

WFWP: 25th Women's Conference for Peace in the Middle East with Sun-jin Moon

Carolyn Handschin
January 18, 2021



25th Women's Conference for Peace in the Middle East: "Women's Vision and Impact on Tomorrow's Middle East North Africa (MENA): What Does the Future Hold?" 16-18 Jan 2021

"Women's Vision and Impact on Tomorrow's MENA: What does the Future Hold?" This was the theme of the 25th Women's Conference for Peace in the Middle East, organized by WFWP Middle East in partnership with WFWP International and WFWP Japan. It took place virtually for the first time, during three days, on the 16th, 17th and 18th of January. Translation into Arabic and Japanese was also provided.

Three sessions covered the issues of youth education, peacebuilding and economic empowerment of the youth. An average of 100 people participated in each session, coming from about 30 countries of the MENA, Europe and as far as Japan.

The speakers, from the MENA region, specialists in the fields of education, youth mentoring, business and entrepreneurship, expressed various aspects on the impact of women in the Middle East. There was also a guest speaker from Japan and a talented 17 years old young lady from India.

The conference opened with the warm greetings of the WFWP International President, Dr. Julia Moon, who welcomed this online version of the Middle East Women's Conference and expressed her appreciation for the cultures of the Middle East. She noted the importance of the theme of this conference for the future of the MENA region. She reminded us of the words of the founder of Women's Federation, Mother Moon, who said "Women have the magical power to create harmony and to soften hearts."

She also quoted Father Moon's words at the inauguration of Women's Federation for World Peace, in 1992. He had said that although throughout history women have been persecuted, this will change and the coming world will be one of reconciliation and peace based on women's maternal character, love and sociability. Julia Moon underlined how visionary Father Moon was for the future world and for the position of women. She also emphasized how women can bring healing to resentments and demonstrate resilience and empathy. She said "women can encourage decisions that will bring win, win situations thus promoting wellbeing and eliminating conflicts".

The first day was dedicated to set the note for the whole conference and to deal with youth education. Both speakers of the day made brilliant presentations in their fields. An Iranian business consultant and visionary advisor and mentor of next generation leaders, explained that the Middle East needs the presence of women in all sectors of activities. He petitioned for the next UN Secretary General to be a woman and explained that motherhood is what the region needs to be healed.

The next speaker, an intern at the WFWP UN office, presented WFWP's educational curriculum for youth. It is a program to empower young people, especially girls, to be positive contributors to society. She pointed out that government and leaders should act out of the motivation to bring the wellbeing to society, rather than out of duty.

On the second day the issue of peacebuilding was examined. The first speaker, a university professor from Japan, explained the difference between conciliation and reconciliation and concluded that women should utilize their inner strengths to build and sustain peace. The presentation of a successful journalist,

former politician and women's activist from Yemen was an eye opener. She asked the question, "Why do we need women in the politics of peace?" and she clearly said "Because women politicians are less corrupt, more cooperative, and are strong promoters of the welfare of the entire society." She explained that the women's movement in the Middle East has entered a new phase, giving room to women's social participation. Nevertheless, she observed, that in the countries where there is war, women are totally absent from governance and public life. Women's presence mean resolution of conflict and greater resilience.



The executive director of a political think tank based in Jordan, explained that although women receive a fair power share in Jordan, women's participation in peacebuilding and enhancing influence of women's organizations in civil society, will contribute to a more regulated, more harmonious and prosperous life for the citizens.

On the final day, a lawyer and law professor from Morocco, in examining the situation of wealth distribution in the MENA, pointed out the inequalities between and within countries, as well as the fact that "the MENA region and its societies have to deal with a young population facing the highest youth unemployment levels in the world". She considers that the advancement of the Sustainable Development Goals will give the opportunity to eliminate extreme wealth inequalities. On the other hand, an educational reform providing the right skills to the youth, would result in a better professional engagement of the young population.

Finally, a dynamic young entrepreneur and social activist dealt with the need to promote entrepreneurship as a way to youth empowerment. Being in the workforce herself, she pointed out the possibilities of modern technology for developing employment for youth, but there are limitations. In countries where technology is not widespread and where the use of it is only limited to social media, modern entrepreneurship stays behind. Like the previous speaker, she warned of a need to change the educational contents to meet the future needs of the youth. She gave successful examples of efforts to teach entrepreneurship to young girls from an early age and also to brake down the barriers of concepts of success between men and women.

Dr. Sun-jin Moon, WFPW International Vice- President closed the conference saluting the efforts of the speakers as well as of the participants, to examine the subject. From her side, she an original idea of economic empowerment. It combines significant means for supporting humanitarian work worldwide, as well as preserving and contributing to the survival of the earth's natural resources.

The conference closed with a brilliant performance of classical ballet of the Universal Ballet Company, gracious offer of its director, the president of WFPW International, Dr. Julia Moon! It was an excerpt of the Sleeping Beauty, a dance full of grace and a celebration of True Love.