.
- Strengthen regional collaboration through conferences, consultations and forums that promote cross-country learning and solidarity. Organise cross-regional learning exchanges and knowledge-sharing platforms to disseminate tools, best practices and experiences.
- Support the Regional Observatory on VAWG as a hub for data collection, validation of VAWG indicators and publication of the Regional Index on WPSA.
- Utilise the Regional Indexes on VAWG and the WPSA, as well as comparative research conducted by the Regional Observatory (e.g. on VAWG and the WPSA) to identify gaps, showcase good practices and harmonise efforts across countries.

4. Reclaim the political nature of the WPSA.

- Advocate for elevating the WPSA as a political priority for decision-makers on local, national and international levels.
- Mainstream the WPSA across all humanitarian responses and relief efforts and monitor progress in relation to other international mechanism on women's rights, such as the SDGs.
- Ensure all forms of VAWG are addressed in NAPs, including VAWG under occupation and emerging forms such as CVAWG.
- Advocate for the application of the WPSA in relation to other international legal frameworks, particularly in the context of the occupation of Palestine and other occupied areas.

5. Ensure women's participation in high-level platforms.

- Facilitate women's direct engagement with institutions such as UN bodies, the UN Security Council and national political bodies to advocate and influence global and national peace agendas.

6. Facilitate international engagement and access to funding.

- Build the capacity of local and national CSOs to access international funding, navigate donor systems and develop high-quality project proposals related to the WPSA.
- Support women's participation in UN consultations, global summits and peace forums to ensure voices from conflict-affected communities are heard.
- Engage international institutions and donors in regional discussions to ensure alignment and complementarity in supporting WPSA implementation.

7. Strengthen monitoring and accountability.

- Regularly check and update the Regional Observatory indicators to monitor WPSA implementation, ensuring they are inclusive of marginalised groups and grounded in reliable data sources.
- Promote transparent and participatory monitoring mechanisms that structurally include women's rights and women-led organisations, as well as independent researchers, in evaluation processes.

Annexes:

Annex A: Agenda Regional Forum Advancing the Women, Peace and Security Agenda



Background:

The First Regional Forum “*Advancing the Women, Peace and Security Agenda (WPSA)*” organised under the patronage of H.E. Ms Wafaa Bani Mostafa, Jordan’s Minister of Social Development and the Head of the Inter-Ministerial Committee for Women’s Empowerment, will take place on 6-7 May 2025 in Amman, Jordan, within the framework of the regional project *Strengthening Feminist CSOs for the Implementation of the Women, Peace and Security Agenda in Iraq, Lebanon, Jordan and Palestine*, funded by the Support Fund for Feminist Organisations of the Agence Française de Développement (AFD) and the French Ministry for Europe and Foreign Affairs. The Forum is organised by EuroMed Feminist Initiative (EFI) in partnership with a consortium of EFI member women’s rights organisations in Iraq, Jordan, Lebanon, and Palestine.

The Forum is a key step in advancing collaboration among feminist civil society organisations (CSOs) and women-led community-based organisations (CBOs) from the four countries. It aims to follow up on progress made in the implementation of the WPSA, identify existing gaps and barriers and address both country-specific and shared regional challenges, particularly regarding the role and engagement of CSOs in implementation and monitoring processes.

The Forum will also provide an opportunity to advance the WPSA. The 2024 Regional Index on Violence against Women and Girls (VAWG) and the Regional Guidelines on the implementation of the WPSA will serve as tools to assess achievements and inform recommendations for concrete actions.

The outcomes of the Forum will be documented and disseminated to decision-makers, civil society and relevant stakeholders to support the development and improvement of laws, policies and measures related to the WPSA at both national and regional levels.

Objectives:

The Forum aims to:

- Assess progress made and discuss specific barriers and gaps in the implementation of the WPSA at the national level and highlight shared challenges at the regional level.
- Explore existing opportunities to advance the implementation of the WPSA in the current context and identify best practices to enhance the role of feminist CSOs and women-led CBOs in advocacy,

implementation and monitoring efforts. Regional and cross-regional exchange of experiences will foster dialogue and enhance mutual learning.

