

Women, Peace and Security in the Mediterranean

by Anja Palm



ABSTRACT

The New-Med Research Network organized an international conference in Palermo on 23 October 2017 on the side-lines of the yearly OSCE Mediterranean Conference to discuss the role of women, peace and security in the Middle East and North Africa. Structured around two expert panels, invited speakers debated modalities to advance the role of women in the Mediterranean, with a particular emphasis on assessing the implementation of United Nations Security Council Resolution 1325, which stresses the impact of armed conflict on women and recognizes their important role as contributors to sustainable peace and security.

Womens | Security | Mediterranean | Algeria | Morocco | Tunisia

keywords

Women, Peace and Security in the Mediterranean

by Anja Palm*

Introduction

The Istituto Affari Internazionali (IAI) organized an international conference in Palermo on 23 October 2017. Invited experts, drawn from governmental institutions, think tanks and academia, gathered for the one-day event to discuss the gender perspective on the future of the Middle East and North Africa (MENA) region. Structured around an introductory session and two expert panels, participants discussed the opportunities and challenges for advancing the role of women in the Mediterranean and assessed the implementation of the “Women, Peace and Security” (WPS) agenda in the region.

The event, organized in cooperation with the Organization for Security and Cooperation in Europe (OSCE) with the support of the Italian Chairmanship of the Mediterranean Contact Group, was developed within the framework of the New-Med Research Network, an international network of scholars and academics with a special interest in the broader Mediterranean region. Launched in 2014, the New-Med Research Network has organized seventeen international events and published thirty-four research papers and four edited volumes dealing with the ongoing challenges and developments affecting the Mediterranean basin. Coordinated by IAI, the New-Med Research Network is developed in cooperation with the Italian Ministry of Foreign Affairs and International Cooperation (*Ministero degli Affari esteri e della Cooperazione internazionale* – MAECI), the German Marshall Fund of the United States (GMF), the OSCE Secretariat in Vienna and the International Affairs Programme of the Compagnia di San Paolo Foundation.¹

¹ More information on the New-Med Research Network, including past events and access to publications are available from the IAI website: <http://www.iai.it/en/node/2004>.

* Anja Palm is Junior Researcher in the Mediterranean and Middle East programme at the Istituto Affari Internazionali (IAI).

· Report of the international conference “Women, Peace and Security: A Gender Perspective on the Future of the MENA Region” held in Palermo on 23 October 2017 and organized by the Istituto Affari Internazionali (IAI) in cooperation with the OSCE Secretariat in Vienna, the Italian Ministry of Foreign Affairs and International Cooperation, the German Marshall Fund of the United States, WIIS Italy and the International Affairs Programme of the Compagnia di San Paolo Foundation in Turin within the framework of the New-Med Research Network.

Opening remarks were delivered by **Paul Bekkers**, Director of the Office of the OSCE Secretary General, who welcomed participants and thanked the organizers for making the event possible. Underscoring the important role played by the New-Med Research Network since 2014, Bekkers emphasized how this was the first time the WPS agenda was discussed at the margins of the annual OSCE Mediterranean Conference, a fact that demonstrates the growing interest around this important topic.



Paul Bekkers

Bekkers outlined how emancipation and gender equality are meaningful to ensure stability and sustainable growth, as they generate well-being and functional state-society relations. He mentioned a number of aspects related to the positive effects of the participation of women in peace and security issues, ranging from the way gender balance in negotiations can help parties reach more sustainable peace agreements, to the role of women in the prevention of radicalization and in fostering greater economic development. Bekkers pointed out that there are still many steps to be taken: as of today women constitute less than 4 percent of the signatories of peace agreements, and less than 10 percent of lead negotiators. Notwithstanding this low participation rate, women are strongly affected by the outcomes of these processes. To provide another example, Bekkers mentioned that women make up only 22 percent of parliamentarians in the OSCE region, 19 percent in the MENA region and 26.5 percent in the EU. Gender equality therefore remains a distant goal and the international community should step up its efforts, concluded the speaker.

Lorenzo Kamel, Scientific Director of the New-Med Research Network and Senior Researcher at IAI, welcomed all participants and stressed how the New-Med Network has always recognized the importance of including gender perspectives about processes that are affecting large part of the Mediterranean basin. All New-Med conferences have been characterized by a significant presence of women and many of the studies produced by the Network have been written by female scholars.

