

March 8, 2023 - International Women's Day

CSP WG women and gender realities



We recall the proclamation of the International Women's day by Clara Zetkin in 1911 to support women's freedom, equality and peace. The celebration of March 8th in 1914 turned into a demonstration against the arrest of Rosa Luxemburg who spoke out against weapons and imperialist wars. In 1975, the United Nations proclaimed March 8 the „Day of the United Nations for the rights of women and world peace! “

We as women and partners from NGOs in different conflict zones in the OSCE area (from the Balkan- Kosovo and Serbia, the Caucasus - Armenia and Georgia, Central Asia, Ukraine, Belarus and Turkey) are fully aware of the complex relationship between women's rights, a life in dignity and peace. We are committed to stop economical, physical, psychological and sexual violence that women face every day. We protest against the destruction of our natural environments, of restricted access to food and medicine and so the lack of economic security, social and health services - especially for the most vulnerable. We do our best to investigate and document crimes systematically. We struggle in our networks and with the support of the international community against impunity for those who discriminate and threaten us. We will not allow that our possibilities to participate actively in building democracies and a peaceful environment are restricted through raising authoritarianism, dictatorship, anti-feminism and war lords.

We recall that the war of aggression of Russia against Ukraine started 1 Year ago (for many already 9 years earlier). This war has already caused so much suffering for women and children living in Ukraine in particular. This war is responsible for (personal, material and ecological) losses, ruptures of families and friends, destruction of infrastructure and environment. This war has terribly affected the life of women living in forced exile and in difficult situations of (internal) displacement, or those women who have no possibilities to leave the most dangerous zones. So many women complain about lost auto-determination, terribly changed perspectives for their life, values and priorities. This causes existential fears, stress, depression, traumata and favours "othering" - a terrible risk for prevention and possible reconciliation.

We women from „safe“ places in the OSCE area, Germany, Switzerland, Italy, Austria, share and open spaces for and with women in conflict and war zones to tell their stories and be listened to. We help enhance empathy and confidentiality to de-construct un-good enemy images. With our partners and friends, we focus on new – not divisive but unifying - narratives. We build and consolidate our relationship on mutual experiences at a very concrete and personal level. We study together with our feminist lens and critical distance to power structures the best ways of women's (economic) empowerment, of resistance, of organising and accompanying peace processes. . Moreover, we act in context specific ways to resist all forms of violence and improve living conditions.

We base our politics and actions on solidarity and ethics of care, focussing on urgent needs. We raise together awareness for the protection of women and the prevention of further violence. We train civilian and non-violent conflict solutions with engaged youth and the support of artists. We denounce toxic masculinity, militarised mind-sets and dangerous militarisation of whole societies, misusing precious resources for economic profits and killing. We design collectively inclusive images of communal life and find locally adapted ways to implement replying projects.

On this women's day 2023, we promise to continue working in a transformative way, challenging dominant political and ideological borders. We insist that it is high time to galvanise voices against war and for a redefinition of what security is like from a feminist, human and planetary perspective. We insist on the (re-)development of a caring society that must be engaged in active prevention, in peaceful resistance, in disarming our mind-sets. Our common commitment for our safety and security is the link between the struggles for our rights with the struggles for peace.

We put our emphasis in the request that this war must end as quickly as possible – as all wars around the world! Talks, dialogues, negotiations with meaningful participation of women on all levels, are part of our agenda. The aim is to rebuild societies for the benefit of all and a future life in dignity.

“We dream of a world where the sky is no more a place of threat through a carrier of bombs, when the airplanes transport people and not bombs, when birds are singing instead of alarm signs.”

March 8 is our day!