



WE, THE WOMEN IN THE ARAB REGION, on the occasion of the adoption of the **Post-2015 Development Agenda**, and following the adoption of the Addis Ababa Action Agenda, are deeply concerned by the emerging international consensus on sustainable development and financing for programs and development projects in the context of the Middle East and North Africa's urgent priorities and rights.

UN Member States, after lengthy deliberations on the Post-2015 Development Agenda, established an outcome document on 2 August 2015 for adoption at the 68th General Assembly at the United Nations. With 17 Goals and 169 Targets, the document attempts to respond to the challenges in the MDGs, while also reflecting a number of new trends and priorities in economic, social and environmental development. Persistent lobbying from member states, civil society and other stakeholders led to the explicit recognition of the needs of countries in special circumstances, including LDCs, LLDCs, and SIDS. However, the realities affecting countries in conflict and post-conflict situations—including those under occupation—have not been accounted for.

While there is a vision of achieving peaceful and inclusive societies, countries failed to make concrete, time bound and achievable commitments towards ending war and conflict, addressing fanaticism and extremism, and eradicating illicit arms flows. There is also a disappointing lack of commitments regarding prevention of conflict, rebuilding and rehabilitation. The international community's failure to recognize and prioritize our region's dire circumstances affects the development and security prospects for all nations.

OUR REGION FACES NUMEROUS CONFLICTS AND THREATS: Our daily realities, as women, citizens and non-citizens, refugees and internally displaced peoples, teachers, lawyers, and professionals from other sectors, activists, academics, etc. in this region, reflect the devastating and systemic issues affecting our countries. While we acknowledge Goal 5 and Goal 16, dedicated to gender equality and women’s empowerment and building peaceful and inclusive societies, these targets and indicators fall short of meeting the challenges of conflict-affected countries and communities.

STRUCTURAL ISSUES

Arms trafficking and illicit financial flows to extremist groups in the region, as well as support for political extremists by governments with strategic political and economic aims, fuels violent conflict and instability in the region, and grows the number of **armed youth and militias**. Countries in the region, as well as countries of the global north, **enjoy impunity for their role in financing and facilitating in arms production and trading** across borders, and their **negligence of their commitments to international treaties** and conventions. This impunity has exacerbated ongoing tensions, subsequently increasing instability, destruction and violence against women, as well as the **rise of various forms of fanaticism and extremism**. During times of extreme crisis, **a lack of coordination between humanitarian relief and human rights activists** on the ground often prevents aid from reaching the women living in the most vulnerable areas.

ARAB WOMEN HAVE BEEN LEFT BEHIND IN THE SDGS: There is urgent need to recognize and respond to the disproportionately negative impact that conflict has on the realization of human rights for women. While international conventions, resolutions, and national legislation—including CEDAW, CRC, CERD, ICESCR, ICCPR, and UN Security Council Resolutions on women, peace, and security, and national constitutions—realize the equal and non-discriminatory rights of women in conflict situations, family and penal laws in the region often contradict and violate these principles.

Eradicating violence against women through the life cycle in the region is a priority, as there is an overwhelming failure to protect women in armed conflict situations. State and non-State actors are not held accountable to conventions they are signatory to, and enjoy impunity for human rights violations and crimes against humanity (e.g. the slave trade and the sale of women in the slave markets).

There is **weak representation and participation of women in all spheres and levels of decision-making** in the region. While there is a lack of laws, regulations, and quotas to facilitate women’s rights—including political and civil rights, institutional oversight and enforcement over existing legislation is non-existent.

Women's right to economic participation is also not realized; legal **frameworks for property and inheritance for married and unmarried women threatens their economic independence and ownership over resources**. These norms also discriminate against single and divorced women. As women take on a **disproportionate amount of unpaid care work and make up a significant percentage of workers in the informal economy**, they are not protected by labor laws, compensated for their work, nor included in GDP calculations.

Women, as **primary care givers in families and communities**, bear substantial responsibilities for accessing services and resources such as health and reproductive health and rights, education, water, food, as well as humanitarian relief in times of crisis and access to courts etc. Violence from international interventions, as well as internal fighting and extremism, **destroys infrastructure and transport systems, and impairs women's safe mobility to access these resources**.

THESE ARE NOT ONLY WOMEN'S ISSUES: THEY ARE OBSTACLES TO THE ENTIRE POST-2015 DEVELOPMENT AGENDA. Acknowledging the failures to address the pressing and unique challenges of our region, we call on member states and international stakeholders to act on the vision of the post-2015 development agenda¹ through concrete and measurable commitments.