- Use evidence and data from the Regional Index on VAWG and the Regional Guidelines for the implementation of the WPSA to support advocacy efforts and promote stronger, more concrete commitments from national and regional stakeholders.

Expected Outcomes:

- **Assessment of progress and challenges:** A comprehensive review of WPSA implementation will highlight both progress and challenges in each country, as well as identify shared regional challenges.
- **Exchange of best practices:** Regional and cross-regional sharing of experiences will help strengthen networking, promote solidarity and enhance collective capacity.
- **Recommendations for advocacy:** Concrete recommendations will be developed to support advocacy efforts and promote accountability in the implementation of the WPSA.
- **Strengthened regional collaboration and exchange of experiences:** Regional networking will sustain momentum and foster collaboration on women's rights and equality, while cross-regional exchange and the sharing of best practices will contribute to enhanced mutual learning.
- **Documentation and dissemination:** The Forum's outcomes and recommendations will be documented and disseminated to strengthen advocacy and inform policy development for the implementation of the WPSA at both national and regional levels.

Participants:

The Forum intends to gather at least 40 participants, including:

- Members of the project consortium.
- Representatives from all beneficiary CSOs and CBOs across the four project countries.
- Relevant stakeholders involved in the implementation of the WPSA, including the National Action Plans (NAPs) for the United National Security Council (UNSCR) 1325.
- Women's rights experts and academics.
- Members of national and regional observatories on VAWG and women's rights.

Place:

Movenpick Hotel, Amman, Jordan

Language:

Arabic, English

Agenda

Day One: Tuesday, 6 th May 2025	
09:00 – 09:30	Registration
09:30 – 10:00	Welcoming and Opening Remarks Political will, institutional commitment, and strategic direction for the implementation of the WPSA. • Ms Lilian Halls-French – Political Advisor, EuroMed Feminist Initiative (EFI) • H.E. Mr Alexis Le Cour Grandmaison – Ambassador, French Embassy in Jordan • Dr Ahmed Abu Haider – Assistant General Secretary, on behalf of H.E. Ms Wafaa Bani Mostafa – Minister of Social Development, Head of the Inter-Ministerial Committee for Women's Empowerment
10:00 – 11:30	Panel One: Progress made in the implementation of the WPSA in the current context and stakeholders' commitments This panel will provide space for stakeholders and policy makers to reflect on and evaluate the process of developing, implementing and monitoring the NAPs for UNSCR 1325. Main challenges faced, lessons learned, and best practices from each context will be shared, along with key recommendations for advancing the WPSA at both national and regional levels. • Dr Hanna Nakhleh – Advisor to the Minister of Women's Affairs, The National Observatory on VAWG, Palestine • Ms Hana Gorgis - Director General, Department of Women's Affairs in the Presidency of the Republic of Iraq, Iraq • Dr Khanzad Ahmed - Secretary-General, High Council of Women Development in the Kurdistan Region of Iraq (KR-I), Iraq • Dr Huda Ayash - Director of the Policies and Observation Unit, Jordanian National Commission for Women (JNCW), Jordan Open Discussion Introduction and Moderation: Ms Borianna Jonsson – Executive Director, EuroMed Feminist Initiative
11:30 – 12:00	Coffee Break
12:00 – 13:30	Panel Two: National commitment to the WPSA: Gaps in implementation, country-specific concerns and shared challenges Representatives of women's rights organisations will provide analyses of WPSA implementation in their respective countries. Drawing on their experience, they will highlight identified gaps and challenges and raise specific concerns relevant to their national contexts.

