

Launching Event for the Publication

Empowering Women in Water Diplomacy in the Middle East and North Africa: A Comparative Study of Egypt, Jordan, Lebanon, Morocco and Palestine

15 March 2021, 13:00-15:00 CET, online

CONCEPT NOTE & AGENDA

The role of women in water diplomacy related decision-making has been underestimated, despite the acknowledged essential role of women in peacebuilding, conflict management and sustaining security, as reaffirmed by the landmark United Nations Security Council Resolution 1325 on Women, Peace and Security (adopted on 31st October 2000) and by the eight resolutions on the issue adopted thereafter.

The untapped potential of brilliant girls and women is a great loss, both for women themselves and for the society as a whole. Women empowerment starts with access to safe water and gender responsive sanitation so that they are in a position to act as experts, partners, agents and leaders of change, including on water cooperation given the strong linkages among water, security and peace and the potential of water as an instrument for peace¹. Further emphasis on encouraging and capacitating women to take up such positions has strong merits that are yet to be explored. Without deliberate action to address imbalances in the involvement of women and men within transboundary water management institutions and systems, there is a missed opportunity to reap the benefits of an inclusive water governance for more equitable, as well as technically sound, sharing of water resources for all stakeholders.

Issues of women's participation and gender equality in the governance of shared waters have received insufficient attention to date, yet action is happening on the ground. Aiming to contribute to this direction, the Global Water Partnership – Mediterranean (GWP-Med) and the Geneva Water Hub joined forces at the beginning of 2020 and initiated a collaboration on the role of Women in Water Diplomacy with emphasis on the Middle East and North Africa region. The collaboration has taken the form of technical/ mapping work on the current status and challenges facing women in water diplomacy/ transboundary water cooperation settings, capitalising on the methodology used for a similar mapping exercise undertaken in 2018 in Jordan, Lebanon and Palestine. The current effort has reviewed and updated the work in the three countries and expanded the mapping to the Maghreb sub-region by including the cases of Egypt and Morocco.

The *Comparative Study on Empowering Women in Water Diplomacy in the Middle East and North Africa (MENA) Region* has been elaborated with the aim to identify the similarities and the differences in the challenges female water experts face across the five countries (Egypt, Jordan, Lebanon, Morocco, Palestine), and to identify the capacity building needs in terms of the various skills of a 21st century water diplomat.

The Comparative Study was financially supported by the Swedish International Development Cooperation Agency (Sida) in the framework of the "Making Water Cooperation happen in the

¹ <https://www.consilium.europa.eu/en/press/press-releases/2018/11/19/water-diplomacy-council-adopts-conclusions/>
<http://data.consilium.europa.eu/doc/document/ST-13991-2018-INIT/en/pdf>

Mediterranean” Project, aka Water Matchmaker Project, the Swiss Agency for Development and Cooperation (SDC) and the University of Geneva.

Through targeted outreach and dissemination activities, the analytical work has evolved into an Initiative aiming to support and strengthen the role of women involved in water diplomacy in the MENA region. The Initiative is led by the 6 co-authors of the Comparative Study, with the institutional co-ordination and support of GWP-Med and the Geneva Water Hub.

To mark the publication of the Comparative Study, a virtual launch will be held on the 15th March 2021, the date representing a symbolic bridge between the celebrations of the International Women’s Day on March 8th, and the World Water Day on March 22nd, and aiming to emphasise that “Valuing Water” (the 2021 theme for World Water Day), cannot be fully achieved without taking into consideration the value of water to women, and the 2021 International Women’s Day theme of “Women in Leadership: Achieving an equal future in a COVID-19 world”.

This virtual launching event, is co-organised by the Global Water Partnership (GWP-Med) and the Geneva Water Hub, within the framework of the Union for the Mediterranean (UfM) Water Policy Framework for Actions 2030, and has the threefold objective to:

1. Launch the publication of the Comparative Study;
2. Briefly present the Study’s key findings and share the main components of the Initiative’s Action Plan for 2021;
3. Receive reflections from prominent experts, foster synergies and explore operational linkages with leading regional international organisations and development partners.

The 2-hour event (13:00-15:00 CET) will develop over three segments, matching the three objectives: a welcoming part by the co-organising partners; a presentation and discussion on the key findings of the Comparative Study; and a panel among development partners and relevant organisations, reflecting on the theme and exploring options for operational synergies. Simultaneous interpretation will be available in English/French/Arabic.

The publication on *Empowering Women in Water Diplomacy in the Middle East and North Africa: A Comparative Study of Egypt, Jordan, Lebanon, Morocco and Palestine* will be shared during the Launching Event.