Kamel stressed the relevance of issues tackled in the conference by referring to a number of considerations, most importantly the demographic dimension of the ongoing developments in the MENA region. According to the United Nations Department of Economic and Social Affairs (UNDESA), the population in the region has increased fivefold since the 1950s, reaching 550 million people as of today and it is expected to exceed one billion by the end of the century. That women play a key role in this evolution is being increasingly recognized and some timid yet

meaningful developments – such as increasing access of women to the job market – can be observed in almost all countries of the region, with the exception of Egypt and Syria. He concluded by mentioning the importance of focusing on the largely neglected role of women in international security, and pointing out that a study commissioned by New-Med on these issues will be available before the year's end.



Charlotte Brandsma

Session I: Security in the Mediterranean: Opportunities and Challenges for Enhancing the Role of Women

The first panel, chaired by **Charlotte Brandsma**, Programme Officer on Mediterranean Policy at the GMF, focused on opportunities to promote women's needs and aspirations that can emerge from the complex political, cultural and demographic processes that are unfolding in the Mediterranean region. A particular reference was made to the role that women can play in enhancing the security of their own countries and of the region, in key fields ranging from gender and migration to peace building and conflict mediation, from conflict prevention to political participation.

Brandsma emphasized how the inclusion of women in debates over security improves the quality of the discourse as it contributes to broadening its definition. Security in the MENA region has followed two trends: on the one hand there has been an increasingly fragile situation determined by numerous trans-border challenges such as trafficking, migration, radicalization and internal and regional insecurity. This fragility has been perceived on both sides of the Mediterranean and beyond. On the other hand, a gender paradox has emerged: there is a stark contrast between the active role that women have played in the protests and the exclusion of women from participation in the public sphere.

The first speaker in the panel, **Hafida Benchehida**, Deputy Chairperson for Legal and Administrative Affairs and the Human Rights Committee in the Algerian Senate, reported on the Algerian government's viewpoint regarding the inclusion of women in the public sphere, and referred to some specific steps that have been taken to improve their role over the last years. Following the "black decade" of civil war in the 1990s, a holistic approach has aimed to ensure the inclusion of women in all fields of public life (such as in parliaments, ministries and the police). Moreover, numerous laws have been enacted to enhance the presence of women. As far as the security sector is concerned, women have been increasingly involved in the peace process and in the restoration of stability, both in civil society and in the administration. A practical example is the national reconciliation law,

approved via a referendum following an open consultation process with all Algerian stakeholders.

Nevertheless, Benchehida noted that there remain numerous obstacles, derived in part from threats to women security already existent in peace time but which become even more acute in times of insecurity, war or conflict. She pointed out that this is particularly true concerning terrorism and that the Algerian government has encouraged the institutionalization of self-organized women associations to combat radical extremism and/or help in the reintegration of radicalized individuals in society.



Hafida Benchehida

The main obstacle remains Algeria's traditional patriarchal society where religion plays a fundamental role and where women are not usually visible in the public sphere. New laws, such as the introduction of a female quota, are contributing to changing the perception and visibility of women. However, a greater effort must be made in education in order to highlight the importance of the presence of women in public institutions. Efforts are needed in various sectors, ranging from the special economic programmes for the inclusion of women and youth (such as loans or microcredit), to vocational and professional training, to guarantee access to justice.

The second speaker, **Assia Bensalah Alaoui**, Ambassador at Large of King Mohamed VI of the Kingdom of Morocco, expressed her gratitude to IAI and the New-Med Research Network for the organization of the conference: 17 years have passed since the adoption of the United Nations Security Council Resolution (UNSCR) 1325, but women's security is still very fragile today. All shores of the Mediterranean are confronted with common challenges: increasing general insecurity, migration, terrorism, cultural divide and polarization. Alaoui remarked that polarized societies are an obstacle to dialogue and inclusion, and that women are often the first victims of insecurity. Nevertheless, new possibilities have emerged for women to become actors in the security field.

