



EastWest
INSTITUTE



Stronger Together

Women Parliamentarians
in Joint Action for Peace
and Security

EVENT REPORT

1/2014

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Women Parliamentarians
in Joint Action for
Peace and Security

March 2014



ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

Partners:

Women's Action for New Direction (WAND)

Parties with whom we cooperated:

Ministry of Family and Social Policy – Turkey

Grand National Assembly – Turkey

HÜRSIAD – Ankara, Turkey

Ankara municipality – Turkey

Georgetown University – Washington D.C., USA

North Atlantic Treaty Organization (NATO) – Brussels, Belgium

Soka Gakkai International – Washington D.C., USA

Sanam Naraghi Anderlini at MIT Center for International Studies – Cambridge, MA, USA

Beth Grupp at Beth Grupp Associates – Washington D.C., USA

Jamila Raqib at Albert Einstein Institution – Boston, MA, USA

Zuhal Kurt – Turkey

Allen Collinsworth – Turkey

U.S. Congress

H.E. Gary Doer, Ambassador of Canada to the USA

Donors:

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Introduction

The United Nations Security Council passed resolution 1325 on Women, Peace and Security (WPS) in 2000, which is considered to be the backbone of efforts to include women in peace negotiations, post-conflict reconstruction and disarmament, demobilization and re-integration initiatives around the world. Ten years after this landmark resolution was passed, the EastWest Institute's Parliamentarians Network for Conflict Prevention started its work on the Women, Peace and Security agenda upon the request of women members of parliament from Afghanistan and Pakistan, who felt marginalized, sidelined and excluded from their national security processes as well as from international dialogues on this issue.

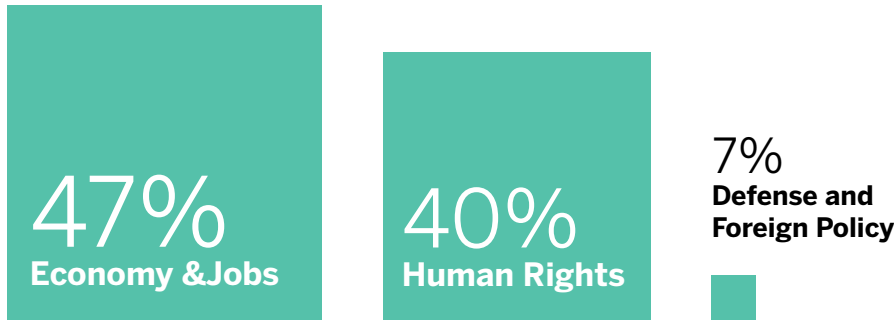
Having primarily focused on the tense relationship between Afghanistan and Pakistan and on the resulting security implications, particularly in the Federally Administrated Tribal Areas (FATAs), the Network brought together women MPs from both countries to discuss the obstacles to peace. The determination of these women MPs to claim their places at the table of power has resulted in an unprecedented commitment to a standing dialogue between their respective countries. Two historic meetings have taken place under the Network's auspices: we convened the first-ever delegation of Afghan women parliamentarians in Islamabad in 2011, and in April 2012 we arranged for the first ever official delegation of Pakistani women parliamentarians to visit Kabul. The Network's ongoing efforts to strengthen the role of female parliamentarians and build their capacity to adequately deal with the challenges of their countries has also resulted in a study visit to Brussels in October 2012 for Afghan parliamentarians. Two years of hard work bore fruit: two-thirds of the delegation consisted of women.

“What you are doing in collaboration is truly remarkable. A network like this is so important, to let your sisters around the world know that they are not alone in their struggle. But that they are the agents for change.”

**Ambassador
Melanne Verveer**
Executive Director,
Georgetown
Institute for
Women, Peace &
Security

Participants Polling

Did you run for office on a specific political issue?



36%

are not supported by their family in pursuing a political career

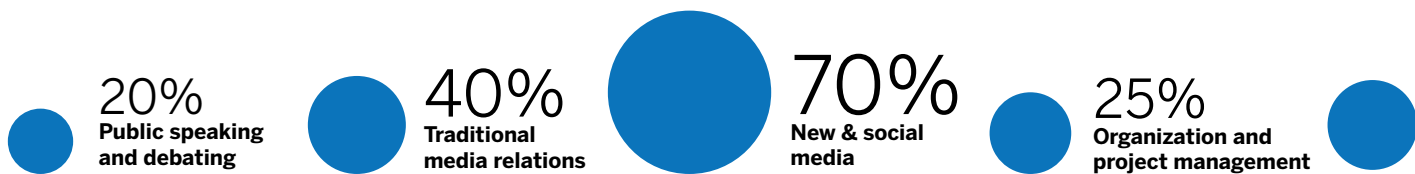
86%

have received threatening letters, phone calls and death threats

100%

didn't consider leaving politics, despite these threats

Which **skills** would you like to develop to better interact with your voters and colleagues?



With elections on the horizon for both Pakistan (2013) and Afghanistan (2014), the Network searched for ways of continuing to support the Women, Peace and Security agenda, particularly in Afghanistan and Pakistan. Drawing lessons from other areas of our work, we believe that sharing experiences and forging mentoring relationships are the keys to success. This led us to partner with Women's Action for New Directions (WAND), a U.S.-based organization with a mission of "educat[ing] the public and opinion leaders about the need to reduce violence and militarism, and redirect excessive military spending to unmet human and environmental needs."

WAND has been working to increase women's political leadership to further these goals and has forged longstanding relationships with women trailblazers in the U.S.

Senate, Congress and in state and local legislative bodies across the United States. These are women leaders who can serve as role models and mentors for women MPs in countries where they are still considered secondary citizens. In turn, face-to-face meetings facilitate the exchange of genuine information on the situation on the ground in countries such as Afghanistan and Pakistan, and also about practices in the host country of the meeting. Furthermore, to fully capitalize on the opportunity to bring this extraordinary group of women leaders together, we invited women MPs from countries in transition and post-conflict societies in the Middle East and North Africa (MENA) so that they, too, could benefit.

The potential for synergy between the Parliamentarians Network for Conflict Prevention and Women's Action for New Direc-

Do you know enough about the UN SC Res 1325 to use it in your work?

before  20%

after  80%

I **most** confidently represent my constituency on issues concerning:



tions led the two organizations to form a “Partnership to Strengthen Women’s Political Empowerment and to Advance the Role of Women in Peace, Security, and Human Rights.” The 2013 partnership had the objective to:

- Strengthen the role of women lawmakers in all political processes, beyond strictly gender-related issues in the wider MENA region, with a particular focus on Afghan and Pakistani women parliamentarians;
- Enhance regional cooperation as well as cooperation with female legislators in the U.S.;
- Build a strong regional and international network of support for women decision makers, with a specific focus on supporting women in Afghanistan and Pakistan;

- Facilitate sustained means of communication for the exchange of information on parliamentary initiatives, calls for action and other activities which can enhance the outreach of women in the wider MENA region.

