

Press Release

The United Nations in Lebanon celebrates International Women's Day

Beirut, Lebanon

Sunday, March 8, 2020 (United Nations) – On this International Women's Day, the United Nations issues a call to action on women's rights and gender equality in Lebanon. We recognize that 'gender inequality is the overwhelming injustice of our age and the biggest human rights challenge we face' and that women's equal rights 'offer solutions to some of the most intractable problems of our age', as stated by the United Nations Secretary General António Guterres in [his recent remarks on women and power](#).

The "Global Gender Gap Report 2019" released by the World Economic Forum ranks Lebanon 145th out of 153 countries in its Global Gender Equality Index. On this International Women's Day, the UN and its partners recognize the progress made in Lebanon but draw attention to how entrenched gender inequalities are in the country's legislations and practices, and how much progress is needed to break the vicious cycle of gender-based violence and inequality.

To recognize International Women's Day, the United Nations System in Lebanon, coordinated by UN Women, comes together around a joint campaign building on the Global IWD's theme titled [I am Generation Equality: Realizing Women's Rights](#). The campaign is aligned with UN Women's new multigenerational campaign, Generation Equality, and marks the 25th anniversary of the Beijing Declaration and Platform for Action adopted in 1995.

In Lebanon, the UN system's joint campaign, structured around the tagline ***Nahnou Laha (Her Fight is Our Fight)***, builds on the global theme and tells the history of women's rights and gender equality in Lebanon, to recognize some of the most prominent women who shaped Lebanon's history and the legacy of their struggles for peace and gender justice.

The campaign includes an online interactive timeline beginning with the formation of the Lebanese Republic, which documents the history of the struggle for women's rights and



gender equality in Lebanon, through highlighting key events, dates, and the work of women hailing from different areas including the sciences, arts, politics and academia.

In parallel, a social media campaign will run, as of today and for the next 11 days, on the social media platforms of the UN agencies in Lebanon. The campaign will include bilingual Arabic and English social media flashcards and a 2-minute video of remarkable moments related to the women's rights journey in Lebanon.

The UN Special Coordinator for Lebanon, Jan Kubis said "Commemoration of this year's IWD in Lebanon takes place in a specific context. It is women and youth who have assumed the front role in mass national movement for radical change, who have been protecting its peaceful and non-sectarian character and who have been sending a strong signal to political forces and their partisan supporters, rejecting their provocations and manipulations, constant attempts to block change. While the new government has established a new benchmark with its 30 % being women and the 1325 National Action plan can be an effective tool for women's empowerment and equality, a long way is ahead. Bold steps are needed, including political, legislative, economic and social. The next elections provide another important opportunity. The UN in Lebanon will continue to support Lebanon's women, press for their equal rights, opportunities, participation, representation and empowerment".

The first National Woman's Day was observed in the United States on 28 February 1909. In 1975, during International Women's Year, the United Nations began celebrating International Women's Day on March 8, which is now celebrated in many countries around the world. It is a day when women are recognized for their achievements regardless of divisions, be those national, ethnic, linguistic, cultural, economic or political.

"Achieving gender equality at all fronts is a compelling need to remedy injustices, maintain peace and stability and achieve fundamental human rights." said Mr. Philippe Lazzarini, UN Resident and Humanitarian Coordinator for Lebanon. "The recent civic movement has shown women's leading role in shaping popular demands. They sent a wake-up call to realize effective change, including prioritizing women's equal rights at the socio-economic and political levels. However, this change cannot be achieved without firm political will and steady commitment to enforce laws that fight male-dominated power structures, root out gender-based violence and secure women's civic and political rights," he added.

In 2019, the Government of Lebanon led by the National Commission for Lebanese Women submitted its Beijing +25 [report](#), a national review on the implementation of the Beijing Declaration and Platform for Action, covering the 2014 – 2019 period. The report pointed to progress achieved on the adoption of laws and strategies including the Strategy for Combatting Violence against Women and Girls, the repeal of Article 522 of the Penal Code in addition to amendments to Personal Status Laws. It also cited the challenges Lebanon faces including the enforcement of laws related to the protection of women and girls from domestic violence, sexual violence, trafficking in persons, and other abuses. Furthermore, in late 2019,



Lebanese women were very vocal during popular protests, which, among other claims, called for gender equality.

The year 2020 will also mark several other galvanizing moments in the gender equality movement: a five-year milestone towards achieving the Sustainable Development Goals; the 20th anniversary of UN Security Council resolution 1325 on women, peace and security; and the 10th anniversary of UN Women's establishment.

The United Nations system in Lebanon comprises 23 agencies, funds and programmes, as well as a peacekeeping mission, a political mission and a regional commission that cover a broad spectrum of peacekeeping, political, development, human rights and humanitarian work in Lebanon. The United Nations supports Lebanon to promote the country's long-term peace and security, development and human rights priorities.

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