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Regional Civil Society Advisory Group for Europe and Central Asia (2020-2022)

To provide strong and coherent leadership in support of State's priorities and efforts, UN Women builds effective partnerships with a variety of actors. One of the key roles and functions of UN Women is to forge effective partnerships with civil society organizations and advocates who make important contributions to the national and global policy framework on gender equality and women's empowerment.

In order to fulfil its mandate, UN Women considers the civil society as one of the most important constituencies providing an important source for ideas, policy perspectives, partnerships and support for the organization. Closely linked is the vital advocacy role played by civil society in advancing policy and dialogue on women's rights and empowerment, development, and peace and security.

Towards this, the UN Women Regional Office in Europe and Central Asia (ECA RO) has renewed and re-established the Regional Civil Society Advisory Group (RCSAG) for a three-year period, and updated its composition with new members to ensure the Group is well positioned to work together with UN Women in the normative and intergovernmental areas.

Members of the RCSAG are:

1. Fabiola Laço-Egro (Albania)

Fabiola is a human rights and gender activist, since the 1990's civil movement for women's rights in Albania.

Fabiola has 30 years of activism experience in improving, implementing and monitoring laws on measures against gender violence, trafficking and social services (for women, children, youth, Roma and Egyptian communities, and the elderly). Her experience also includes: territorial reform and education; women's economic and social empowerment through trade unions; support to migratory families and community groups during the Albanian civil crisis in 1997 and Kosovo crisis in 1999; and prohibition of blood revenge and supporting isolated families in northern Albania.

Fabiola was spokeswoman of the Independent Trade Unions of Albania, co-founded the Association of Young Christian Women Albania and is a Member of the National Council for Civil Society. She is also a Member of the Experts' Group on Policy Recommendations to support the European Institute for Gender Equality to prepare the 2019 Beijing review report.

Fabiola is the founder and Executive Director of 'Today for the Future', a community development network focusing on gender equality, integrity and strengthening the socio-economic, cultural and political situation of vulnerable groups within the framework of "Albanian society integration to the great European family".



2. Khalisa Shahverdiyeva (Azerbaijan)

Khalisa is a social justice activist. As a legal counsel, trainer and expert specialized in inter-family law, domestic violence, gender, and human rights, Khalisa has more than 14 years of experience of working with local and international organisations.

During the past years, as a researcher and UNFPA expert, Khalisa contributed to numerous reports such as "Socio-Economic Policies of Azerbaijan Through the Gender Lens: Assessment", "Estimating the Economic Costs of Gender-based Violence in Azerbaijan", and "The EU Assessment of Performance of the State Monitoring Groups on Gender-based Violence and Violence Against Children in Azerbaijan". She is also the co-author of the "National Action Plan on Combating Gender-Based Violence in Azerbaijan."

In 2011-2012, Khalisa taught domestic violence and gender studies to third-grade classes at Azerbaijan University.



3. Irina Solomatina (Belarus)

Irina is the Head of Council of Belarusian Organization of Working Women since May 2019. She founded the "Gender Route" project in 2005 and continues to coordinate the "Global Media Monitoring" project in Belarus, since 2010.

Irina has chaired the annual Gender Stream of the International Congress of Belarusian Studies since 2013.

She is also the author of many articles and several books, the most significant of them being "Female activism in Belarus: invisible and untouchable" (2015) and "She existed: 16 Women Who Became A Part Of Belarusian History" (2019).



4. Dijana Duvnjak (Bosnia and Herzegovina)

Dijana is co-founder and Steering Board President at Foundation for Socioeconomic Development 787 and Founder and Chief Executive Officer at HitoSkills, a communications company. For over 5 years, Foundation 787 helps women and youth to develop and sustain their business ideas and promotes entrepreneurial culture. Foundation 787 plays an important role in Bosnia's entrepreneurial ecosystem by providing complete, high quality business education programs and networking opportunities and is a reference point for women in entrepreneurship.

As a Communication Skills Coach, Dijana is working with local and international clients in communication skills improvement, through developing custom programs for individuals and teams, from corporates to non-governmental organizations worldwide. Dijana has 10 years of experience working in media and communications, start-ups and non-governmental organizations to support women in business through mentoring programs.



