

**WOMEN LEADERS – NETWORKING
FOR PEACE AND SECURITY IN THE MIDDLE EAST
Vienna, 30-31 May 2007**

**WORKSHOP 2: Economic development and conflict Resolution
– Women´s Training and Business Strategies**

PRESENTATION TO THE ROUND TABLE

MESSAGES AND RECOMMENDATIONS

General findings:

- Women and conflict are related in two ways: on one hand, women are comparatively more affected economically by conflict. On the other hand, women's economic empowerment can be an important tool for conflict resolution.
- Women –as mothers and wives - often see their situation in conflict deteriorate. They are compelled to focus on their role of providers of basic living needs and often see their other potential roles as economic players reduced. This issue is not properly addressed by post-conflict assistance.
- Sustainable and reliable peace and security is a precondition for women economic recovery and prosperity.
- In the Middle East, economic empowerment of women does not correspond to their weight in society nor even to their participation at the different levels of education.
- The main factors limiting women's economic empowerment are:
 - limited access to the conditions necessary to participate in the business world and the work force (such as capital, skills, relevant education)
 - legal constraints (such as limitations to buying property, borrowing money or setting up a business without men's consent)
 - cultural constraints that translate into stereotyping women into traditional roles
 - political constraints imposed by a conflict-environment

RECOMMENDATIONS:

- The **implementation of UN-SCR 1325** has been until now far from satisfactory. It is important to **develop a mechanism that ensures** on going follow-up, monitoring and evaluation of its recommendations, including those related to economic empowering.
- Because women are relatively more vulnerable to conflict; conflict and post conflict responses by the international community should establish allocation

criteria that **take into account women's specific needs**. This is crucial to bring women back to the economic life.

- Implement programmes aiming at **facilitating women's access to finance** that go beyond the more traditional micro-finance schemes. This could be done, *inter alia*, by creating specific credit lines catering for women projects. Programmes in this field **should be part of a larger strategy**, also tackling also issues such as vocational training and related social services. Access to finance schemes need to be sustainable in the long term and take into account the cultural specificities of the society.
- Encourage and support the **creation of business women's networks** promoting exchanges in the education/vocational training field as well as the possibilities to strengthen business relations and opportunities between women on different sides of the conflict. These networks should become powerful social and political players in conflict resolution strategies.
- Identifying and supporting **specific business initiatives and activities** that could involve business women from the different sides of a conflict, and than can create common links as well as yield tangible outcomes in terms of employment creation and increased living standards.
- Orienting the education and economic participation of women towards **future oriented, more dynamic** sectors; e.g. IT, new technologies. This would help strongly to break a circle of stereotyping women roles.
- Putting **pressure on decision makers to solve the political obstacles** to women's full participation in economy, including the roots of conflict. Lifting obstacles to movement and access and introducing the conditions for women - in different sides on a conflict - to work together, is key in this context.
- Finally, this Conference proves that there is no conflict immune to dialogue, good will and hope. Thus, we are grateful for this initiative and we hope that it will be follow-up.

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