	• Ms Leila Al Ali - Executive Director, Association Najdeh, Lebanon (Online) • Ms Amal Khreisheh - General Director, Palestinian Working Women Society for Development (PWWSD), Palestine • Ms Wathba Altayar - Consultant, Women Empowerment Organisation (WEO), Iraq • Ms Layla Naffa Hamarneh – Director of Programmes, Arab Women Organisation (AWO), Jordan Open Discussion Moderator: Ms Mais Afaneh – Regional Programmes Manager, EuroMed Feminist Initiative
13:30 – 14:30	Lunch
14:30 – 16:00	Panel Three: The role of feminist CSOs in following up the implementation and monitoring of the WPSA: Cross-regional exchange of experiences with Africa. Cross-regional exchange of experiences is a key mechanism for promoting learning and fostering solidarity among women’s rights advocates. Main lessons learned from the development, implementation and monitoring of the WPSA in West and Central Africa will be shared. Key challenges affecting women’s participation in peacebuilding processes will be presented and best practices will be shared along with concrete recommendations for advancing the WPSA. • Ms Simone Mbodé Diouf - Member of the strategic committee of the project "Pour des agendas Féministes, Paix et Sécurité", and African Union Youth Ambassador for Peace for West Africa (Online) • Ms Aïcha Loum - Advocacy Officer, Equipop - Bureau de Dakar, Senegal, West Africa (Online) • Ms Nzale Therese - Programme Officer, Fonds pour les Femmes Congolaises, Democratic Republic of Congo, Central Africa (Online) Open Discussion Moderator: Ms Liza Hido – President, Baghdad Women’s Association, Iraq
16:00 – 16:30	Coffee break
16:30 – 17:00	Wrap up - A summary of the discussions and findings from Day One

Day Two: Wednesday, 7th May 2025

09:00 – 10:30	Panel Four: Influencing legislation and policymaking: How civil society can drive change - best practices and lessons learned from the region
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	This panel will explore the critical role civil society plays in shaping legislation and policymaking, focusing on best practices and lessons learned from across the region. Drawing on concrete examples, the discussion will highlight how women-led organisations have successfully mobilised grassroots movements and diverse actors to influence policy agendas, engage decision-makers and drive reforms in favour of women's rights. Panellists will share strategies for effective advocacy, coalition-building and navigating political spaces, while also reflecting on challenges such as conservative resistance, co-optation and limited civic space. • Ms Jeanne Frangieh – Executive Director, Himaya Daeem Aataa (HDA), Lebanon • Ms Sahar Qawasmeh – General Director, Roles for Social Change Association (ADWAR), Palestine • Ms Jalila Smadi – Director, Jerasia Charitable Society for Women, Jordan • Ms Amal Kabashi – Executive Manager, Iraq Women Network (IWN), Iraq Open Discussion Moderator: Ms Dana Awaidah - Project Coordinator, Women Studies Centre, Palestine
10:30 – 11:00	Coffee Break
11:00 – 13:00	Panel Five: Evidence-based advocacy: Using data collection and research, such as the Regional Index on VAWG, to advocate for the implementation of the WPSA This panel will bring together academics and researchers from across the region to explore how evidence, data and research can inform advocacy efforts, shape policy development and promote the implementation of the WPSA. From strengthening women's participation in peacebuilding in the Palestinian context, to enhancing women's economic participation in Jordan, addressing VAWG in Iraq and fostering strategic collaboration between civil society, academia and policy-makers in Lebanon, the speakers will present examples of local and national initiatives that contribute to advancing the WPSA. • Ms Ilham Makki – Researcher on VAWG, Iraq • H.E Dr Maysoon Otoom, Former Senator, Associate Professor, Women's Studies Center, University of Jordan, Jordan • Dr Luna Shamieh – Visiting Professor, National University of Public Service in Budapest, Palestine • Ms Myriam Sfeir Murad – Director, The Arab Institute for Women, Lebanese American University, Lebanon Open Discussion Introduction and Moderation: Mr Thaker AlZghool - Research Manager, Regional Observatory on VAWG and Regional Index on WPSA

