



## **Advancing the role of women in international security: Views from the Middle East**

Wednesday 27 October 2021 8:15-9:45 EDT (New York time) | Online

TRANSCRIPT

This event, organised by UNIDIR and UN Women during the General Assembly First Committee, drew on recent roundtables to explore opportunities to expand the capacity of women in the fields of security, foreign policy, and disarmament in the Middle East.

The discussion was held in Arabic and English with simultaneous translation. The event is part of UNIDIR series of regional discussions on gender and disarmament. A recording of the event is available on the [UNIDIR YouTube channel](#).

### **PROGRAMME**

#### **Welcome remarks:**

- Dr. Chen Zak Kane, Project Lead, Middle East Weapons of Mass Destruction Free Zone, UNIDIR

#### **Opening remarks:**

- Ambassador Leena Al-Hadid, Permanent Representative of Jordan to the UN, OSCE, and Vienna-based International Organizations

#### **Panel discussion:**

- Ambassador (ret.) Nabeela Al-Mulla, American University of Kuwait
- Ambassador Lana Nusseibeh, Assistant Minister for Political Affairs and Permanent Representative for the UAE to the UN
- Mona Ali Khalil, Director, MAK Law International and former Senior Legal Officer of the UN Office of the Legal Counsel

**Moderator:** Mina Al Oraibi, Editor-in-Chief, The National, UAE

#### **Closing remarks:**

- Anita Bhatia, Assistant Secretary General and Deputy Executive Director of UN women

- Dr. Robin Geiss, Director, UNIDIR

## **Dr. Chen Zak Kane**

Good evening, afternoon or morning to our very esteemed speakers and guests. I'm Chen Zak Kane, and it's my honor to welcome you on behalf of UNIDIR' gender and disarmament program and the Middle East Weapons of Mass Destruction Free Zone project to today's meeting: Advancing the role of women in international security views: from the Middle East.

I would also like to thank UN Women, our event co-organizer and congratulate Ambassador Sima Sami Bahous from Jordan, for her recent nomination as Executive Director of UN Women.

The meeting is part of a broader UNIDIR initiatives aimed at understanding the obstacles that prevent women equal participation and think together on ways to overcome those. For that purpose, UNIDIR has been holding several workshops in various regions. This particular event is looking on the Middle East in general and Arabic speaking countries in particular to raise awareness of the importance of promoting the role of women in the fields of international security, especially in senior and decision-making roles and identify the means in which this can be achieved.

We are fortunate to have today five women from the Middle East that embodied just that. I cannot think of a better group of women that can serve as role models and help us think through these issues. We are aware that the Middle East also contain non-Arabic speaking countries and many of the obstacle as well as the solution which we will discuss today are relevant beyond the Middle East. We wanted to start on a small scale and expand our efforts, so we at UNIDIR see it really as the beginning not the end of the process.

Before we start let me go through some logistical and technical issues. If you have any technical issues and we know, we are aware that you might given the fact that we are a little bit challenged by zoom today, please contact by email Laetitia, our event facilitator or either Tomisha and one of them will add their email in the chat box. On the bottom of your Zoom screen, there is a globe. Please choose one language either Arabic or English. The event is going to be interpret simultaneously today to Arabic and English. Speakers in the event may speak either English or Arabic. As a participant, you don't need to do anything you will hear throughout the event your chosen language.

We also want to share with you a fact-sheet UNIDIR produced based on the research and the roundtables that we held with women in the region. The link will be available in the chat as well. We will post the feedback form at the end of the event please fill it and let us know what you find useful and how we can do better.

We have a great event today with excellent speakers so Ambassador Leena Al-Hadid from Jordan will deliver opening remarks followed by a moderated discussion with Mina Al-Oraibi, Editor-in-Chief, of the National, Ambassador (ret.) Nabeela Al-Mulla of Kuwait, Ambassador Lana Nusseibeh of the UAE, and Ms. Mona Khalil, Director of MAK Law and former Senior Legal Officer with the UN and the IAEA. Following the panel, we will have the pleasure of welcoming Assistant Secretary General and Deputy Executive Director of UN Women, Anita Bhatia to deliver remarks following by closing remark from UNIDIR director, Dr. Robin Geiss. With that it's my pleasure to introduce Ambassador Leena Al-Hadid, who is ambassador of the Hashemite Kingdom of Jordan to the Republic of Austria, non-resident ambassador to Czech Republic and the Republic of Hungary, Permanent Representative of Jordan to the UN and other international organization, and the OSCE in Vienna, Austria. She was chairperson of the Board of Governors of the IAEA between 2018 and 19. And a member of the

Mediterranean woman mediators network. And especially dear to us, she is also a member of the advisory board on Disarmament matters and the BoT of UNIDIR. Ambassador Al-Hadid, welcome and the floor is yours.

### **Ambassador Lena Al-Hadid**

In order to discuss the possibilities of promoting the participation of women and ensuring greater national security, it's important to highlight the contributions of women. Hopefully through this discussion, we will be able to determine certain practical measures not only to promote the participation of women, but also to provide for and enabling development of environment in order to make women more successful in promoting international security and reaching fruitful development for the societies locally and internationally.

In order to highlight the contribution of women to international security, we need to be serious in tackling some relevant issues. And to address a number of questions before that, I would like to call on to everyone to consult the different publications that are issued in this regard, especially those issued by the UN Institute for Research on Disarmament and that it has thankfully translated into Arabic last year, namely, the publication's on [Connecting the Dots](#).

In order to guide our discussion, I would like to start with these questions: Do you think that in our different policies that exist in the Arab world do we really emphasize the issue of gender equality? In my opinion, an Arab society is we do have a certain level of commitment, but it needs to be modernized and developed, and allow me to share with you a few examples in English. UNSCR 1325 and its numerous subsequent resolutions on women peace and security were not drafted and later adopted out of void, but rather grounded in international human rights law, legal instruments such as CEDAW and other relevant internationally agreed frameworks. The work women peace and security agenda centers around four pillars, but the true challenge lies in that it's a huge area to cover, and it branches out in directions and areas that cannot always be adequately addressed. Regardless, in recent years, the Arab world has witnessed an acceleration in the implementation of that agenda. Efforts have intensified to design and implement National Action Plans. discussions have been advancing nationally, regionally, and internationally. I think this side event being a perfect example of that efforts. Let me focus a little bit on the regional level and bring you to the League of Arab States. In 2015, a regional strategy and plan of action was prepared to adapt the international women peace and security agenda regionally, and to serve as an umbrella for our countries. In 2017, Jordan adopted a national action plan and has been actively pursuing its goals since that plan was developed to respond to the country's latest security and military challenges.

