

# Warsaw 30.9.-3.10.2022



Meetings took place around and linked to the **HDC**<sup>1</sup> and respective side events – partly co-organised by WG and CSP members on: Ukraine- “practices of women’s solidarity in response to the Russian invasion”, “Central Asia border conflicts”, “future of OSCE “, “climate justice-HR” , “index on torture and victim approach” and others.

**1. WG Meeting in Warsaw** (Nina, Irina (both living in exile in Poland), Anki (member of the Swedish OSCE network, Aida and Toleskan (both Birduino Kirgistan), Mariya (Public alternative Ukraine, actually in Brussels) and Polish feminist activists (Rut Kurkiewicz and Nina Sankari)

**a)** We discussed with Ukrainian members about their actual situation, their needs and challenges, how they interpret the situation especially for women and how they continue working politically: Nina (WILPF) spent some weeks at several occasions this summer in Ukraine in contact with different partners, family and friends. She reported about fear, insecurity with ongoing alarms and the will not to accept war as a normality. There is no consensus within the group and friends how to position themselves towards the war - some more in a geostrategic way of support for the nation and victory against the aggressor - others looking for perspectives towards a cease-fire and how to deal with the massive difficulties/problems organising daily life, with loss of friends, jobs and resources, surviving in improvised and unclear (legal and social) situation. Nina mentioned her feeling running growing personal security risks due to her work and connections as well known and connected peace builder, her ongoing relationship with women from occupied territories, from Belarus and Russia. She decided to renounce in the upcoming months to go back to Ukraine. The major focus will be on her commitment for solidarity, humanitarian and social support activities and open debates on failures to let this war and Putin’s aggression happen after all experiences of Russian involvement and invasions in the region. Nina is in contact with academic think tanks to support a respective questionnaire and possible retreats to make dialogue happen.

Mariya Yasenovska talked about her life full of insecurities (despite a job in Brussels based on her expertise in dealing with women and their specific vulnerabilities / disabilities partly in the context of already started re-construction processes for Ukraine). We heard her deep sorrow about lost home and family, unclear status for the next year or future, the suffering of ongoing war, destruction and terrible human rights violations. Sascha Romantsova - Centre for Civil liberties - and Ukrainian colleagues of CSP - not member of the WG reported their commitment regarding lack of accountability, rule of law, documentation of HR violations and war crimes that they are dealing with in the country.

**b)** The WG had an informal meeting with OSCE senior gender adviser **Lara Scarpitta**, **Vera Strobachowa** also **GU**, **Izabela Hartmann/ODIHR** and **ODIHR** staff members on respective experiences and political evaluation from a feminist perspective of ongoing developments on the ground in the OSCE region. We exchanged activities (e.g. Meeting in Sarajevo with Syrian and Bosnian women on lessons learned and



<sup>1</sup> zehntägige Konferenz über die Situation der Menschenrechte und Grundfreiheiten auf dem Gebiet der OSZE Mitgliedstaaten. Die menschliche Dimension der OSZE umfasst Medienfreiheit, Minderheitenrechte, Toleranz, Nicht-Diskriminierung, Rechtsstaatlichkeit und die Bekämpfung von Antisemitismus. Diese Themen gelten als unverzichtbare Elemente des umfassenden Sicherheitsbegriffs der OSZE. Da es im Vorfeld keine Einigung über die Durchführung des regulären Treffens der Vertreter der OSZE Mitgliedstaaten zur dritten Dimension gegeben hatte, konnte das Treffen lediglich in der Form einer Konferenz stattfinden im Sinne eines Forums für Austausch und Diskussion. Beschlüsse konnten keine gefasst werden und Russland war auch nicht an der Konferenz vertreten.

exchange organised by the OSCE secretariat, field visits and the overall gendered aspects of conflicts also in Central Asia). We started to exchange ideas and chances of better highlighting gendered approaches in the OSCE area in the future and how to improve mechanisms to avoid structural failure to prevent war.

**c) the WG discussed future plans:** upcoming meeting in the Balkans, with discussion with Serbian, Albania, Kosovar and Northern Macedonian women, in connection with a WPS conference in Prishtina, a conference on 10 years of 1325 association in Albania, a project meeting of 1000PWaG and women from Northern-Macedonia for the next OSCE presidency. See attachment.

## 2. Participation in the CSP general assembly/GA:



The GA brought together about 100 women and men from all over the OSCE region and numerous organisations with a major participation from post-sovietic countries. The big question in the room was about the failure of the OSCE to avoid war and the Russian aggression in Ukraine. The confrontation with growing authoritarianism all over, criminal regimes, corruption, torture, illegal treatments and procedures, imprisonment are followed by members in their respective context and interlinked with neighbouring regions. The wording of “East and West of Vienna” was often mentioned regarding the dimension of the development.