13:00 – 14:00	Lunch
14:00 – 15:00	<u>Group Work</u> – Identifying recommendations to advance the implementation of the WPSA Participants will break into three working groups (WGs) to collaboratively identify concrete recommendations for advancing the implementation of the WPSA. Each group will explore a key aspect of the agenda, drawing conclusions and formulating recommendations. The working groups will discuss the following topics: • WG 1: The role of civil society in implementing and monitoring the WPSA at local, national and international levels. <i>Facilitator: Ms Soma Farhang Mostafa - Programme Coordinator, WEO</i> • WG2: Opportunities to advance the implementation of the WPSA at local, national and international levels. <i>Facilitator: Ms Dina Badwan - Projects Coordinator, PWWSD</i> • WG3: Lessons learned and best practices from the implementation of NAPs for UNSCR 1325 <i>Facilitator: Ms Alaa Sayed - Project Coordinator and External Relations Officer, Association Najdeh</i>
15:00 – 15:30	Coffee Break
15:30 – 16:30	<u>Session:</u> Sharing of group work results (10 minutes per group), followed by an open discussion. <i>Moderator: Dr Abeer Dababneh, Member of the Board of Commissioners, Independent Election Commission, Professor, Women’s Studies Center, University of Jordan</i>
16:30 – 17:00	<u>Closing panel:</u> Strengthening regional solidarity for the implementation of the WPSA At a time when shared challenges—such as conflict, displacement, backlash against women’s rights and shrinking civic space—transcend national borders, regional cooperation offers a powerful avenue for collective action, mutual learning and policy alignment. Cross-border exchange of experiences and joint advocacy efforts can help amplify women’s voices, strengthen accountability mechanisms and ensure a more coordinated and impactful implementation of WPSA commitments. Based on the outcomes of the Forum’s discussions, the session will summarise how solidarity can be sustained in the face of political and structural barriers. • Ms Boriana Jonsson - Executive Director, EuroMed Feminist Initiative • Mr Frederic Turlin - Middle East Regional Officer for Gender, Environment and Social impacts, Agence Française de Développement (AFD)

Annex B: Lessons Learned and Best Practices in Connection with the Four Pillars of the WPSA

1) Lessons learned in connection with the four pillars of the WPSA

Participation	Protection
- Political will and institutional support are crucial to ensure women's meaningful participation. - Inclusion must be intersectional: women with disabilities, young women and women refugee must be intentionally included in decision-making, through both formal mechanisms and targeted empowerment initiatives and leadership pipelines. - Cultural and social resistance can be shifted through early targeted awareness efforts, especially in electoral contexts. - Intergenerational exchange strengthens leadership and promotes sustainability.	- Women's led and feminist CSOs play a pivotal role in raising awareness, providing services for victims/survivors of VAWG and evidence-based policy recommendations to decision-makers, to enhance women's protection from VAWG, including women's rights activists and defenders. - A lack of funding and institutional safeguarding puts frontline activists and vulnerable women at risk. - Inclusive governance, responsive to the needs of both women and men, requires structures and services, such as hotlines and clear protection protocols for victims/ survivors of VAWG. - Mainstreaming equality is most effective when fully institutionalised and supported by accessible services such as hotlines for reporting violations.
Prevention	Relief and Recovery
- Transparent, structured and sustained dialogue between women's CSOs and decision-makers on women's rights and equality foster more effective conflict prevention. - CSO-led advocacy, that is organised, data-driven and grounded in community needs, strengthens both prevention and accountability. - Prevention efforts are more effective when men and local leaders are engaged as allies.	- Funding gaps undermine the long-term sustainability of relief and recovery initiatives. - Integration of the WPSA into national budgets is essential for continuity and effectiveness. - Recovery must also be inclusive, addressing the specific needs of displaced women, women with disabilities and victims/survivors of violence. - Diverse women must be engaged in planning relief and recovery not merely as "victims" or "beneficiaries", but as active agents of change.

