

Investing in the Future: Resilience of Women and Girls in the Middle East and North Africa

Sharjah Declaration for the Rights and Empowerment of Women & Girls

Representatives of States and governments, together with representatives of international organizations and civil society, met in October 2016 in Sharjah, United Arab Emirates, to discuss the resilience of women and girls in the Arab region.

Recognizing that one cannot build sustainable peace on the basis of marginalization, exclusion and inequality,

Noting that women have a catalytic role as agents of change and leaders in reconciliation, peacebuilding and countering violent extremism,

Recognizing that engaging men and boys is a necessary means to challenge the structures, beliefs, practices, and institutions that sustain men's privileges, as well as to address inequalities between women/girls and men/boys,

Recognizing the positive potential of young people, both females and males, in promoting peace and security,

Emphasizing that the adoption of the sustainable development agenda, with its dedicated goal on gender equality and the mainstreaming of gender equality across all 17 goals, demonstrates that development, human rights and peace and security are interdependent,

Reiterating that civil society, including women's organizations, plays an important and vital role in the sustainable and peaceful development of a community and country, and should be engaged in decision-making processes at all levels,

Calling for mainstreaming gender in all plans, policies and programmes which are aimed at empowering, protecting and supporting refugees and internally displaced people (IDPs), and pursuing practical targeted action that addresses the needs and rights of women and girls, and by engaging men and boys as partners for gender equality,

Acknowledging the findings of the Global Study on Women, Peace and Security, which found that the chances of a peace agreement lasting 15 years increases by as much as 35 per cent when women participate in the negotiations,

Recalling the commitments made by Arab Member States in the Cairo Declaration for Arab Women and the Strategic Plan for Women Empowerment, as well as the 2030 Sustainable Development Agenda, which call for gender equality in all areas of public and private life and a commitment to achieving the Sustainable Development Goals,

Calling on Member States to create national mechanisms and develop national action plans to guarantee implementation of the Regional Strategy and Executive Action Plan on "Protection of Arab Women: Peace and Security",

Call upon Member States to intensify cooperation with religious institutions to ensure women's rights within Islam and ensure rights for women in other religions practised in MENA and to protect women and girls from all forms of violence, particularly during conflicts, to promote religious discourse which creates awareness and to ensure that women's rights are protected in the family and society and actively work toward a culture of peace and security,

Noting that extreme poverty and hunger could be eliminated by 2030 if between 9.5 and 13 per cent of global military spending was channeled to improve agriculture and rural infrastructure in poor communities,

Noting that women and girls need to be included and specifically targeted in planning for economic recovery and resilience, with special consideration given to their needs regarding education, livelihoods, skills development, employment and access to resources, particularly for female-headed households and in light of socio-economic restrictions placed on women and girls,

Recognizing the important role of women as agents of economic stabilization and growth, and that economic outcomes are more likely to be inclusive when women are involved,

Reaffirming that "No action is not an option", and that it takes governments, businesses, development partners, men, women and all actors to work in a coordinated and sustained partnership framework to realize inclusive and equitable peace and stability,

Emphasizing that data show a persistent underinvestment in gender equality and women's empowerment in humanitarian assistance, and **calling** on all donors to invest in women's empowerment and leadership in emergencies and development.