

INTERNATIONAL WOMEN'S DAY

Exploring the Gender,
Climate Change, and
Security Nexus within the
Euro-Mediterranean Region

7 MARCH 2025
10:00 - 12:00 CET [ONLINE]

**WEBINAR
REPORT**



Union for the Mediterranean
Union pour la Méditerranée
الاتحاد من أجل المتوسط

IEMed.
European Institute of the Mediterranean



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FOREWORD

The International Women's Day 2025 Webinar, co-organized by the Union for the Mediterranean (UfM) and the European Institute of the Mediterranean (IEMed), focused on the critical intersection of gender, climate change, and security in the Euro-Mediterranean region. The event served as a platform for discussing the disproportionate impacts of climate change on women and the urgent need for gender-sensitive climate action in addressing regional security challenges. It also marked the launch of the second UfM-IEMed MedWE Policy Paper, **Climate Crisis and Gender Equality: Emerging Security Risks in the Euro-Mediterranean Region**.

The discussions underscored how climate change acts as a stress multiplier, exacerbating existing vulnerabilities, particularly for women in conflict and disaster-affected areas. Speakers emphasized that the impacts of climate-induced stresses must be understood in conjunction with other regional security concerns, such as displacement, resource scarcity, and fragile governance structures. As the region faces growing challenges, it is evident that an intersectional approach that addresses the overlapping dimensions of climate change, security, systemic inequalities, and socio-economic factors is crucial.

The webinar highlighted that while climate change accelerates socio-economic inequalities, it is a significant driver of conflict and instability as well. It also challenged the view of women solely as victims, advocating for their active roles as leaders in climate adaptation and peacebuilding efforts. Women's involvement in decision-making processes related to climate security and resilience was recognized as a key factor in achieving long-term stability and sustainable solutions in the region.

During the setting the scene, the UfM confirmed its commitment to empowering women through initiatives such as

the Capacity Building on Gender Equality and Climate Change, and the new initiative to be launched in 2025 with the support from the Swedish International Development Agency (SIDA), on the nexus Climate and Women and Peace security Agenda (WPSA), including networking and capacity-building activities followed by a regional stakeholder conference in Amman, Jordan, later this year.

PANEL 1 /// Launch of the Second UfM- IEMed MedWE Policy Paper “Climate Crisis and Gender Equality: Emerging Security Risks in the Euro-Mediterranean Region.” – 10:10-10:30

Moderator: Gemma Aubarell, Director of Culture, Gender, and Civil Society at the IEMed

- **Sarine Karajerjian**, Programme Director, Arab Reform Initiative
- **Zeina Moneer**, a Senior Environmental and Climate Policy Analyst and Senior Lecturer of Environmental Politics

This panel examined the intersection of climate change, gender, and security in the Euro-Mediterranean region. It emphasized the heightened vulnerabilities of women within displaced populations in conflict zones, where climate-induced challenges amplify existing security risks. Through the lens of the **MedWE Policy Paper**, the discussion focused on two primary concerns: the urgent need to address gender disparities in climate adaptation and governance and the critical

role of women's leadership in shaping policies related to climate security. Panelists emphasized that women are not just victims of climate crises but essential agents of change in creating resilient and inclusive solutions.

Key Challenges

1. Insufficient Gender-Responsive Policy Frameworks:

The panel highlighted that the inadequate integration of gender perspectives in climate change adaptation policies, disaster risk reduction (DRR) plans, and national climate strategies remains a pervasive issue in the region. This is further compounded by the gender-neutral nature of most national climate policies, which fail to recognize the important roles women play in resilience-building. As an example, in Egypt, where the sea

level rise could displace 2 to 4 million people, many women are at risk of losing their livelihoods and have limited access to resources in times of crisis, particularly in urban migration hotspots like Cairo. In addition, legal frameworks in many countries fail to ensure gender equity in land rights and inheritance laws, impacting women's ability to adapt to climate shocks, particularly in conflict zones like Syria, where over 50% of agricultural production has been lost in the past decade due to war and climate change.

Repeated discourses of women vulnerability: It is true that women bear the brunt of climate disasters but this is not because of their gender or because women are inherently vulnerable. However, this is only part of the story. This projection of women as victims and/or survivors of climate change overlooks the more complex realities and the power dynamics of vulnerability. This is often because “women's identities are projected as fixed, centered and uniform” disregarding other factors that shape women lived experiences of vulnerability such as age, wealth, class and ethnic belonging. For example, a recurrent theme in the vulnerability research when it conflates feminization of household headship with a more generalized narrative of women's poverty. This emphasis on the association of poverty with the feminization of a household's headship has also legitimized the discourse of climate vulnerability and the feminization of heads of households. However, this assumption of “feminization of vulnerability” is refuted by numerous studies that indicate the crucial importance of other social factors in the context of female-headed households as determinants of vulnerability.