In Morocco, women's rights are a top priority and the gender integration approach has been making substantial progress in the security and judicial spheres, with women gaining ground in very important sectors. Some progresses have also been made in the political sphere. Despite a certain backsliding following the new coalition government headed by the Justice and Development Party, today Morocco is still at the frontline of moderate Islam. Equality is a constitutional right and there is currently a very hot debate regarding the law on preventing violence against women, because of the strong polarization of society. Also, women have been key to the promotion of a gender integration approach, through both bottom-

up and top-down approaches.

As far as migration is concerned, Morocco has witnessed great inflows due to its generous policy concerning Sub-Saharan migrants. This will be even more true with the prospective membership of Morocco in the Economic Community of West African States (ECOWAS). Women have played a key role in the migration sphere, with numerous NGOs promoting integration being headed by women. Furthermore, women have taken up a fundamental role in the context of mediation, particularly in translating peace agreements into practice at the day-to-day level in several realities. A practical example is the joint initiative that Morocco is promoting with Spain aimed at training local mediators in the Mediterranean. Lastly, one of the pillars of Morocco's strategy is the prevention of radicalization and terrorism, and women play a key role in this approach, as they can depict early signs of radicalization in society and have the right sensitivities to address them early on.



Assia Bensalah Alaoui

The third speaker, **Khalid Chaouki**, Member of the House of Deputies in Italy, underscored the importance of New-Med and IAI's role, as demonstrated by the organization of this conference which provides an excellent platform for a high-level exchange of views. Chaouki pointed to the common challenges affecting the entire Mediterranean basin, raising some examples from his experiences in Italy. He underlined the need to foster dialogue and share experiences and also stressed the need to close communication gaps, which remain a major obstacle to dialogue. More effective dissemination of quality information can greatly contribute to improving the level of debate about gender issues within the Mediterranean context.

There are two main generators of violence and misunderstanding according to Chaouki: firstly, the intergenerational conflicts in families, such as in the case of the second generations from Maghreb countries born in Italy. In that sense, the role of mediators is fundamental to foster prevention and dialogue. Important actors in this regard are to be found in Islamic institutions, such as religious leaders. Secondly, the emergence of new forms of discrimination both in public opinion and journalism, due to a lack of mutual understanding and dialogue between different cultures. To promote fruitful dialogue, it is of fundamental importance that a common ground is found at the political, judicial and social level. He concluded pointing out that social media can play an important role in contrasting discrimination and fostering dialogue.

The last speaker of the panel, **Lena Avounius**, Gender Adviser at the OSCE, outlined the Organization's efforts to promote the role of women. The OSCE has been promoting a comprehensive approach to security, encompassing the politico-military, economic, environmental, and human dimensions, and working on cross-cutting issues. Furthermore, the OSCE developed a gender action plan in 2014, which has been joined by all 57 member states of the Organization. The main role of the OSCE is to develop best practices and provide a platform for an exchange of experiences and lessons on the most effective tools and approaches to address problems such as violence against women, their economic inclusion and their role in the security sector.



Khalid Chaouki

Avounius also underlined the importance of the development of regional and national policies, highlighting how the OSCE has organized a series of workshops to help several states develop National Action Plans (NAPs) for the implementation of UNSCR 1325 and related resolutions. Another focus of the OSCE's work is the prevention of radicalization: the section of the OSCE Office for Democratic Institutions and Human Rights (ODIHR) on Gender Equality and Women's Rights has promoted several projects, such as one focused on the training of community resilience in Kyrgyzstan, which aims to engage parents in preventing extremism.

In the question and answer (Q&A) session, **Fatima Baloudi**, General Consul of Morocco in Palermo, remarked that the role of women should be enhanced by encouraging them to be more active in civil society, bringing a "female touch" to Islamic federations and by encouraging exchanges with the home countries for the second generations. Paul Bekkers asked speakers to outline how the OSCE could improve its role in helping countries in the MENA region achieve their goals. **Ingibjörg Sólrún Gísladóttir**, Director of ODIHR, stated that the OSCE's existing framework does encourage the role of women, but that many countries lack the needed capabilities – which add to a lack of commitments and scarcity of resources. Indeed, she pointed out that only 6 percent of UN bilateral aid addresses gender issues and only 2 percent tackles the role of women in peace and security.

