



INVITATION LETTER & CONCEPT NOTE /

Experts' Roundtables:

"Empowering Women in Water Diplomacy for Peacebuilding in the conflict-affected MENA Region"

Access to water across conflict-affected MENA settings are shaped by displacement, targeting water infrastructure, institutional collapse, poor governance, coercive control, and unequal power relations.

All political, economic and social dynamics are deeply gendered.

In water leadership, women remain under-represented as water professionals, negotiators, and decision-makers. Women empowerment starts with access to safe water and gender responsive sanitation so that they are in a position to act as experts, partners, agents and leaders of change, including using water as an instrument for peace.

The role of women in water diplomacy related decision-making has been underestimated in 2 traditionally male dominant sectors (water resource management and diplomacy) despite the acknowledged essential role of women in peacebuilding, conflict management and sustaining security, as reaffirmed by the landmark United Nations Security Council Resolution 1325 on Women, Peace and Security (adopted on 31st October 2000) and by the eight resolutions on the issue adopted thereafter. The

untapped potential of brilliant girls and women is a great loss, both for women themselves and for society as a whole.

The Geneva Water Hub (GWH), in collaboration with the Global Water Partnership-Mediterranean (GWP-Med), is convening a series of 2 virtual Expert Roundtables, **making** the case for a *paradigm shift*: women in conflict-affected MENA region should be recognized not only as affected populations, but as diplomatic actors. If literature asserts that women's participation strengthens the legitimacy and durability of water decisions, reality check is still far from satisfactory.

The 2 expert roundtables will focus on women's leadership and empowerment in water diplomacy in conflict-affected environments in the MENA region, with linkages to the climate and women, peace and security agenda. This activity is an integral part of the *Initiative on Empowering Women in Water Diplomacy in the Middle East and North Africa region*, institutionally co-led by GWH and GWP-Med.

The discussion series will be inspired and cover the themes of the six interactive dialogues water, diplomacy, and peacebuilding sectors. It is anticipated that the discussion outcomes will also contribute to the work of the Euro-Mediterranean Water Forum (Rome, 29 Sep-2Oct 2026) and thereafter to the 11th World Water Forum (Riyadh, 21-25 Mar 2027). The themes of the second roundtable discussion will be more oriented toward the water, climate and peacebuilding cross-linkages and the implications for women diplomats and decision makers.

The Roundtables will be interactive, lively and structured across a set of targeted questions. The experts will be asked to provide examples, best practices, solutions and challenges that women are facing in the water diplomacy and leadership. Experts will be provided in advance with a list of challenging questions and stimulated to provide their own opinion, underlying main challenges and their personal view on the topic proposed by the roundtables.

Format of the Roundtables: by invitation, online, in English, with a duration of approximately 120 minutes each.

In this context, GWH and GWP-Med are launching an expression of interest from experts, practitioners, and institutional representatives as below across the MENA region to share evidence, experience, and strategic insight.

The reflections and contributions received during the Roundtables will feed directly into a GWH and GWP-Med analytical paper that will provide input to the upcoming global and regional water, climate and peacebuilding agenda, including the UN Water Conference 2026; the World Water Forum and its regional preparatory processes like the Euro-Mediterranean Water Forum; regional fora like the Cairo Water Week, Baghdad International Water Week, Oman Water week; events and processes led by the UfM and League of Arab States. Furthermore, it is anticipated that this line of work will benefit from and contribute to the Climate, Women, Peace and Security (WPS) Network and

specifically the Technical Working Group on Women & Youth Leadership in Peacebuilding & Climate Action.

Date	Expected Thematic Inputs	Expertise Sought
9 th SEPTEMBER 2026	Global & Regional Water Agenda themes, and fora, e.g. 1) UN Water Conference Interactive Dialogues 2) Euro-Mediterranean Water Forum Debate 3) World Water Forum process	- Water professionals, experts working in or on conflict-affected MENA settings, - Decision makers and managers from public institutions, - Relevant women-led networks - Representatives of related regional and global organisations -
13 th October 2026 (to be confirmed)	Women, Peace and Security Agenda, including linkages to water and climate debate and agenda	- Negotiators and mediators - Practitioners and decision makers on climate and security - Researchers and academics working on linkages between water diplomacy, feminist political ecology, Women, Peace and Security, and Climate action sectors - Relevant women-led networks - Representatives of related regional and global organisations
Ad hoc meeting back-to-back to regional and international events- Informal in-person meetings	All the above, per expertise	All the above

The involvement in the Expert Roundtables is *pro bono*, but all contributions will be duly acknowledged/cited in the final publication, in a manner that is acceptable and deemed appropriate by the experts.

What GWH and GWP-Med guarantee:

- Safe environment for exchanges during the Expert Roundtables, under the Chatham House Rules,
- Visibility through Geneva Water Hub and GWP-Mediterranean communication channels and acknowledgement in the policy brief submitted ahead of the 2026 UN Water Conference, with direct quotations, pictures, and institutional affiliation visibility, If requested, direct quotation will be avoided.
- An opportunity to shape a cross-regional, practice-grounded contribution on gender, conflict, and water diplomacy.

Self-nominations and nominations of colleagues are both welcome.
Deadline for expressions of interest: 27th August 2026 through an email to ncarmi@genevawaterhub.org and anthi@gwpmed.org

With our highest regards.

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