2. Lack of Gender-Disaggregated Data and Gender-Responsive Financing:

The absence of gender-disaggregated data is a critical barrier in accurately assessing the differential impacts of climate change. This issue is compounded by the inadequate allocation of financial resources toward gender-sensitive initiatives. The gender gap in financing remains stark, with limited funds directed at projects that specifically address gender equality in the context of climate change. Syria's refugee population working in agriculture in Lebanon faces significant risks, including exposure to harmful pesticides, which are exacerbated by the lack of legal safeguards.

3. Underrepresentation of Women in Leadership Roles:

Despite the centrality of inclusive governance in effective climate action, leadership positions in climate and environmental governance structures are still dominated by men, leaving women with limited decision-making power. This imbalance further perpetuates gender inequalities in policies and climate solutions. The Shawish system in Lebanon, which regulates refugee women's access to work, serves as an example of how structures can perpetuate exclusion, with women forced into exploitative labour conditions, including in agriculture.

4. Gendered Impact of Climate-induced Displacement:

The panel emphasized that women, especially in conflict-prone regions, are disproportionately affected by climate-induced displacement. The intersection of climate change, economic instability, and forced migration exacerbates risks, leading to increased gender-based

violence, economic disenfranchisement, and erosion of social protections. Syrian refugees in Lebanon, for instance, face not only displacement but also a loss of security and social support, which is particularly damaging for women who are more vulnerable to exploitation and violence in crisis situations.

Opportunities

1. Institutionalizing Gender-Responsive Climate and Legal Frameworks:

The discussion stressed the importance of legal reforms that incorporate gender-sensitive approaches into national climate adaptation strategies and DRR frameworks. It was emphasized that securing women's land rights and resources, especially in countries like Palestine and Syria, would enable long-term resilience. Women's leadership in climate governance and land tenure systems is crucial for ensuring food security, as seen in Morocco, where Amazigh women have adopted practices like crop diversification to maintain agricultural sustainability in the face of climate change.

2. Moving beyond gender as a binary variable and amplify the discourse of women agency:

It is crucial to stop seeing women as homogenous group and to move beyond the simplistic views of gender as a binary variable and instead explore and

reflect on the intersectional identities that women hold. To better understand the complex realities of women vulnerabilities, it is essential to move beyond the simplistic views of gender as a binary variable and instead explore and reflect on the intersectional identities that women hold. With this foundation, women lived experiences of climate change are shaped by their social identities that are fluid, shifting and mutually constructing, as well as embedded in a historical context of long histories of systematic discrimination and ongoing power and inequality, privilege and oppression, across scales from the micro to the macro.

3. Gender-Responsive Climate Financing and Economic Empowerment:

The need for gender-sensitive funding was underscored, with specific focus on women-led climate adaptation projects in agriculture, water management, and green technologies. Women refugees in Lebanon are increasingly forced to enter agriculture, a sector they had not previously worked in, driven by displacement, where financial support for sustainable agricultural practices could empower them economically and ensure that they can secure their livelihoods.

4. Promoting Women's Leadership in Climate and Environmental Governance:

The panel underscored the critical im-

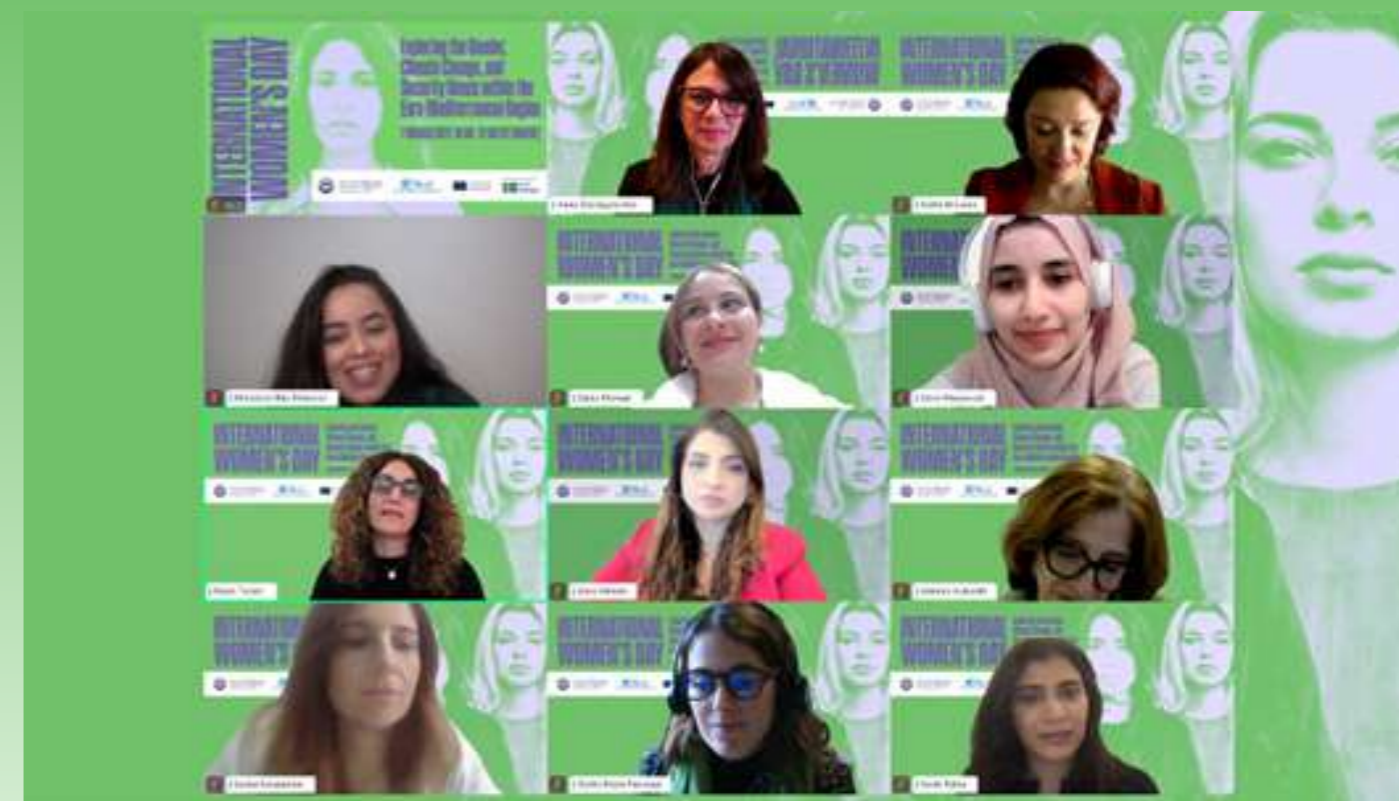
portance of promoting women's leadership in climate adaptation and environmental governance. Capacity-building initiatives, as demonstrated by Palestinian women engaged in agri-food processing businesses in the West Bank, can significantly contribute to women's participation in climate governance, leading to more equitable and effective climate policies.