There is an idea – still to be developed - of a big Civil Society Conference in 2025 in Finland. No country has shown interest to hold the 2024 presidency yet. The OSCE has no agreed budget for this year because of Russia’s veto and absence due to the consensus principle and Russia blocking.

First, member organisations and CSP WG presented their activities and plans. The CSP secretariat exposed its difficulties to deal with communication issues and organisation of the platform (the rotating secretariat went last year to CCL in Ukraine!). They complained about lack of ownership, of a clear mandate and common vision. There is a clear political will and needs to cooperate as civil society from mostly human rights organisations in the tradition of the Helsinki Citizen Assembly and a cross-dimensional perspective ( 3 dimensions of the OSCE: security and cooperation with less organised CS participation, human dimension and economy/ecology also lacking CS participation).

The new SG of OSCE, the German Helga Maria Schmid has a feminist approach – but her activities depend also of the respective OSCE presidencies. In the CSP, our WG was considered as one of the most active and effective and has gained “territory” over the last years. There was a great interest - new members are potentially interested to follow our agenda: Mariam Antadze/Georgian centre for Psychosocial and Medical rehabilitation of torture victims, Marie-Ursula Kind, Swiss Helsinki foundation , Kirsten Meijer, executive director NL Helsinki Committee, Elena Rodina, Civil Rights defenders. I will add them to the group for the moment – if they agree!

## My contribution in a side event on the future of OSCE:

OSCE – hopes and recommendations towards the future of an important multilateral institution

The founding principles of the OSCE, laid down in the Helsinki agreement from 1975 and the Paris Charta from 1990 are based on „democracy, peace and unity“. OSCE and its common security architecture was built on neighbourhood policies in a vast and diverse area especially after the end of the cold war. It was the time when leaders – such as Gorbachev – talked about a common European house which was never realised adequately and as a safe and just heaven for all. The enlargement and new justification for the western military alliance NATO, cold-war rhetoric, and the end of neutral corridors contributed to split the continent.

The promotion of gender equality has been crucial since the beginning as an institutional principle and in praxis. GAP met a lot of difficulties due to the consensus principle but was continuously developed in missions and documents. Of course the question remains: has it been sufficiently implemented on the ground? Certainly not! The lack of equality (elections, participation, protection, prevention of violence) in many states is visible and an indicator for the lack of democracy and of creating sustainable peace!

Recent and really threatening developments of re-nationalisation, the growing installation of authoritarian regimes (and their increased cooperation between themselves), aggressive, patriarchal and militarised imperialism, militarised masculinity, democratic backlashes showed their faces - also through de-gendering and suppression of diversity as identity politics. As a visible result, space for civil society is shrinking, peace builders, HR defenders are at risk. The general development has massive implications on the safety of women and marginalised vulnerable groups of the society. We witnessed their voices at the conference on massive HR violations, lack of impunity and risks for their safety.

All in all this development put the comprehensive security architecture in danger. The heaviest attack is the Russian war against Ukraine. The consensus principle is blocked by Russia and its allies, the chairpersonship of 2024 is still unclear, the budget, to continue the numerous missions and programs, is not voted. Only a trick of the Polish presidency could save the traditional Human Dimension Meeting as a conference organised by the chairpersonship. The word of failure of the institution is running through the corridors while the OSCE remains the last bridge actually between East and West. Who has failed, why and when? Early warning, early action, missions, CS participation? Why the war could not be prevented?

Finally, we observe that the comprehensive OSCE security architecture is shifting to more and more national interests and geo-strategic positions, is losing its human dimension and trust in the multilateral capacities. The entry points for civil society and for a transformative agenda seem to change too. Is this „Realpolitik“ why some member states play down the ambition of the founding mothers and fathers of OSCE and violate the chances of precious instruments for mediation, gender equality, (electoral) missions, high level diplomacy.

If we discuss our failure as committed civil society organisations on the basis of lacking implementation of principles and good practices, we nevertheless need to emphasize the unique value of multilateralism to cope with the challenges.

Perspectives:

1. Strengthening the role of CS involvement also beyond the Human dimension, especially the security sector and the interlinked 3rd dimension in an intersectional approach. Cross dimensional work is, not just from a feminist point of view, the only way to affront the named challenges. We are prepared through our local experiences and regional/international networks to ring alarm clocks in the whole conflict cycle. And to re-strengthen a human perspective to prevent and care. based on dialogue.
2. Progress must be made in the sector of arms control and disarmament in the renewal of the common security as proposed also in the recent Olof Palme report in preparation of the planned review conference of the OSCE in 2025.

There is not yet a reason to be purely optimistic but multilateralism is crucial to overcome our divides.  
No care – no peace!!