The United Nations Interim Force in Lebanon (UNIFIL) receives funding from the Elsie Initiative Fund to enable an inclusive environment in UN peacekeeping

New York, 31 January 2022 – The Elsie Initiative Fund for Women in Peace Operations (EIF) announced today that the United Nations Interim Force in Lebanon (UNIFIL) is the first UN field mission to receive funding to create an enabling and inclusive environment for women peacekeepers.

The EIF was jointly established by the UN and Canada in 2019 with its secretariat within UN Women. The EIF, a UN trust fund, is funded by Member States. US $30 million have been raised thus far.

The US $357,000 EIF grant will allow UNIFIL to build gender-sensitive accommodation and working conditions for women peacekeepers from the Ghanaian battalion. It will also enable the peacekeeping mission to attain gender parity and equality.

“For success in peacekeeping operations we need more uniformed women to participate. Yet, too often women’s equal participation in these missions is deterred by inadequate gender-responsive living and working conditions,” said UN Women’s Executive Director, Sima Bahous. “The UNIFIL project, funded by the Elsie Initiative Fund, is setting a great example by specifically tackling this significant structural barrier. Its positive changes will help us attain parity in peace operations.”

UNIFIL’s project is designed to address this barrier by installing four accommodation buildings, an ablution unit and a welfare area for women. The improved living conditions comes at a time when Ghana, who currently deploys 861 military personnel to UNIFIL (16% of whom are women) is expected to increase its deployment of women peacekeepers. The project follows guidelines and recommendations from the Department of Operational Support’s new gender-responsive conceptual peacekeeping camp and accommodation designs created through the Elsie Initiative for Women in Peace Operations, funded by Canada.

“Women still face barriers that prevent them from contributing to peacekeeping to the fullest. This includes lack of information about deployment opportunities and not enough access to necessary training, as well as institutional constraints and biases, or inadequate facilities and infrastructure in field missions,” said Jean-Pierre Lacroix, UN Under-Secretary-General for Peacekeeping Operations. “This project represents an expression of our shared values for gender equality and the promotion of women’s full, equal and meaningful participation in our workforce, in line with the Secretary-General’s Action for Peacekeeping initiative, which is critical to increasing performance and mandate implementation” he said.

Over the years, UNIFIL has supported the increased participation of women peacekeepers from five percent in 2018 to nearly seven percent (or a total of 659 women) in 2021. With this project, UNIFIL seeks to support troop and police contributing countries to achieve the gender targets set in the UN’s Uniformed Gender Parity Strategy 2018-2028.

“Our women peacekeepers participate in all types of operational activities, from de-mining to patrolling the Blue Line”, said UNIFIL Head of Mission and Force Commander Major General Stefano Del Col. “We
are proud to put this funding to use to remove some of the practical barriers that may deter women's participation in our important work," added Del Col.

This project contributes to UNIFIL’s implementation of UN Security Council resolution 1325 (2000) on Women, Peace and Security (WPS) and UN Security Council resolution 2538 (2020) that called for an increase in the deployments of women peacekeepers. It is also in line with the Action for Peacekeeping (A4P) initiative and the A4P+, launched by the UN Secretary General in 2018 and 2021, respectively, to reinforce and harness the political commitment in advancing the WPS agenda and reaffirming women’s full, equal and meaningful participation in peacekeeping and peace processes.

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About the Elsie Initiative Fund (EIF)
Established by the UN and Canada in 2019, the EIF is an innovative, multilateral fund that aims to accelerate progress towards the UN’s gender targets in line with Security Council resolutions and the UN Uniformed Gender Parity Strategy 2018-2028. Funded by contributions from Australia, Canada, Denmark, Finland, Germany, the Netherlands, Norway and the United Kingdom, the EIF supports the sustainable deployment and meaningful participation of uniformed women peacekeepers by providing financial assistance and incentives. For more information on the EIF, please visit https://elsiefund.org/ and follow @ElsieFund on Twitter.

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