



NEWSLETTER

Updates on activities during the first half of 2021

The Swedish Dialogue Institute for the Middle East and North Africa has had an intense spring, hosting, co-hosting and taking part in many conferences, seminars, meetings and other activities. In parallel, the Institute's preparations for the establishment of its headquarters in Amman has continued and by the end of 2021 the Institute is expected to have completed its move to Jordan.

Below is a summary of some of the main activities that the Dialogue Institute has held during the first semester of 2021, within its three main interconnected focus areas: Peace and Security, Sustainable Development, and Inclusive Participation.

Peace and Security

Women, Peace and Security (WPS)

In 2020 the Dialogue Institute arranged and/or participated in several activities on the Women, Peace and Security agenda and during the spring 2021 this work has continued with a number of initiatives, including:

Webinar: "How Inclusive is Inclusive Peacebuilding?": On the occasion of International Women's Day 2021 the [Issam Fares Institute for Public Policy and International Affairs](#) at [American University of Beirut \(AUB\)](#) and the Dialogue Institute hosted a panel discussion/webinar highlighting the importance of diversifying peacebuilding actors across various sectors, to advance the Women, Peace, and Security agenda. It was an opportunity for distinguished speakers from diverse sectors and backgrounds to reflect on their roles in the media, the private sector, security, civil society, and academia in building and promoting inclusive peace. Some key take-aways from the meeting: Peacebuilding needs to be recognized at all levels, from high-level negotiations to grass root work and stronger links are needed between them, Human Security should lie in the heart of peacebuilding efforts and could contribute to higher degrees of inclusivity, and negotiating and mediating teams should be guided by empathy; curiosity; and active listening.

For more information see: [How Inclusive is Inclusive Peacebuilding](#). The event can be watched at [Youtube: How inclusive is inclusive peacebuilding?](#) and here is the [summary report](#).

Roundtable discussion: “Women Building the Future of Syria”: In March, in the margins of the Brussels V Conference on Supporting Syria, the Swedish Foreign Minister Ann Linde hosted an online panel discussion on “Women Building the Future of Syria – A Conversation About Realising a Feminist Peace”. The meeting was organized by the Swedish Foreign Ministry, the Folke Bernadotte Academy, and the Dialogue Institute, in cooperation with the [Kvinna till Kvinna Foundation](#). Women activists from and in Syria participated and provided their perspectives on the way forward. The event also represented a continuation of Swedish efforts to support the Women, Peace, and Security agenda in Syria.

For more information see: [Women Building the Future of Syria](#).

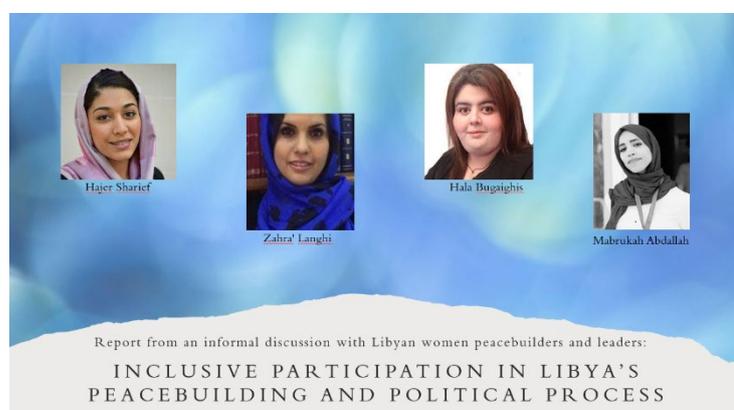
Webinar: “The Life Phases of a Yemeni Woman”: In April the Dialogue Institute participated in a webinar hosted by the [Sana'a Center For Strategic Studies](#), launching a gender report titled “[The Life Phases of a Yemeni Woman](#)”, examining the diversity of experiences of women and girls in Yemen who face differing gender dynamics and daunting challenges at various stages in their lives.

For more information the event can be watched at [YouTube: Sana'a Center Report Launch: The Life Phases of a Yemeni Woman](#).

Webinar: “Inclusive participation in Libya’s peacebuilding and political process”:

At the end of June, the Dialogue Institute and the Swedish Permanent Representation to the EU hosted an informal discussion with Libyan women peacebuilders, leaders and senior officials from EU institutions and member states, on inclusive participation in Libya’s political process. Among other highlights, the meeting stressed the importance of holding the elections as planned in December 2021 and of adapting a legal framework to support the democratic process and the participation of women in Libya, building on progress made in a country where women are now more involved than before and with a society that has become more accepting. The speakers highlighted the important role that the EU can play in the critical period after the election, and stressed that gender equality should be integrated into all initiatives.

For more information see: [Inclusive participation in Libya’s peacebuilding and political process – report from an informal discussion with Libyan women peacebuilders and leaders](#).