Fatiha Hassouni from the Union for the Mediterranean (UfM), raised the issue of the effectiveness of policies, noting that in some cases the implementation of action plans is very weak, while in several countries despite the absence of formal action plans many gender related policies have been pursued. **Irene Fellin**, President of Women in International Security (WIIS) Italy, added that a correct framing of existing policies is crucially important. She further asked the speakers if in countries which did not adopt UNSCR 1325 NAPs political debates are taking place regarding proposed tools to promote gender, peace and security issues.

In response to the comments and questions, **Lena Avounius** stressed that it is important not to focus exclusively on challenges, but also on the creation of positive messages in order to respond to negative conceptions of gender issues. She highlighted that media can play a very important role in this regard.



Lena Avounius

Khalid Chaouki proposed that the OSCE support the creation of counter-narratives through a trans-national project. The goal should be to promote the exchange of different views and the creation of a common ground that can facilitate dialogue. He further stressed the need of greater mobility between the two sides of the Mediterranean, since there remain several obstacles that make travel difficult in practice.

Assia Bensalah Alaoui raised the issue of the second generations living in the EU, noting that these communities have not only to familiarize with their host countries, but also learn about their cultural roots. She added that unfortunately this is often done in a biased manner, representing an issue in terms of radicalization. As it is difficult for the youth to acquire adequate knowledge about the other side of the Mediterranean, the EU has to make a greater effort to enhance cultural convergence, not mere assimilation. Concerning what the OSCE could do in helping countries strengthening the role of women, she mentioned as a line of action the support for indigenous programmes, led by women and by locals, in order to enhance the effectiveness of projects and prevent donors from being perceived as a foreign body. Indeed, 60 to 70 percent of EU donor money goes to European experts, instead of being allocated to local realities. Another point she raised is the need to create new economic opportunities for youth in order to reduce the gap between the needs of the labour market and the training provided to them. She concluded by stating that Morocco has not adopted a UNSCR 1325 NAP due to the discrepancy of the criteria mapped at the international level and the priorities, which have been mostly reactive, identified at the national level.

Hafida Benchehida explained that Algeria has not adopted a NAP following UNSCR 1325, because the country had already put in place numerous projects, particularly in light of the country's terrorist threat.

Session II: Women, Peace and Security in the Mediterranean: Assessing the Implementation of UNSCR 1325 and Related Resolutions

The second session, chaired by **Ettore Greco**, IAI's Executive Vice-President, discussed the objectives and first results of a research conducted on the

implementation of UNSCR 1325 and seven related resolutions by the OSCE Mediterranean Partners for Cooperation, with the goal of assessing the potential for nations to develop and adopt 1325 NAPs in their respective contexts. Taking into account other possible tools that nations can put in place to implement the WPS agenda, the panel debated whether 1325 NAPs are still the best instruments available and how international and regional organizations can support this process.



Ettore Greco

Greco introduced the topic of the UNSCR 1325 implementation, pointing out that it has been very slow and problematic since its adoption in 2000. As many countries failed to implement the principles embedded in UNSCR 1325, in October 2004 the Security Council urged Member States to develop and adopt NAPs that could support the implementation of this agenda. He explained that IAI, with the support of OSCE and the MAECI, has been conducting a specific research on the implementation of UNSCR 1325 and related resolutions, and on the steps that have been taken regarding the WPS agenda. Further, IAI has worked with WIIS Italy in collaboration with the MAECI for the establishment of a network of Mediterranean Women Mediators, which was officially launched on 26 October 2017 in Rome.

The first speaker on the panel, **Irene Fellin**, President of WIIS Italy, described UNSCR 1325 as a landmark resolution: its adoption represented a significant development in the UN's history concerning women's rights, putting the role and responsibilities of women at the centre of the international security agenda for the first time. Since 2000, seven other resolutions have reinforced the main messages embedded in UNSCR 1325. Firstly, the resolution points out that conflict affects women and men in a different way. In this regard, it is important to take into consideration the changing nature of war. Today most conflicts are intra-state rather than inter-state, and 90 percent of casualties take place among civilians, mostly women and children. The focus should therefore shift from the security of states to the security of the population, including human security. Secondly, the resolution recognizes women as actors who can provide important resources and powerful voices of peace for the prevention and resolution of conflicts. Their involvement represents a benefit not only for women themselves, but for the society as a whole. She stressed how 17 years after the adoption of UNSCR 1325 there is still some misunderstanding regarding its main aim, which is not to provide security for women, but to engage women in providing security for *all*.