The partnership—the first of its kind between the two organizations—foresaw a range of activities, but most notably two meetings that would facilitate the forging of personal ties between the women lawmakers. To keep the activities balanced, one of the exchanges would take place in the MENA region and the other in Washington D.C. This report details the most significant steps that have been made in shaping the partnership and recalls the achievements of this group of extraordinary politicians.

Participants

**Firdaous Oueslati,
Tunisian Constituent Assembly (Tunisia)**

Firdaous Oueslati was born in Amsterdam and studied in Leiden, The Netherlands, but her home country is Tunisia. After the revolution in Tunisia, she decided to run for a seat in the Tunisian Constituent Assembly. Oueslati has been elected representing the district 'The Americas and Europe.' These regions are considered separate districts because of the large number of Tunisian citizens living on their territory. Since her election Oueslati has been working in the Tunisian Constituent Assembly on drafting a new constitution. Her priorities were to ensure that the constitution provides everyone with their fundamental freedoms and that the government is subject to checks and balances. The new constitution was adopted in January 2014 and is praised as the most progressive in the region.



**Marianne Malak
Constituent Assembly Egypt)**

Marianne Malak, a Coptic-Christian, was elected to the Egyptian Parliament in 2012 as the youngest Member of Parliament in Egyptian history. With a degree in law, a master in human rights, and a PhD in international law, Marianne was a member of the Constituent Assembly, which drew up a new constitution for Egypt. She was one of the first women to sit on the platform of the Egyptian parliament, and is a member of the Inter-Parliamentary Union. Currently, she serves on Egypt's National Council for Human Rights (NCHR) and the Committee of Constitution and Legislation; as well as the Tourism, Culture and Media Committee of the Egyptian Parliament.

**State Representative
Angela Williams
Colorado (USA)**

State Representative Angela Williams serves as chair of the Audit Committee and the Business, Labor, Economic, and Workforce Development Committee, and is a member of the House Services Committee and State Veterans & Military Affairs Committee. She is also the owner of the Angela Williams Agency, Inc. Williams is an active community leader. She is a recent graduate of the Harvard Kennedy School Sr. Executives Program. As co-founder of Chamber Connect, the Colorado Black Chamber of Commerce leadership development program, she has been essential to the professional growth of dozens of Colorado's future minority business leaders. Williams also serves as the chairperson of the recently formed Black Democratic Legislative Caucus of Colorado.



**Loubna Amhair
House of Representatives (Morocco)**

Loubna Amhair has been a Member of the Moroccan House of Representatives since 2011, serving on the Committee of Finance and Economic Development. Prior to her election as an MP, Amhair has been advisor to the State Minister on communication and technical matters, law projects and protocol issues. From 2007 to 2009, she was Head of the Studies Service at the Directorate for Education, Research and Development of the Ministry of Agriculture and Fisheries. Amhair has hands-on experience in rural development and the socio-economic promotion of rural women.



**Golalai Nur Safi
National Assembly (Afghanistan)**

Golalai Nur Safi has been a Member of the Afghan National Assembly, Wolesi Jirga, since 2005, where she represents the Balkh province in the North of Afghanistan. She holds a medical degree from the Ukraine Medical University and after the fall of the Taliban in 2001, she worked as a doctor for Medica Mondiale. She has also worked as an ophthalmologist at the Kabul Medical Hospital. Safi is a member of the High Peace Council. Only nine of the 70 members are women.



**Donya Aziz
National Assembly (Pakistan)**

Donya Aziz, a medical doctor, began her political career with the PML-Pakistan Muslim League in 2002 and was elected to Pakistan's National Assembly. During her first tenure in parliament, she was appointed Parliamentary Secretary for the Ministry of Population Welfare. In addition to serving on various committees, she was also parliamentary representative on the Pakistan Medical and Dental Council as well as on the Pakistan Nursing Council. From 2008 to 2013, Donya served as a member of the working council of the Women's Parliamentary Caucus, President of the Young Parliamentarian's Forum, as well as on the Executive Board of Parliamentarians for Global Action.



**Elay Ershad
National Assembly
(Afghanistan)**

Elay Ershad is currently serving as the Chairperson of the Committee on Education, Higher Education, Cultural Affairs and Religious Affairs. Prior to becoming a parliamentarian, Ershad worked as the Gender Advisor and Executive Assistant to the Minister of the Interior and the Minister of Education in Afghanistan. She has also worked in the legal arena, as a Translator and Afghan Representative for Moscovitch Advocate Holland, and as an assistant lecturer in the Faculty of Law and Political Science of Kabul University.



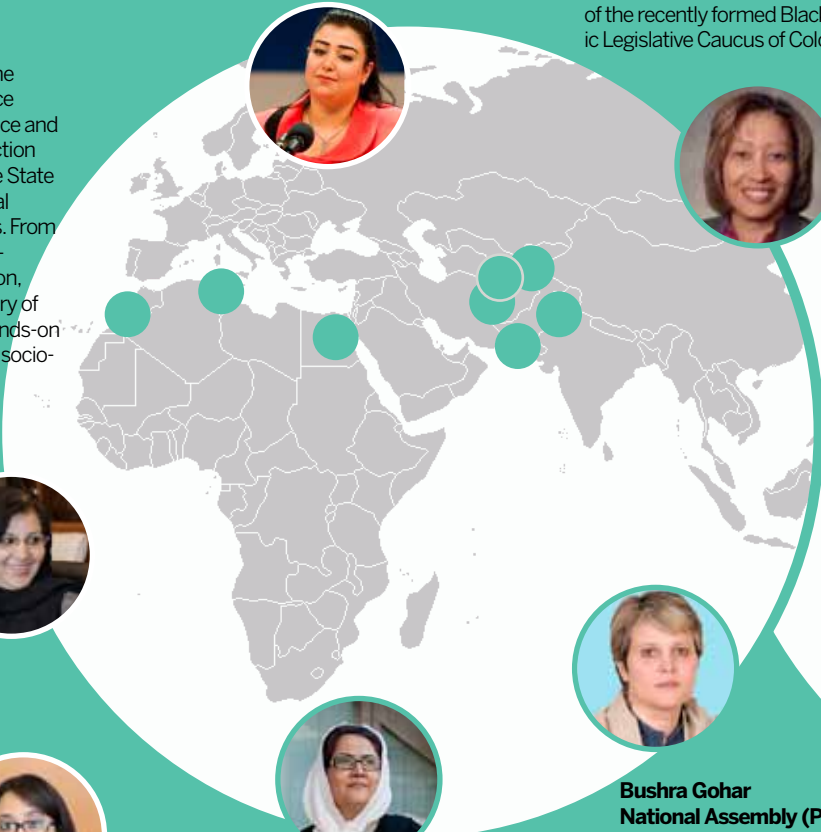
**Bushra Gohar
National Assembly (Pakistan)**

Bushra Gohar served as member of Pakistan's National Assembly from 2008 to 2013, and was elected as the chair of the National Assembly's Standing Committee on Women's Development in 2009. She has been a member of the Working Council of the Women Parliamentary Caucus and has also served on the National Assembly's Standing Committees on Finance and Revenue, Interior and Kashmir Affairs. Since 1994, Gohar has been the Director of the Human Resources Management and Development Center (HRMDC). Gohar holds a master's degree in Human Resource Management from Wilmington College, U.S.