5. Integrating Gender dimensions into Security and Peacebuilding:

The integration of gender perspectives into peacebuilding efforts is crucial, especially in regions affected by both climate change and conflict. Women must be included in climate security discussions and peace negotiations to ensure that climate-induced migration and displacement policies are gender-responsive. This is particularly important for regions like Syria, where women's voices are often excluded from key discussions on climate and conflict resolution. In this context, the chapter Syria: Environment and Conflict in Syria: The Case for Participatory Approaches in Agriculture by Sarine Karajerjian, featured in the report [Participatory Approaches to Conflict, Climate Change and Environment](#), emphasizes the need for restoring trust among all actors, including communities displaced outside the country, in order to ensure a smooth transition away from conflict. The chapter stresses that rebuilding a fair and equitable agri-

cultural system is crucial for serving all local populations and empowering them to engage in decision-making processes. This approach is key to promoting resilience and sustainable development in Syria's post-conflict recovery.

PANEL 2 /// Bridging New Perspectives on the Nexus Gender, Climate Risks, and Security



Moderator: Anna Dorangricchia,
Project Manager, Social and Civil Affairs
Division, UfM

- **Rania Tarazi,** Gender Team Leader, UNDP
- **Saira Ahmed,** Focal Gender point, UNDRR Arab States
- **Sarah Rabie,** Climate, Peace and Security Specialist, CGIAR
- **Anthi Brouma,** Deputy Regional Director, Global Water Partnership-Med
- **Sarra Messaoudi,** Regional Lead, MENA Coalition on Youth, Peace and Security
- **Khouloud Ben Mansour,** African Union Youth Ambassador of Peace to North Africa (Tunisia)

In the second panel, the conversation shifted to actionable strategies for incorporating gender-responsive frameworks into crisis response and recovery efforts, particularly in climate-impacted and conflict-affected regions. The panel focused on the compounded challenges of climate change and conflict, highlighting

their disproportionate impact on women. Discussions regarding how policy and institutional frameworks can better integrate gender considerations, ensure women's leadership in decision-making, and enhance security and resilience in the face of crises.

Gender-disaggregated data emerged as a central theme, with the panellists stressing its importance in developing inclusive, evidence-based policies. The Sendai Framework for Disaster Risk Reduction was highlighted as an exemplary model of integrating gender considerations into disaster management and climate response efforts. As pointed out during the session, failing to include gender-sensitive policies undermines effective responses to crises, leaving women disproportionately exposed to risks such as violence, exploitation, and economic marginalization.

The event also placed significant emphasis on the role of youth, particularly young women, in shaping climate and security policies. Panellists highlighted

the need to move beyond tokenistic inclusion and towards genuine co-ownership of climate action and peacebuilding initiatives, ensuring that young voices are central to policy development.

As climate change continues to amplify security risks in the region, the webinar emphasized the importance of regional cooperation, diplomacy, and integrated approaches. The pivotal role of women in water diplomacy and the governance of shared water resources was also highlighted, with women often at the forefront of negotiations to manage these critical resources.