Youth, Peace and Security (YPS)

Workshop: Intergenerational partnerships to deliver on the YPS agenda in the MENA

In the middle of January the Dialogue Institute and the [Dag Hammarskjöld Foundation](#) co-hosted an online workshop on Youth, Peace and Security (YPS). Attendees included young peacebuilders and leaders of youth-led organisations from across the MENA region, representatives from Sida, FBA, and the Swedish and Norwegian foreign ministries, as well as representatives from multilateral organisations and civil society. Participants discussed what is needed to promote intergenerational collaboration and partnerships to deliver on the YPS agenda in the MENA region. Several key themes emerged, including the need to contribute to deeper understanding of the YPS agenda, to protect and promote safe spaces, advance the meaningful inclusion of youth from diverse backgrounds, move away from tokenistic engagement, counter persistent harmful narratives of youth as perpetrators of violence, the importance of creating platforms that foster dialogue between youth and decision makers, and the importance of connecting the YPS agenda to other normative frameworks, while learning from the implementation of the Women, Peace and Security agenda.

For more information see: [Youth, Peace and Security \(YPS\) workshop](#) and the full [report](#).

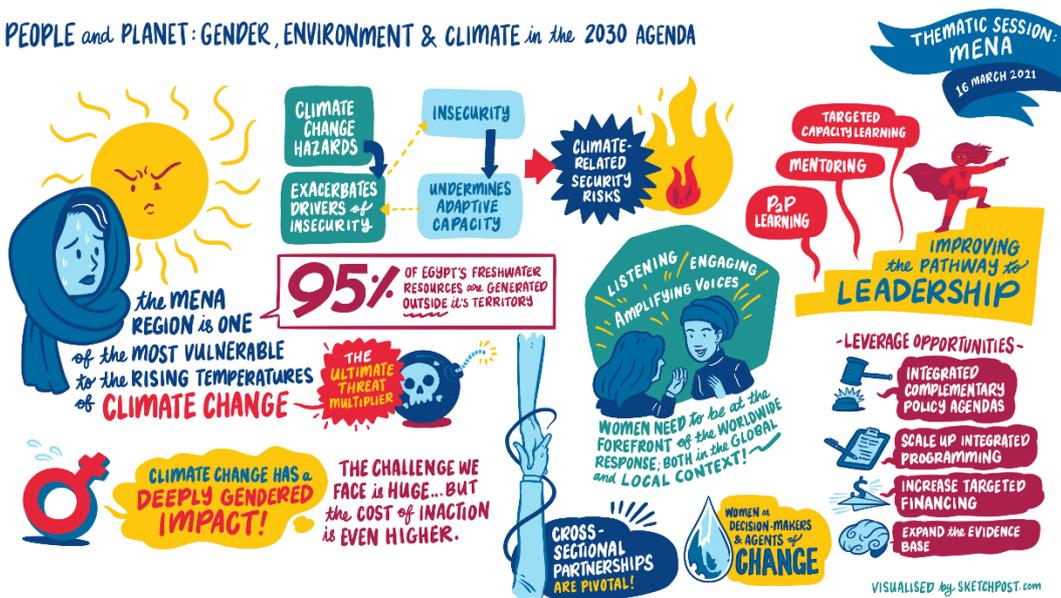
During spring, the workshop on Youth, Peace and Security has been followed-up by discussions with different Swedish actors, incl. the [Swedish Ministry for Foreign Affairs](#), [the Folke Bernadotte Academy – Swedish agency for peace, security and development](#) and [the Swedish International Development Cooperation Agency \(Sida\)](#) on the implementation of the YPS agenda and on how Sweden can continue to support young peacebuilders in the MENA region. In the autumn of 2021 further activities on this theme are planned.

Sustainable Development

Conference: “Gender, climate and security”: One of the Dialogue Institute’s major activity during the spring was a three day conference in March. The conference was arranged together with [Sida Partnership Forum](#), [UN Women](#), [UN Environment Programme \(UNEP\)](#), and [Stockholm Environment Institute](#). With over 150 participants from approximately 100 different organisations, the event focused on gender, environment, and climate. The Dialogue Institute hosted a regional hub for the MENA region with discussions focused on the nexus of gender, climate, and security, with special attention given to water security. The programme included presentations of and discussions concerning recent reports on the topic, as well as networking and exchanges of knowledge and experiences in peer-to-peer learning. Participants came from a variety of partner organizations in the region, among others [EcoPeace Middle East](#), [Geneva Water Hub](#), [Global Water Partnership Mediterranean \(GWP-Med\)](#), [Middle East Desalination Research Center \(MEDRC\)](#), [Stockholm International Water Institute \(SIWI\)](#), UNEP and the [Union for the Mediterranean \(UfM\)](#). Some of the key recommendations emerging from the conference were: a) strengthening governance and meritocratic processes, b) addressing statistical shortcomings, c) designing appropriate policy proposals, with application of gender mainstreaming, d) modernizing working conditions, concentrating work to normal working hours to allow for work-life balance, and e) working on overcoming resistance to change, incl. raising awareness and investing in capacity building, mentorships etc.