**Shinkai Karokhail
National Assembly (Afghanistan)**

Shinkai Karokhail has been a Member of the National Assembly of Afghanistan, Wolesi Jirga, since 2005, where she works towards conflict prevention and promotes women's rights. Karokhail was one of the founding members of the Afghan Women Educational Center (AWEC) in 1991, worked as a teacher in the first years and held various positions throughout the development of the NGO. She studied at the Medical College of Kabul University between 1979 and 1984 to become a Medical Doctor and completed her degree in Political Science and International Relations at the Kateb University of Kabul in 2011. In September 2012, Karokhail was honored by the EastWest Institute with the H.H. Sheikha Fatima bint Mubarak Values-based Leadership Award in recognition of her unwavering efforts in advocating women's rights.






**State Senator
Sandy Pappas
Minnesota (USA)**


Sen. Sandy Pappas' focus is engaging women legislators in media work and active messaging in state and national media outlets. Pappas was first elected to the Minnesota House of Representatives in 1984 where she served three terms. In 1990, she was elected to the Minnesota Senate where she is serving her seventh term and was recently chosen by her peers to serve as Senate President. Throughout her career, Pappas has been a fervent advocate for human rights. She has held several leadership positions in the Minnesota Senate, and is the founder of Forward Global Women, an NGO which fosters the development of women peacemakers in the MENA region.

**Delegate Joseline Pena-Melnyk
Maryland (USA)**




Joseline Pena-Melnyk represents District 21 in the Maryland House of Delegates. She is a member of the Health and Government Operations Committee, the Regional Revitalization Work Group, the Legislative Black Caucus of Maryland and Women Legislators of Maryland. She is also currently the House Chair of the Joint Committee on Access to Mental Health Services and the Bi-County Committee of Prince George's County Delegation. Pena-Melnyk was born in the Dominican Republic and attended John F. Kennedy High School in the Bronx, New York. She received a B.A. in criminal justice from Buffalo State College and a J.D. from the School of Law at the State University of New York.

**State Senator Charleta Tavares
Ohio (USA)**




Charleta Tavares served as a member of the Ohio House of Representatives (1993-98) Columbus City Council (1999-2010) and currently serves as a member of the Ohio Senate (2011-present). Tavares is a nationally recognized cultural competence, housing, health and human services advocate and policymaker. Tavares is the executive director of the Multiethnic Advocates for Cultural Competence (MACC). In addition, she was a founding member and is chair emeritus of the Ohio Suicide Prevention Foundation.

**State Senator Barbara Favola
Virginia (USA)**




Barbara Favola represents residents of Virginia's 31st district. Prior to her election in 2011, she served on the Arlington County Board for fourteen years and chaired that body three times. As the former Chair of the Metropolitan Washington Council of Governments Chesapeake Bay Committee, she is a strong supporter of human rights and environmental stewardship. In 2012, Favola was appointed to the Executive Board of the Women's Legislative Network of NCSL as the Democratic Representative for the Southern Region. Additionally, she serves on Virginia's Senate Local Government Committee, Rehabilitation and Social Services Committee, and Transportation Committee, and is now the Chair of the Women's Reproductive Health Caucus.

**State Representative
Jennifer Maurine Seelig
Utah (USA)**



Jennifer Maurine Seelig, a Women Legislators' Lobby (WILL) state director, was elected by in November 2006 to serve in the Utah House of Representatives. She currently serves on the House Political Subdivisions, Legislative Management, House Law Enforcement and Criminal Justice Committees, Executive Appropriations Committee, as well as on the Executive Offices and Criminal Justice Appropriations Subcommittee. In 2010, Seelig was elected the House Minority Whip by the Utah House Democratic Caucus.

**Delegate Ana Sol Gutiérrez
Maryland (USA)**



Delegate Ana Sol Gutiérrez has represented District 18 in the Maryland House of Delegates since 2002, when she made history as the first Latina elected to the Maryland General Assembly. Gutiérrez was born in El Salvador and attended Pennsylvania State University and the American University. She did her post-graduate studies in applied engineering at George Washington University and executive management at the Kennedy School of Government at Harvard University. Gutiérrez currently sits on the House Appropriations Committee, the Joint Committee for Children, Youth and Families, and was the founder of the New American Caucus. She is also the co-chair of the Maryland Democratic Latino Caucus.

**State Senator Lena Taylor
Wisconsin (USA)**



Senator Lena Taylor, a Milwaukee native, earned a B.A. in English from UW-Milwaukee and a J.D. from SIU-Carbondale. She won a 2003 Assembly special election, and won her Senate seat in 2004. Her Senate committee service includes Economic Development and Veterans and Military Affairs, and Finance, as well as study committees on Strengthening Wisconsin Families, Courts and Effective Justice Strategies. Taylor is an attorney and past vice chair of the Wisconsin Democratic Party. She has interviewed extensively with national media on the walk-out of Senate Democrats to uphold collective bargaining rights for public employees.


**Senator
Patricia Torres Ray
Minnesota (USA)**



Patricia Torres Ray is the first Hispanic woman to serve in the Minnesota Senate. She is a member of the Minnesota Democratic-Farmer-Labor Party. She has 18 years of experience in public service and community organizing. Torres Ray also serves as a state program administrator for the Minnesota Department of Human Services. She is originally from Colombia and holds two degrees from the University of Minnesota: a B.A. in Urban Studies and a master's degree in Public Affairs from the Humphrey Institute.




**State Representative Karen Camper
Tennessee (USA)**



State Representative Karen Camper of Memphis, Tennessee, has been a member of the Tennessee General Assembly since 2008. A veteran of the United States Army, Camper brings to the table her unique perspective on national security and the importance of service. In the Tennessee General Assembly, she serves as chair of the Women's Legislative Caucus, chair of the Veteran's Legislative Caucus and is a member of the Judiciary and Transportation Committees. Camper is an active member of her community, serving on the International Business Council Advisory Board, founder of The Humble Hearts Foundation Inc., a Charter Member of Women in Military Service for America, and a Lifetime Member of Black in Government and NAACP.

**State Senator Nan Grogan Orrock
Georgia (USA)**



Nan Grogan Orrock is the President of the Women Legislators' Lobby (WILL), a national network of women state legislators launched by Women's Action for New Directions (WAND) in 1991. A veteran of the civil rights and women's movements, Orrock served ten terms in the Georgia House of Representatives as the first female House Majority Whip and is serving her first term in the Georgia Senate. She is founder of both the Georgia Legislative Women's Caucus and the Working Families Agenda Caucus.

Achievements in Ankara

With much to learn from meeting participants from vastly different backgrounds, the MPs also had an opportunity to learn from their host country on subjects ranging from defense spending to measures aimed at stimulating women entrepreneurs and policies put in place to curb violence against women.