It is no secret that international security and disarmament diplomacy are fields usually dominated by men. However, this trend has been changing globally, including in the Middle East. The recruitment of women into the Army is becoming a subject of increasing discussion in the Arab world and several countries have made significant efforts to bring women into their armed forces. The Jordanian armed forces developed a strategy for women that aims to build capacity through recruitment and training, generating broader participation and employment opportunities. There are now around 5,000 female personnel in uniform which represents around 3 %of all the country's military forces. It's not a big percentage, but steady and it has been steady for decades, thus changing perceptions in communities. Women now have access to the Air Force, military force, Royal Guard Protection Unit, and military intelligence. Several reached the rank of brigadier general in the armed forces and Major General in the royal medical services. These are huge achievements. Jordanian women joined the UN peacekeeping forces in 2007. They participated in many countries such as Congo, Cyprus, South Sudan, Fiji,

Afghanistan, and carried out duties with refugees, and were involved in training local police forces in various countries. They also took part in the Gaza field hospital as medical staff. One of the examples of Arab and regional cooperation would be the recent agreement between my government and the State of Qatar in sending female security personnel to the 2022 World Cup. One example of international institutions focusing on gender parity would be the International Atomic Energy Agency which strives to increase the representation of women, both in the nuclear field as scientists and in the Secretariat. I myself can remember during my post here in Vienna in the 1990s. When attending meetings of the IAEA, only few women participated then. Currently there are so many women in decision making and senior positions, including around 30 % of female ambassadors in the room. In the IAEA Secretariat, I'm proud to say that we have one female inspector, a Jordanian female inspector who travels around the world inspecting nuclear facilities. During my time as a chairperson of the Board of Governors of the IAEA for the year 2018 and 2019, I found myself resolving complex negotiations that I would not have been able to sail through had I not accumulated years of experience in diplomacy. A number of female Jordanian ambassadors are now holding sensitive positions around the world, and then you, an upcoming generation holds so much promise for the future.

Despite all the progress made in increasing the number of women in the field of international security and disarmament, gender parity is still a long way to go. To go back to numbers. The World Economic Forum report in 2020 estimates that gender gaps in the Middle East and North Africa could potentially be closed by around 100 years. That's a long time to wait. The Arab region has the world's lowest rate of female labor force participation, and female unemployment is three times higher than the world average. These numbers are disturbing, given that more than half of the Arab population is below the age of 30. In Jordan we identified this challenge early on and spearheaded efforts at the UN Security Council which led to the adoption of the historic UN Security Council to 2250 on youth, peace and security. It was the first time in history that the focus was entirely on the role of young men and women in peacebuilding, and countering violent extremism.

Arguments for promoting gender parity tend to resolve around social, political, or religious reasons. While they may be valid justification in some areas, and other areas, they are often too abstract. After all, in the majority of our countries the gender gap in education favors women in university level outnumbering men by 30%. The number of female graduates in science is higher than that of males in 11 of the Arab countries. More effort needs to be made to involve these graduates and to remove obstacles that may stem from gender stereotypes, and social cultural expectations. There is a huge untapped potential, and it is too costly for our societies not to move towards a higher level of inclusion. Studies have shown that women are more inclined to understand security problems, tend to support preventive measures, and are less inclined to oppressive solutions. I am not trying to argue with a woman or a man think differently, but rather that having that diversity of opinions within our societies can only strengthen professions and disciplines. Evidence has suggested that including women in conflict mediation has a positive impact on the durability of peace. At the end of the day, having a similar attitude or approach toward any issue will never lead to robust debates and discussions. If we change the traditional approaches to tackling current challenges, it will prove effective in dealing with new and unpredicted events, especially in our region. Now, why does all of this matter? It matters because women have the right to participate in security discussions, and shape the outcomes of decisions that will directly affect and impact their lives. I'll stop there. I thank you. And I look forward to listening to the valuable inputs from colleagues in the region in particular.

**Dr. Chen Zak Kane**

Thank you, Ambassador for your very thoughtful remarks. Mina, the floor is yours.

### **Mina Al Oraibi**

Thank you very much. Thank you, Ambassador Al-Haddid you've given us some great food for thought and thank you to the organizers of this session for having me moderate our illustrious panel coming up now. So as we all know, this is an important topic. And that's why those of you are here joining us know that. However, there are certain figures I wanted to add that are from UNIDIR and UN women that are quite important to keep in mind. We know that women are underrepresented in international security and in peacemaking all too often. Something to keep in mind that when it comes to UNGA committees, the highest level of representation for women are in humanitarian committees, and even that's up 48%. All else is between 30 to 36%. And the Arab world particularly faces troubles, because it has the least representation for women in security delegations. According to UNIDIR, it's 16.4% women representation in delegations. However, the highest is in Latin America, which is at 42.6%. And even though Latin America grouping is quite high, it's still less than 50%. So these are further numbers to say, we have a situation here that needs to be rectified. We have a great panel to tackle this. All of them have an illustrious career so I won't go into too much detail but very briefly ambassador Nabeela al-Mullah from Kuwait became the first Arab female ambassador to the UN in 2003. In addition to serving as an ambassador to the UN, she has served as ambassador of Kuwait to Zimbabwe, South Africa, and Austria. She was also the first one from the Middle East and South Asia region to chair the Board of Governors of the International Atomic Energy Agency at 2002-2003. As I said, there's a much longer list to go but I will briefly move on to Ambassador Lana Nusseibeh, Assistant Minister for political affairs and Permanent Representative of the United Arab Emirates at the UN in New York. Ambassador Lana was the first woman from the UAE to be appointed to the role of Ambassador and Permanent Representative to the United Nations in 2017. She was elected as one of the vice presidents of the 72<sup>nd</sup> session of the General Assembly representing the Asia Pacific Group from a member states alongside being named president of the UN Women executive board. Also has a long list but I will stop there. And we have also with us Mona Ali Khalil, an international lawyer specialized in the field of international security and who has extensive expertise in international security. She's served at the UN Office for legal counsel, which advises the Security Council. She has also served in the Office of Legal Affairs of the IAEA where she advised on nuclear security and counterterrorism. Again, the list is quite long. But importantly, Mona founded MAK law International, she advises both governments and international organizations. So I'm asking Nabeela, I will come to you first to look at this question. And from your experience, you know, we've said that less than 20% of delegates from Arab League States region are in disarmament forums, and the number drops to 16% when it is leading, or even less than, actually 16% when it's leading delegations. So we know there's lower presentation. But we want to know from you what was like when you were named ambassador in 2003. And really breaking that important glass ceiling? And how have things changed now, so over to you. I'm sorry, you're on mute. And if I may, just as you unmute, also to remind our participants, you may pose your questions in the Q&A session, and I will be coming to you in order for our audience to also have their questions. So please go ahead with putting in your questions in the Q&A box on Zoom, and I will come to them. And if there's a particular panelist, you'd like to ask, then please indicate them the question, Ambassador Nabeela, over to you.

