

Distr.
LIMITED
E/ESCWA/WOM/2004/IG.1/6
13 July 2004
ENGLISH
ORIGINAL: ARABIC

ECONOMIC AND SOCIAL COMMISSION FOR WESTERN ASIA

REPORT

**ARAB REGIONAL CONFERENCE TEN YEARS AFTER BEIJING: CALL FOR PEACE
BEIRUT, 8-10 JULY 2004**

Summary

The Economic and Social Commission for Western Asia (ESCWA) held the Arab Regional Conference Ten Years After Beijing: Call for Peace at United Nations House in Beirut during the period 8-10 July 2004, pursuant to General Assembly resolution 58/148 of 22 December 2003 in which the

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Fourth World Conference on Women and full implementation of the Beijing Declaration and the Platform for Action, 58/142 of 22 December 2003 on women and political participation and 58/148 of 22 December 2003 on follow-up to the Fourth World Conference on Women and full implementation of the Beijing Declaration and Platform for Action and the outcome of the twenty-third special session of the General Assembly, in addition to Security Council resolution 1325 (2000) of 31 October 2000 on the role of women in peace-building and the Millennium Development Goals (MDGs) adopted by the General Assembly of the United Nations in the year 2000, in particular the third goal, namely, to promote gender equality and empower women,

2. Note that the Arab Regional Conference “Ten Years After Beijing: Call for Peace” is convened pursuant to the United Nations resolutions that stipulate the need to assess the accomplishments achieved during the ten years following the Beijing Conference in order to present the findings to the Commission on the Status of Women (CSW) at its forty-ninth session, to be held in New York from 28 February to 11 March 2005, for their inclusion in the comprehensive document to be prepared by CSW and submitted to the General Assembly in order to provide information on the circumstances and needs of the region.

3. We also note the continuing instability in the Arab region, which has suffered for decades from conflicts and tensions and is one of the regions of the world most exposed to wars and armed conflicts. This situation not only slows the pace of economic and social development but, also, undermines the progress that has been achieved. There is evidence to indicate that the gravity of the regional dangers, the decrease in investment rates and the persistence of the disparity between physical and human capital are all factors that contribute to reducing levels of growth.

4. Our conference today is held in extremely difficult and intricate circumstances, at a time when the occupied Palestinian territories, including East Jerusalem, is experiencing a decline at all levels, including the political, social, economic and cultural levels, which has a negative impact on the living conditions of Palestinian women and the Palestinian people as a whole. The continuing occupation by Israel persists, with the confiscation and settlement of land, demolition of homes, razing of agricultural lands, partition of Palestinian territory and construction of the wall. Circumstances such as these are also being experienced by the people of Iraq, which now suffers from occupation as it suffered from repeated wars and lacks security and stability, as well as the peoples of the Syrian Arab Republic and Lebanon, parts of the territories of both of which remain under occupation.

5. The theme “Call for Peace”, chosen as the theme of the present conference, embodies the circumstances and particular conditions of the region and expresses the desire of its peoples to live in peace and stability and for a better life, in particular since emphasis in past years has been on equality and development while peace has not been accorded sufficient concern. In this regard, we consider that the action required for the achievement of equality and development cannot proceed without the establishment

19. According the necessary attention to the education of girls and women and encouraging them to enter the field of applied sciences, in addition to the removal of discriminatory pictures and ideas that endorse a negative image of women from schoolbooks;
20. Habilitation and training of women to assume positions of leadership and career advancement;
21. Finding solutions for the problems that cause girls to drop out of education, in order to eliminate the illiteracy, poverty and unemployment from which women continue to suffer;
22. According rural women the necessary concern through the provision of the basic services necessary for their lives, the formulation of health awareness, illiteracy eradication and vocational training programmes and the provision of soft loans in order to enable them to support themselves and their families;
23. Concern with the issues and needs of elderly and disabled women, changing th

