

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

**WORKSHOP 3: Politics and Civil Society
– Women’s Networking Strategies**

PRESENTATION TO ROUND TABLE

The participants in Workshop 3 warmly welcome the initiative to convene this important conference, the first to bring together key women political leaders and women active in civil society in the Middle East region.

The situation in the Middle East is deteriorating. Israel and Palestine next week mark 40 years of occupation. In Iraq, Lebanon and elsewhere in the region, violence and insecurity are daily exacting a heavy toll on peoples’ lives. Military actions have failed to resolve conflict. The only hope for peace and security in the region are political solutions, acceptable to all parties, which lead to a resolution of conflict. The peace processes hitherto set in motion are at an impasse. There is an urgent need for action employing other strategies, action which engages both political leaders and civil society, which today is often ahead of the decision-makers in its eagerness to move negotiations forward.

Charged with seeking ways in which political leaders and women in civil society can work together for peace and security, the participants in Workshop 3 wish to convey the following messages and recommendations to the Round Table. These seek to build on such initiatives as UNSC Resolution 1325, the Arab Peace Initiative, and the pioneering work of women’s networks among the parties to a conflict - including in particular, in the case of Israel-Palestine, those of the International Women’s Commission for a Just and Sustainable Palestinian-Israeli Peace (IWC).

Recommendation:

- Addressing the core issue of Israel-Palestine: women leaders to convene an international conference in the region within the framework of the Arab League Initiative, in which women political leaders and civil society are substantially included, and in which women are involved in both the planning and implementation.

Follow-up action: Establish a planning committee forthwith, with a view to taking a decision on the timing and format, etc, of the conference within the next two months

It is necessary to put in place consultative mechanisms which are inclusive and transparent, both within and between communities which are parties to a conflict, and multilaterally. Again, women have an important role to play.

Recommendations:

- International women leaders who visit the region to consult routinely with women peace activists, including, in Israel and Palestine, the IWC
- Communication mechanisms to be established between political leaders and women's organizations, through which the analyses and suggestions of civil society can be regularly transmitted to decision-makers, and issues and proposals raised in negotiations are presented for discussion in civil society forums
- Women leaders to establish within their own societies mechanisms to consult with and inform their constituencies

Follow-up action: Women leaders to inform women peace activists of their visits to the region, and appoint in their own offices a liaison officer for this purpose
Elected women representatives to be trained on peace-building processes involving consultation with civil society

In accordance with the provisions of UNSC 1325 and other human rights and women's rights conventions and legal instruments, more concerted efforts are needed to ensure protection for civilian populations, especially women and children, during conflicts and in the period following conflict resolution.

Recommendations:

- Women leaders to hold political decision-makers accountable for compliance with their human rights obligations, including the protection of civilian populations, especially women and children
- More effective use to be made by women leaders and civil society of mechanisms for monitoring and reporting on human rights violations, to trigger interventions to stop violations, as a legal obligation
- In peace negotiations, accountability for the protection and security of civilians to be fully factored into decisions and agreements.

Given the limited time for deliberation during the workshop, some of these recommendations need to be further developed for implementation to be practicable. Participants are committed to working in partnership with the Conference organizers and women leaders to this end.

Follow-up action: A meeting to be held later this year, to assess the progress which has been made in following up the issues raised and recommendations made at this Conference