### **Ambassador Nabeela Al-Mulla**

Thank you, Mina, thanks to UNIDIR for organizing this event. I would say that we came a long way. You know, during my time, I think I was more or less a loner, in the field, a loner, whether it was in the whole diplomatic

field as ambassador, wherever I want, wherever I went, in the IAEA, you know, we did not have any Arab woman, among the delegations except in ours. I was assisted at the time by the current, our ambassador to Canada, Amb. Reem AlKhaled. I'm very proud that we were able to work together as a women's team, you know, from the Middle East, and the United Nations as well. When I went there, it was the 60<sup>th</sup> anniversary of the UN and I was telling my Arab colleagues, especially those who were from the founding members, the Arab founding members of the United Nations. And where are your woman? you know, it takes little Kuwait that came in 1963, gaining the membership of the UN to be there as a first Arab woman while they like Egypt, Jordan, Iraq, Saudi Arabia, Lebanon, they have a longer tradition in their civil service, but their women were not there. I was very pleased to see later on today, that more women were also appointed as representatives at the UN, even in lower levels even as lower than permanent representative, you know, you hardly saw the women around. So it's a long way coming in. It's, it's a lonely field. But it's not lonely when you are concentrating on the issues that you have to tackle. And you have also the support of women from other regions, there is a camaraderie that exists naturally with the women from even European Union, Latin America, Africa, Asia, although they were in a minority that so this is how it went. I'm very proud to see that there are more women there, including my own delegation, Kuwait delegation to the UN. Thank you.

### **Mina Al Oraibi**

Thank you so much ambassador Nabeela, if I can ask you a quick follow up question. And that is, you said, you saw this increasing and that there were these capable women and suddenly they're increasing. What do you think was the greatest driver for that increase?

### **Ambassador Nabeela Al-Mulla**

There is greater awareness. There's also primarily the issue of the whole world, wanting women to be encouraged to take part in decision making, but I must say that it's not only it's not only the Arab world, you know, I will look around and say, Okay, well, I've never had until I attended the United Nations, I didn't see a single woman from the UK. You know, it was a male domain all the time. No Russian or Chinese, you know, the Americans of course they started but mostly it was they were political appointees, they were not career diplomats. So I always say don't let us not be too harsh on ourselves, looking at other countries that have a greater tradition of civil servants there, even among our own, I mean, I look at each you can say, you know, I really distressed that I don't see many Egyptian ambassadors in such fora, in all my career, whether it is in Brussels in Vienna, New York, I didn't see them in the field of arms control, it was the domain of men, you know, all the time in the Arab League as well, you know, when it was mostly about men monopolizing this field, in foreign policy, public, the bureaucracies are convinced that men can do just good enough job to go ahead with. Thank you, Mina.

### **Mina Al Oraibi**

Thank you so much. So that takes us nicely to Ambassador Lana. We know it is important to have representation of women. But I want to ask you, why does women's meaningful participation matter in the security field. And not just at the decision making level, Ambassador Nabeela was saying that, you know, it's up the decision making level but also, as you go further down, even though you have very capable voices within a lot of the civil service, so Ambassador Lana, if I can turn to you, please.

## **Ambassador Lana Nusseibeh**

Thank you, Mina, so great to be here with you. And thanks to UNIDIR and UN Women for organizing this event. And for the invitation to speak with such a fantastic group of women, ambassadors and leaders in their field from all corners of the world. It's really refreshing. But it shouldn't be refreshing, it should be much more commonplace, which is I think, one of the topics of the discussion today. And of course, you know, today 21 years ago, today, almost to the day, the Security Council, as Ambassador Leena mentioned, acknowledged for the first time in resolution 1325, that women are agents of change rather than victims in need of protection, which has been a little bit the prism through which gender empowerment has been discussed for so many decades. And of course, although this is something that as an ambassador Nabeela said something that we all know already from our own experience of the world, I think the resolution finally created a formal mandate for women's roles in conflict prevention, conflict resolution and post conflict setting. So in that sense the UN is a very important place for setting standards and the aspirations and the normative framework by which countries that aspire to live up to. And I think, as other panelists have said, and mina, as you said, there's an obvious moral rationale for this inclusion.

But there's also a case in terms of outcomes. There's also a case of answering the question, what does it solve? Why does it matter? So and I think that case is answered very simply by the fact that we know today that societies that cannot be stable and their economies cannot thrive, when we fail to include half of the population. It's a simple fact, as Ambassador Hadid pointed out in her opening remarks as well, including women in the process of peacemaking also has a positive impact on the durability of that peace. So there's another selling point. So to put some numbers on it, and I feel sometimes that we feel we need to make the case for this with data, but I think it's important to illustrate, when women participate in peace processes, the resulting agreement we know now is 35% more likely to be durable than when women don't participate in it. Up to 15 years of study investigating 82 peace agreements in 42 different armed conflicts between 1989 and 2011 found that the peace agreements with women's signatories are also far more associated with durable peace outcomes than the peace agreements that did not have any female signatories to it. So I think that's a clear call through the data for why women need to be involved in the peacemaking itself and in the decision making. And next month, the international community will be celebrating, of course, the fifth anniversary of the Colombian peace agreement, which to date is an example of one of the most comprehensive agreements when it comes to inclusion of women's and girls rights. And this inclusion can be traced back to the act of advocacy of women from both negotiating parties. So we're getting more data, we're getting more case studies that help build the case for all of us, I think and the international community for why this is the best investment from the peace and security continuum.

And of course, there are a number of reasons, it's very difficult to identify one or two but there are a number of reasons for this impact of women in decision making roles in the security sector without generalizing but both at the technical and leadership levels, there is clear benefit, there's clear net gain when women are included. So there are some of the obvious societal ones, women bring their own lived experience into their jobs, they improve the likelihood that other women's and girls specific needs of rights are taken into account and respected often as a case of unseen, unheard or thought of, and so bringing their perspective directly into the negotiations from the outset brings that lived experience to bear.