For further information or clarifications on please contact Dr. Anthi Brouma, Deputy Regional Coordinator, GWP-Med (anthi@gwpmmed.org) or Ms. Natasha Carmi, Lead Water Advisor, Geneva Water Hub (ncarmi@genevawaterhub.org).

Provisional Agenda
Monday, 15 March 2021, 13:00-15:00 CET

13:00-13:15	<p>Welcoming remarks by co-organisers</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • <i>Prof. Michael Scoullas</i>, Chairperson, Global Water Partnership – Mediterranean (GWP-Med) • <i>Mr. François Münger</i>, Director, Geneva Water Hub • <i>Mr. Isidro González Afonso</i>, Deputy Secretary General for Water, Environment and Blue Economy, Union for the Mediterranean (UfM) Secretariat
13:15-13:30	<p>Keynote speech - <i>The role of women in water for a sustainable and peaceful MENA with a socio-economic recovery outlook</i></p> <p><i>On behalf of HRH Prince El Hassan bin Talal</i> Chairman of the Royal Scientific Society of Jordan <i>HRH Princess Sumaya bint El Hassan</i> President of the Royal Scientific Society of Jordan</p>
13:30-14:05	<p><i>Empowering Women in Water Diplomacy in the Middle East and North Africa: A Comparative Study of Egypt, Jordan, Lebanon, Morocco and Palestine</i></p> <p><i>Brief presentation of the key findings</i></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Introduction and scope of the Study • Findings from the Country Baselines • What has the comparison told us? • What makes for a good Water Diplomat? • Way forward and the Initiative’s 2021 Action Plan <p>Shared presentation by the Co-authors of the Comparative Study</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • <i>Eng. Charafat Afailal</i>, Former Minister in charge of Water, Expert on Water and Climate (for Morocco) • <i>Dr. Anthi Brouma</i>, Deputy Regional Coordinator and Theme Leader on Diversity, GWP-Med (for regional & global components) • <i>Eng. Natasha Carmi</i>, Lead Water Advisor, Geneva Water Hub, former Policy Advisor on Water at the Palestinian Negotiation Support Project (for Palestine & regional/global) • <i>Ms. Mey Al Sayegh</i>, Communication Manager, Lebanon Crisis Response Plan (LCRP), Ministry of Social Affairs, Lebanon (for Lebanon) • <i>Dr. Tahani Moustafa Sileet</i>, Head of Central Department for External Cooperation, AMCOW TAC, PMU Director & Regional Coordinator-VICMED Project, Director- NBI National Office, Nile Water Sector- Ministry of Water Resources and Irrigation, Arab Republic of Egypt (for Egypt) • <i>Ms. Maysoon Zoubi</i>, Water and Sanitation Consultant at Arab Dar Engineering Co. Jordan, former Secretary General, Ministry of Water and irrigation, Jordan (for Jordan) <p>Q&A</p>

<p>14:05-14:45</p>	<p>Working for a gender transformative MENA: reflections and insights from leading actors on gender and water cooperation</p> <p><i>Moderator: Eng. Charafat Afailal, Former Minister in charge of Water, Expert on Water and Climate</i></p> <p>Panel interventions</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • <i>Ambassador Charlotta Sparre, Director of the Swedish Dialogue Institute for the Middle East and North Africa, pt Stockholm, Ministry for Foreign Affairs, Sweden</i> • <i>Ms. Rascha Osman, Deputy Head of Division, Regional Coordinator North Africa, Division Middle East and North Africa, Swiss Federal Department of Foreign Affairs</i> • <i>Mr. Henk Ovink, Special Envoy for International Water Affairs for the Kingdom of the Netherlands</i> • <i>Ms. Roula Majdalani, Leader, Climate Change and Natural Resources Sustainability Cluster, UN ESCWA</i> • <i>Ms. Susanne Mikhail, Regional Director of the United Nations Entity for Gender Equality and the Empowerment of Women (UN Women) for the Arab States</i>
<p>14:45-15:00</p>	<p>2021 Action Plan & Closing of Launching Event</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • <i>Mr. Almotaz Abadi, Managing Director Water, Union for the Mediterranean (UfM) Secretariat</i> • <i>Eng. Natasha Carmi, Lead Water Advisor, Geneva Water Hub, former Policy Advisor on Water at the Palestinian Negotiation Support Project</i> • <i>Dr. Anthi Brouma, Deputy Regional Coordinator, Theme Leader on Diversity, Global Water Partnership – Mediterranean (GWP-Med)</i>