

Le Président du Conseil de sécurité présente ses compliments aux membres du Conseil et à l'honneur de transmettre, pour examen, le texte d'une **lettre du 2 juillet 2021**, adressée au Secrétaire général, **par les Représentants permanents de l'Irlande, du Mexique et du Royaume-Uni de Grande-Bretagne et d'Irlande du Nord auprès de l'Organisation des Nations Unies**, ainsi que la pièce qui y est jointe.

Cette lettre et la pièce qui y est jointe seront publiées comme document du Conseil de sécurité sous la cote S/2021/625.

Le 3 juillet 2021

The President of the Security Council presents his compliments to the members of the Council and has the honour to transmit herewith, for their information, a copy of a **letter dated 2 July 2021 from the Permanent Representatives of Ireland, Mexico and the United Kingdom to the United Nations** addressed to the Secretary-General, and its enclosure.

This letter and its enclosure will be issued as a document of the Security Council under the symbol S/2021/625.

3 July 2021



New York, July 2<sup>nd</sup> 2021

Excellency,

Ireland and Mexico, as co-chairs of the Security Council's Informal Expert Group on Women, Peace and Security and in close cooperation with the United Kingdom, would like to share the summary note of the following meeting of the Informal Experts Group:

- The situation in Lebanon

We would be grateful if the present letter and its attachment could be circulated as a document of the Security Council.

Please accept, Excellency, the assurances of our highest consideration.

Handwritten signature of Geraldine Byrne Nason in black ink.

Geraldine Byrne Nason  
Permanent Representative  
of Ireland  
to the United Nations

Handwritten signature of Juan Ramón de la Fuente Ramírez in black ink.

Juan Ramón de la Fuente Ramírez  
Permanent Representative  
of Mexico  
to the United Nations

Handwritten signature of Barbara Woodward in black ink.

Barbara Woodward  
Permanent Representative  
of the United Kingdom  
to the United Nations

H.E. Mr. António Guterres  
Secretary-General  
United Nations  
New York





## **SECURITY COUNCIL INFORMAL EXPERT GROUP ON WOMEN, PEACE AND SECURITY**

### **Summary of the meeting on Lebanon held on May 25<sup>th</sup>, 2021**

On 25 May 2021, the Informal Expert Group on Women, Peace and Security (IEG) convened a meeting on the situation in Lebanon. The members were briefed by the United Nations Deputy Special Coordinator for Lebanon and Resident and Humanitarian Coordinator for Lebanon Najat Rochdi and Deputy Head of Mission for the United Nations Interim Force in Lebanon (UNIFIL) Jack Christofides, accompanied by colleagues from the United Nations Country Team. The meeting concluded with an overview of key recommendations provided by UN Women.

#### **Questions from Council Members:**

Members of the Security Council asked questions about ways to support women's participation in the upcoming elections and leverage the women, peace and security agenda to build confidence in the political dialogue, and about the UN's work to provide assistance for refugee women and girls and support women's health, education, and economic empowerment and development. Other questions focused on suggestions for language on women, peace and security for the renewal of the UNIFIL mandate, incentives for troop contributing countries to increase the proportion of women personnel in UNIFIL, and measures put in place to protect women from sexual exploitation and abuse.

#### **Main points raised in the meeting:**

- Since December 2016, when the Security Council started inviting women from civil society to brief in country-specific meetings, there has never been a woman from Lebanon invited to such a meeting.
- Women in Lebanon were prominent in leading the protests in 2019 and are at the forefront of all current peace-making initiatives. Women politicians, women front-line responders and women peacebuilders are building platforms for dialogue, working to de-politicize and de-escalate tensions but also call for reconciliation and reform, including a unified personal status law to replace religious personal status laws which contain discriminatory provisions.
- Lebanon's confessional system is based on a complex set of personal status laws that bind citizens to their confessional leaders and structures and contribute to gender inequalities and the perpetuation of negative social norms and gender stereotypes. They result in unequal civil status for women and diminish their social and economic rights, including in matters of marriage, divorce, inheritance and custody.
- Lebanese women have carved out important spaces for themselves across the political arena, the security forces, the business sector, the media and in the academia. Still, Lebanon has one of the lowest rates in women's participation in formal politics. Women make up only 4.6 percent of the parliament, and under 5 percent of all security institutions. No woman has ever been invited to a formal political dialogue process in Lebanon.