They may in some contexts and cultures create a more comfortable channel for women to provide input, some policy and implementation and no one shoe fits all. So they certainly they inspire women, other women and



girls as visible role models. And they encourage them, I think when we see that at the table to widen their career options, actively contribute to their communities perspective and prosperity. So we saw this in the UAE we've heard it in other contexts from Kuwait, from Jordan, and we've definitely seen it in the UAE, this sort of inspiration that comes from having women in unusual fields that were before seen as the purview of only men. We in the UAE saw our first female fighter pilot. And for that matter, also our female nuclear scientists running the Middle East first peaceful nuclear power program, the woman who is overseeing our Mars program and can orbit up into Mars the first time that's happened in the Arab world. So I think these become role models and inspiration points for girls and women around the Middle East, and that can lift all of us up together. In Liberia, we've seen that the first female peacekeeping unit has created another dynamic shift for inclusion. Women, peacekeepers, were more aware on the ground of what was happening or could happen to women and girls. And they also helped to reset society's views on what women are capable of. So as UN Secretary General Antonio Guterres rightfully reminded us during his remarks at the open debate, last week on women peace and security, conflict, prevention and disarmament have been at the core of the women's movement for peace for more than a century.

And I think inclusion is especially important in the Middle East and North Africa right now, because of the numbers, unfortunately, and the severity of the conflicts. We do occupy a slightly larger part of the Security Council agenda here in New York. And I would like to see, and we're faced with these complex peace processes, as well as significant development losses that must be reversed if we are to ensure stability and development for the countries that we care about and globally. And that is before, of course, getting to the severe setbacks of COVID-19, the impacts of climate change. All of this makes recovery, an even bigger lift.

So it's not just important, but essential that we make a major investment in women in the MENA and global security sectors over the next few years. I think we should have long surpassed the stage of having to justify a woman's seat at the table. And women's participation in peace and security is so often referred to as something that we still need to debate. It's not so much why should it be there, It's how do we implement it? How do we make it happen,? should be the conversation that we are having in these discussions today.

And so just quickly, I'd like to highlight three interventions for the consideration of the panel and the audience that we think from our experience at home and at the UN, could speed up gender sensitivity position in the security sector, and give our next WPS anniversaries even more to celebrate if we focus on these tangible outcomes. So first, on women's full and equal and meaningful participation in peace and recovery processes. We shouldn't shy away from quotas in my view, they do work. And that's it, there's no question that certain peace processes are harder to crack on women's representation and leadership than others. The rather than giving up we have compelling examples from the UN where they've innovated around hurdles. Certain peace envoys and senior officials have set up women's advisory bodies or held mass consultations, including online. And these are more concrete ways to raise women's voices, to include them. And as Member States, I think that responsibility lies on us. We need to ensure that every peace and recovery process has a clear cut gender inclusion mechanism when it's defined, when it's debated and set by the Security Council.

Second, UN agencies themselves can make gender a stronger part of their core evaluation metrics. So I'm really optimistic that UN Women and really I applaud the appointment and selection of Ambassador Sima Bahous, a role model in the Arab region to head this agency. But I think under her leadership and with the fantastic team there, UN Women can continue to build momentum here as an advocate across the UN system for these tangible deliverable outcomes. Every One actor in the security space should have requirements to have gender

balanced teams, gender balance consultations with conflict stakeholders, and gender advisor review of programming, among other measures, and I think we can think of several others. And to ensure there is accountability on these metrics. I think performance against them needs to be incorporated into Staff Evaluations affecting pay and promotion to show that we think it really matters.

And third, I think it's high time that we have Arab women, more Arab women as UN Special Representative of the Secretary-General and special peace envoys. Of the 23 senior officials in the field, only eight are women. And none of them are from our region, despite it being one of the most conflict affected regions in the world. So a great opportunity to rectify this representation gap is by ensuring female MENA leaders replace officials who retire or reassigned. And it's not just symbolic, it's really also substantive. I think we all have a collective responsibility to live up to what we have promised to women and girls in all of these groundbreaking declarations and resolutions of the last two decades and more. And we shouldn't frame this work as a burden, which is too often how the gender discussion is framed around. And there are few investments that have such high returns. So we should frame it in the economic way as well. McKinsey estimates that even partial progress on gender equality, with many of the reforms being cost free, could generate \$12 trillion of global GDP by 2025. Who would not want to see a generation of \$12 trillion to global GDP by 2025?

So as my team and I are currently preparing for the UAE term on the Security Council, beginning January 2022, we're pursuing a results oriented approach to this discussion with the objective of moving gender equality out of its silo and into all discussions relevant to peace and security. So it's, we think, in our view, and I think the view of all the panelists today, it's the right move for women. It's also the right move for men. And it's the right move for the economy and for peace. Thank you so much.

### **Mina Al Oraibi**

Thank you so much, Ambassador, that's great and some meaningful and tangible possibilities for how we can increase gender representation. And really, that takes us nicely over to Mona because I wanted to ask you, in your experience, what you've seen actually has worked in increasing women's participation from the MENA region be it in peace operations, or more broadly in this agenda. So over to you, Mona.

### **Mona Ali Khalil**

Thank you, Mina, thank you to the fellow panelists and the keynote speaker. I'm a fan of all the above. And I'd like to count myself as a friend of many of them. I am inspired by them, but also take their warning that well, great progress has been made but that there's a tremendous amount of work to be done. We've had a year maybe a year and a half of wake-up calls. The wake up call of the pandemic was not the only one. There was the extreme weather events waking us up to the existential threat of the climate change wake-up call. But the anniversary the 20<sup>th</sup> anniversary of UNSCR 1325 was itself a wake-up call. Again, progress had been made but woefully little progress. Unfortunately, after tremendous effort, tremendous resources, tremendous commitment, we have very little to show for it. I think we have less than 20% of the peacekeepers are women, less than 15 of the peace negotiators are women. And less than 10% of the signatories of major peace agreements are women. As Nabeela rightly noted, it's not just in the Arab world where progress is lacking. It's

also at the global level. And unfortunately, while we are still a smaller fraction of the leaders of the peacekeepers and the peacemakers, we are still the plurality of the victims. And while 1325 has right to reorient the role of women in peacekeeping and peacemaking not as just victims and survivors, but rather as leaders and advocates for peace and justice, and those who are essential to the conclusion of peace agreements, and peace operations, we cannot lose sight of the Darfur women in Sudan or the Yazidi women in Iraq, or the Rohingya women in Myanmar, for they're not only suffering the vagaries of war that men and women of all humanity suffers but they are special victims of rape and other sexual gender-based violence. They are also those that suffer the greatest impact of the socio-economic depravities and vagaries of war and of marginalization in general. So let us see that fuller picture and then contextualize where the Arab world is woefully behind, but we're all behind the Scandinavian countries like Iceland, Norway, Finland, Sweden, lead the world. But even there, the gender gap has not, has not been fixed.