Fellin then focused on the role of NAPs, which she described as being powerful tools and a great opportunity for discussion. She acknowledged that there may be more urgent issues, but noted that NAPs can play a fundamental role in fuelling

debate also for the long term. Indeed, they represent an important window for mobilizing civil society and foster their interaction with institutions. Fellin explained that as of September 2017, 69 States have launched 1,325 NAPs and that these represent an umbrella for different actions, both existing and new ones. One of the big misunderstandings is that NAPs are only for countries in conflict, while in reality they are conceived as being a relevant tool for all countries, providing the opportunity to address and improve both domestic and international policies. Fellin concluded by reminding that the anniversary of the adoption of UNSCR 1325 was celebrated on 31 October.



Irene Fellin

The second speaker, **Neziha Labidi**, Tunisian Minister of Women, Family and Childhood, outlined the developments related to women's conditions in her country. She pointed out that Tunisia abolished polygamy in 1956, and that today women represent up to 45 percent of public servants thanks to their competences and skills. Until 2011-2012, Tunisian women tended not to talk about equality, but about "partnership", a concept that saw them standing by the side of men. Since then a new dynamic has developed, which has led to the re-emerging activism of Tunisian women also thanks to men who have supported them. This culminated in the adoption of Article 46 in the 2014 Constitution, which recognizes equal rights for women both in horizontal and vertical terms.

Labidi then turned to the most recent developments, pointing out that an organic law for the eradication of violence against women was adopted by an unanimous vote on 26 June 2017, and that the President of the Republic abolished the prohibition of marriage between Muslim women and non-Muslim men on 13 August of the same year. In parallel to these developments many strategies and mechanisms have been deployed, such as the *Plan d'action multisectoriel pour l'enfance* to counter radicalization, the *Plan d'action de lutte contre le terrorisme* and the *Ligne de credit sans interest pour les femmes*, aimed at sustaining the economic independence of women. Furthermore, Tunisian governmental representatives have been trained in gender issues and encouraged to include a gender perspective in the relevant policies. All these developments have taken place in view of the implementation of UNSCR 1325. Indeed, the Tunisian NAP should be finalized and ready for adoption by 8 March 2018. She concluded by noting the importance of involving men in the developments of NAPs, and the role that NAPs can play in facing current security challenges, in particular terrorism and radicalization.

The third speaker of the panel, **Abdessamad Dialmy**, a sociologist and expert in gender, sexuality and Islamism in Morocco, explained that the Global Study

on UNSCR 1325² defines violent extremism as a challenge to be tackled. Part of violent extremism takes the form, according to Dialmy, of gender and sexual based violence, which can be perpetrated in three different ways: through harassment, enslavement and in the case of jihadist brides. He pointed out that Morocco has developed several good practices in countering these practices, standing up for peaceful Islam and supporting research demonstrating how the Koran does not condone gender-based violence.



Conference participants

According to Dialmy, extremist violence is fuelled by the sexual frustration of many Muslim men. To counter this trend, there is a need for governmental policies that on the one hand decriminalize free sexuality and on the other provide services and support for singles (such as housing). He concluded by stating that sexual violence should not be considered as collateral damage in times of conflict, but a major phenomenon of our time, one that represents a war crime and a crime against humanity.

The last speaker on the panel, **Ann-Sofie Stude**, Finnish National Focal Point for Women, Peace and Security, noted that the implementation of UNSCR 1325 is a top priority for Finland and is included in the government's agenda for the current year. She remarked that the WPS agenda is very extensive, as it can range from child education to military strategy. The negative aspect of this breadth is the risk of losing focus on all topics, but the positive aspect is that it represents a multifocal agenda, covering very different activities and sectors.

Stude pointed out that the great number of actors that need to implement UNSCR 1325 can be seen as problematic. However, it is crucial to ensure the broadest participation possible. Each NAP should reflect the particular situation in a certain country, and not merely replicate the plan of another country or an abstract model. She further suggested the development of regional action plans, additionally to the national ones, in order to foster cooperation between different countries. She concluded by noting that the NAP itself is only text on paper, meaning that what really counts is its implementation. Whilst surely economic resources are needed to implement the WPS agenda, there are also actions that can be undertaken without financial support, such as changing the ways of thinking in order to have better security and more sustainable peace.