Ultimately, the webinar reaffirmed the necessity for a gender-responsive approach to addressing the interconnected risks of climate change, conflict, and gender inequality. It called for concerted efforts from all stakeholders: governments, international organizations, and civil society, to foster inclusive, resilient, and secure communities in the Euro-Mediterranean region.

Key Challenges

1. Gender-exclusion in Climate Crisis Response and Recovery:

The exclusion of women from governance and recovery efforts in climate crises remains a critical barrier to effective resilience-building. Only 68 countries report sex-disaggregated data for disaster mortality and affected populations under the Sendai Framework, highlighting the significant gaps in data and the lack of gender inclusion in disaster recovery planning. The gender exclusion from climate negotiations as well as the continued underestimated role in peacebuilding, conflict management and in sustaining security still remain a relevant challenge in the region. This marginalizes women's contributions to community recovery and limits their role in climate adaptation strategies. For example, women in the Nile Basin, where water scarcity could lead to potential conflicts, are particularly vulnerable due to their exclusion from high-level negotiations in water diplomacy. Obstacles such as gen-

der pay gaps and negative stereotypes persist in negotiations, limiting women's involvement in the management of vital water resources.

2. Displacement Risks and Gender-based Vulnerabilities:

Women displaced by climate change and conflict face heightened risks of gender-based violence, wage discrimination, and exploitation. Despite these risks, gender-sensitive policies in displacement frameworks are often lacking. Research on gender-based violence among displaced populations in the MENA region indicates a critical need for more targeted interventions. The UNDRR has developed a disability and gender checklist for early warning systems, aimed at saving lives in vulnerable countries like Djibouti, Somalia, and Sudan. However, scaling up these initiatives across the region is necessary to address the broader risks faced by displaced women. Moreover, women are the primary water collectors in 7 out of 10 households in the MENA region, underscoring their central role in water diplomacy and the need for gender-inclusive policies in transboundary cooperation.

3. Economic Precarity and Gendered Impacts of Climate Change:

Women, particularly in sectors such as agriculture, fisheries, and the informal economy, are disproportionately affected by the economic impacts of climate change. Despite their central role in climate-sensitive sectors, women

are systematically excluded from decision-making roles and lack access to capital. This exclusion limits their ability to adapt to climate risks and to secure their livelihoods in times of crisis. A study has shown that less than 0.01% of global climate finance is directed toward women-led climate, peace, and security projects, highlighting the funding gap in supporting women's roles in climate action. The feminization of vulnerability is an issue that often overlooks the complex realities of women's socio-economic and geographical contexts in these regions.

Opportunities

1. Developing Gender-Responsive Crisis Management Frameworks:

The panel emphasized the importance of developing gender-responsive disaster management and climate crisis recovery frameworks that prioritize women's specific needs and contributions. Gender-sensitive planning should ensure that women are included in crisis governance, particularly in leadership and decision-making roles at local and regional levels. Spain, Italy, Cyprus, Lebanon, and Tunisia have already begun integrating climate considerations into their Women, Peace, and Security (WPS) agendas, recognizing the significant impact of climate change on women's rights and roles in peacebuilding. These nations are models for incorporating gender-responsive strategies into national recovery and climate adaptation policies.

2. Promoting Women's Role in addressing Climate-related Displacement:

It was emphasized that displacement policies must include gendered risk assessments and protections for women, particularly those in conflict-affected areas. The integration of gender-sensitive legal frameworks is essential to protect displaced women from exploitation and violence while ensuring social cohesion and economic empowerment in host communities. The African Union's Youth Peace and Security (YPS) Framework mandates the creation of national YPS coalitions, providing young leaders and women with a seat at the table in mediation and peacebuilding efforts. These frameworks could provide a model for improving the participation of youth and women in climate-induced displacement efforts and recovery strategies.

3. Enhancing Women's Participation in Green and Resilient Economies:

A critical discussion point was the need for targeted interventions to economically empower women, particularly in green sectors such as sustainable agriculture, green technologies, and climate-resilient infrastructure. Facilitating access to capital, capacity-building, and leadership opportunities will enable women to become central actors in the green transition. For example, grassroots women organizations, which are often first responders in crises, have demonstrated resilience and resourcefulness in climate adaptation and should be better

supported to enhance their impact. In Morocco, women have already adopted practices such as crop diversification to adapt to climate change, but these efforts need scaling to address the broader regional challenges. In this context, the WEFE (Water-Energy-Food-Ecosystems) Nexus framework represents a concrete example of a holistic and integrated approach that responds well to the interplay of challenges that we face in the region.

4. Sustaining long-term Gender-Responsive Climate Recovery Efforts:

Panellists made a strong call for multi-year funding mechanisms and enhanced coordination to support the sustainability of WPS initiatives. Long-term investments in gender-sensitive recovery initiatives are essential for building climate resilience and economic empowerment in regions severely affected by climate change. Youth-centered approaches should be incorporated into the entire cycle of peacebuilding and climate action, from design to monitoring and evaluation, ensuring that young people, particularly young women, are meaningfully involved in shaping recovery efforts.