So maybe a little bit of good news after all of this bad news is welcome. We do have 29 female heads of state worldwide. And one would think that the majority would be, you know, there'd be a more of an imbalance of proportionality and where those women come from, but it's actually quite geographically diverse. We have eight from Western Europe, seven from Eastern Europe, five from Latin America and the Caribbean, five from Africa, four from Asia, but not in the Arab world. We have seen, I think, tremendous rise. And for some reason, Arab women ambassadors tend to be more visible, I think, because it's more surprising, but we do have a, I would say, a powerful collection of superstars. We've seen them heading, you know, the UN 75<sup>th</sup> declaration, we've seen two of them chairing on this panel alone the IAEA Board of Governors, one was the first and one most recent. So we have made great strides. Unfortunately, as many of my co-panelists have mentioned, the pandemic has set us back in the year, a decade of action for sustainable development. We're actually further behind, we made losses, we've suffered losses where we've lost some gains. So we It's no time to be complacent or celebrating many of these anniversaries. It's time to redouble our efforts globally, as well as locally.

I am optimistic. The girls are the ones that give me the most optimism. We've seen Nadia Murad, the Yazidi woman who suffered great untold suffering at the hands of ISIS emerged as a Nobel Peace Prize winner, but also as an extremely effective advocate for justice and criminal accountability as a means to peace. We have seen Malala, who was shot at the head merely for wanting an education become an advocate for girls education, for women's rights on a broader socio-economic level. So we have every reason to be optimistic.

A recent report by RESDAL, a security defense network of Latin America has highlighted some interesting facts for us that I'm happy to summarize briefly just to give us a sense of grounding, as we try to launch into greater success and greater progress. But in that report, they've identified Egypt, Jordan and Morocco as the three main Arab contributors to peacekeeping. And while Arab women are less likely to serve us contingents (they're less than half of the average), they are a higher concentration of women among staff, and experts in peacekeeping missions, twice the average. Most countries in the MENA region are recruiting women increasingly, and almost with a concerted commitment to not just do it, but to be seen to be doing it. And there is this concerted effort but primarily in the field of civil service. We see many doctors, many diplomats, many journalists, many ambassadors, but we don't see that many force commanders, we don't see that many soldiers, we don't see that many police officers. Progress is being made.

There is as I said, a concerted effort to fill the ranks across the board in armed forces and police forces. And there is a recognition of the value, the added value, as Ambassador Leena and Ambassador Lana both have mentioned in their respective countries making tremendous strides. Egypt, for instance, has contributed over

30,000 peacekeepers through over 37 UN missions and 24 countries. But unfortunately, very few women. Tunisia has a better record, 5% of its armed forces are women, including command officers, 40 military pilots and 40 naval officers. They have also taken the lead in combating terrorism alongside their male colleagues. Jordan, is a case study and success as well, where we see a higher percentage of women almost annually, a visible tangible increase, dating back to the early 2000s they were recruited as officers and given senior command positions at the field, military intelligence, military courts are staffed with increasingly greater percentages of women, including 863 troops to the UN peacekeeping missions and maybe one of the first, if not the first Arab country to reach the female officer quota in the peacekeeping missions. So Algeria also has had a very advanced participation of women dating back to the resistance of the French colonial era where women played a significant role, not only in war but also in peace. And were politically empowered by the Constitution at the time and various decrees and ordinances giving equal status and equal opportunity to women for decades, ahead of other Arab countries. But nonetheless, they're still excluded from combat positions from Force Commander, military and non civil oriented stuff positions.

So why is that? Why do we see that? There is, of course, the cultural, possibly the religious. But there's also, I think, an overly narrow understanding of what peace and security is. That it isn't just diplomats and soldiers, that isn't just political leaders and military leaders. It is, as we see more of the spectrum here and their backgrounds, also journalists and lawyers, and human rights monitors, and safeguards inspectors, and intelligence officers, and humanitarian actors. The interdependence of peace and security, human rights and sustainable development, I think opens huge channels and huge opportunities for women to make a difference. Arab women in particular, from the doctor to the journalist, from the human rights activists to the lawyer, all women have a much broader path to peace and security, and a more sort of diversified interdependence of skills and skill sets.

I've had the pleasure of training several Arab governments for preparation for their seat on the Security Council and other important bodies of the UN and without a doubt, not only are half the people on the in the training course have been women, we have parity within the training programs, but the superstars are usually women, partially because they have to. They're accustomed to having to prove themselves to be better in order to be treated as equal. But that's something that that is often the burden of a woman that she has to work harder, just to be visible sometimes and to be chosen to rise through the ranks. But they do rise, and their star is shining, their star is rising. So that, again, allows me to end on a very positive note that we have the talent, we have the opportunity, we have the mandate. And as Ambassador Lana said, we have the imperative, it's a question of life and death, not only for the region, but for the broader globe, given all the wake-up calls we are facing.

### **Mina Al Oraibi**

Thank you very much Mona both in terms of giving us some positive news, in addition to all the challenges we face, but also the importance of this particular issue. Ambassador Nabeela, I know you wanted to comment, so please, the floor is yours.

### **Ambassador Nabeela Al-Mulla**

Thank you just wanted to add to what Mona was saying, because I'm very proud and satisfied that at least also we (in Kuwait) made strides in that aspect of woman inclusion in the military. Only three days ago or four days ago, it was announced that women are welcome to enlist in the army and navy and whatnot. So it's a great step

forward. Saying that, of course, you know, I want to comment on this general trend of how can we encourage the woman to enlist in these fields, whether it's peacekeeping, whatever it is, you know, arms control negotiations.

It's emulating, you know, when one country looks at the other, and they try to sort of best themselves compared to the other I think it's a very interesting, healthy kind of competition, when you see that and more so when it exists among the, the Arab countries. The other thing that I want to emphasize, is the role and the effect of international organizations making countries aware of the necessity of including woman in the different aspects of life, whether it's UN peacekeeping, arms control, etc.

Also, it is the role of the UN within its organizations. During my term, whether it was the UN agencies in Vienna, or previously at headquarters in New York, there is some kind of marginalization of the Arab woman intimates, especially Arab women who did not have the backing of their states. Some of them are enlisted, they're working there, but they need to be encouraged and nurtured. The lack of support by their own governments should not be a hindrance. I think it's the organization itself that has to support this Arab woman. Just because perhaps they are dual citizens, and they just slip outside of their own home country, attention should be given to these workers. I really think that they are wonderful workers. I knew a couple of them, and I thought it was really an eye opener. Leena, I think it was Leena who mentioned the fact that there is a Jordanian inspector at the IAEA. Can you imagine this is way back in 2002? I was shocked, shocked to see that among the inspectors that came back from Pyongyang, after North Korea evicted the inspectors, one of them was an Egyptian woman. I was I was truly surprised, I didn't expect an Egyptian woman with hijab was there. So I asked to see her, I was intrigued that in 2002, we had an Arab that would go to North Korea.

