

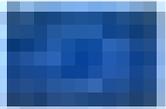


CIVIL SOCIETY CONFERENCE

Follow up meeting on progress made in drafting Iraq second National Action Plan for United National Security Council Resolution 1325 on Women, Peace and Security

26 September 2020, Baghdad

OUTCOMES



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The Civil Society Conference to follow up on Iraq second National Action Plan (NAP) for United Nations Security Council Resolution (UNSCR) 1325 on women, peace and security, in view of Women, Peace and Security Agenda and COVID-19 pandemic, was held on 26th September 2020 in Baghdad with the participation of more than 65 representatives from civil society organizations (CSOs) and Iraqi Government institutions. The conference was organized by the Alliance 1325 and supported by EuroMed Feminist Initiative in the framework of the 'Madad for Women' project funded by the European Union through the EU's Regional Trust Fund, the EU 'Madad Fund'. The meeting was also co-sponsored by the United Nations Assistance Mission for Iraq (UNAMI). The main objective was to follow up on the progress made in the development of the second NAP since the national civil society conference in February 2020 and support its adoption and implementation. Furthermore, the impact of Covid-19 pandemic on the women was discussed and recommendations for gender sensitive measures in the national response were elaborated.

The meeting provided a platform for an open and constructive dialogue between civil society organisations (CSOs), major networks and alliances and community-based organisations (CBOs) from different parts of Iraq, among which Sawtuha Alliance, Iraqi Women Network, Sustainable Development Network, Future Network for Iraqi Democracy, the Directorate of Women's Empowerment at the Council of Ministers, and representatives from Directorate of Non-Governmental Organizations, Policy Department, Family and Child Protection Directorate and Community Police at Ministry of Interior, High Commission for Human Rights, as well as from governorates and local municipalities.

After the Iraq national anthem at the opening, Ms. Suzan Aref, the General Coordinator of the Alliance 1325 welcomed the participants and expressed the gratitude of the Alliance 1325 to EuroMed Feminist Initiative as well as the European Union, the EU Madad Fund and UNAMI for their continuous support to the Alliance 1325 and their important action on following up on Iraq NAP 1325. Ms. Aref highlighted some key achievements of the Alliance 1325 in developing and implementing the first NAP 1325. She then reminded the objective of the meeting, namely to discuss the progress made of the second draft NAP 1325 in view of the recommendations of the National Civil Society Conference in February 2020 and the COVID-19 Crisis response as well as the role of the civil society and local communities in supporting and localizing the implementation of NAP 132

Dr. Ibtissam Aziz, General Director of Women Empowerment General Directorate at the Council of Ministries, expressed her appreciation of the Alliance 1325 for their continuous efforts in following up and implementing the NAP 1325. She underlined that ***"based on the recommendations of Erbil CS Conference, a team was established from the Women Empowerment Directorate to coordinate the development of the national action plan as a part of an overall National Policy for Empowering Iraqi Women (2021-2024)."***



Ms. Idah Muema, Senior Gender Advisor at UNAMI, greeted the participants online. She affirmed UNAMI continuous support for the implementation of the NAP 1325 and commended the work of the Alliance 1325. Ms. Muema underlined the positive indication that the views and concerns of civil society have been heard and that dialogue between the Government and civil society has been fruitful. ***"Coordination and collaboration in monitoring and reporting of the national action plan and national policy to avoid duplication is essential. We are pleased to note that the Women' Empowerment Directorate is coordinating efforts with different entities in this area. That is commendable and should be supported."***

National Policy for Empowerment of Iraqi Women (2021-2024)

During *the first session*, Dr Ibtisam Aziz and her team made a detailed presentation of the National Policy for Empowerment of Iraqi Women (2021-2024) which is a general framework and an umbrella to all programmes dedicated to Iraqi women, addressing their needs and supporting their human rights. The policy aims to standardizes national plans and programs on women, and provide them a solid, comprehensive, and sustainable institutional framework. As such the policy will upgrade institutional work that meets international requirements and standards to achieve an advanced model in the Arab world and the region, ensuring that Iraq fulfils its international obligations according to conventions, treaties and resolutions. As an umbrella, the National Policy will also facilitate the follow-up, and the monitoring and evaluation process to guarantee efficient implementation.