33. Change the negative image of Arab women in the media through the formulation of audio visual media programmes and direct means of communication;
34. Promote media coverage in order to raise awareness of the rights of women and rectify the flawed perceptions that distort the image of Arab women to the broadest audience, including rural and remote areas, and accord the necessary concern to the media rhetoric directed to the world at large in order to change this image;
35. Monitoring, highlighting and making accessible the successful experiences of women in the media and, in particular the difficulties encountered with regard to the experience of Arab women in satellite channels and coverage of armed conflict zones and wars and the allocation of the necessary resources;
36. Establishment of an association for Arab women in the media in order to facilitate communication among them and with other parties;
37. Establishment of media colleges and centres for training women in countries without such institutions;
38. Call on governments to formulate programmes for raising awareness in schools, media, public institutions and local administrations in order to eliminate wrongful customs and traditions and illegal practices and laws that hinder the advancement of women, prejudice their rights and equality with men and distort their image;
39. Holding workshops and seminars at ESCWA that bring together women in the media, women intellectuals and civil society organizations;
40. Undertaking by ESCWA to prepare a comprehensive directory of the names of women intellectuals, media figures and researchers, in order to improve media coverage of women's issues;
41. Coordination between ESCWA, the United Nations Development Fund for Women (UNIFEM), the League of Arab States, the Arab Women Organization (AWO) and the Center of Arab Women for Training and Research (CAWTAR) with regard to the preparation of the report of NGOs on evaluation of the implementation of the Beijing Platform for Action, for inclusion with the report of governments;
42. Undertaking by ESCWA to organize meetings with Arab parliaments, unions and national associations and organize an international Arab forum that includes Asian women, in order to benefit from their experiences and attainment of key positions, in addition to giving women the opportunity to make their viewpoint known at the hearings held in European parliaments.

B. RESOLUTION ON THE SUBPROGRAMME ON THE EMPOWERMENT AND ADVANCEMENT
OF WOMEN WITHIN THE PROPOSED STRATEGIC FRAMEWORK
FOR THE BIENNIUM 2006-2007

The Committee on Women of the Economic and Social Commission for Western Asia,

Recalling the restructuring of the ESCWA programme of work that requires the review of its priorities,

Recalling also ESCWA resolution 240 (XXII) of 17 April 2003 on the establishment within ESCWA of a committee on women,

Expressing its satisfaction with the establishment of a centre for women within the secretariat with the responsibility for acting as the secretariat of the Committee on Women, pursuant to the above-mentioned resolution,

Informed that the proposed strategic framework for the biennium 2006-2007 includes a special subprogramme on the empowerment and advancement of women,

Convinced of the importance of this subprogramme,

1. *Adopts* the subprogramme for the empowerment and advancement of women within the proposed strategic framework for the biennium 2006-2007;
2. *Requests* the Executive Secretary to allocate the necessary human and material resources to the Centre for Women under the programme of work for the biennium 2006-2007, which will be prepared in

6. Ms. Bahia Hariri commended the theme of the confer

and Cultural Organization (UNESCO) Chair in Women, Science and Technology and Member of Parliament in Sudan; Ms. Habiba Sarabi, Minister of Women's Affairs in Afghanistan; Ms. Yasmina Baddou, Secretary of State responsible for Family, Solidarity and Social Action in Morocco; and Ms. Nesreen Berwari, Minister of Municipalities and Public Works in Iraq.

9. Ms. Asgeirsdottir opened the seminar by emphasizing the capacity of women to cause change in society and citing the experience of her country, Iceland, in this regard. She noted the importance of monitoring the implementation of the laws enacted by women in leadership positions and the need not only for the promulgation of these laws but, also, adherence to their correct application.

10. During the discussion, the following main points were raised and conclusions reached:

(a) The need for Arab women to possess administrative proficiency, knowledge and capacity for leadership in order to impose themselves at the centre of authority;

(b) The ministerial role of women should not be confined to ministries concerned with family, children and social affairs;

(c) The importance of strengthening the aspect of statistics and studies for the provision of accurate data on Arab women and drafting of future policies;

(d) The need to eliminate misconceptions with regard to gender issues in order to expedite development;

(e) Women ministers should be urged to adopt women's issues and maintain close contact with society and the grass roots in order to attract other women and sustain the support and backing of society. They should be encouraged to appear regularly in the media in order to familiarize the public with them and their capacity to develop society;

(f) Encouragement of women to join political parties in addition to their support for participation in those parties, preparatory strengthening their role in parliaments;

(g) Encouragement of women to form associations concerned with business and the private sector with the objective of increasing their participation in economic activity;

(h) Establishment of a forum for Arab women ministers for the exchange of knowledge and experiences and the identification of means for the advancement of women and to promote the political culture of women;

(i) Undertaking by ESCWA to conduct an analytical compendium study on the future of the situation of Arab women;

(j) Assistance from ESCWA in monitoring and following up the progress achieved by member countries in the application of international resolutions, treaties and agreements on women and indicating to Arab governments the need to facilitate the assumption by women of leadership positions.