FOR MEANINGFUL INCREASES IN PEACE, STABILITY, AND EQUALITY ON THE GROUND, WE DEMAND THAT MEMBER STATES:

INCREASE INVESTMENT IN GENDER EQUALITY AND WOMEN'S EMPOWERMENT:

- Allocate budget line items in the national budgets for organizations led by women, supporting women's empowerment, and rehabilitation and reintegration of victims of violence and conflict.
- Ensure humanitarian aid is accessible, gender-responsive, and equitably distributed, and consult with women in vulnerable areas to meet their basic needs (including private needs).
- Institutionalize financing and technical support programs for women in decision-making circles and monitoring committees at all levels.
- Allocate technical and financial resources directly to feminist and women's groups, through international protection tools, for monitoring violations of human rights.
- Allocate percentage of ODA to operationalizing objectives of Agenda 1325
- Shift domestic revenue resources for manufacturing and purchasing towards public spending on health, education, housing, and fulfillment of all economic and social rights.

TRANSFORM RHETORIC INTO REALITY:

- Implement and enforce the Fourth Geneva Convention with regard to Women and Children in Emergency and Armed Conflict; the Arms Trade Treaty to end the flow of military arms into the region; and the CEDAW General recommendation No. 30 on women in conflict prevention, conflict and post-conflict situations including occupation, holding all parties accountable and ending impunity.
- Implement the quota system—at least 30% according to Beijing—including representation of women at all levels of government and in national reconciliation committees.
- Establish 50% quotas for women’s representation in peace building and reconciliation.
- Empower constitutions that explicitly support/promote gender equality and women’s rights
- Implement social protection programs and policies for domestic and informal workers, and enforce special access to social protection programs for single-woman headed households.

END IMPUNITY THROUGH ACCOUNTABILITY For war criminals

- Establish and operationalize accountability mechanisms for Agenda 1325 at the international, regional and national levels.
- Enforce all the international tools and mechanisms available for justice and accountability, including the International Criminal Court channels.
- Institutionalize and monitor gender sensitive budgets to decrease gender gaps, especially for displaced women, refugees and women with disabilities.
- Guarantee that courts and legal systems are logistically and financially accessible.

PUT SYSTEMIC CHANGE AT THE HEART OF SUSTAINABLE DEVELOPMENT

- Dedicate space and time for regular meetings with women in crisis situations and in refugee and displaced persons camps to assess and respond to their aid priorities.
- Promote legal protection frameworks, preventing public and private forms of violence.
- Establish special tribunals on violations against women and special connections with UN bodies on refugees and victims of armed conflict.
- Ensure that laws on family and children align with international agreements on women’s rights, equal access to education, and incrimination of early marriage.
- Require representation of women in all financial and administrative bodies tasked with allocation and implementation of development aid at the national level.
- Create mechanisms to ensure legalized and free education for all, and timely aid and resources for the rebuilding and reconstruction of schools destroyed in conflict and war.
- Pressure donor countries to ease debt burdens of countries in conflict to reduce threats to public spending on social protection and economic and social rights

IN A TIME OF OVERWHELMING VIOLENCE, DISCRIMINATION, AND INSTABILITY PREVENTING SUSTAINABLE AND INCLUSIVE DEVELOPMENT, MEMBER STATES MUST HEED THIS CALL TO ACTION.

We, women in the Arab States Region, commit to serving our communities, sensitizing partners and governments on the post-2015 Development Agenda, as well as other relevant international conventions and resolutions, to ensure that local and national level implementation is coherent with international human rights norms and standards. We also commit to continue or struggle to monitor, document and fight violence against women in all its forms, and contribute to the implementation of related policies and programs that remove barriers to our economic, social and political empowerment and rights.

The Post-2015 Development Agenda strives for *“a world of universal respect for human rights and human dignity, the rule of law, justice, equality and non-discrimination (para 8). **Member states have committed to**“work for a significant increase in investments to close the gender gaps and strengthen support for institutions in relation to gender equality and the empowerment of women at the global, regional and national levels. All forms of discrimination and violence against women and girls will be eliminated...” (para 20). **The International community has committed to:** “redouble our efforts to resolve or prevent conflict and to support post-conflict countries, including through ensuring that women have a role in peace-building and state-building. We call for further effective measures and actions to be taken, in conformity with international law.”*