Shared Recommendations from the Webinar and Policy Paper

1. Strengthen Gender-Responsive Climate and Security Policies:

Reform policies to integrate gender equality into climate adaptation, disaster risk reduction, and peacebuilding, while dismantling systemic barriers and cultural stereotypes that hinder women's participation in climate governance. Recognize and amplify women's contributions to climate solutions, ensuring their active involvement in decision-making and reconstruction efforts. Enhance the institutional collaboration between Ministries of Environment, Ministries of Women and security institutions

2. Regional Data Collection and Gender Analysis:

Create a regional platform for gender-disaggregated climate data and research to improve understanding of gendered impacts and integrate gender analysis into disaster risk management.

3. Foster Multi-Stakeholder Collaboration and Sustainability:

Establish regional coalitions to promote women's leadership in climate action, exchange knowledge, and replicate suc-

cessful women-led projects. Strengthen EU-Mediterranean cooperation to support long-term, gender-sensitive initiatives, ensuring sustained resources for women's involvement in climate challenges. This can be well supported through linkages with women's leadership initiatives in other sectors, such those in the water sector that bears strong connections with climate change. In this sense, the WEF Nexus has a strong potential, given the ongoing process of the Strategy for the Water-Energy-Food-Ecosystems Nexus in the Mediterranean Source to Sea continuum, which is a joint effort led by the UfM, the European Commission and UNEP MAP with the technical support of GWP-Med, the Water and Environment Support (WES) project and PRIMA.

4. Empower Women through Capacity-Building and Knowledge Exchange:

Develop training and financial support programs to equip women, especially in rural and crisis-affected areas, with the skills and resources for climate resilience. Identify and promote the collaboration among existing regional platforms to

share good practices and scale successful women-led climate initiatives.

5. Amplify Women's Roles in Climate Security:

Strengthen women's roles in climate security by integrating gender-sensitive approaches and climate aware approaches in security policies and ensuring local women's participation in peace processes and climate negotiations.

6. Promote Gender-Responsive Climate Finance:

Implement gender-responsive financing to ensure equitable access to climate adaptation funds for women-led initiatives, particularly in conflict-affected areas and displacement contexts.

7. Enhance Media's Role in Women's Leadership:

Promote media initiatives that highlight the gendered impacts of climate change and amplify women's leadership in climate action and disaster recovery.

8. Promote Inclusive Public-Private Partnerships:

Support public-private partnerships that advance green technologies and women-led initiatives, particularly in clean energy, agriculture, and waste management.

9. Focus on Gender-Responsive Disaster Prevention, Preparedness and Recovery:

Ensure disaster recovery and reconstruction efforts are gender-responsive, incorporating women-led solutions in rehabilitation projects like farmland restoration and reforestation.

10. Ensure meaningful Youth Participation:

Create opportunities for youth, particularly young women, to meaningfully engage in climate action and peacebuilding, with an emphasis on investing in youth-led initiatives and fostering cross-regional cooperation.



AMWEX

IEMed-UfM Conference
on Climate Crisis and
Gender Equality in the
Euro-Mediterranean
RegionAmerican University in Cairo
12 February 2025
15h00-17h00 CET

OPENING REMARKS

The conference **on Climate Crisis and Gender Equality in the Euro-Mediterranean Region**, organized within the MedWE Programme of the European Institute for the Mediterranean (IEMed) and the Union for the Mediterranean (UfM) brings experts together to discuss the impact of climate change on gender and security in the Euro-Mediterranean region.

Hala Barakat, Director of the AUC Center for Entrepreneurship and Innovation at the Onsi Sawiris School of Business, opened the session by

welcoming participants to the MedWe Dialogue, introducing the event as a platform for experts to explore the intersection of climate change, security, and gender.

Barakat shared several initiatives aimed at empowering women, particularly in the field of technology and entrepreneurship. She explained that the AUC runs an academy specifically for women entrepreneurs, serving Egyptian women across various governorates. AUC also manages a flagship program called Rabe-ha, which funded by Global Affairs Canada, in collaboration with **UN Women** and the **National Commission for Women**

(NCW). This program has supported over 2,000 women entrepreneurs nationwide. The initiative focuses on building the capacity of women-owned micro, small, and medium-sized enterprises (MSMEs) to grow and scale their businesses.

Barakat shared that the AUC recently received data from the **Women on Board Observatory**, which was established five years ago to measure the representation of women on the boards of Egyptian companies listed on the **EGX (Egyptian Exchange)** and the **FRA (Financial Regulatory Authority)**. This data has been valuable in monitoring women's pres-

ence in leadership roles and board positions in the Egyptian corporate sector.

Acknowledging the challenges faced by women, Barakat noted that these projects seek to collect data to improve support for Egyptian women. Finally, she also highlights the challenges women face due to the care economy, including the often-invisible labour of raising children and managing family responsibilities. She stressed that these issues are critical to address as essential to the discussions on gender equity.