These kinds of fields should be open to women all over the place, and slowly and encourage them. We should encourage young persons and convince them. Okay, fine, you might get rich, you might not be a leader, not have a label or something like that, but you will find a niche, something that will satisfy your mind and soul, and working together with others from the Third World, developed world. But let's open up the way for them. I'll tell you one, one thing that if I still have time, one of the things that I appreciated in my upbringing, that one of my professors opened the door for me to join Pugwash. I was still in university. For me, I was like, wow, you know to go to such an institution and discuss armament and disarmament and things like that. Encourage them, invite them to institutions to talk, to listen, and things like that. Because only by practice, will they develop their whole being into the field. Thank you.

### **Mina Al Oraibi**

Thank you so much. I think the point about role models that we've heard being repeated here is such an important one. And all of you are role models and have given Arab youth, men and women role models of success. But also the roles they can play on the national stage serving their countries, but also international stage.

So we have quite a few questions coming in. And I know we've got limited time, unfortunately. So I want to pose the first question that's coming to us from the audience, but also Ambassador Leena al-Hadid, I will ask you as we wrap up to give us your thoughts. But first, the question from the audience, which is how do you empower men in the Middle East to also be champions for women? Because it is important for women to support women, but we also need men to support women and also to see the benefit of that. So and this is open to the panel, I'm not sure who would like to take a stab at this one. Go on Mona and then I'll come to you, Ambassador Lana.

**Mona Ali Khalil**

I think that's an excellent, excellent point. And it's very important to focus on the male perspective. We don't want to have a reverse discrimination policy as we go forward in the future. There's three things that I that I would like to bring to the table on this issue. Number one, we focus on the girls, but it's as important for boys to see as normal, successful women thriving in all fields. In order for that normalization to occur, it's important that we open the eyes of our boys as much as we open the eyes of our girls.

Second, I mean, I pay tribute to my father, and all men. In order to have empowered women, we need enlightened men. It was my father more than my mother, I have to confess who encouraged me to be a self-sufficient professional to advance my education, to advance my career. My mother, of course supported that, but it wasn't as important to her as it was to my dad. So we need to encourage the enlightened men who empower us as women.

Third, and most important, we need to empower each other. As Nabeela has said, we need to network, we need to mentor, we need to champion, we need to uphold those examples and those heroes. But on the negative side, and I think this is as important, and we've seen this in right wing extremism as much as we've seen it and Islamic jihadism, men who are threatened by successful women, become dangerous, they become marginalized. They start to see the success of women, the advancement of women as a sign of their loss, of their marginalization, of their disenfranchisement. That is part of the radicalization process and the misogyny that is a danger to our region, as it is a danger globally. We have that in common these extremists, these right wing, violent extremist also possess a certain message of misogyny where they see that women are taking opportunity from them. Their sense of superiority may derive from race, but it also derives from gender. And as women succeed, these men become radicalized. So it's very important that education campaigns also direct themselves to the radicalization aspect of the advancement of women. Our success is seen as their failure, they see it that way. And that makes them a danger to us and to their communities.

**Mina Al Oraibi**

Thank you very much, Ambassador Lana, you wanted to respond.

**Ambassador Lana Nusseibeh**

Also, just building on the points that have just been made that I think were really powerful. Ambassador Nabeela spoke essentially about mentorship and the role that women in positions in their fields have in bringing up other women to look for professions and fields that are out of the traditional norm. So I think the role of mentorship, carving space out in your calendar and saying, right, who are the two or three women I will make myself available for the field, and men of course, but I think who are the two or three women I make myself available for in this in this in this very busy calendar to mentor. I think the second thing was around, of course, men have to be equal partners in seeing this as a win-win for them as well. I think that's essential. It's not just important or nice to have, it's essential. And I think we all can speak to men who have empowered us and pushed us forward in many ways as much as the women. In fact, it's often the man who gives you that first opportunity that you are trying to seek, because they're the ones in charge of the decisions. So I think that is incredibly important.

You know, I remember when the UN launched an initiative, “He for She” and Sheikh Abdullah bin Zayed, our foreign minister was the first person to sign up and said, “I’ll love to be “He for She” and was really proudly wearing his badge that General Assembly. And you know, felt that he was our first feminist. And I think that if more men do that, if more men find it, not embarrassing, but something to be proud of to be a feminist to be at the forefront of gender equality, I think that will actually go a long way. And we all as Ambassador Nabeela said another set examples for each other in the region. And then and then move it forward do better than the next the next time.

There was an interesting comment from the previous intervention by Mona about the pipeline. And I think we have so much work to do on the pipeline, we often hear, even from within the UN system, we’d like to appoint more women cadets, more women peacekeepers more, but we just we advertise and there aren’t any. And you know, it’s a little bit of a, it’s a little bit of a short term answer. And I think we need to be working on the midterm and the longer term solutions for increasing the scope of the pipeline. So in the UAE, we have Sheikha Fatima bint Mubarak Peace and Security Center in partnership with UN Women. And essentially, we’re training women, that’s we’re on our third cohort of graduates who are going through the training academy. And essentially, we’re taking women from Asia, from Africa, from the Middle East who’ve applied to this, they’re being paid in order to go through this training. They’re from their military, respective military sectors in their country. And they are, in my view, a future pipeline, they’re networking with each other. They’re networking with the UN, they’re looking for opportunities in the UN system or back in their own countries. And they’re getting top notch training in the UAE, to the point of cultural sensitivities, they’re also getting it in an environment that perhaps is comfortable for them. And we have to create those environments as well. So I think those are the kinds of things that we need to do to create better mechanisms for enabling, empowering, and making that pipeline really full of great applicants.

### **Mina Al Oraibi**

Thank you very much. So I apologize. We’ve only got three and a half minutes to get through two more questions and also give an opportunity to Ambassador Al Hadid, so please try to keep your responses to the next two questions as tight as you can. So the next one is what role can women play in religious space diplomacy and conflict resolution in the Middle East. And so this idea of women’s powers and religious initiatives can they work hand in hand? So with that, I’d like to ask Ambassador Nabeela, but also Ambassador Leena, I’ll come to you because I know Jordan has played a role in that. So Ambassador Nabeela, if you can respond to that, please.