3. Seminar with civil society organizations including unions, syndicates and political parties to discuss the role of women in civil society in various political, economic and social spheres

11. The seminar was chaired by Ms. Mahnaz Afkhami, President of the Women's Learning Partnership. The main speakers were Sheikha Hissa Khalifa Ahmad Al-Thani, Special Rapporteur on Disability to the United Nations Committee on Social Development; Ms. Mary Jean Eisenhower, President of People to People International in the United States of America; and Ms. Zahira Kamal, Minister of Women's Affairs in Palestine.

12. Ms. Afkhami opened the seminar with a summary of her experience with civil society organizations, during which she noted that opinion polls in the region indicated an aspiration towards democracy. She focused on the need to kindle awareness among youth and women of the issue of gender equality and cause change in cultural concepts. She emphasized the importance of cooperation and exchange of experiences between civil society organizations in the various Arab countries in order to replicate the successful experiences that produce the desired results.

13. During the discussion, the following points were raised and conclusions reached:

(a) Neglect of many of the ratified international conventions for the disabled who constitute 10 per cent of the total world population and, in particular, disabled women with special needs;

(b) Insufficiency of the implementation of the Beijing Platform for Action, responsibility for which rests jointly with governments and civil society;

(c) Insufficiency of civil society action with regard to emergency aid services in a number of Arab countries because of political circumstances and instability, as in Palestine and Iraq;

(d) Absence of genuine, institutional democracy, existence of laws and legislation that restrict the freedom of action of NGOs and the need to create a climate of confidence for genuine, sound partnership between NGOs and governments;

(e) Lack of coordination between civil society organizations at the national, regional and international level;

(f) Absence of young leaderships;

(g) Lack and reduction of financial resources;

(h) Neglect of the private sector to assume its responsibilities with regard to implementation of the Beijing Platform for Action;

(i) Indivisibility of assistance and provision of services on the one hand and contribution to the development process on the other hand, because of the overlap between all development activities;

(j) Importance of the utilization of micro-credit as a means to empower women and encourage them to undertake income generation projects;

(k) Strengthening the partnership between NGOs and governments and emphasizing the role of these organizations in monitoring and building bridges between peoples and governments;

(l) The need to amend the laws and legislation that protect the work of NGOs in the Arab countries;

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Media and Culture in Jordan, Mr. Hisham Sharabi, Chairman of the Center for Policy and Analysis on Palestine and Ms. Iqbal Barakah, Editor-in-Chief of Hawwa magazine, from Egypt.

15. Ms. Shaaban opened the seminar by emphasizing that the struggle today was taking place, above all, at the level of media and culture. She noted the issuance of the consultative opinion of the International Court of Justice ruling on the demolition of the wall in the West Bank and emphasized that this opinion indicated that the struggle would certainly lead to victory and that public opinion was in favour of Arab rights. She also noted that the balance of civilization, ethics and justice weighed in favour of the Arab world, even if the balance of force was against it. Therefore, it was the responsibility of every intellectual to convey Arab rights to public opinion. It was the duty of those working in the media to show world opinion that the weakness from which the Arab world suffers is procedural and organizational, not civilizational or ethical. She emphasized that the Arabs should coordinate their positions and speak with one voice and that men and women in the media and intellectuals should work to win over world opinion and present an intellectual position in the media that would bring Arab rights to the fore.

16. During the discussion, the following main points were raised and conclusions reached:

(a) The mission of the media in conveying the rights of women as human beings in conformity with international law without allowing room for hesitation or doubt in this regard and the joint role of journalists and political will in the accomplishment of this mission;

(b) The role of women in the media in defending women's issues;

(c) The need to mobilize women's organizations to put pressure on those media that convey a negative image of women;

(d) The need to move from an abstract, intellectual vision of women to realistic scenarios and achieve balance between resources spent in the gathering of information and that utilized in the implementation of projects;

(e) Utilization of information drawn equally from a variety of legal and cultural sources at the country level in order to confront reality;

(f) The role of the media in the reduction of the gap between theory and practice in the sphere of women's issues, in addition to support for dialogue and cohesion between peoples and politicians in order to empower the Arab peoples to express their position with regard to the significant developments taking place in the region;

(g) The need for the commitment of journalists and the media to bring out the accomplishments of women in the Arab world and the obstacles that continue to stand in their way;

(h) Establishment of media mechanisms in institutions and organizations concerned with women and strengthening media institutions;

(i) Establishment of an Arab association for women in the media and a specialized centre for women and media studies;

(j) Organization of training and professional skills programmes for Arab women in a

IV. ORGANIZATION OF THE CONFERENCE

A. DATE AND VENUE

women's issues; the late Ms. Lour Mughayzal of Lebanon, for her defence of women's rights; Palestinian women, for their stand for the right to self-determination; and Morocco, for the issuance of the family code.