² UN Women, *Preventing Conflict, Transforming Justice, Securing the Peace. A Global Study on the Implementation of United Nations Security Council resolution 1325*, October 2015, <http://wps.unwomen.org/resources>.

In the Q&A session, **Eleonora Insalaco**, Programme Manager at the Anna Lindh Foundation, congratulated Tunisia for its efforts and stated that this example demonstrates how much progress can be done in five years, and is evidence of the strong role that the government has taken in promoting gender equality. She encouraged Tunisia to take a leading role in sharing its expertise at the upcoming ministerial conference in November as well as with EU countries.



Ingibjörg Sólrún Gísladóttir

Assia Bensalah Alaoui pointed out that NAPs are not being adopted in several countries because there is no sense in piling up plans and measures, without the capacity and the funds to implement them. She then referred to Abdessamad Dialmy's presentation stating that when discussing the problem of sexual harassment it is important to take into account the sexual humiliation that is often a key cause. The prohibition of relations outside of marriages represents a core issue, which is nevertheless difficult to discuss at present times due to the rise of extremism that fosters strong societal polarization. She concluded by noting that many different plans have been adopted, leading to different outcomes, as well as there being apparent difficulties for Tunisia in adopting the NAP. She wondered if the Tunisian NAP would be a reorganization and a relabeling of what is already in place, or if it would embody a new plan that has its own logic with own priorities directly linked to UNSCR 1325 and related resolutions.

Sarah Abdelgelil from the Cairo International Center for Conflict Resolution, stated that there is a too strong focus on the NAPs, which, however, are not the only tool to implement the WPS resolutions. Little attention has been given to other options such as mainstreaming gender into policies and legislation. She also questioned to what extent NAPs are useful in conflict-ravaged states, as their implementation is very difficult in these situation.

Carla Monteleone, from the University of Palermo, reminded the audience that the current situation is critical, as several countries are distancing themselves from UNSCR 1325 and is today losing support even from some countries that were in favour of adopting it. **Nathalie Pielhes**, from the French Prime Minister's Office, asked the Tunisian Minister what kind of gender training was delivered to the government. **Everett Price**, from the US Helsinki Commission, wondered if there is any research regarding male sexual depravation contributing to extremism, particularly referring to Muslims based in Western countries who radicalize notwithstanding the more libertine sexual morals of the society.

Responding to these questions, **Neziha Labidi** noted that Tunisia is trying to cover all aspects and is reassembling all existing plans to develop a unique strategy that responds to the reality of Tunisian society. She further remarked that the situation in Tunisia is very particular, since the current government is at war against terrorism and corruption. These circumstances therefore create an urgency that has led to an accelerated process: this is



Conference participants

why the NAP is expected to be ready by 8 March 2018. Labidi further detailed that the training is aimed at explaining the content and the reason behind the adoption of UNSCR 1325, as well as the need to sensitise men on gender and security issues.

Abdessamad Dialmy stated that concerning sexual freedom among Muslim communities the situation is the similar on the two sides of the Mediterranean, as Muslim men feel guilty also in the EU, there being a gap between sexual norms that are Islamic and practices that are European. He further stressed the impact of sexual deprivation and noted that the main challenge lies in the prohibition of sexuality before marriage.

Ann-Sofie Stude replied that there is a constant up and down trend regarding support for Resolution 1325, and that in the recent months support has again been very high. **Irene Fellin** argued that the objective of the panel was exactly that of putting different ideas about the NAPs on the table. She pointed out that whilst she is a strong supporter of the NAPs, she also believes that there are other powerful tools. Nevertheless, she noted that these other mechanisms can also be organized through the NAPs. Fellin concluded by stating that there is a need of additional resources to ensure the implementation of UNSCR 1325, but that a change in mind-set represents the most important factor.

Concluding remarks

Concluding remarks were delivered by **Alessandro Azzoni**, Permanent Representative of Italy to the OSCE, who stated that gender will be a top priority under the 2018 OSCE Italian Chairmanship. While noting that real gender equality has so far not been achieved anywhere in the world, he stressed the necessity of increasing efforts to achieve this goal. According to Azzoni, the role of women in society is possibly the most effective parameter to assess the well-being of a society, as societies that empower women tend to be more advanced. Women have to be included in conflict prevention and in peace processes as their perspectives can provide a crucial added value. In Azzoni's view, 1325 NAPs are the primary tools. However, they should not be regarded simply as a box to tick, but as lively

implementation instruments. He concluded by noting that national tools are not sufficient and that there is a need for multilateral commitments and activities, which need both top-down and bottom-up approaches. Lastly, he noted, gender should not be perceived as a women's issue only, as men have important roles to play.



