

# Including Women Reinforces the Legitimacy and Sustainability of any Peace Process

Lea Baroudi\*

Johanna Hawari – Bourjeily\*\*

Justine Abi Saad\*\*\*

Karma Ekmekji\*\*\*\*

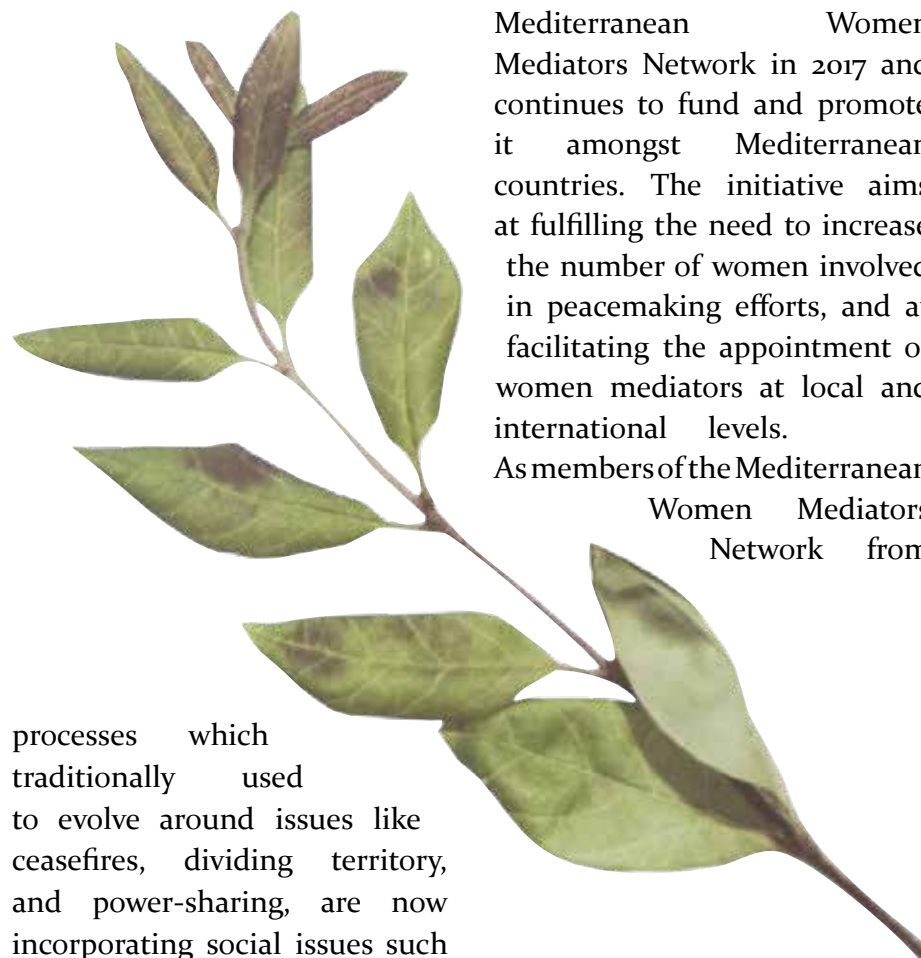
Governments, civil society organizations and multilateral institutions across the world are getting ready to mark the twenty-fifth anniversary of the Beijing Declaration and Platform for Action, the twentieth anniversary of Security Council Resolution 1325, a landmark resolution on women, peace and security, and a five-year milestone towards achieving the Sustainable Development Goals of the 2030 Agenda.

2020 is going to be a year to watch for when it comes to advancing the agenda of women in mediation, conflict resolution, peacekeeping, and security. It will also be a year where we must set off alarm bells and sirens across the world, and particularly in our region, to say that women remain under-represented in these field and our opinions are still left unheard.

«Women are no observers of conflict,» says Nobel Laureate Leymah Gbowee, the Liberian peace activist responsible for leading a women's nonviolent peace movement, that helped bring an end to the Second Liberian Civil War, «why then should they be the observers of conflict resolution?»

A critical mass of academic research shows that including women enhances the legitimacy and the credibility of any peace process and that inclusion and sustainability go hand in hand. When women are included in peace processes, there is a 20% increase in the probability of an agreement lasting at least two years, and a 35% increase in the probability of an agreement lasting at least fifteen years! Meanwhile, when peace processes failed to include women, the peace agreement would crumble within five years.

Furthermore, studies published by the International Peace Institute indicate that peace



processes which traditionally used to evolve around issues like ceasefires, dividing territory, and power-sharing, are now incorporating social issues such as education, healthcare and so on.

It is in this context, and in this spirit, that the Italian Ministry of Foreign Affairs and International Cooperation launched the

Mediterranean Women Mediators Network in 2017 and continues to fund and promote it amongst Mediterranean countries. The initiative aims at fulfilling the need to increase the number of women involved in peacemaking efforts, and at facilitating the appointment of women mediators at local and international levels.

As members of the Mediterranean Women Mediators Network from

Lebanon, we each have taken the responsibility upon ourselves, as individuals and as a collective group, to advance the agenda of women in peace and security

within the spheres of our work that span over the community, national and international levels. We share and work on instilling our common values of inclusion, tolerance and advocacy for women in peace and security and believe that it is only through leading by example that we can garner enough political and social support, from men, before women, to ensure that more women are included in grassroots, national and cross boundary peace building efforts. As you flip through the pages of this UNDP supplement so befittingly entitled, The Peace Building in Lebanon, you will get acquainted with the amazing work that different stakeholders in Lebanon are doing to advance the agenda of women, peace and security. These efforts are inspiring and should serve as spring boards for girls and women to believe that change can be instigated when we stop being spectators and start assuming active roles in the field of peace and security.

**As members of the Mediterranean Women Mediators Network from Lebanon, we each have taken the responsibility upon ourselves, as individuals and as a collective group, to advance the agenda of women in peace and security within the spheres of our work that span over the community, national and international levels**

\* Founding member and General Coordinator of March Lebanon

\*\* Founder and Director of the Professional Mediation Center – USJ

\*\*\* Conflict Transformation and Peacebuilding Practitioner, Mediator & Trainer; Program Manager - Civil Peace Service Program – GIZ

\*\*\*\* International Affairs and Relations Advisor to the President of the Council of Ministers, H.E. Saad Hariri, founder of Diplomwomen