C. ATTENDANCE

29. Representatives of twelve ESCWA member countries attended the conference in addition to representatives of six other Arab States Members of the United Nations not members of the Commission and other States Members of the United Nations; representatives of United Nations programmes, bodies and organizations; and observers from other inter-governmental, governmental and NGOs. A large number of women ministers and parliamentarians also attended, bringing the total number of participants to 450. The list of participants is attached as annex I to this report.

D. ELECTION OF OFFICERS

30. Rule 18 of the Terms of Reference and Rules of Procedure of ESCWA stipulates that member countries shall assume the chairmanship of the sessions of the subsidiary bodies of the Commission on a rotating basis, in Arabic alphabetical order employed by the United Nations. In view of the absence of the United Arab Emirates from the first part of the meeting (para. 11.3(b) of the Arabic text of the report), the United Arab Emirates was elected to chair the session on 6 November 1984 (see also the report of the Commission on Human Rights, E/CN.4/Sub.1/1984/18, paras. 18 and 19).

- (c) Seminar with Arab women civil society organizations, including syndicates, unions and political parties, to discuss the role of women in civil society in various political, economic and social spheres;
 - (d) Seminar with Arab women intellectuals and media figures to discuss the role of women in cultural life and the media.
7. Report of the Executive Secretary on the activities of the Centre for Women since the first session of the Committee on Women.
 8. Proposed strategic framework for the Centre for Women for the biennium 2006-2007.
 9. Date and venue of the third session of the Committee on Women.
 10. Other matters.

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Annex I

Deputy Minister of Foreign Affairs

Iraq (continued)

Mr. Abdel Baset Karim Mawlood
Manager of the Office of the Deputy
Prime
Minister

Ms. Zanna Muhammad Amin al-Rawandoozi
General Manager of the Ministry of
Municipalities and Public Works

Mr. Essam Abdul Latif Mohammed
Manager of the Office of the Minister of
Labour
and Social Affairs

Mr. Shalaw Hussein Karim
Secretary to the Deputy Prime Minister

Mr. Muhammad Alan Weria
Secretary to the Minister of
Municipalities and
Public Works

Ms. Maysoon Hussein Ahmed
Third Secretary
Ministry of Foreign Affairs

Ms. Ansam Tawfeek Abdul Hameed
Director of Non-Governmental
Organizations
Centre, Ministry of Planning

Ms. Nada Khaled al-Shammari
Diplomatic Attaché
Ministry of Foreign Affairs

Ms. Lamia Lutfi Ali
Archives Manager
Ministry of Planning

Ms. Nesma Faek al-Attiya
Secretary to the Minister of Planning

Ms. Hanan Abdulla Ahmed
Diplomat
Embassy of Iraq in Lebanon

Jordan

Ms. In'am Mufti
Member of the House of Notables

Ms. Asma Khader
Minister of State and Government Spokesperson

Ministry of Culture and Information

Ms. Laila Sharaf
Member of the House of Notables

Ms. Salwa Al Masri
Member of the House of Notables
First Vice President of the Inter-
Parliamentary
Union Coordinating Committee of Women
Parliamentarians

Ms. Ruwaidah Ma'aytah
Member of the House of Notables
Vice President of the National Council
for Family
Affairs

Ms. May Abu Samen
Member of the House of Notables

Ms. Wejdan Al Saket
Member of the House of Notables

Ms. Enssaf al-Khawaldeh
Member of the House of Representatives

Ms. Hayat Musimi
Member of the House of Representatives

Ms. Falak al-Jam'ani
Member of the House of Representatives

Ms. Nariman Rousan
Member of the House of Representatives

Ms. Zakieh Shamayleh
Member of the House of Representatives

Ms. Adab Saud
Member of the House of Representatives

Ms. Ibtissam al-Atiyat
Programme Officer
Jordanian National Commission for Women

Mr. Ali al-Zayood
House of Notables Staff

Mr. Abdullah Bani Ali
Department of Public Relations
House of Representatives

Kuwait

Sheikha Fadyah Saad Al Sabah
General Coordinator
Women's Affairs Committee

Ms. Salwa Mohammed Ajami
Secretary to General Coordinator
Women's Affairs Committee

Lebanon

Ms. Randa Berry
Vice-President
National Commission for Lebanese Women
Mr. Abdulla Bou Habib
Representative of and Political Advisor to
the
Deputy Prime Minister

