

3rd Cairo Water Week 18-22 October 2020

Online Technical Session on

Strengthening the Role of Women in Water Diplomacy in the Middle East & North Africa (MENA) region

21 October 2020, 14:30-16:00 Cairo time



The Session will discuss the role of women in water diplomacy with emphasis on the Middle East and North Africa region. It will aim to identify opportunities and challenges, and eventually promote action for strengthening it. The Session is based on a **Comparative Study on Women & Water Diplomacy in the MENA region** that has been prepared by Natasha Carmi, Charafat Afailal, Anthi Brouma, Mey Sayegh, Tahani Sileet, and Maysoon Zoubi with the financial support of the Swedish International Development Cooperation Agency (Sida). The Cairo Water Week is the first occasion in which the findings of the Study are presented in the Arab world.

The Session aims to:

- present for the first time in and discuss the key findings of the Comparative Study, both in terms of the country baselines and also across the countries;
- receive feedback on areas to consider for the next steps with emphasis on capacity building needs;
- foster synergy with targeted regional institutions and development partners;
- further enhance the informal network of Women & Water Diplomacy in the MENA, led by the Comparative Study's co-authors.

So, why is it so important to focus on Women in Water Diplomacy?

Because the growing imbalance in global water supply and demand leads to tensions and conflicts and could potentially evolve into a widespread threat to international peace and security. At the same time, water

deprivation is increasingly seen as a fundamentally political and security problem, and not confined only within the realms of human development and environmental sustainability. It is indicative that after recognising water formally as a foreign policy issue in 2013¹, the EU Foreign Affairs Council adopted the new conclusions on EU Water Diplomacy² making the case for linking water, security and peace, including the potential of water as an instrument for peace.

For water diplomacy to bear fruits, the inclusive participation of all stakeholders in the process is an absolute must including women. Enabling women to have a meaningful voice in decision-making provides an opportunity to include their distinctive knowledge, diverse perspectives and experiences to facilitate a more comprehensive understanding of relevant water issues and challenges and to identify a broader set of equitable solutions to those challenges, especially as women are most suffering from water scarcity and climate change impacts. However, 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. Further emphasis on encouraging and capacitating women to take up such positions has strong merits that are yet to be explored. Enhancing the role of women in water diplomacy means building more equitable and more sustainable water policy and promoting peace and cooperation.

The Comparative Study on *Women & Water Diplomacy in the MENA region*, prepared with financial support from the Swedish International Development Cooperation Agency (Sida), has contrasted the challenges to the attainment of more women decision makers in water diplomacy and transboundary water cooperation settings, in five Arab countries in the MENA and Mashreq region, including Lebanon, Palestine, Jordan, Egypt and Morocco. It builds upon a previous mapping exercise conducted in three MENA countries, and adopts the same methodology of surveying and interviewing women in water-related institutions.

The focus of the Comparative Study is to identify the similarities and the differences in the challenges female water experts faced among the five countries, and to identify the capacity building needs in terms of the various skills of a 21st century water diplomat. Importantly, the Comparative Study has provided the enabling environment for the creation of a network of women in the five countries that aspires to provide the platform for future interventions and exchanges.

The Session will include the presentation by the co-authors of the five country baselines and the key findings from the comparison across countries. It will also include a panel with speakers from key regional institutions that are active and committed to supporting women in water diplomacy. Open discussion with the participants and a short sum of next steps will conclude the session.

The Session is a joint endeavour of the Global Water Partnership-Mediterranean (GWP-Med) and the Geneva Water Hub.

¹ https://www.consilium.europa.eu/uedocs/cms_data/docs/pressdata/EN/foraff/138253.pdf

² <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>

Agenda

14:30-14:35	<p>Welcoming remarks - Structure & objectives of the workshop</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Dr. Anthi Brouma, Deputy Regional Coordinator, Theme Leader on Diversity, Global Water Partnership – Mediterranean (GWP-Med) • Eng. Natasha Carmi, Lead Water Advisor, Geneva Water Hub (GWH)
14:35-15:30	<p>The Comparative Study on Women in Water Diplomacy in the MENA</p> <p>Introduction and scope of the Study, Dr. Anthi Brouma, GWP-Med (5min)</p> <p>Country Baselines (5min each):</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Egypt: Dr. Tahani Moustafa Sileet, 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 • Lebanon: Ms. Mey Al Sayegh, Communication Manager, Lebanon Crisis Response Plan (LCRP), Ministry of Social Affairs, Lebanon • Jordan: Ms. Maysoon Zoubi, National Projects Coordinator/Project Manager, FAO Jordan, former Secretary General, Ministry of Water and irrigation, Jordan • Morocco: Ms. Charafat Afailal, Former Minister in charge of Water, Expert on Water and Climate • Palestine: Eng. Natasha Carmi, Lead Water Advisor, Geneva Water Hub <p>What has the comparison shown us? (10min) Eng. Natasha Carmi, GWH</p> <p>Discussion (15min)</p>
15:30-15:55	<p>The way forward: exploring synergies and linkages for the next steps</p> <p><i>Moderator:</i> Mr. Vangelis Constantianos, Executive Secretary, GWP-Med</p> <p>Panel interaction (5min each)</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Mr. Almotaz Abadi, Managing Director, Union for the Mediterranean Secretariat • Ms. Stephanie Chaban, Regional Advisor on Gender Equality and Women's Empowerment, UN ESCWA • Dr. Marwan Alraggad, Executive Director, Inter-Islamic Network on Water Resources Development and Management (INWRDAM) • Dr. Tessa Terpstra, MENA Regional Envoy for Water and Energy Security, Counsellor, Dutch Ministry of Foreign Affairs
15:55-16:00	<p>Wrap up and closing</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Eng. Natasha Carmi, Lead Water Advisor, Geneva Water Hub • Dr. Anthi Brouma, Deputy Regional Coordinator, Theme Leader on Diversity, Global Water Partnership – Mediterranean (GWP-Med)