

## WORKING GROUP ON WOMEN & GENDER REALITIES IN THE CIVIC SOLIDARITY PLATFORM OF OSCE



### **Who we are:**

The **Working Group on Women & Gender realities in the Civic Solidarity Platform of OSCE**

(<http://www.civicsolidarity.org/member/1451/working-group-women-and-gender-realities-osce-region>) discusses since its foundation in 2015 how mechanism of justice and meaningful women's involvement in (peace) negotiations have been influential, what the main hampering factors were, and on how successful processes can be replicated, adapted and transferred to different countries and regions.

We are an open forum with participants from (inter-)national Human Rights and Peace organisations, for now from Ukraine, Austria, Georgia, Armenia, Russia, Sweden, Germany, Italy, Kirgizstan, Kazakhstan. We offer space and invite women from all OSCE countries to exchange with us. A specific focus is on women's groups from the respective OSCE presidencies (actually Slovakia, Albania).

### **How we work:**

Our mission is unique because we **launch open discussions** on a macro-political level and encourage permanent dialogues on a micro-political level, with the support of local women and women's organisations who are committed to women's rights and gender justice. We are related to supranational organisations and transnational networks with women from different conflict and post-conflict countries.

We **build trust and partnerships** with women from "non conflict" countries that play an important role and responsibility in a geostrategic and economic international dimension, regarding e.g. arms trade, conflict negotiation, extraterritorial obligations, justice mechanisms and have a strong impact on environmental degradation.

We **address stakeholders and civil society**, focusing on border conflicts as for unrecognized territories such as Nagorno-Karabakh, border conflicts in Georgia, in Central Asia Kazakhstan's border region and the Kyrgyz Republic with China, like the Xinjiang Uyghur autonomous region with its re-education camps. We promote the transformation of military conflict resolution into peace dialogues in Donbas region.

### **Our approach**

We approach gender issues in a **horizontal and participatory** way. We integrate manifold perspectives without claiming to homogenize and assimilate the different realities, which are represented by the participants. The integration of key women human rights defenders and academics in our activities expand our experiences and visions to understand the realities of today's world. **Diversity** in the group is considered as an added value, as a resource in conflict prevention. The mix of fact finding missions, storytelling, case studies and analytical reporting, the face to face exchanges generate a broad understanding of different realities and levels of abstraction necessary for the evidence based involvement at all levels providing strategic recommendations for further joint activities for positive change. Our initiatives are based on the optimal synthesis of the different contents and sources of knowledge, experiences, and visions.

We will intensify the **use of social media** to keep on track with the digitalization. We aim to develop a new sense of (digital) commons for a common future and resilience. In this spirit our commitment is pro-active: we resist to a mainstream tendency to co-opt civil society representatives in governmental and official

institutional networks (for decoration) and we avoid any form of mainstreaming but promote the diversity of conditions under which women (and men) organize their daily live.

We confront all civil society groups represented in the CSP with **evidence based analysis**, we advocate and do the necessary monitoring within the WPS Agenda. We address the decision-making bodies, the stakeholders, the OSCE, and its different departments (HDIM, Gender Unit and others). We strive to build effective and accountable institutions using an inclusive approach to involve all stakeholders on different levels.

The **cross-dimensionality** is a key factor of our approach. It is the logical consequence of the compilation of manifold facts, sound analysis and evidence based knowledge. Therefore, we use a gender lens on the interconnectedness and spill over effects of the three OSCE dimensions:

- **Human dimension**, including underlying social inequalities, exclusive patriarchal structures, protection of women Human rights defenders, narratives of violent extremism, (sexist) hate speech against women
- **Security dimension** integrating Human security, an active impact in multilateralism in the spirit of sustainable Development/SDGs
- **Economic and Environmental dimension**, using theory of feminist economy to analyse the conditions of care work and the root causes of female poverty; focussing on the reduction and prevention of social distress, promoting policies for gender just climate change, fostering a transnational social security system (based on CEDAW and ILO), and protecting women migrants exposed to exploitation and precarious working conditions.

### **Main Topics**

Together we uphold the **rights** of those most marginalised and in danger (with a specific focus on women refugees, asylum seekers and IDPs) and hold our respective governments, (international) institutions and decision makers accountable to open space for women's involvement to move beyond politics of fear and to build structures and develop mechanisms for sustainable (gender just) peace.

We address the continuity and constant threat of **violence against women**. The testimonies of women reported to the Working Group by its participants give evidence that many women experience dominating patriarchy, stereotyping masculinities, backlashes in family politics and de-gendering, including more violence and extremism in the societies threatening the life of women.