The main pillars underpinning the policy derive from Women, Peace and Security Agenda and are covering the areas of participation, protection and prevention and economic recovery, while abolishing discriminative legislation remains a cross cutting issue throughout these areas. The implementation framework is based on the principle of objective-based planning. This framework considers the resources and capabilities of the entities concerned with implementation, and equity in the distribution of activities by governorates and vulnerable groups, thus enabling localising. This provides a

clear picture of the implementation mechanism and distribution of roles through the performance measurement indicators and within a determined timeframe. Furthermore, coordination is envisioned between national stakeholders and local implementing entities, and international and regional supporting actors.

In the Q&A session, the participants expressed their appreciation that the civil society recommendations from the national civil society conference held in February 2020 in Erbil have been considered and reflected in the draft National Policy and its implementation plan. Participants unanimously supported the rationale of the Policy, deriving from the WPSA, which gives a broader framework for implementation of women's rights, while respecting both the pillars of UNSCR 1325 and the Iraq particular context. In this line the civil society representatives emphasized the fruitfulness of the dialogue between the government and civil society and underlined that the beneficiaries of this policy are the most vulnerable and poorest communities and they shall remain a priority. The approach of the National Policy was congratulated by the conference, as it ***"consolidates all efforts exerted in this area by governmental institutions, civil society organizations, as well as regional and international organizations, for the advancement, support, and empowerment of women, and enhancing their role in society"***.



Conclusions

- The National Policy for Empowerment of Iraqi Women has considered the recommendations from the CS Conference in Feb2020, in Erbil.
- The implementation plan in the Policy has considered and combined the pillars addressing all areas: participation, protection, prevention, economic recovery as well as legislation.
- There is a clear focus on M&E mechanism which was recommended during the February Conference based on the recommendations of the National Report on first NAP.
- The Policy includes a Media Plan with clear objectives and actions.
- There is a clear funding mechanisms which combine recommended sources of funding: Ministerial efforts, State budget, private sectors, and international support.
- The Directorate was commended for its leadership in development of the National Policy and for efficient and continuous coordination with the governorates and CSOs.

Covid-19 Pandemic and Impact on Women

During *the second session* moderated by Ms. Wailite Gorges, Ms. Fatin Al-hilfy from High Commission for Human Rights and Ms. Friyal Al-kaaby from Alliance 1325 Secretariate discussed the impact of the COVID-19 pandemic on the society and on women in particular and how to ensure an inclusive, gender sensitive response to this crises in national programs. According to the World Health Organization, about 70% of workers who are massively exposed to the virus in the health and social sector, cleaning services, and personal assistance services, are women. The loss of income, the closure of schools, the home quarantine, put an added burden on women, who traditionally suffer from unequal responsibilities at home and unequal access to the formal labor market. Violence against women and girls, especially domestic violence, has been on the rise because of the lockdown measures. The suspension of services creates additional difficulties. Participants discussed the situation in Iraq and provided recommendations for measures and actions to be considered and included in the National Policy for Empowerment of Iraqi Women as an umbrella to all national programmes dedicated to Iraqi women.

Recommendations for Covid-19 Measures in the National Policy

Participation

- The participation of women in decision-making linked to the COVID-19 crisis is enhanced in all fields (health, education, politics)
- Enhance the role of women in crisis management. To this goal:
 - Affirmative measures to be taken to increase the representation of women in national decision-making structures dealing with COVID-19 to ensure a gender perspective in healthcare decisions.
- Women's organizations are consulted, and their analyses and recommendations are considered when making decisions to respond to the pandemic.

Protection and Prevention

- Directorate to provide regular gender analysis to be incorporated in the institutional preparedness and response to the crisis and post crisis to improve equality in response in health care and prevention of VAWG.
 - Ensure access to sexual and reproductive healthcare services during Covid-19 pandemic for most vulnerable women such as IDPs, in villages and remote areas.
 - Ensure continuity of PSS services, helplines and online legal counselling to victims of VAWG during lockdowns and beyond on national and local levels and spread information on their availability.
- #### Legal Protection
- Address VAWG as a priority for governmental measures to address the impact of Covid-19 on women and urgently put the domestic violence law for adoption; make sure protection measures are immediately taken and resources allocated.