Paul Bekkers (left) and Lorenzo Kamel (right)

Fatiha Hassouni, Programme Manager for Social & Civil Affairs at the UfM Secretariat, remarked that gender is not only a MENA issue, but a regional Mediterranean challenge, which concerns both the north and south. For this reason, the UfM has engaged in promoting a regional dialogue on women's empowerment to enhance mutual learning and strengthen intercultural dialogue. She further outlined the objective of the UfM to foster regional cooperation and partnerships, working for the development and stability of the region. This is done through the holding of ministerial conferences on strengthening the role of women in society, the provision of a platform for dialogue among different levels in society and the development of concrete projects in the region. Hassouni concluded by affirming the need to tie policies to local realities and to build on national priorities.

Eleonora Insalaco noted that the importance of UNSCR 1325 derives from its linking gender equality with insecurity for the first time. This marked an important step forward, as gender had often been conceived as secondary to other policies. Insalaco referred to an Anna Lindh Foundation's study on insecurity in the region and the role of women. The study's results show how a vast majority of interviewees considers intercultural dialogue central for ensuring peace and security, recommending that investment to contrast radicalization on both sides of the Mediterranean focuses on education, the creation of multicultural classrooms and empowering young people to participate in public life. Further, 80 percent of interviewees stated that projects aimed at cooperation between the two sides of the Mediterranean can be effective for women's empowerment in the region. As far as the Anna Lindh foundation is concerned, Insalaco explained that the choice has been not to create a specific programme, but to engage in gender streamlining throughout all programmes of the Foundation. She concluded by noting that one should not think about women's empowerment only according to current standards, which derive from men-driven standards, but to create tools to give women the opportunity to develop their own conceptions and standards.

Paul Bekkers expressed his great satisfaction with the conference, which he found very enriching. Regarding the takeaways for the OSCE, he mentioned the need for a multiplication of activities focused on dissemination of counter-narratives, education and training, as well as greater attention to youth and the issue of migration and trafficking. He concluded by noting that the process of mutual

learning is crucial and the OSCE, as an intergovernmental organization, strives to act as a multiplier of the efforts of all stakeholders.

The conference was closed by **Lorenzo Kamel**, who thanked all participants – particularly the many students attending the conference – for the excellent discussion and presented the upcoming initiatives and publications produced by the New-Med Research Network in the coming months.

Updated 28 November 2017

Conference Programme

Palermo, 23 October 2017

Opening Session

Welcome Remarks

Paul Bekkers, Director, Office of the OSCE Secretary General, Vienna

Lorenzo Kamel, Scientific Head of New-Med Network, Istituto Affari Internazionali (IAI), Rome

Session I

Security in the Mediterranean: Opportunities and Challenges for Enhancing the Role of Women

Social, political and cultural equilibria in the Mediterranean basin underwent a major reshaping in recent years. The 2011 uprisings, in particular, have had a considerable impact in shaking the social order and putting into question traditional gender roles. In some cases, new political structures appeared, and new constitutions and laws were adopted bringing women's rights at the core of political agendas. Indeed, the role of women within societies is a meaningful parameter to assess social and political change. The first session will focus on opportunities to promote women's needs and aspirations that can emerge from the complex political, cultural, and demographic processes that are unfolding in the Mediterranean region. The discussion will trace ongoing dynamics with a particular reference to the role that women can play in enhancing the security of their own countries and of the region in key fields: from gender and migration to peace building and conflict mediation, from conflict prevention to political participation.