- A group of women, representing all political parties and emerging political groups and movements in Lebanon, is meeting every month to break Lebanon's current political impasse. These meetings are a forum for the participating women to exchange ideas and build consensus on a range of issues, and they contribute to raising the profile of these women within their own parties. There are currently two different tracks, one that includes representatives from political parties in parliament and one with representatives from newly emerging parties.
- In the last parliamentary elections held in 2018, women candidates faced various challenges to win seats. These challenges included issues related to financing, their portrayal in the media, and violence against women in politics. The United Nations is monitoring hate speech and working with political parties and the media on the portrayal of women candidates. Lebanon's National Action Plan on Women, Peace and Security (NAP) sets out specific measures related to elections, including a 30 percent quota for women's participation in national and local elections. The International Support Group plays an important role in streamlining messaging on various issues of concern including elections, but also on the formation of the government, ending impunity, and investigations into the Beirut port explosion.
- In September 2019, Lebanon adopted its first NAP, with the support of the United Nations, including UN Women. UNIFIL was a member of the Steering Committee that drafted it. The plan sets out, *inter alia*, actions to increase women's participation in decision-making at all levels, including in the security and defense sectors. It also seeks to strengthen women's participation in conflict prevention, countering violent extremism and the promotion of social cohesion. UNIFIL supports the National Commission for Lebanese Women which is in charge of implementing the plan. The NAP has contributed to tangible results including a significant increase of women among the military cadets of the Lebanese Armed Forces -making nearly half of the cadets recruited for the class of 2020-, as well as the Cabinet's decision to form the National Commission for the Missing and Forcibly Disappeared which was a key demand of the women's rights movement since 1990.
- Data from national institutions and civil society organizations indicates that the multi-layered crises in Lebanon have led to a significant increase in gender-based violence across the country, particularly among Syrian refugees and migrant workers.
- 20 percent and in some areas even 26 percent of refugee households are female-headed, and the socio-economic situation of these families is dire. This percentage increases as men are sent back to Syria and leave their families behind. Only 18 percent of refugee women have legal status. Lack of a legal status is an obstacle to accessing services such as vaccination services or protection from violence. The COVID-19 pandemic is an additional burden for refugee women who have to take care of the remote education of their children in the camps. Child marriage is on the rise among the Syrian refugee population in Lebanon, with one fourth of Syrian refugee girls between 14 and 19 being married. Because of discriminatory provisions in Lebanon's nationality law, children of Lebanese women married to Syrian men or other foreigners are not granted Lebanese nationality.
- Standing at 132 out of a total of 156 countries, Lebanon has one of the highest overall gender gaps in the world according to the World Economic Forum and amongst the lowest rates of women's labour market participation. While prior to the current crisis less than one third of women were participating in the labour market, UN Women estimates that a further 14-19 percent of this group have left the workforce over the last year.
- Only 7 percent of UNIFIL's uniformed personnel are women while 31 percent of its civilian staff are female. The mission is working on improving accommodation and facilities for

women officers to increase the number of women serving at UNIFIL. The mission ensures that its delegations at meetings with interlocutors at the local and national level are gender-balanced as a way of encouraging its counterparts to aim for the same. Several quick impact projects of the mission have targeted women beneficiaries, such as the development of a municipal nursery as well as livelihood trainings for women. Gender task forces have been formed at UNIFIL headquarters and the mission's sectors. In addition, a senior gender focal point is responsible for integrating a gender perspective into peacekeepers' day-to-day tasks in the sectors, and there is a gender focal point in each battalion and each unit at UNIFIL.

### **Recommendations:**

The following recommendations were made by UN Women, as the secretariat of the IEG.<sup>1</sup>

- a) In the upcoming consultations on the mandate of UNIFIL, the Security Council should retain all existing references to women, peace and security in both the preambular and operational paragraphs of resolution 2539 (2020) including the request to UNIFIL to continue to support the implementation of the action plan on Women and Peace and Security. In addition, the Security Council could consider the following additions:
  - Request UNIFIL to support, engage and consult with a wide range of diverse women's civil society organizations and women-led organizations and community groups in all areas of its work.
  - Request UNIFIL to support security and military agencies in Lebanon to increase the number of women in their ranks, including in decision-making positions.
- b) In any other upcoming resolutions or presidential statements on Lebanon, as well as in Council deliberations and consultations, the Council could also consider encouraging the Lebanese authorities to repeal legislation discriminating against women, adopt a unified personal status law, and strengthen the participation of women as voters and candidates in the parliamentary and municipal elections in 2022, as well as all conflict prevention efforts, and urge the UN to support the government in these matters.

In addition, the IEG co-chairs and other Council Members should:

- c) Invite women from civil society to brief in upcoming meetings on Lebanon.
- d) Support the Government of Lebanon in strengthening the participation of women in peace, security, and political processes, including the parliamentary and municipal elections in 2022, and advocate for women's participation in conflict prevention and resolution, mediation, and social cohesion, building on the role played by women in the protests and in mediation at the local level.

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<sup>1</sup> These recommendations are suggestions from UN participants in this meeting or the background note prepared by the secretariat of the Informal Expert Group ahead of the meeting, and not recommendations from the Informal Expert Group as a whole or Council Members.

- e) Support the implementation and resourcing of the National Action Plan on Women, Peace and Security, with a specific focus on its pillars related to peacebuilding and reconciliation.
- f) Advocate for gender-inclusive recovery in the context of the COVID-19 pandemic and the ongoing financial and economic crisis, including sustainable funding for women's civil society organizations.
- g) Support the institutional frameworks and capacity for gender-based violence prevention and response, including measures to end child marriage, and advocate for protective policies that safeguard the rights of women and girls and enhance protection for women human rights defenders and peacebuilders.
- h) Advocate for the government to lift its reservations to CEDAW and ratify its Optional Protocol.

The Co-Chairs thanked the United Nations Deputy Special Coordinator for Lebanon, the Deputy Head of UNIFIL, and all participants and committed to follow-up on the important issues raised at the meeting.