Economic Recovery

- Apply gender analyses in adopting Covid-19 recovery measures, learning from the negative effects on women of previous financial and economic crises.
- Base economic recovery measures and subsidies on a gender assessment of the impact of the pandemic, including barriers for women posed by social norms and gender stereotypes.
- Address the issue of the informal sector by considering an adequate minimum wage eligible for social security to all forms of non-standard employment.
- Plan and invest in affordable and accessible childcare services.
- Consider unemployment raise in relation to Covid-19 and plan for financial support for women headed households, single mothers, persons with specific needs.
- Ensure access to jobs and social and health protection are secured for refugees and displaced women.

The role of civil society and local communities in the localization of NAP 1325

The third session moderated by Ms. Batol Al Dagher, discussed the efforts taken by CSOs in localizing NAP 1325 and the challenges faced in implementing the activities. Interventions were made by Ms. Amal Gbashi, Coordinator of Iraqi Women Network, Ms. Muna Alhilay, Ms. Suzan Safar, Mr. Manaf Alani from Alliance 1325, and Ms. Noor Nabih from Women Minorities Forum Organization.

The speakers raised up different challenges to the implementation of plans and strategies linked to women's needs and rights, namely lack of political will to adapt the law on domestic violence, to see for accountability for perpetrators of gender crimes, especially sexual violence. In this regard for example, measures and mechanism to compensate Yazidi women survivors of sexual violence are still lacking. The role of women parliamentarians is crucial to this end. The cooperation of women's organizations with women parliamentarians to support and strengthen this cause is essential.

The civil society continues to monitor the implementation of governmental plans and strategies; however, this work is scattered. Alliance 1325 is ready to invest in improving coordination and establishing a civil society follow up, monitoring and evaluation mechanism, and to provide technical support to CSOs, grassroots CBOs and local communities which will enhance broader awareness, knowledge and capacities to implement the National Policy for Empowerment of Women, benefiting all women in Iraq.

Conclusions

- The work on Women, Peace, and Security Agenda needs structured partnership between civil society and government agencies as well as mechanisms that strengthen the means of communication between them, and allocated resources and adequate funding.
- Civil society plays important role in supporting women parliamentarians to adopt legislation on women's rights, especially on combating domestic violence.
- In the frame of the National Policy for Empowerment of Women, include measures for accountability and reparation for victims of sexual violence, especially compensating Yazidi women survivors of sexual violence.
- Alliance 1325 is ready to provide technical support to civil society organizations to follow up the implementation of the National Policy and organize an independent civil society monitoring and evaluation mechanism.

General Conclusions and Recommendations

General Conclusions

- The National Policy for Empowerment of Iraqi Women serves as the main umbrella for plans and programs related to women. Derived from the Women, Peace, and Security Agenda, it gives a broader framework for implementation of women's rights, while respecting both the pillars of UNSCR 1325 and the Iraq particular context.
- Considering the recommendations from the national civil conference held in February 2020 in Erbil, the National Policy includes the discussed pillars, as well the recommended M&E mechanism, media plan, funding mechanism and localizing mechanism during implementation.
- The National Policy provides a platform for unification of all efforts made by Government, institutions and civil society organizations.

General Recommendations

- In the current crises of Covid -19, with reports on increase cases of violence against women at home, urgently adopt the Anti-Domestic Violence Law and in priority amend discriminative articles in the Personal Status Law, Penal Code, Procedure Law.
- Include measures to address the consequences of COVID-19 pandemic on women and girls in the National Policy for Empowerment of Iraqi Women and pay special attention to reaching out and supporting the work of organizations in the far districts and sub-districts, which is essential for localizing the National Policy with its implementation plan.
- Women's Empowerment Directorate to take the lead and continue its coordination with the governorates and civil society and become the main source of support to different sectors.
- Women's Empowerment Directorate to support the role of women parliamentarians in raising awareness and mobilizing for amendment in legislation and for approving gender sensitive budgets.
- United Nations Mission in Iraq (UNAMI) to provide a UN umbrella in supporting of the National Policy for Women Empowerment.
- Alliance 1325 to organize a civil society follow up mechanism to support the implementation of the National Policy.



Civil Society Conference :
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