In the context of the MedWe Dialogue, Barakat emphasized how climate risks

intensify social, economic, and geopolitical vulnerabilities, particularly for women and marginalized communities. She highlighted the importance of fostering dialogue among participants to promote gender-responsive policies and encourage international cooperation across the Euro-Mediterranean region.

Anna Dorangricchia, Programme Manager for Gender Equality at the Social and Civil Affairs Division of the Union for the Mediterranean (UfM), addressed the session by highlighting the importance of integrating gendered perspectives into climate policies to ensure more inclusive and effective solutions. In this framework, UfM has launched a specific programme focusing on the nexus between women and climate risk. More particularly, UfM works on how climate risk can be included in the **Women, Peace, and Security (WPS) agenda**. The UN WPS agenda works for the integration of gender perspectives in conflict prevention, resolution, and peacebuilding, emphasizing the critical role women play in these areas.

By highlighting the intersection between gender, climate risk, peace, and security, the UfM seeks to strategically align with the objectives of the WPS agenda to integrate women's perspectives in addressing security and peace challenges, particularly in the context of climate-related risks.

Dorangricchia announced UfM's plan to launch a regional debate on this specific

issue in 2025, launching a network of organisations and experts working on this stressing the urgent need to gather more data and organize a regional stakeholder conference by the end of the year. She underscored that climate risks in the Mediterranean are increasing, making it essential to adopt a holistic approach. This initiative aims to build a knowledge hub that will centralize information and data on the intersection of gender and climate risk across the Mediterranean region, fostering greater collaboration among experts and stakeholders and ensuring that comprehensive and sustainable strategies are put in place.

She concluded by outlining that this initiative is part of UfM's objective of incorporating gender perspectives into national climate action plans, aiming to create a unified program that provides capacity-building and advocacy to bridge the gap between gender equality and climate resilience.

Gemma Aubarell, Director of the Culture, Gender, and Civil Society Department at IEMed, concluded the opening discourse by introducing the MedWE initiative, jointly promoted by the UfM and IEMed. She explained that the program annually selects a specific theme to be explored through the lens of gender equality and empowerment, bringing together diverse experiences and expertise with the aim of driving meaningful impact. This year, the initiative focuses on the intersection of climate change and gender equity. In

her intervention, Ms. Gemma Aubarell emphasised the importance of moving beyond problem identification toward promoting transformation and proactive solutions. She underlined the need to fix our attention not only on the challenges, but also on practical steps forward—highlighting how the MedWE initiative seeks to inspire meaningful change and cooperation across the Euro-Mediterranean region.

Ms. Aubarell announced the upcoming launch of the second initiative's paper, scheduled for release on 7th March, accompanied by a dedicated webinar. This year's edition focuses on the climate crisis and gender equality in the Euro-Mediterranean context, addressing the urgency of the issue in light of the region's current and projected vulnerabilities. She stressed that the analysis goes beyond showcasing situations—it serves as a platform for dialogue and action. The goal is to create a tool that facilitates cooperation and fosters collective responses to shared emergencies. The gender perspective is not incidental but grounded in the commitments of the UfM Ministerial Declaration on strengthening the role of women in society.

The paper adopts an intersectional approach, exploring how economic insecurity, regional instability, and climate-induced displacement intersect with gender empowerment and reporting. These dimensions are carefully integrated into the analysis, offering a comprehensive view and paving the way

for concrete recommendations for future action. Aubarell concluded by stressing that the IEMed study aims to bridge knowledge with political action, fostering cooperation between Mediterranean countries to address these urgent challenges.

DISCUSSION: HOW CLIMATE CHANGE AFFECTS OUR LIVELIHOODS

Dr. Noura Abdelwahab, Senior Gender and Social Inclusion Expert at the International Water Management Institute-MENA Office and **Dr. Zeina Moneer, Senior Environmental and Climate Policy Analyst and Senior Lecturer of Environmental Politics** facilitated a discussion revolving around the intersection of climate change and gender, emphasizing the urgent need for gender-transformative approaches. Both speakers highlighted the necessity of integrating innovative interventions to address the challenges posed by climate change, particularly for women in the MENA region.

The Role of Technology and International Agents in Climate Action

Moderator: *Dr. Zeina, what is the role of technology and international agents in protecting women and putting them at the forefront of climate action?*

Dr. Zeina Moneer underscored the critical role of technological advancements and international cooperation in safeguarding women's livelihoods in the

face of climate challenges. She explained that the MENA region is highly vulnerable to climate risks, ranking among the most water-stressed areas globally. With over 70% of arable land dependent on rain-fed agriculture, erratic weather patterns—droughts, floods, and extreme heatwaves—pose a significant threat to food security and local economies.

“The scarcity of natural resources has always been at the centre of conflicts in the region,” Dr. Zeina noted, referencing Syria’s prolonged drought as a factor that aggravated political discontent, as well as Gaza’s ongoing water crisis. She emphasized that climate-related events, combined with political instability, disproportionately affect vulnerable populations, particularly women and children.