Turkey until recently was a seeming oasis of stability, economic growth and prosperity in the troubled Middle Eastern region. Traditionally a strictly secular nation, Turkey upholds the 'trias politica' where the president shares executive power with the prime minister and the council of ministers. This image was marred the very week after our delegation left Ankara, when protests on Taksim Square, which started as a means of blocking the demolition of a park, were met by a violent police crackdown. That, in turn, triggered a nationwide outcry. Across the country, demonstrators protested against the perceived encroachment of the secular state.

In October 2013, Turkey made the news once more when four female members of the Grand National Assembly of Turkey attended parliament wearing headscarves. The decades-old ban had been lifted a month earlier by the ruling Justice and Development (AKP) party of Premier Erdogan, who claims that female parliamentarians have the right to display their identification with the religion of the majority of the population.¹ While the AKP party has the majority in parliament, secularists see the return of the headscarf in parliament as an encroachment by political Islam upon the reigning secular practices of modern Turkish society.

It is against this backdrop that the partnership's first meeting took place in Ankara, Turkey on May 28-30 2013. With much to

learn from meeting participants from vastly different backgrounds, the MPs also had an opportunity to learn from their host country on subjects ranging from defense spending to measures aimed at stimulating women entrepreneurs and policies put in place to curb violence against women.

Meeting Fellow Parliamentarians

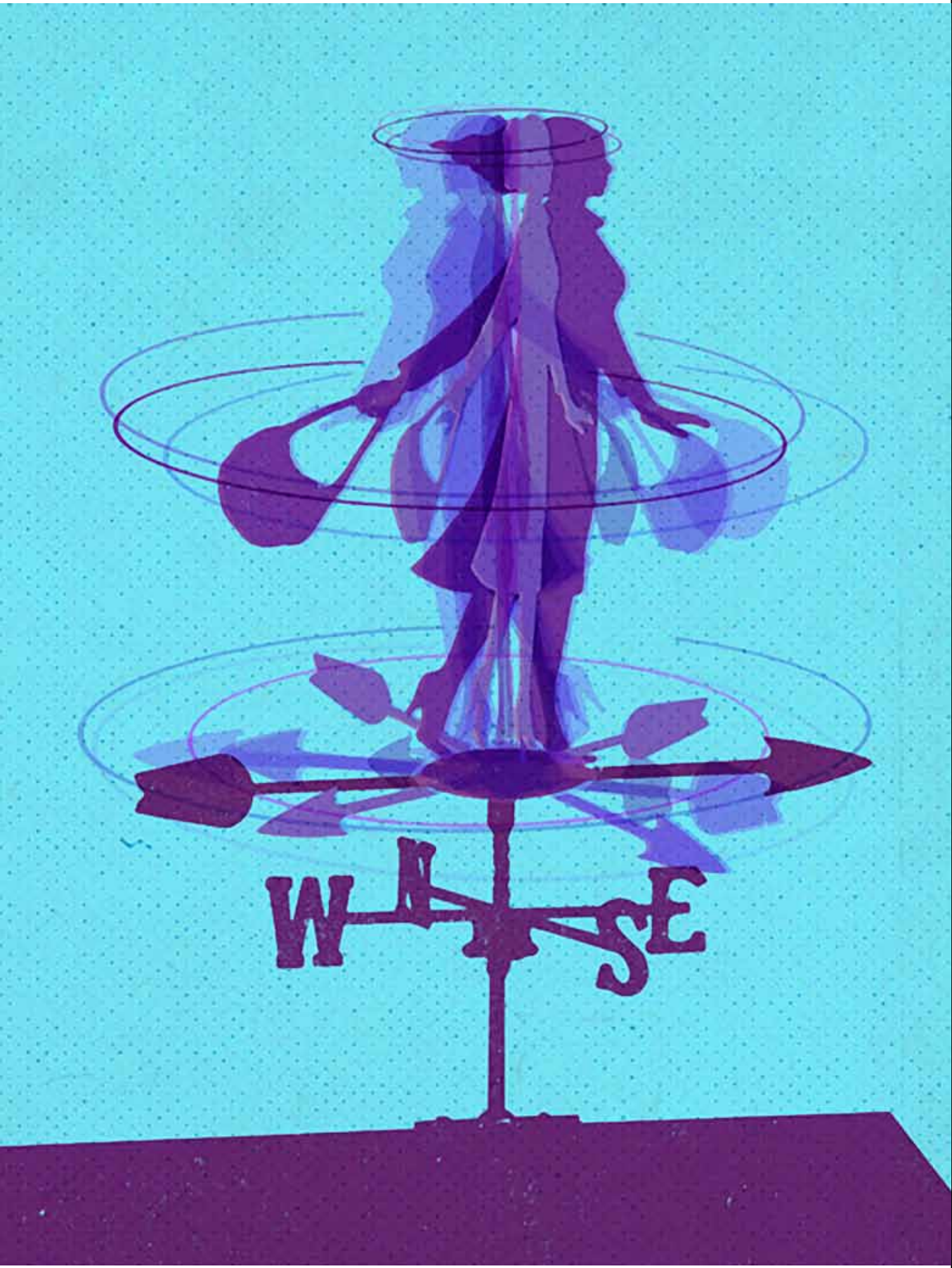
On Defense

Direct interaction with parliamentarians in Turkey is the most meaningful way to learn about the Turkish parliament, its structures and Turkish society at large. Particular to this group of women and our agenda is the focus on Women, Peace and Security, as well as the implementation of UN Security Council resolution 1325. It is no surprise then that discussions with the Chair of the Defense Committee, Oğuz Kağan Köksal, focused on questions of participation of women in the committee itself, in the army and on military spending. The chairman emphasized the cooperation between Turkey and the North Atlantic Treaty Organization (NATO) in Afghanistan and stressed their commitment to a secure Afghanistan.

On Human Rights

One of the core tasks of the Human Rights Inquiry Committee of the Turkish parliament is the prevention of violence against women and members of their family, for which a separate sub-committee has been established. Given the predominantly Muslim background of the attending MPs from

¹ <http://english.ahram.org.eg/NewsContent/2/8/85233/World/Region/UPDATE-Turkey-women-MPs-break-taboo-to-wear-headsc.aspx>



Participants at the Grand National Assembly of Turkey



After years of decreasing its defense budget, Turkey has announced an increase of its defense spending for 2014 (facing larger insecurity due to the protracted conflict in Syria).

the wider MENA region, Ayhan Sefer Üstün, chair of the committee, was asked about Turkey's efforts to highlight violations at the supranational level, particularly referring to the Organization of Islamic Cooperation (OIC).

Many feel that the OIC member states are doing little in the field of human rights, particularly women's rights and their equal participation in public life, but also that international pressure on states such as Saudi Arabia is not effective and is often countered with arguments of state sovereignty. Üstün recognized the difficulty in bringing up such issues with neighboring Islamic countries and underscored the principle of state sovereignty. However, a human rights court for the Islamic world could be an option to bring severe violations to trial, much along the lines of the European Court of Human Rights and the Inter-American Court of Human Rights.