For more information see: [Gender, climate and security – report from MENA hub on development](#).

PEOPLE and PLANET: GENDER, ENVIRONMENT & CLIMATE in the 2030 AGENDA



In connection to this conference the Dialogue Institute also participated in a webinar arranged by Geneva WaterHub and GWP-Med, launching the report [Empowering Women in Water Diplomacy in the Middle East and North Africa - A Comparative Study of Egypt, Jordan](#). The launching event can be watched at [YouTube: Publication Launch - Empowering Women in Water Diplomacy in the Middle East and North Africa](#)

During the past year the Dialogue Institute has also also, within the field of sustainable development, explored a number of other potential areas of future work, including discussions with Sipri, UNEP and Sida on climate, water and security, with SIWI on water diplomacy and, with other partners, topics such as “governance and resilience in the post-Covid-19 era” and “the role of entrepreneurship in the implementation of the 2030 Agenda”.

Inclusive participation

Round table discussion: “Digital space - the new frontier of civic space”

As part of the [2021 Stockholm Forum on Peace and Development](#), a forum co-hosted by Sipri and the Swedish Ministry for Foreign Affairs, the Dialogue Institute hosted a round table discussion titled “Digital space - the new frontier of civic space”. The session explored links between civic space and digital space, looking at challenges to and opportunities for creating a safe and conducive digital space that can foster democracy, gender equality, dialogue, and participation in the Middle East and North Africa. Participants stressed the need to globally defend, reclaim and expand human rights and civic space, including online. They highlighted a need for greater transparency from social media platforms, concluding that tech companies must be held accountable for their conduct. They also recommended that policies and practices should be developed in partnership between tech companies and civil society, academics, and others, suggesting a need to build networks of intra-regional solidarity and support.

For more information see the full report at: [Digital space - the new frontier of civic space – dialogue at Stockholm Forum](#). The session can also be watched at: [YouTube: Digital space—the new frontier of civic space](#).

Round table discussion + other meetings: “Meaningful youth participation in MENA”

As part of the Swedish Government’s [“drive for democracy”](#) the Dialogue Institute has held a number of meetings in the past year on meaningful youth participation in the MENA region. A first meeting was a [CSO Forum](#), held in September 2020, where participants from the MENA region and Sweden discussed challenges and opportunities and presented a set of [recommendations](#). This meeting has been followed by several other meetings, including in June, when the Dialogue Institute hosted a roundtable discussion with young leaders from the MENA region and with Janine Alm Ericson, State Secretary for International Development Cooperation, and representatives from the Swedish Foreign Ministry, Sida, FBA and civil society. During this meeting participants emphasized the importance of expanding civic space, and in particular freedom of speech and freedom of assembly. They highlighted the need to approach youth participation from a rights-based perspective and a wider citizenship-angle, to push for legal reform, and to facilitate political participation and access to credible platforms, for instance through the development of reliable and representative political parties and a reduction of the voting age. Additional meetings have been convened for Swedish CSOs to network, share best practices and discuss possible synergies.

For more information see: [Meaningful youth participation in the MENA region – report from a roundtable discussion](#).

Webinar: “The EU’s new agenda for the Mediterranean: Will it make a difference?”

In April the Director of the Dialogue Institute, Charlotta Sparre, participated in a webinar titled “*The EU’s new agenda for the Mediterranean: Will it make a difference?*”, hosted by the [Centre for European Policy Studies \(CEPS\)](#). The webinar discussed the European Union’s “Renewed Partnership with the Southern Neighbourhood - A new agenda for the Mediterranean”, prospects for this new agenda, what leverage the EU has to effect it, and how the EU can raise its political game in the region.

For more information: the event can be watched at [YouTube: The EU’s new agenda for the Mediterranean: Will it make a difference?](#)

Webinar: “Portrayal of Women and Gender Roles in Films - How Does it Reflect on Society?”

As part of [Malmö Arab Film Festival \(MAFF\)](#), the leading film festival dedicated to Arab cinema outside the Arab world, the Dialogue Institute hosted a webinar on gender roles in film. A panel of prominent women in the film industry discussed how films - and other cultural expressions – reflect on society and are part of societal change and how films can either reinforce stereotypes or contribute to changing perceptions and norms. The webinar aimed at raising awareness of ongoing changes, challenges, and opportunities in the Arab world and Europe, contributing to discussions on gender equality and bridge-building between people and cultures.