### **Ambassador Nabeela Al-Mulla**

I, honestly, I didn’t get the gist of your question, because I don’t think that the two are compatible as much as we would like to say. I find difficulty in dealing with the religious establishments, they are so entrenched, all over the place, I’m not talking only about our region, whether it’s Sunni or Shia. I’m talking even about the West, where the religious sentiment is very strong there. I don’t want a pessimistic view of what is happening in the world. But I don’t know what we can do. You know, honestly, I can’t prescribe anything except that let us keep an open mind at every opportunity where we can make inroads into the minds and views. In particular, for me, youth are the most important element in this aspect, if we can energize them, and mobilize them, they are the prime movers, we have seen that with climate change, they are the power behind the pressure on decision makers. So I think our focus should be on the younger generation, and try to enlist them for with ideas and to encourage them, to encourage them. In particular, I say that to the benefit of even my students at the university,

you have to persevere, you have to be resilient. And you have to be a little bit humble, because what you know, is not what is there in the world to know. And you will have to admit yourself and attach yourself to others who have preceded you and to work together, not necessarily within the small community, but community of nations. Thank you.

**Mina Al Oraibi**

Thank you very much. Ambassador Al-Hadid, if I can ask you also to respond to that question. And then any thoughts you may have had from our conversation as we come to a close?

**Ambassador Lena Al-Hadid**

Thank you so much, Mina, just very quickly, to concur with everything that's being said. And also to link that question to the previous one as well. How do we engage male, the males in this discussion, in particular, and since we're talking about our region, I think the education and the involvement of male religious leaders is so crucial in all parts of the world, to change the messaging and to make sure that their messaging is more about inclusion, but that can only be done through education. And when it comes to role models in particular, you know, everybody tells me you must be such a great role model for your daughter, I always say you know, I need to be just as much as a role model for my son as for my daughter because it's all about the education, it's all about the awareness, it's all about as Mona also rightly said, lessening or making the threat to men minimal and to understand that we all benefit in this. I think Ambassador Lana, so eloquently discussed this as well. But basically, it's a comprehensive approach to a serious problem. We have to tackle all the issues, it's not one issue and not the other. Everything is interlinked, and everything can be so effective in moving our communities forward. Thanks.

**Mina Al Oraibi**

Thank you very much. Okay, so my last question to all of our panelists and Ambassador Al-Hadid before we close this part of today's session, is what one, only one piece of advice would you give to either girls or women thinking about coming into the security field? So, Mona, I will start with you and then go to the rest of our panelists, but please briefly.

**Mona Ali Khalil**

There are two things. I think the role models is an important one. But we also need to look back at history and Islamic history. We have role models in Islamic history. Khadija, before being the wife of the Prophet, was his boss in the caravan market marketplace. Also, his closest advisor was a woman, one of his wives. So we do have role models within Islam that we can alter the conversation on the religious side. But we ourselves have a duty to empower those who come after us. We were empowered. We need to reach back and lift up the next generation and I'm very optimistic, the talent, the ambition is self evidently and very, very tangibly available to us.

**Mina Al Oraibi**

Thank you so much. Ambassador Lana your one piece of advice.



### **Ambassador Lana Nusseibeh**

Be really good at what you do, be specialized, read around the subject, go to seminars, go to lectures, meet interesting people. And if you don't love what you do, if you don't wake up every day within your chosen field and feel inspired by it, and it's about a job title, then you're in the wrong profession. So be in it for the right reasons, be good at what you do. I think the rest will come. Have patience and humility, and the rest will come.

### **Mina Al Oraibi**

Thank you so much. Ambassador Nabeela.

### **Ambassador Nabeela Al-Mulla**

I would say two in particular. But it's not only for the field of arms control and disarmament. For youngsters, I will say, be happy in what you are doing. Otherwise you will be miserable the rest of your life. It is not an end, it's not an objective to be a negotiator or a peacekeeper. It has to be also in your blood, that it grows on you. So if you're not so sure of that, you attach yourself to a mission, attached yourself to the UN, it can be arranged and try to learn the ropes. But more than that, and as the other said, read, because this is one important aspect that bothers me about younger generation nowadays, they don't read. It's not enough that you hear and learn by experience. Read the history of peacekeeping. How many people realize that peacekeeping was not even envisioned in the chapter of the United Nations? I was challenged this to say, find me, how did it develop all through the years, things like that. So encourage them to research, encourage them to question, and encourage them to know that they are in the right spot. Thank you.

### **Mina Al Oraibi**

Great, thank you very much, and Ambassador Al-Hadid, your one piece of advice.

### **Ambassador Lena Al-Hadid**

Thank you very briefly, on top of everything everyone else has said, persevere. It's not personal, the obstacles are not personal. And stay focused, stay focused on your end goal. I think that is so important and do not listen to the noise.

### **Mina Al Oraibi**

Thank you very much. Thank you to our great panel. I would like to thank our panel if you're sitting in a room we all be clapping for you. So I will clap for you here and I will give the floor to Anita.

### **Anita Bhatia**

Thank you very much. And let me start by just saying really have a very warm and heartfelt thanks to our distinguished panelists. Ambassador Leena al-Hadid, Ambassador Lana Nusseibeh, Ambassador Nabeela Moula,

Mona Khalil, and I'd also like to sincerely congratulate Dr. Robin Geiss on your recent appointment as the director of UNIDIR. I'd like to just end this fascinating conversation which I was privileged enough to catch a few snippets off by just reminding us all of the important role that the women's movement has played at the forefront of disarmament efforts at various levels. Women have shed light on the gendered impacts of the use, and trade of weapons, such as use for sexual and gender based violence and conflict, and of course, exacerbation of existing social and gender inequalities broadly. This is why this is among the reasons why in 2020, the Secretary General said the reduction of global military expenditure is one of the five goals for the next 10 years of women, peace and security. But when you look at the data, it is actually quite disturbing because while the world was grappling with the COVID crisis, and the overall global economy was actually shrinking and shrank by 3.3% last year, there was an increase in military expenditure of 2.6%.

At a time, when we are clearly seeing that security concerns cannot be met by defense expenditure alone because security today has different meanings and security includes health, security, and economic security. So the old way of thinking about security is still translating into increased military expenditures. We have seen that women have been the first responders to communities that are working to build peace and to repair the physical, social, economic and psychological damage of conflict and COVID to rebuild peaceful communities. So not only have we witnessed the very successful stewardship of the response to the pandemic in many countries, which have been led by women leaders, but at a more global at a more community level and at a grassroots level. We have seen the rapid mobilization of women's groups in Iraq, in Libya, in Palestine, Syria, Yemen and other countries, who have echoed the Secretary General's call for a global ceasefire. As you all probably know, UN Women contributes to the Secretary General's report on illicit trade in small arms and light weapons. We also contribute to the United Nations disarmament yearbook, and within the UN Office on Drugs and Crime. We have contributed to the training manual on small arms and light weapons. We have collaborated with UN ODC in global online events for presentations and trainings on the inter linkages between small arms and light weapons and violence against women across the breadth of the humanitarian peace and development nexus. And most importantly, I want to underscore how UN Women by helping civil society organizations who have repeatedly and for decades called for disarmament, arms control, and the shifting of military expenditure to social investment. UN Women is contributing to this very important dialogue. And this was recognized when the International Campaign to Abolish Nuclear Weapons received the Nobel Prize in 2017.