On Equality

Present with a large delegation, the committee on Equal Opportunity for Women and Men was the only committee that the delegation met with where the chair person was a woman—Azize Sibel Gönül. Gönül took an interest in the work the Parliamentarians Network for Conflict Prevention has

been doing on bridging the divide between Afghanistan and Pakistan by fostering dialogue between women MPs from both countries. To further inform themselves on the struggles of women in peace and security, the delegation offered the committee a copy of Abigail Disney's Women, War and Peace series which features a member of our delegation, the Hon. Shinkai Karokhail, in one of the documentaries.

Implementing the Law: Turkish Ministry of Family and Social Policy

What's in a name? In Turkey—quite a lot. Women's groups across the country were outraged when two years ago the Turkish Ministry of Family and Social Policy was created, replacing the Ministry of Women and Family Affairs. Nevertheless, the ministry has provided unwavering support to women in Turkey, be it in the political sphere, by implementing the affirmative action policies which are protected by the Turkish constitution, or by creating awareness campaigns.

As a woman studying in Saudi Arabia, Deputy Minister Associate Professor Aşkın Asan is well aware of the challenges faced by women around the world, particularly



In 2013, Prime Minister Erdogan amended the strict secular laws of Turkey, allowing for women to sit in parliament wearing headscarves for the first time in 15 years.

those living in patriarchal or strict Islamic countries. Sharing a personal anecdote, she told the delegation that she was invited to return to Saudi Arabia to teach at a university, which she would have accepted had she been able to drive. In October 2013, Saudi Arabia witnessed a day of civil disobedience by women defying the religious ban on women operating vehicles, a sign that Saudi society is slowly but surely changing.²

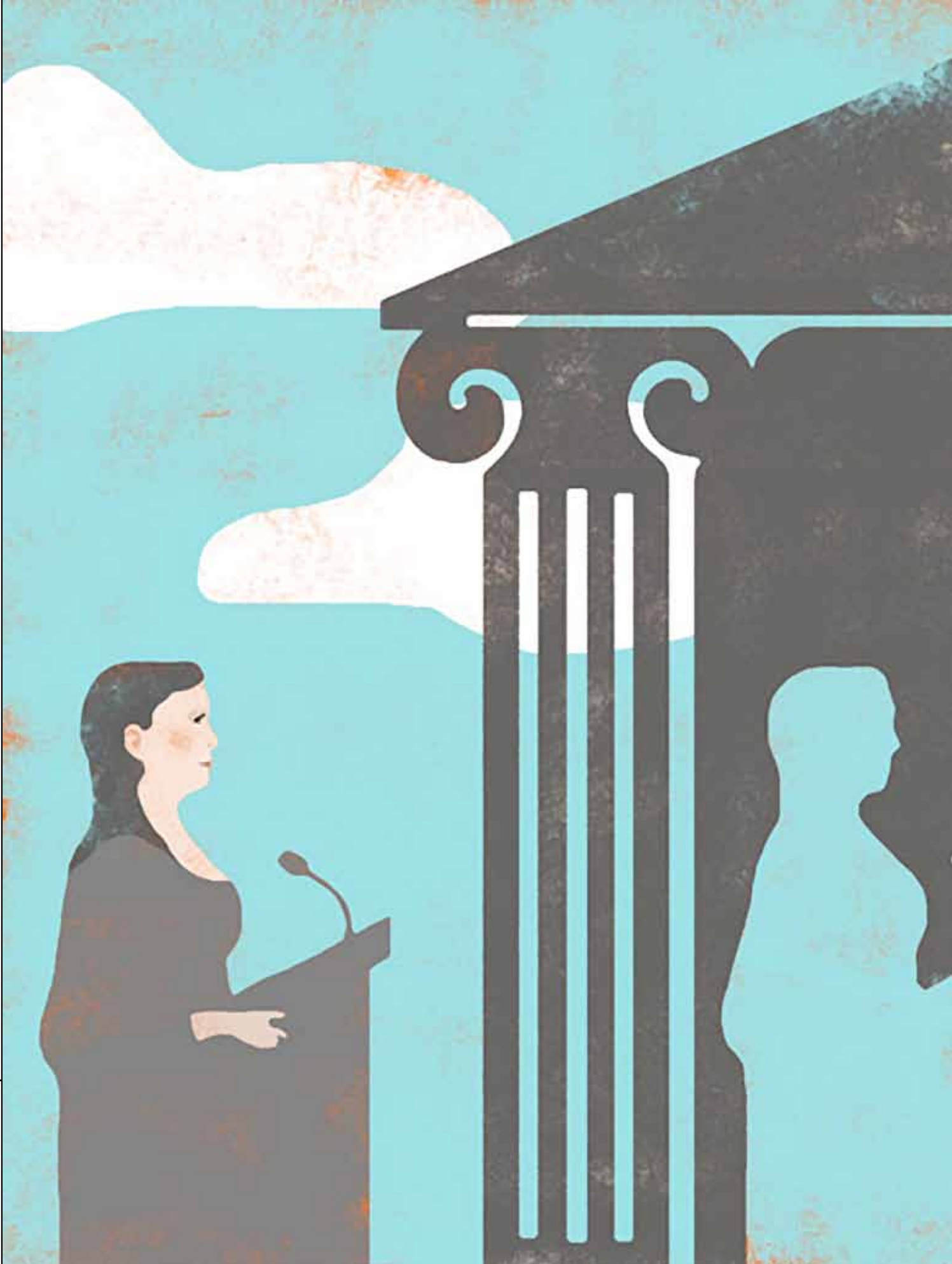
Focusing on the Islamic countries, former Pakistani MP Donya Aziz asked the deputy minister what an organization such as the Organization for Islamic Cooperation (OIC) could do to raise awareness about the role of women in society and UN Security Council Resolution 1325 in particular. Deputy Minister Asan was disappointed that support for a gender-equality institute remains theoretical, despite having agreed upon its establishment at the Change in Muslim Societies and the Role of Women Conference in Istanbul two years ago. However, the Parliamentary Union of OIC countries (PUIC) has initiatives that are specifically addressing the concerns of women, and thanks to Deputy Minister Asan's good offices, the Parliamentarians Network for Conflict Prevention is currently in the process of apply-

ing for consultative status with PUIC.

Turkey has taken a leading role in the Islamic world on issues that affect women disproportionately, such as domestic violence. It was the first country to sign and ratify the convention on Preventing and Combating Violence against Women and Domestic Violence (the "Istanbul Convention").³ It was also the first country to adapt its national legislation to this convention and it includes religious representatives in the discussions and debates on the subject. It remains difficult, however, to effectively convince men to see violence against women and domestic violence as an issue. The ministry has taken the initiative to visit coffee houses, traditionally a space for men to gather, to offer an introduction and further courses in anger management and behavioral change free of charge to men.

² <http://edition.cnn.com/2013/10/26/world/meast/saudi-arabia-women-drivers/>

³ Note: Opened for signature in May 2011, the Istanbul Convention is the first legally binding instrument in Europe to prevent and combat violence against women and domestic violence and in terms of scope it is the most far-reaching international treaty to tackle this serious violation of human rights. URL: http://www.coe.int/t/dghl/standardsetting/convention-violence/Seminars/Geneva2013/default_en.asp.



Washington Meeting Highlights

Decisions in D.C.