Innovative Solutions to Combat Climate Change’s Impact on Women

Moderator: *Dr. Noura, what kind of innovations can we use to fight the impact of climate change on women on sectors such as agriculture and water management?*

Dr. Noura Abdelwahab presented an innovative solution—the **Black Soldier Fly Project**—as a model for sustainable waste management and economic empowerment. This initiative utilizes black soldier fly larvae, which grow out of food waste, as an alternative source of protein for animal feed and compost. She highlighted its benefits:

- The dried larvae contain up to **50% high-quality protein**, making them a sustainable alternative to traditional animal fodder.
- **Insect farming** requires significantly less water, land, and energy compared to soy, which is commonly used for poultry feed.
- The project provides **women-led micro-business opportunities**, generating sustainable income while addressing food waste management.

However, Dr. Noura pointed out that scaling up such projects remains a challenge. Risk officers need tangible collateral, and sustainable business models do not always fit conventional financial frameworks, she explained. The Black Soldier Fly initiative has already launched **50 micro-projects** in collaboration with the Egyptian NGO and NPO Nahdet El Mahrousa, each costing approximately **40,000 EGP**, providing women with both economic independence and climate resilience strategies.

The solution, she argued, lies in integrating small-scale sustainable businesses into **national projects**, ensuring financial and institutional support for women entrepreneurs.

Women’s Role in Climate Decision-Making

Moderator: *Dr. Zeina, does this mean that women should participate in the decision-making of national climate policies? What do you think of the narrative*

that women should not participate in the decision-making process?

Dr. Zeina strongly rejected the narrative that women should be passive recipients of climate policies rather than active participants. She emphasized that portraying women solely as **helpless victims** undermines their agency and ignores their direct contributions to environmental sustainability.

“This vulnerability narrative is constructed,” she stated. “Women’s identities are often seen as fixed, leading to the feminization of vulnerability.” However, she provided counterexamples:

- In rural **Amazigh communities in Morocco**, women assume leadership roles when men migrate for work, taking full responsibility for **managing crops, diversifying irrigation techniques, and sustaining commercial activities**.
- These women are not passive victims but **resilient leaders**, developing innovative approaches to adapt to climate change.

“The discourse must shift,” Dr. Zeina concluded. Women are not merely surviving climate change; they are actively reshaping their communities through sustainable agricultural practices and challenging the protracted discourse of women as vulnerable.

Measuring the Impact of Gender-Transformative Initiatives

Moderator: *Dr. Noura, can you give us an example of a gender-transformative initiative where we can measure its impact in the MENA region?*

Dr. Noura shared the experience of a project supporting SMEs, where a holistic gender-transformative approach was developed over a three-year period, despite initial resistance. After several rejections, the project began by raising awareness on the importance of integrating gender considerations in the workplace, demonstrating that such inclusion leads to tangible impact. In subsequent phases one-to-one gender clinics aimed at identifying concrete actions were introduced, promoting gender-lens investment, and supporting gender-sensitive policy development. Dr. Noura emphasized that this comprehensive, hands-on support model was key to embedding transformation. Reflecting on lessons learned, Ms. Noura stressed the value of knowledge-sharing platforms, proposing the establishment of regional or national knowledge hubs to collect and disseminate success stories—highlighting what worked, what didn’t, and why—as a means to scale and replicate effective practices. “This platform allows women to access proven models, share their experiences, and develop their leadership capacity,” Dr. Noura explained. “By mainstreaming such initiatives, we create long-term resilience for women-led agricultural enterprises.”

This initiative mirrors UfM's goal of building a comprehensive knowledge base, underlining the need for sustained collaboration, data collection, and a gender-responsive approach to ensure that sustainable strategies are effectively implemented.

Gender Mainstreaming in Climate Policies

Moderator: *Dr. Zeina, if we want to mainstream gender into climate action policies, how can we ensure women's skills and abilities are included in the green transformation of the MENA region?*

Dr. Zeina challenged the notion of **gender mainstreaming**, emphasizing that is not just about increasing the number of women in policy discussions—it is about ensuring **meaningful participation**.

“Are women speaking from the same position of power as men?” she questioned. “Is gender mainstreaming not just a technocratic approach to meet global quotas?” She noted that across the Mediterranean region, efforts to integrate gender perspectives into national climate policies vary:

- **Egypt's** Nationally Determined Contributions (NDCs) mention gender equality but **lack concrete measurable targets**.
- **Tunisia** has implemented women's empowerment programs in **agriculture**, linking them to its NDCs.

- **Morocco** has reformed **financial laws to introduce gender-responsive budgeting** for climate action—a model that, according to Dr. Zeina, should be **replicated across the MENA region**.

“There is a **lack of gendered budgeting** in climate action,” she noted. “Without dedicated financial commitments, women's contributions will remain undervalued.”