2) Best practices in connection with the four pillars of the WPSA

Participation	Protection
- Establishing and supporting dedicated units on women's rights enhanced governmental awareness of women's needs and equality - Fostering long-term relationships between CSOs and reform-minded political actors and decision-makers has enabled the advancement of policy reforms responsive to women's needs. - Forming local women's and youth committees, including in refugee and conflict affected communities, has enhanced the response to emerging needs and promoted women's participation in local peacebuilding, recovery and policy dialogue. - Encouraging intergenerational knowledge exchange between long-standing women peacebuilders and young activists strengthened continuity, mentorship and innovation enhanced the sustainability of actions. - Using a women's organising approach—centring local leadership, collective voice and solidarity—to mobilise for social and political change has proven effective. Forming women's and youth committees at the local level and in refugee communities is considered a best practice in participatory leadership. - Using community-driven data collection (e.g. surveys, statistics, participatory research) to support CSO advocacy and inform national and international policy recommendations is a best practice that enhances engagement with stakeholders and decision-makers, bringing local needs and concerns into policymaking.	- The war in Gaza and in Lebanon underscored the importance of the WPSA in addressing the specific challenges women face in protracted crises. Feminist CSOs and women-led CBOs quickly shifted from advocacy to urgent service provision, aligning their efforts with the WPSA's goals to protect women and girls—particularly from sexual violence. Their flexible and responsive actions not only met immediate needs but also promoted women's participation in peacebuilding and decision-making, contributing to long-term stability and recovery. fostering a safer and more inclusive environment for women and girls affected by conflict. - Building and promoting alliances with men for women's rights has highlighted the transformative potential of male champions in shifting norms and supporting women's leadership. Awareness-raising activities targeting both women and men have proven beneficial in addressing patriarchal norms and stereotypical roles and can lead to long-term change. - Integrating gender-responsive budgeting to fund protection programmes has ensured sustainability and long-term impact. - Institutionalising of policies across ministries and improving access to services has strengthened VAWG prevention. - Using disaggregated data and community reporting has helped design more responsive protection mechanisms and improved engagement with stakeholders and decision-makers. - Advocating for the inclusion of the WPSA in national budgets and tracking expenditures supported meaningful implementation, sustainability and the ability to document achievements and monitor progress.

Prevention	Relief and Recovery
- Supporting the formation of reconciliation councils with women in leadership roles has enhanced the resolution of community disputes and fostered inclusive peace. - Launching awareness campaigns targeting men and community leaders supported mobilization and can lead to long-term change in harmful norms. - Strengthening cooperation between CSOs and State actors has enhanced coordinating on early warning and prevention responses. - Engaging men as allies in preventing violence and promoting women's inclusion has contributed to shifting public attitude in addressing patriarchal stereotypes. - Using civil society-generated statistics, reports and evidence-based data can guide national prevention strategies. - During the Gaza war, partner organisations in Jordan responded to the emotional toll and shifting public priorities by pausing in-person activities and redirecting their efforts towards digital advocacy. Social media became a powerful platform for feminist expression and solidarity which marked the emergence of a bold, digital feminist voice within conservative communities, using online spaces to raise awareness, share personal stories and mobilise support.	- Advocating for the inclusion of the WPSA in general budgets has ensured the allocation of resources for recovery programmes. - Forming multi-stakeholder local committees in refugee and conflict-affected communities to co-lead recovery planning has enhanced localisation and ownership. - Promoting service delivery in recovery, responsive to women's needs—health, education and livelihoods—has ensured that these needs are effectively addressed. - Using community-led approaches to design and monitor recovery services, has helped alignment with actual needs and priorities. - The monitoring and follow-up approach established by the project enabled optimal sharing of experiences across the four countries, enhanced coordination between policy makers, feminist CSOs and women-led CBOs and built the institutional and organisational capacities of all CSOs in project management, M&E, documentation and reporting.