Chair **Charlotte Brandsma**, Programme Officer, Mediterranean Policy, German Marshall Fund of the United States, Brussels

Panelists **Leena Avonius**, Gender Adviser, OSCE, Vienna

Khalid Chaouki, Member of Parliament, House of Deputies, Rome

Hafida Benchehida, Senator of the Algerian Parliament, Algiers

Assia Bensalah Alaoui, Ambassador at Large, Kingdom of Morocco

Session II

Women, Peace and Security in the Mediterranean: Assessing the Implementation of UNSCR 1325 and Related Resolutions

The adoption of United Nations Security Council Resolution 1325 (UNSCR 1325) on Women, Peace and Security (WPS) in 2000 was a ground-breaking achievement for the recognition of women's vital contribution to peace and security. As the adoption of UNSCR 1325 was not immediately followed by the implementation of the WPS agenda by the Member States, in 2005 the Security Council called on individual states to create National Action Plans (NAPs) detailing their strategies to fulfil their commitments under UNSCR 1325. The session will discuss the results of a research conducted on the imple-

mentation of UNSCR 1325 and the WPS agenda within the OSCE Mediterranean Partners for Cooperation with the goal of assessing advantages and challenges for Nations to develop 1325 NAPs. Taking into account other possible tools that Nations can put in place to implement the WPS agenda, the panel will discuss if the 1325 NAPs are still the best tools available and how twinning projects and international and regional organizations can support this process.

Chair **Ettore Greco**, Executive Vice-President, Istituto Affari Internazionali (IAI), Rome

Panelists **Irene Fellin**, President, WIIS Italy, Rome

Neziha Labidi, Tunisian Minister of Women, Family and Childhood, Tunis

Abdessamad Dialmy, Sociologist and expert in gender, sexuality and Islamism, Morocco

Ann-Sofie Stude, WPS National Focal Point, Ministry for Foreign Affairs of Finland, Helsinki

Concluding Remarks

Fatiha Hassouni, Programme Manager, Social & Civil Affairs, Secretariat of the Union for the Mediterranean (UfM), Barcelona

Eleonora Insalaco, Programmes Manager, Anna Lindh Foundation

Paul Bekkers, Director, Office of the OSCE Secretary General, Vienna

Alessandro Azzoni, Permanent Representative of Italy to the OSCE, Vienna

Istituto Affari Internazionali (IAI)

Founded by Altiero Spinelli in 1965, IAI does research in the fields of foreign policy, political economy and international security. A non-profit organisation, the IAI aims to further and disseminate knowledge through research studies, conferences and publications. To that end, it cooperates with other research institutes, universities and foundations in Italy and abroad and is a member of various international networks. More specifically, the main research sectors are: European institutions and policies; Italian foreign policy; trends in the global economy and internationalisation processes in Italy; the Mediterranean and the Middle East; defence economy and policy; and transatlantic relations. The IAI publishes an English-language quarterly (*The International Spectator*), an online webzine (*Affarinternazionali*), two series of research papers (*Quaderni IAI* and *IAI Research Papers*) and other papers' series related to IAI research projects (*Documenti IAI*, *IAI Working Papers*, etc.).

Via Angelo Brunetti, 9 - I-00186 Rome, Italy

T +39 06 3224360

F + 39 06 3224363

iai@iai.it

www.iai.it

Latest DOCUMENTI IAI

- 17 | 20 Anja Palm, *Women, Peace and Security in the Mediterranean*
- 17 | 19 Andrea Aversano Stabile, Alessandro Marrone e Carolina Polito, *Europa della difesa: quali prospettive?*
- 17 | 18 Andrea Dessì, *EU Aid and Development Planning in the Occupied West Bank*
- 17 | 17 Andrea Dessì, *Peace Economics: Opportunities and Options for a Post-Conflict Middle East*
- 17 | 16E Alessandro R. Ungaro, Paola Sartori and Federico Palmieri, *Italian Defence Reform: Toward a New Logistics Support Model?*
- 17 | 16 Alessandro R. Ungaro, Paola Sartori e Federico Palmieri, *Riformare la Difesa italiana: verso un nuovo modello di supporto logistico?*
- 17 | 15 Giulia Gallinella, *I Caschi blu della cultura. Il ruolo italiano nel peacekeeping culturale*
- 17 | 14 Margherita Bianchi, Guillaume Lasconjarias e Alessandro Marrone, *Proiettare stabilità nel vicinato a sud della Nato*
- 17 | 13 Matteo Bonomi, *The Western Balkans in the European Union: Perspectives of a Region in Europe*
- 17 | 12 Sara Piacentini; edited by Eleonora Poli, *The Western Balkans in the European Union: Enlargement to What, Accession to What?*