



Final statement

The Final statement and recommendations of Baghdad Regional Forum for the Development of Institutional Mechanisms for the Advancement of Women

The Baghdad Regional Forum for the Development of Institutional Mechanisms for the Advancement of Women in the Arab Region, concluded its works in Baghdad 27th August 2019. The Forum was held under the patronage of the President of the Republic, in cooperation with the Secretariat of the Council of Ministers and the Supreme Council for Women Affairs in Kurdistan Region – Iraq, and organised by the Iraqi Women Network and Iraqi Al-Amal Association, with support from the UN Assistance Mission for Iraq (UNAMI), UN Women in Iraq, the Dutch Embassy and the International Women's Association for Peace and Freedom. The Forum was in preparations for the anniversary of the UN 1325 resolution + 20 and Beijing + 25.

This is the first initiative after 2003 that Baghdad hosts a regional women's conference, in which representatives of governments and Civil Society from Iraq, Egypt, Palestine, Jordan, Lebanon, Tunisia, Yemen and Bahrain participated, as well as number of regional and international organizations.

The three-day Forum provided a platform for discussion and exchange of experiences among active players on the role of the various institutional mechanisms operating in the Arab region, focusing on their functions and powers, organizational structure, management of financial and human resources, and their achievements in improving the situations of women in all fields, as well as its joint work with civil society organizations in the formulation and implementation of policies and national plans for women. In-depth discussions pursued to mobilize joint national efforts to establish an independent national body for women's empowerment in Iraq.

Discussions focused on the importance and effectiveness of institutional mechanisms to reduce the challenges that hinder the movements for of women's rights in the Arab region, especially during and after conflicts, and to confront the Israeli occupation, terrorism, extremism, religious radicalism, patriarchal mentality, tribal norms and corruption, and policies of exclusion and marginalization of qualified and active women in decision-making positions.

The participants emphasized the need for the independence of institutional mechanisms for women, ensuring competent human resources and sufficient budget for them, and strengthening their partnership with the civil society, women's research establishments, and media centers, to ensure that gender integration is influenced in all government policies, strategies and plans, and that government commitments are translated into concrete actions to achieve gender equality, with a view to developing them and enhancing their participation in changing stereotypes of women in general and towards active participation of women in security, peace, community cohesion and in the development process



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The participants also expressed the importance of women's solidarity across the Arab region in order to enhance more effectiveness of institutional mechanisms to achieve the Beijing Declaration and the Platform for Action, the provisions of CEDAW, Security Council Resolution 1325 and the Sustainable Development Goals. Participants made a special appeal to intensify national, regional and international efforts to free Aizidi women and children abducted by ISIS, ensure their safety and their return home, and called for the implementation of Security Council resolution 2379 of 2017 regarding accountability for ISIS crimes in Iraq.

The participants called for the need to form a unified national mechanism for women under the title; the National Council for the Empowerment of Women, which should work according to an inclusive and comprehensive strategy for the advancement of the conditions of women in Iraq.

In light of the inputs and discussions held in plenary and working groups, a number of recommendations were agreed, concerning the role of institutional mechanisms for the advancement of women:

First Component: on the implementation of the agenda of Women, Security and Peace

- Developing strategies and plans on the agenda of Women, Security and Peace, identify indicators to measure the impact, and make available the necessary resources for implementation, follow-up and evaluation.
- Develop partnerships with various stakeholders and build the capacity of official and non-official frameworks to ensure the implementation of national plans for Resolution 1325 Women, Security and Peace.
- Prioritize issues of sexual violence during conflict, and urge relevant authorities to adopt measures and procedures to protect women and girls survivors, institutionalize psychosocial, health and social services, implement transitional justice programs in reparation and restitution, and reintegrate victims of conflict, extremism and terrorism such as refugee and internally displaced women, victims of rape and their children and the families of the missing and forcibly disappeared individuals.
- Involve women in conflict resolution and negotiation and in the formulation of national policies, plans and strategies to combat extremism and terrorism, promote stability, build security, peace and national reconciliation.

Second Component: on the implementation of the Sustainable Development Goals

- Taking into account the five aspects of development in working on issues of equality and empowerment of women (political, economic, cultural, social and environmental aspects), and the development of national strategies and plans for women in line with the 2030 development plan
- Actively participate in drafting and follow-up of national development plans in accordance with gender approaches, identify indicators and allocate gender-sensitive budgets, through active presence within national committees for the implementation of the 2030 Agenda and in the preparation of voluntary national reviews.
- Develop partnerships with various non-official development institutions from civil society organizations, the private sector and the media.
- Increasing public awareness of the relationship of sustainable development to equality, empowerment, security and peace building.

Third Component: on reducing violence against women

- Mobilizing efforts to enact against domestic violence. Work to amend legislation concerning violence and discrimination against women, such as personal status and criminal laws.
- Reinforcing national policies and plans to eliminate violence against women through the provision of protection, prevention, rehabilitation, fair and effective remedies, reparations and ending impunity.
- To provide an integrated system of services for victims of violence (health, psychological, legal and social) through the development of referral systems, building a database and monitoring mechanisms, and providing safe shelters for victims of gender-based violence.
- Allocate adequate financial and human resources for policies to change social and cultural patterns of behaviour and customs and practices devoted to violence against women.
- Strengthen the capacity of the judiciary and security services to stamp violence against women.
- Supporting the programs and initiatives of the NGOs working on issues of violence against women.
- Strengthening the relationship with the media and social media to combat violence against women.

Fourth Component: on the political empowerment of women

- Reviewing election regulations and political party laws to ensure wider participation of women in public life and encourage political parties to take gender into consideration in their programs and their leadership.
- Raise public awareness of the importance of women's political participation and develop the concepts of democracy and human rights to help eliminate the stereotypical that perpetuate discrimination, violence and gender inequality in the public and private spheres.
- Provide policies, plans and programs to empower women leaders, especially young women, involved in politics, and to secure their protection from defamation and character assassination.

Fifth Component: Visions on the establishment of the institutional mechanism for the advancement of women in Iraq

- Working towards the establishment of the National Council for the Empowerment of Women, as a unified and inclusive national mechanism, comprising the three national authorities; civil society organizations, the media and the competent research and studies institutions, a Council which should be independent, with the allocating the necessary financial resources and efficient human resources.
- In order to reduce the fragmentation of national efforts and resources and to improve the status of women, a comprehensive strategy for the advancement of women in various spheres should be developed to achieve gender equality, in line with Iraq's international obligations and in particular with the Joint Statement Plan with the Office of the UN Secretary-General's Representative on Sexual Violence Issues as a result of armed conflicts, and the Security Council resolution 2379/2018.
- Involve women in confronting terrorism and extremism and integrating them in the efforts aiming at conflict management, and stability promotion, national reconciliation and peaceful coexistence.
- Combating discrimination and inequality, particularly tribal practices and norms which are contrary to human rights, and directed against women and girls. These acts have become rampant in conflict and displacement situations, in particular out-of-court weddings, and child marriages and so-called honour killings.