So finally, just to wrap up, I do want to underscore that despite the centrality of weapons to armed conflict, the women, peace and security agenda can probably do more to engage with the field of disarmament and arms control, particularly at the multilateral level. There have been 11 Security Council resolutions on WPS, but very few of them actually have references to arms control and disarmament, and multilateral meetings on women, peace and security actually don't often address the governance of weapons. And so we know that the national implementation of the agenda actually presents a more encouraging picture because National Action Plans have included arms control and disarmament, in particular, regarding small arms and light weapons, and to a lesser degree, some action, and this trend has become quite noticeable since 2015, which suggests that there is actually a new momentum in many countries for integrating arms control into WPS policies and implementation and initiatives in the field of arms control and disarmament to improve women's participation. This actually represents an opportunity for us to strengthen convergence between these policy areas.

We know there have been a number of concrete steps in recent years to increase the participation of women in disarmament diplomacy, including the creation of informal gender working groups in landmine and cluster munition review conferences, the establishment of fellowship to sponsor women diplomats who participate in

cybersecurity negotiations, the provision of sexual harassment helpline, and email address during the 2019 preparatory committee work for the Nuclear Non Proliferation Treaty Review Conference and other such instances. However, because all of these share the broader goal of reducing armed violence, we must work together to strengthen the synergies. And we must work together to ensure that women who have repeatedly and routinely been sidelined and underrepresented in political processes, including disarmament negotiations actually have a seat at the table.

And I just here want to refer to the 2019 UNIDIR study which found that 20 years after 1325 gender inequality continues to persist in disarmament diplomacy, with women, comprising just 32% of participants in disarmament related meetings over the last 40 years. This must change. And we know that in Arab states, for instance, women have often been largely excluded both from peace processes and dialogues on missiles and nuclear proliferation. And it is therefore very important that we work as was being discussed previously, to increase the level of women's participation.

Let me end by saying it is absolutely vital that the international community substantially increase efforts towards the full implementation of the WPS agenda. If we're going to want to effectively thwart global arms proliferation, prevent conflict and build peaceful and inclusive societies, increased participation of women is a *sine qua non* and states should therefore, raise awareness of the relevance of gender inequality to arms control to non proliferation and disarmament measures in the region, but also globally. The region is not exceptional in this respect. All regions of the world need to improve their performance in this regard. And we need to get the multilateral system to recognize that women have a really important role to play in disarmament by promoting expertise in weapons control and increasing, this is really important, increasing the gender balance in decision making. We must also speak out loudly about the fact that during the time, when the world was grappling with the effects of the pandemic, military expenditures were actually rising. That means something else was not being prioritized. Because the pie is discrete, and spending more on one issue means you're spending less on something else. So we have to encourage greater investment in social infrastructure and services that buttress the full range of human security, nationalize the Arms Trade Treaty and related treaties, so that you bridge the agenda and disarmament framework gaps from the local to the global level, and Member States should ensure complementarity of the respective peace and security frameworks within the ATT, including national action plans on UNSCR 1325 and SDG reporting. It is only by doing things like this, and taking these actions that we can expect to effectively tackle arms proliferation and achieve durable peace. Thank you so much. And I once again, want to end by saying a very big thank you to all of our distinguished panelists and participants in today's event.

### **Mina Al Oraibi**

Thank you so much for your thoughts and for really putting a spotlight on some of the issues that were raised, and fleshing them out for us. And of course, the role of UN Women in championing these and many other causes. And now it gives me great pleasure to hand over to the director of UNIDIR, Dr. Robin Geiss over to you and thank you all for both your participation and those who have attended and continued with us throughout this conversation. Thank you.

### **Dr. Robin Geiss**

Thank you very much. And first of all, a warm thank you to all our distinguished panelists for this very inspiring discussion today. Gender norms vary across the world, as do international security, disarmament, concerns and

other security priorities. And that's exactly why it's so important for us to examine these issues in a context and specific manner. UNIDIR regularly carries out regional and sub regional discussions, because they allow for deeper understanding of the problems that people are facing, as well as the opportunities to overcome. So against this background that today's event was organized with the clear objective of shedding light on the prospects of greater participation and agency of women in international security decision making in the Middle East. You were very fortunate to hear from a diverse group of inspiring women whose eminent achievements demonstrate the contribution that Arab women and women from the Middle East more broadly make to the field of international security and disarmament. Their knowledge and their experience in these areas are also a reminder of what we have to lose when we exclude women from policy discussions and decision making. And I don't think we can afford to do that. We also heard about obstacles on the way to equality. But these are by no means unresolvable. By implementing targeted policies, building political support, transforming organizational cultures and mindsets, and valuing diversity, we can certainly create a more equal and a more secure world. I would like to emphasize the last point about diversity, in particular.

When the same people talk about the same issues all the time, they tend to come to the same conclusions and the same solutions over and over again. So in this regard, both regional and gender diversity can be an important means to enhance diversity of thought, which ultimately leads to a better and more sustainable outcome in the field of security. And I think this is true in all other policy domains just as well. I strongly believe that creating a gender equal culture is ultimately about assigning value to diversity and change. And women and men, as we heard, need to be on board for this to happen. Here I would like to highlight the work of the International gender champions network and more specifically, the gender champion disarmament impact group. These are leadership networks comprising individuals committed to advance gender equality in their organization, and in their programmatic work. UNIDIR as an organization is involved in these initiatives, and so am I. Ultimately, we hope that efforts to advance gender equality international security will also encourage new and more diverse perspectives. As we continue to work towards these goals, we're very privileged to have a range of partners joining forces with us. And in this regard, I would like to extend a very warm thank you once again to all our panelists who joined us today, as well as, of course, the UN Women collaboration on this joint event. Finally, I'd like to thank everyone who joined us today, all of you who participated in the discussion, thank you very much. I wish everyone a good day, good afternoon, or good evening, depending on where you are in. With this, I'm handing back over to Chen.

### **Dr. Chen Zak Kane**

Thank you, Robin. And I would like to again, thank everyone but beforehand, I want to highlight that we posted in the Q&A box or the chat box our feedback form. We will appreciate if you will be able to fill it. That helps us to know both how we did as well as how we can do better. So with that, if you can please fill those up.

At the end of the this really enlightened and important event, I want to thank our distinguished speakers, guests, and I want to wish all of you good day. I will encourage you to check what was said and implement some of those ideas. I think that will empower all of us to have a better decision-making negotiations and a better world.

So with that, thank you, everyone. Thank you.