For more information: the event can be watched at [YouTube: Portrayal of Women and Gender Roles in Films - How Does it Reflect on Society?](#)

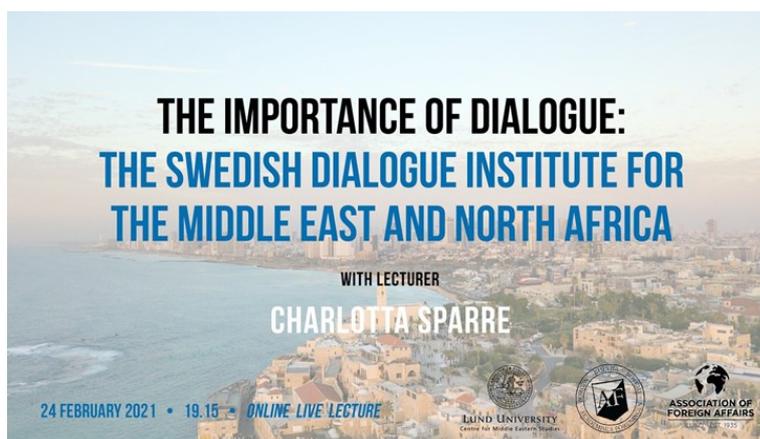


Other activities

Lecture on Dialogue:

In March the Director of the Dialogue Institute was invited to give an online lecture on dialogue, at an event arranged by [UPF Lund - The Association of Foreign Affairs](#) and the [Centre for Advanced Middle Eastern Studies Lund University](#). In her talk Charlotta Sparre spoke about dialogue, why it is important and how the Institute works on creating spaces for dialogue. Based on her own experiences of decades of diplomatic work, she shared thoughts and reflections on the intersection of foreign policy and culture, stressing the importance of empathy, curiosity and active listening.

For more information: the event can be watched at [Lecture on the importance of dialogue](#).



The Dialogue Institute's monthly webinars on MENA related topics

Since the spring 2020 the Dialogue Institute hosts monthly webinars to stimulate learning, exchanges and discussions, with and for colleagues in the Swedish Foreign Service, as well as for colleagues from other relevant government agencies and from organisations such as International IDEA, Sipri, SIWI and the Swedish Institute of International Affairs. Prominent analysts on the MENA region are invited to reflect on topics related to the regional developments in the Middle East and North Africa. While these webinars have been by invitation only, summary reports with main findings are published on the Institute's website. During the spring the following webinars have been arranged:

- January: [Webinar on the Arab uprisings – 10 years on](#)
- February: [Webinar on Religion and Diplomacy](#)
- March: [Webinar on the US and MENA](#)
- April: [Webinar on Turkey and MENA](#)
- May: [Webinar on the EU and MENA](#)
- June: [Webinar on Russia and MENA](#)

In addition to activities mentioned in this newsletter, the Dialogue Institute has participated in meetings arranged by other organisations and has held many consultative meetings to build networks, identify future work areas and possible synergies with other partners.

Further updates on activities by the Dialogue Institute can be found at: [Dialogue Institute/News](#).

About the Swedish Dialogue Institute for the Middle East and North Africa

The Swedish Dialogue Institute for the Middle East and North Africa is a governmental agency that serves as a platform for contacts and dialogue between on the one hand Sweden and the countries of Europe and on the other hand the countries of the Middle East and North Africa. It was established by the Swedish government in 1998 and is an integral part of the Swedish Foreign Service. It was previously located in Alexandria, Egypt, under the name “Swedish Institute Alexandria” (SwedAlex).

In its activities, the Dialogue Institute addresses issues that are important for political, economic and social development in the MENA region, or for relations between the countries, or that help increase mutual understanding in the areas of culture and religion. It also promotes the Euro-Mediterranean Partnership.

The Dialogue Institute operates through conferences, seminars, meetings and other activities and primarily focuses on the following areas:

- Peace and Security
- Sustainable Development
- Inclusive participation

During the past two years the Dialogue Institute has temporarily been located in Stockholm. In 2020 a host country agreement with Jordan was agreed and entered into force in late 2020. During 2021 the Institute is gradually moving to Amman and by the end of 2021 the Institute is expected to have completed its move to Jordan.

In the past year the Dialogue Institute has held activities in all priority areas:

- In the area of **peace and security**, the Institute's work has so far mainly focused on the agendas for women, peace and security (WPS) and youth, peace and security (YPS), as well as on climate and security, water and security, and good governance and security.
- In the area of **sustainable development**, the Institute's work has mainly focused on women's participation, young people's participation and on entrepreneurship in the implementation of Agenda 2030, as well as on activities around climate, water and security.
- In the area of **inclusive participation**, the Institute's work has mainly focused on issues related to democracy, civic participation and gender equality, with special focus on amplifying underrepresented voices from women and young people.



Swedish Dialogue Institute
for the Middle East and North Africa