It seemed quite appropriate for the partnership to convene in Washington, D.C. for its second meeting. In line with the objective of building a strong network of women legislators, the second meeting coincided with the biannual conference of our partner Women's Action for New Directions who organized for over 100 women state legislators from around the U.S. to travel to Washington, D.C. for the "Women at the Tables of Power" conference from September 29 to October 1, 2013.

This conference gave everyone a great opportunity to learn about defense spending, the U.S. nuclear arsenal and on the formation of public opinion. Many of the present U.S. state legislators to learn more about the situation on the ground in Afghanistan, Pakistan and to hear first-hand accounts of women who were at the very forefront of the Arab Spring during a panel discussion specifically dedicated to "The Essential Role of Women in Building Sustainable Peace and Security." The screening of *Peace Unveiled* in which the Hon. Shinkai Karokhail, MP from Afghanistan, is featured, included an introduction by filmmaker Abigail Disney, creator of the PBS Women, War

and Peace Film Series. *Peace Unveiled* opened the eyes of many women in the room—some learned more about the struggles of women gaining political power and others were reminded of their own experiences.

But often there is a fine line between decision and indecision. While visiting Washington, D.C., the participants witnessed the looming shutdown of the U.S. government over the inability to raise the debt ceiling. The shutdown provided little hope for participants to reach out to those in the House of Representatives and in Congress. With part of the program jeopardized, our participants from abroad were asked for their opinion regarding the shutdown.

"Such decisions are the internal affairs of the United States in which I do not want to interfere," Moroccan MP Loubna Amhair commented. "But [they] should have the political courage and wisdom to take the right decisions for their people" she added. Bushra Gohar, former MP from Pakistan, cautioned that this shutdown will have an effect throughout the world and expressed concern with the situation. "Politics is the art of the possible" and a shutdown is not in the public interest, she said.

For me, our meeting in Turkey was a life-changing opportunity. By speaking directly with women parliamentarians from Afghanistan, Pakistan, Morocco and Tunisia, I came to understand what they are living every day. I was educated about these critical international issues and this exchange got me out of my box. I saw that we have similar challenges and our common human needs really struck me.

Delegate Ana Sol Gutiérrez
Maryland (USA)

The 113th US Congress (January 2013) saw a record number of female Senators and members of the House of Representatives; **18.3%** and **20%** respectively. The state of Colorado has the highest percentage of women in the state legislative office: **41%**.

The Climb Up the Hill

Despite the government shutdown, three meetings on the issue of Women, Peace and Security took place. The staff of Senator Susan Collins of Maine affirmed the Senator's commitment to peace and security issues. The Hon. Shinkai Karokhail reiterated the ineffectiveness of the Afghan army and the dire consequences of their very limited capabilities once U.S. troops withdraw in 2014. Bushra Gohar quizzed the staff on whether women's rights were to be compromised for the sake of stability in post-2014 Afghanistan, emphasizing impact on Pakistan should the Taliban gain power in Afghanistan.

Representative William Keating of Massachusetts received the delegation in his capacity as ranking member of House of Representative Foreign Affairs Committee. Having been to Afghanistan, Rep. Keating is well aware of the challenges on the ground and was receptive to the expressed concerns. The delegation pressed Rep. Keating to ask to meet with women representatives, too, the next time he travels to Afghanistan, to show his dedication to the Women, Peace and Security agenda. Noteworthy is the fact that Rep. Keating is a cosponsor of the Women, Peace and Security Act of 2013, which now has a total of 22 cosponsors.

Representative Martha Roby of Alabama is the Chairperson of the Armed Services Subcommittee on Military Oversight and Investigations. Having participated in a number of Mother's Day trips to Afghanistan in recent years, Rep. Roby was visibly moved when listening to the testimonies of the Afghan MPs. She has been a fervent advocate on the matter, writing op-eds and speaking out on the cause of women and girls in Afghanistan. In keeping with her efforts to advocate for the issue, Rep. Roby convened a hearing on Securing Gains for Women, Girls in Afghanistan in October 2013.⁴

⁴ <http://roby.house.gov/press-release/roby-convenes-hearing-securing-gains-women-girls-afghanistan>

Meeting Melanne Verveer

Having already delivered a lunchtime keynote speech during the "Women at the Tables of Power" conference, former Ambassador-at-Large for Global Women's Issues Melanne Verveer, who is the Director of Georgetown University's Institute for Women, Peace and Security, received the delegation for a targeted Q&A session where valuable information was exchanged among all participants.



On Morocco

MP Loubna Amhaïr shared stories of hope from her native Morocco where women have come quite a long way. After a quota system was introduced, the number of women in politics rose dramatically, resulting directly in amendments to existing laws. Last year the parliament amended a highly controversial law that allowed a rapist to marry his victim and escape prosecution. It was a direct result of the efforts of the women in parliament that this law was amended and that such practices are no longer possible. Amb. Verveer applauded these efforts: "Moroccan women can be great examples for their sisters in Islamic countries around the world."

On Egypt

The accounts of Marianne Malak, MP in Egypt, who was among the first to stand and protest on Cairo's Tahrir Square, confirmed the horrid news reports. She told of attacks on women to discourage them from exercising their democratic right to demonstrate and the resulting fear that this has been instilled in some of the Egyptian women. Malak stated that the country cannot turn back to the dark days of the dictatorship, but that she is deeply worried about the current situation where women are targeted and Coptic Christian churches are being burned down.

On Afghanistan

Of particular interest to Amb. Verveer was the question of whether or not the High Peace Council is being consulted when it comes to efforts of reconciliation. Afghan MP Golalai Nur Safi, who sits as one of the few women on the Afghan High Peace Council, described the situation as very grim. Small issues might be referred to the High Peace Council, but the reality is that it is not consulted often enough. The world needs to understand that "peace is cheaper than war," she added, and that it's in everyone's benefit to work towards reconciliation. Afghan MP Elay Ershad added that funds should be directed towards the young generation. She recalled that the ISAF concept paper to invest in the young generation was rejected; it was shared with the election commission, but they failed to implement it.

On Pakistan

Former MP Bushra Gohar agreed with Golalai in terms of the ineffectiveness of the Afghan High Peace Council. She wondered out loud where the Afghan Council was when the Taliban decided to open an office in Doha. She cautioned that there is a causal relationship between the strength of the Taliban in Afghanistan and in Pakistan, meaning that if the Taliban in Afghanistan get more space to operate, the Pakistan Taliban will demand the same. Questions were raised during the debate, however, on how to engage with Pakistan and who should be contacted. Amb. Verveer's feeling was that there is no real effort in Pakistan to change the situation. It is a strategy to keep the country militarized, Bushra suggested. In hindsight, she believed that the most useful for the U.S. to withdraw troops with a decade-long development plan in place, instead of creating the vacuum in which Afghanistan will most likely plunge into.

Maryland Delegate Joseline Pena-Melnyk placed part of the blame on the United States itself, mentioning the conditions of given aid and a lack of accountability in terms of where the money was spent. Ambassador Verveer, cited the agreements made at the Afghanistan conference in Tokyo, where all delegates of donors to Afghanistan agreed to put women on the top of their agenda, and indeed some donors froze aid as a direct result of the status of women in Afghanistan.