To ensure a **genuine green transformation**, Dr. Zeina proposed:

- **Reskilling women for the green economy**, providing opportunities for them to compete in emerging industries.
- **Mandatory gender quotas** in government institutions and parliament. “When women are in positions of power,” she argued, “they are more likely to prioritize climate and environmental issues.”

Dr. Zeina concluded with a call for governments to **facilitate women's transition from education** to employment in climate-related fields, ensuring that gender is not just a checkbox in environmental policies but a driving force for equitable change.

Debate

Gemma Aubarell concluded the discussion by emphasizing the **multiple entry points** that emerged throughout the

conversation. She highlighted the opportunity for **the Union for the Mediterranean (UfM) and IEMed** to collaborate in identifying **key priorities** for an **effective policy report** that advances the gender-climate-security agenda.

She noted that the **articles submitted by researchers** revealed several overlapping themes and pressing questions:

1. Framing the Approach – How should this issue be strategically addressed at the intersection of gender, climate, and security?

2. Policy Integration – What steps can be taken to support and implement these practices within national and regional agendas?

3. Data-Driven Solutions – Given the identified gap in data, how can research contribute to a transformative approach to gender, security, and climate change?

4. Mediterranean Cooperation – Climate change remains a shared challenge between North Africa and Southern Europe—how can cooperation be strengthened in response to these common threats?

5. Expanding the Security Lens – This discussion has approached security from multiple angles—economic, political, and environmental. How can gender be placed at the heart of these agendas to ensure meaningful impact?

She underscored the importance of embedding gender considerations into both the security and climate agendas, asserting that without this integrated perspective, achieving long-term policy goals will remain out of reach. She closed by reaffirming the need for continued Mediterranean cooperation and an actionable framework that bridges research, policy, and implementation.

Subsequently, the floor was opened for participants to reflect on the issues raised during the discussion, expanding on key challenges:

- **Highlighting the need for localized strategies**, discussion pointed to the importance of balancing regional cooperation with policies adaptable to specific social, economic, and environmental realities. Effective action requires both broad collaboration and localized implementation to address community-specific needs. However, climate change considerations have yet to be fully integrated into these strategies, limiting their long-term effectiveness in addressing interconnected challenges.
- **Emphasizing the urgency of stronger institutional commitment**, reflections addressed the gap between gender-sensitive climate and security policies and their practical implementation. Without political will and financial backing, these agendas risk remaining aspirational rather than actionable, un-

derscoring the necessity for stronger accountability mechanisms.

- **Raising concerns about the lack of gender-disaggregated data**, interventions stressed that many security and climate policies in the region fail to incorporate comprehensive research. Without accurate and inclusive data, solutions risk overlooking the most vulnerable groups and failing to create meaningful change.
- **Underscoring the role of youth and civil society**, discussions pointed to the importance of bottom-up engagement alongside high-level policymaking. Ensuring meaningful participation, particularly from younger generations and women, remains critical for shaping a transformative and sustainable agenda.

Closing the discussion, **Anna Dorangrichia** underscored the necessity of knowledge management as a driving force for policy advancement, emphasizing the need to integrate insights from civil society, academia, and the private sector to push governments toward more effective national policies. She outlined two key lines of action in collaboration with IEMed:

- (1) Deepening the intersection between climate and gender through diverse research perspectives
- (2) Integrating climate considerations into the Women, Peace, and Security agenda — a timely opportunity that organizations like **CGIAR** and UfM could actively support.

She also highlighted structural challenges, such as the habitual misallocation of budgets for gender initiatives, calling for a more strategic approach to financing gender-responsive climate policies. Additionally, she pointed to ongoing efforts within the UfM to challenge the prevailing “feminization of vulnerability” narrative, advocating instead for recognizing women as agents of change. In this light, she emphasized that initiatives like those funded by **The Swedish International Development Cooperation Agency (Sida)**, which focus on measuring and monitoring key indicators of gender impact and sustainability, are essential to overcoming these challenges. Sida’s support provides the necessary data to transform policy measures, enabling more effective and targeted action. By aligning efforts to gather gender-specific data and assess the long-term impacts of climate policies, Sida’s work complements UfM’s efforts to integrate women as active participants in climate resilience, ensuring that gender-responsive strategies are not only developed but also properly financed and sustained.

She noted the **launch of the Mediterranean Women Journalists Network** as a step toward reshaping discourse on gender, climate security, and technological innovation. Finally, she stressed the importance of harnessing the significant female enrolment in STEM fields—such as the 40-50% rate in Morocco—to ensure their inclusion in the green workforce, aligning gender equity with sustainable development efforts.

Main Recommendations from the Discussion

1. Enhance regional partnerships and addressing gender security in the Euromed Agenda
2. Invest in women’s leadership and women initiatives related to climate change: socio-economic opportunities and Decision making

3. Strengthen gender-responsive climate policies with new models of Governance

4. Promote gender-sensitive planning and interventions: Socio-cultural changes and multilevel approach

5. Promotion of networks of journalists, policymakers and experts. Launching a Euromed platform





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