Our feminist solidarity dialogues empower and ensure that women are ready and able to participate meaningfully in **peace building processes**, borrowing knowledge from other women's experiences to act as early warning instances and in preventive action. We formulate in post-conflict reconstruction requests to respect real, everyday based, needs according to women rights as human rights. We request **gender sensitivity** on all levels of decision making and the **involvement of young people**.

Security from a feminist point of view must be redefined in terms of a comprehensive understanding of well being and safety. This includes a strong commitment to turn war-economies into care economies.

## Activities (past and upcoming)

### **Participation in Yerevan:**

During the conference “**Women at Peace tables – More justice for all**” organised by Democracy today Armenia, namely Gulnara Shahinian, in Yerevan/Armenia from June 12 to 14, the WG organised first an internal exchange which was focussed on our interpretations of new developments in the WPS Agenda, our partial disappointment regarding the implementation of UNSCR1325 until now in different contexts. We discussed chances and scepticism regarding UNSCR 2467 in the perspective of future joint activities in 2020 (20 years of UNSCR 1325 and 35 years after Beijing – platform of action).

We clearly stated a changed world where (women) HR defenders, victims of torture and SGBV are threatened, freedom of association and justice in danger. We agreed that there is still a lack of implementation of long-term existing requests such as meaningful participation of women on all levels of decision making. We also agreed that protection of women HR defenders is at risk and pacifists are exposed to growing dangers in almost all countries, due to backlashes, de-gendering, economic conditions putting women aside and in “traditional family roles”. Growing corruption, female poverty and environmental destruction aggravate the situation. We also considered that the situation of migrant women/refugee women and IDPs, are worsening. SGBV, insufficient economic opportunities and patriarchal structures create (new) threats for the life of women, make them even more vulnerable and deprive them from a necessary role of agents for change.

We appreciated the broad range of issues and commitment for peace and justice in difficult political circumstances, brought up by three award winners (Young women Peace Award) from Lebanon, Chechnya and Yemen which inspired the conference.

During the conference, the WG intervened in different panels:

- To present the WG under the title of “Voices of women must be heard” to strengthen Civil Society Cooperation, to get a broader picture of the diversity of challenges women are facing in the OSCE area, how to get also men engaged for a change for the benefit of all.
- To present women’s initiatives for Peace in Donbas, perspectives through dialogue processes during hot phases of conflict in Ukraine and desk and field research about access to rights for IDP women and women in “grey zone” -“Women and displacement in Ukraine”, Kharkiv-2019
- To present field research in Georgia and the Caucasian region, see more in “Through the eyes of women” of IDP women’s association Consent.
- To answer to the question: is justice available for women (victims of SGBV) during conflict and present country specific situations and mechanism such as the women’s court.

Special meeting with OSCE representative Graziella Pavone from ODIHR and a meeting in the Armenian parliament allowed inside information and development of constructive joint strategies for advocacy.

### **Planning:**

The WG will continue to strengthen its **cooperation with the OSCE:**

- Cooperation with and within specific platforms and dialogues with the Gender Unit
- Offer expertise for a side-event during HDIM to ODIHR - in contact with Graziella Pavone, ODIHR for exchange and joint trainings
- Give input at the CSP General Assembly and strengthen exchange and cooperation with the CSP-WG coordinators, exchange especially the new WG on Security and HR.  
Promote its work in contact with diplomatic missions of the OSCE in resp.countries

Members of the WG will **participate:**

- in the **Kharkiv Legal Forum** in Ukraine with a focus on Business and HR and a specific gender Focus, Sept.24-28, 2019, detailed information: Olena Uvarova – Mail: uvarova.info@gmail.com



- in the **Documentary Film Festival in Bishkek/Kirgizstan** and respective lectures with local women/groups in November: <http://www.birduino.kg/en/festival-2019/festival-of-documentaries>, Nov 11-15, 2019
- in the final session of the European project [www.womenvotepeace.com](http://www.womenvotepeace.com) in **Vienna/Austria**, 18./19.11.2019 – eventually linked to a 2 days seminar before in **Budapest/Hungary**

The WG will **strengthen contacts** to (feminist) universities and peace research institutions (such as Berghof foundation) with the aim of collecting stories and data from conflict zones, economic integration

The WG will collectively take part in an **advisory board** for the next conference planed in Armenia in 2020 with the aim to politicise the process. It will help establishing mediation courses and capacity training for award winners and promote their recognition in their respective societies.

For all support and logistic help, we thank the cooperation with DRA (namely Anna Osypova) and the German MFA.

*Agreed by all participants after a phone conference 3.7.2019*



*Discussion continue in the Armenian Parliament and outdoor*