We understand that women can play an important role in preventing conflicts and that when conflict occurs, women are a crucial part of the solution. So we are working to improve our thinking about how to ensure that women are included in these processes.

**Ambassador
Kolida Grabar-
Kitarović**

Engaging NATO

Crucial in discussing the 2014 drawdown of forces from Afghanistan is the future engagement of the North Atlantic Treaty Organization's (NATO) and the accomplishments of the International Security Assistance Force (ISAF), which is currently active in Afghanistan. To this end, Assistant Secretary General for Public Diplomacy at NATO, Ambassador Kolida Grabar-Kitarović, engaged with our delegation through video-conferencing.

Having grown up in war-torn Croatia, Ambassador Grabar-Kitarović related strongly to the stories of women who are faced with conflict on a daily basis. Sharing her personal experiences, she strongly backed reconciliation, despite her feelings at the time: "Back in those times I was thinking that never again was it possible for us to live together again with our adversaries. ..." When it comes to the implementation of UN Security Council Resolution 1325, Ambassador Grabar-Kitarović believes NATO needs to set an example, which has been strengthened by the appointment of the Special Representative Mari Skåre. Her appointment, in Grabar-Kitarović's opinion, was a clear political statement aimed at putting this issue higher on the NATO agenda.

Having travelled to Afghanistan frequently, Ambassador Grabar-Kitarović has excellent knowledge of the situation on the ground and was in a good position to address the concerns raised by the delegation. Shinkai Karokhail expressed her distress that the ministries of interior and defense in Afghanistan are not interested in developing the National Action Plan (NAP) for the implementation of UN SCR 1325 and requested the Ambassador to use her leverage to urge the ministries to develop a NAP. Another issue of great worry is the lack of participation of women in the security forces. Karokhail cited a desperate need to change the mechanisms for bringing more women into this sector, as well as the conditions that these women endure in this sector which is now rampant with sexual harassment and discrimination. Ambassador Grabar-Kitarović informed us that an officer will be sent to ISAF HQ tasked with working on gender-mainstreaming with the minister. She noted that the gender advisors within ISAF are low-ranking and often civilians, not military personnel.

MP Elay Ershad asked the ambassador

about the bilateral agreement between the U.S. and Afghanistan, but the ambassador had no further information. She did, however, stress that in order to work in Afghanistan, there needs to be a clear invitation from the government of Afghanistan.

Bushra Gohar from Pakistan raised concerns about the potential compromising of women's rights in Afghanistan and Pakistan. She pointed out that whenever the discussion focuses on women, it is not about long-term empowerment, but rather about small projects, micro enterprises and small loans. The fact that the Taliban is vying for more power makes it that much more urgent to find a balance and truly discuss women coming to the negotiation table. Ambassador Grabar-Kitarović addressed the different relationships that Afghanistan and Pakistan have; Pakistan is a partner country of NATO but not part of ISAF. She furthermore emphasized that reconciliation is an internal process that belongs to the Afghans. Nevertheless, there are certain preconditions to reconciliation: anyone partaking in the process needs to put down their arms; they need to break all ties with Al-Qaida and respect the constitution and all rights enshrined therein, including those of women.

Amb. Grabar-Kitarović expressed her willingness to engage with the delegation in the future. The partners to this project are in continuous contact with the office of Amb. Grabar-Kitarović.

Increasing Capacity

Highlighted at the Ankara meeting as a particular need, capacity building and training was a core component of the Washington, D.C. meeting. Based on a baseline survey conducted among the participants, we measured the perceived level of skill in a certain area, which was subsequently set off against the relative importance of these issues. In addition to the need for capacity building, strategic planning was also mentioned as a core need requiring attention.

1325 and International Law

Sanam Naraghi Anderlini of the MIT Center for International Studies introduced the concept of international law to many of the delegates. Focusing on the historical developments that the international legal framework has gone through, the question is what we can do—if anything at all—in the



face of civil war and internal conflict, for example, as in Syria. Since the 1990s, efforts have been stepped up to provide a platform for women speaking out against conflict, as they have traditionally been marginalized by all sides. Unfortunately, states seemed reluctant to take up this issue within the United Nations Security Council, and it was pressure from civil society which eventually prompted countries, like Namibia and Bangladesh, to put the issue on the Council's agenda.

Since countries were hesitant to take on the issue because it would be too much of an infringement on their state sovereignty, it became apparent that the challenge would be to use the language of women empowerment instead of human rights. The critical issues that needed to be raised related to the role of women in societies that are going through disarmament processes, rehabilitation of soldiers, issues of security-sector

reform as security forces might have been the only thing keeping a regime in place. In short, the challenge was to think of the needs of the people and, until UN Security Council Resolution 1325 was adopted, there was no platform for women so that their voices could be heard on security issues. Another common problem encountered is determining whom to invite to peace talks. One of the participants remarked, "You cannot make peace with peaceful people." This is exactly the reason violent factions are often invited to join the peace talks table, but women are left out.

MP Loubna Amhaïr of Morocco asked what can be done in support of the Women, Peace and Security agenda in a country which has no violent conflict; in her native Morocco the relevant ministry is dealing with the implementation of the Convention on the Elimination of Discrimination Against Women (CEDAW), not with UN Security



Participants during the Washington, D.C. meeting

Council Resolution 1325. Sanam believes that it's important to also engage countries not undergoing violent conflict in the agenda, as they might be sending peacekeeping troops abroad to areas where the Women, Peace and Security agenda is very relevant on the ground.

Afghan MP Elay Ershad asked Sanam for suggestions on how the Afghan security forces can support the agenda. Sanam is convinced women need to take part in discussions on security, on police trainings and really engage in parliamentary committees and debates on such issues, including budgets. Building partnerships with civil society is another key element.

Bushra Gohar indicated that there is a lot of resistance to UN Security Council Resolution 1325 in Pakistan, because this is seen as conceding that Pakistan is a country in conflict. She wonders if an integrated plan, which will include CEDAW and other mechanisms to protect women, might be a better approach for countries that have similar reservations.

Shinkai Karokhail asked what can be done to make countries accountable for the implementation of the resolution including the National Action Plan, and if the Security

Council itself undertakes any action on this issue. Maryland delegate Joseline Pena-Melnyk elaborated on the same point: if in 10 years only 24 countries have drafted a National Action Plan, how can we shame the countries that have not participated, or the United Nations itself? Sanam suggested the media as a tool to get the word out, but it will be a difficult road.

Ana Sol Gutierrez, a native of El Salvador and a Maryland delegate, inquired after other resolutions that could help if 1325 does not alter the conditions in Afghanistan, Pakistan or Morocco. Once again, these countries fear that support for the resolution would mean acknowledging their internal conflicts. Instead, Sanam maintained, we ought to focus on the content of the resolution rather than on the specific number of countries backing it. In the end, a socio-economic change needs to occur within society, from schoolteachers and bus drivers to members of parliament, and this can only happen if we focus on the content, she added.