Ms. Nayla Mouawad
Member of Parliament
President of Woman and Child Committee

Ms. Bahia al-Hariri
Member of Parliament
President of Committee on Education,
Higher
Education and Culture

Ms. Najwa Ramadan

Member of the Palestine National Council
Secretary-General of the General Union
of
Palestinian Women

Ms. Nihaya Mohamed
Member of the Palestine National Council
General Union of Palestinian Women

Ms. Lucia Hijazi
Member of the Palestine National Council
General Union of Palestinian Women

Ms. Rabeeha Diab
Member of the Palestine National Council
General Union of Palestinian Women

Ms. Laila Khaled
Member of the Palestine National Council
General Union of Palestinian Women
Palestine (continued)

Ms. Obeida Kazemi
Member of the Palestine National Council

Ms. Feryal Salim (Samira Salah)
Member of the Palestine National Council
Director of Refugee Affairs

Ms. Somaia Abdel Malik Barghouti
First Counsellor
Mission of Palestine to the United Nations

Ms. Salwa Kayed Hdeib
Director-General
Ministry of Women's Affairs

Ms. Khadijeh Habashneh
General Manager
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Ms. Samia Bamieh
Member of Governmental Coordination
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Ms. Elham Abdel Kader Mheisen
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Member of Governmental Coordination
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Ms. Khitam Ahmad Kayed
General Director of Women's Education
Ministry of Culture

Ms. Anita Anis Mansour
General Director of Women's Development

Ms. Khadija Atba Bin Atba
Deputy to the National People's Assembly
Ms. Fatima al-Zahra Falisi
Deputy to the National People's Assembly

Ms. Zubaida Khorbash
Deputy to the National People's Assembly

Ms. Halima Bouchagour
Deputy to the National People's Assembly

Ms. Mimouna Nouar
Deputy to the National People's Assembly

Ms. Aicha Bousbah
Deputy to the National People's Assembly

Ms. Dalila Hleilo
Deputy to the National People's Assembly

Mr. Benteboula Boudjema
Ministerial Advisor, Embassy of Algeria in
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Mr. Nouredine Araybi
Advisor, Embassy of Algeria in Lebanon
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Ms. Nadia Khathiri
Administrative Officer
National People's Assembly

Ms. Nasira Ben Karna
Administrative Officer, Manager of Studies

Djibouti

Ms. Hawa Ahmed Youssouf
Minister of Women Advancement and
Social
Affairs

Ms. Aisha Muhammad Rubla
Member 783 1(S)-5.6(t)-5.2(u)-3.11r.6(l) S11 1r.6()TJ3.0 13.1527 79.32 563.46 Tm0 Tc027(d68()Tj10.3303 0 0 10.3303 79.32 60

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Ms. Zuhoor al-Shakafi
Member of Parliament

Ms. Yunsook Lee
Member of National Assembly

Ms. Zoubida Bouayad-El Mejjad
Councillor, Second Chamber of the Moroccan
Parliament
Member of Casablanca City Council
Counsellor for Anfa District

Ms. Naima Ben Yahia
Minister for the Family, Solidarity and
Social
Action

Ms. Khadija al-Ghamiri
Member of Parliament

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Ms. Carol el-Sayed
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Consultant

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Ms. Hanaa Sorour
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Department of Family, Childhood and Women
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Ms. Alyaa Ghanam
Second Secretary
Department of Family, Childhood and Women
Cairo, Egypt

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Mr. Mahmood Ali Hafoze
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Women Organization for Social Solidarity

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Imam Sadr Foundation

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Arab Woman Forum

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Beirut, Lebanon

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Ms. Najwa Numaani
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Ms. Rand Sakr
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RIGHTS

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Lebanese Women Democratic Gathering

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Secretary

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Ms. Jumana Merhi
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Ms. Caroline Sukkar
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Expert on Development and Gender Issues
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Ms. Hoda Badran
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Cairo, Egypt

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Cairo, Egypt

Association of Former International Civil Servants

Ms. Seheir Kansouh-Habib
President
Cairo, Egypt

Center for Egyptian Women's Legal Assistance Foundation

Ms. Azza Soliman
General Director

Cairo, Egypt
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FOR SOCIAL
DEVELOPMENT

Ms. Yousriya Loza-Sawiris
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Cairo, Egypt

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Professor, Lebanese University
Beirut, Lebanon

Ms. Mary Rose Zalzal
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Ms. May Abdalla Sinno
Member
Beirut, Lebanon

Ms. Jean Makdisi
Expert
Beirut, Lebanon

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Annex II