Nonviolence in the Face of Conflict

It may be hard to keep a clear head when faced with gross injustice, but that is exactly what many of the delegates do every day



in their work when they are being verbally or physically targeted for holding political office. Those who attack them may point to these women's racial background, nationality or religion, but most often their mere gender is seen as enough of a reason to discredit them. Jamila Raqib, a native of Afghanistan, worked at the Albert Einstein Institution with Dr. Gene Sharp, the author of *From Dictatorship to Democracy*—a book which has been a powerful tool for many individuals throughout the Arab Spring. The book describes 198 “weapons” of non-violent struggle and includes this statement: “If we want to reduce violence, we need to offer people an alternative—a powerful alternative.”

Jamila outlined the objective of the workshop—to share the importance of planning and why non-violent struggles are more successful when they are planned. The types of scenarios one can encounter are:

- Dictatorship
- Poorly functioning democracy
- Attempted coup
- Corporation with harmful practices.

In order to accomplish real change, you need “a vision of tomorrow.” In most societies, we have grievances that are often

expressed by people in very vague terms; even though these statements are quite valid, they do not do more than express discontentment. Before a plan is to be formulated, the grievances need to be articulated and understood by ordinary people. This gives opponents the chance to react and fix the problem. The vision of tomorrow needs to answer the question: what do you want your society to look like when the struggle is over? This is what these movements are working towards, it is the objective, and, as a consequence, the struggle becomes a road map to achieve these objectives.

“How can we defeat the Taliban in a non-violent movement?” Elay Ershad wonders. Shinkai Karokhail adds: “How can we stop people from obeying the Taliban? I feel we need to empower the people of Afghanistan, that this will be the most effective tool against them.”

Jamila underscores the importance of the pillars of the support system: power relies on cooperation and obedience. Therefore it is necessary to analyze where the structural support comes from, which may be diverse. Jamila stressed that movements that are able to undercut those support systems in a nonviolent manner have the largest chance of success.

Strategic Action Plan

In surveying the group of women lawmakers participating in this partnership, we found some 43 percent had been threatened with violence or death because of the political office they hold.

A strategic planning session has been pivotal in bringing partnership participants closer together. Here's an overview of the process and the agreed next steps.

Goal Setting

Building a network of dedicated people is always dependent on the degree of ownership they feel over the group and the process they participate in. This is no different for the women participating in this partnership, although the similarities in the struggles these women have to face to make it to elected office ties them together in the most profound manner. For example, in surveying the group of women lawmakers participating in this partnership, we found some 43 percent had been threatened with violence or death because of the political office they hold.

The defining characteristic of this group is that all women either have or currently are holding political office. In advancing the Women, Peace and Security agenda, however, they are determined to work together with women in positions of influence and power, as well as think tanks, NGOs and others relevant to the cause. Another important characteristic is the drive to succeed and the ambition these women display. In asking what they want to accomplish, issues raised included:

- Secure lives of dignity for women and girls around the globe;
- Advance, implement, monitor UN Security Council Resolution 1325;
- Inform, influence and promote public policies that respect women's human and civil rights;
- Strengthen international partnership between East and West;
- Expand our collective capacity on peace, human security and international law (including defense and foreign relations);

- Exchange legislation and policy in areas of interest (human security).

Each of these accomplishments follows from having a purpose as a group of women legislators coming together to speak out and to hear the voices of women. Collective advocacy, empowerment, the building of partnerships, educating society and engaging women in leadership positions are all part of this purpose. In doing so, the partnership provides an opportunity to share experiences, learn from one another, support one another and provide guidance and mentorship.

Where there is a vision, one also needs specific goals. Planning two years ahead seems daunting when you have just gotten acquainted. In order to prioritize goals, the participants to the Ankara exchange expressed the need for the group to draft a strategic plan, addressing questions of how to successfully disseminate information among the members of the groups and deal with the expansion of the group. The plan must also address questions surrounding the withdrawal of troops from Afghanistan in 2014, the implementation of UN Security Council Resolution 1325, and whether issues of human trafficking are part of the goals of this group.

Participants from the United States specifically addressed the desire to come up with a strategic plan to engage the U.S. Congress on these issues. Furthermore, partners in this process needed to be identified, both internationally as well as domestically; the United Nations came to the forefront of the debate numerous times. Also participants highlighted the need for training and materials, such as fact sheets, to aid in the advocacy of these issues.

Beth Grupp, of Beth Grupp Associates, was invited during our Washington, D.C. session to guide the group towards concrete goals within the next two years. Choices had to be



In advancing the Women, Peace and Security agenda, however, they are determined to work together with women in positions of influence and power, as well as think tanks, NGOs and others relevant to the cause.

made to come up with tangible goals and specific tactics to implement them.

In Ankara, Turkey, the group identified the most important issues: building bands of sisterhoods; defining the group and its purpose; and identifying hopes for future accomplishments. Members brainstormed on every possible aspect of engagement: from educating U.S. congress on UN Security Council Resolution 1325 to creating a watchdog to monitor implementation of National Action Plans; and from increasing membership of this group of women lawmakers to tracking the funds allocated in countries such as Afghanistan to ensure transparency, accountability and conditionality.

After the group review, the following steps were considered to be most pressing:

- Increase funding and staff to further develop this initiative.
- Obtain international recognition as a watch group:
 - » To monitor elections,
 - » To secure women's political participation,
 - » To follow where money is allocated in countries,
 - » To achieve more transparency and accountability, including an audit.
- Secure monitoring on resolutions that are not implemented.
- Alert key people in Pakistan and Afghanistan regarding peace process.
- Form a high council of peace women.
- Increase membership of Parliamentarians Network for Conflict Prevention.
- Reach out to women in other conflict-affected regions (such as Latin America, and Africa).

At the core of the discussion on what issues should take precedence was the need for a clear definition of what this group is and what it should be called. The following most pressing goals were highlighted for the 2014 – 2016 period:

- Grow this group (without creating a new structure or infrastructure; keep cooperation between WAND/WiLL and EWI/Parliamentarians Network).
 - » Expand into other regions with the same values (keep person-to-person relations intact);
 - » Tactic: Need to identify regions (U.S. and conflict-affected countries or emerging democracies); determine who we want, call people, write emails;
 - » Staff: What would it mean to bring more women to join the group? Brainstorming and communication with the core-group (through email and phone calls);
 - » Make sure that everyone from the group is included in the Parliamentarians Network.
- Create a name.
- Communication:
 - » External: Develop a proactive media plan.
 - » Internal: Quarterly communication through webinar, skype or phone, List serve email, Monthly newsletter.
- Watchdog:
 - » Gather information;
 - » Ensure backdoor information flow (information channel from Pakistan and Afghanistan to the U.S.) – early information, early warning; action alert;
 - » Create a communication flow between countries, so that information can flow to the U.S. to enable U.S. women to bring international attention on those issues;
 - » Long-term goal: monitor and audit money, e.g. Pentagon spending
Conclude strategic partnerships with existing organizations (UN watch, Transparency International).
- Watch the peace process in Afghanistan, make sure that women are at the table.



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