5. Dunja Bonacci Skenderović (Croatia)

Dunja has over 15 years of experience working in the non-government and public-private sectors, and is working as an independent consultant in the fields of combating violence against women and anti-trafficking.

For over 6 years Dunja worked with the Women's Room – Centre for Sexual Rights in prevention of sexual violence against women, and developed anti-trafficking and anti-sexual violence programs and projects.

Dunja was part of the Women's Room team who founded the first centre for victims of sexual violence in Croatia.

She participated in research on sexual rights of women in Croatia, worked on prevention and awareness raising to combat trafficking in human beings (THB) with emphasis on women and children, and was a Member of the Operative team of National Committee for Combating THB. Dunja contributed in the 'Development of Trans-National Referral Mechanisms for Trafficked Persons in South-Eastern Europe', and was a part of GIZ and Thompson Reuters Foundation's Leadership and Innovation Lab on 'Unveil the Hidden Presence: Trafficking in Women and Children'.



6. Dr. Anke Stock (Germany)

Anke is an experienced expert on gender issues and sustainable development. She is a qualified lawyer and holds a Ph.D. on anti-discrimination law.

Since 2005 Anke is the Senior Gender and Rights Coordinator with Women Engage for a Common Future (WECF) - formerly Women in Europe for a Common Future - in Munich, a network of around 150 non-government organizations and smaller groups worldwide focusing on integrating gender issues into environmentally sound and sustainable development work.

Anke's work experience includes consultancies and conducting trainings for the American Bar Association, the European Eco-Forum, the Friedrich-Ebert-Stiftung, UNECE, UNEP, UN Women and UNDP. Her special focus areas are gender mainstreaming into environmental projects, programmes and policies as well as public participation.



7. Alessandra Pauncz (Italy)

Alessandra is Executive Director of the European Network of the Work With Perpetrators (WWP EN) comprising of over 50 organizations from 26 European countries. Alessandra has been working on domestic violence for over 20 years covering many areas of expertise. She has advocated and worked for victims of domestic violence as a shelter worker, psychologist, researcher, manager, trainer, and in fund and conscious raising at various levels: locally (through Association Artemisia), provincially (through Equal Opportunities of the Province of Florence), and regionally, nationally and at the European level (through the European Women's Lobby and WWP-EN). Alessandra founded and ran the 1st Centre in Italy working with perpetrators (CAM – Centre for Abusive Men), and set up the National Italian Network of work with perpetrators (Relive).



8. Moldiyar Yergebekov (Kazakhstan)

Moldiyar is a pro-feminist activist who works as an Associate Professor at Suleyman Demirel University, Department of Social Science and Journalism. His research interests widely cover gender issues in Central Asia with multiple lenses as masculinity and femininity concepts in media, media representation, media consumer-producer awareness on gender & LGBTI and gender based economic inequality, amongst others.



Moldiyar co-initiated the 2018 FemAgora Central Asia Women's Rights and Gender Equality Festival, as a platform to raise awareness of the low status of women in social, political, economic, and cultural spheres in Central Asia. As a male supporter of gender equality and through the annual FemAgora Central Asia festival, Moldiyar is creating solidarity against patriarchal values and forming a conducive environment - economic, social and psychological - to cease violence against women and promote women's rights.

9. Nadira Masiumova (Kyrgyzstan) representing youth, LGBTI, people with HIV

Nadira is a human rights activist who at a young age has conducted trainings on varying topics including: Sexual Orientation and Gender Identity (SOGI); gender issues; feminism; and Sexual, Health and Reproductive Rights. She has also prepared advocacy plans, campaigns, held public events and participated in debates.

Nadira is skilled in Training of Trainers to (i) counter stigma and discrimination against gay men, men who have sex with men, and trans people, and (ii) educate government officials of stigma and discrimination of SOGI.

Nadira organized an art exhibition as part of 16-days of activism in 2018, spoke on "Effective engagement with governments and politicians in homophobic and transphobic countries" at the Ilga Conference, and has provided coaching on "Hate Crimes".



10. Liliana Palihovici (Moldova)

Liliana is the President of the "Institutum Virtutes Civilis" Association and promotes participative democracy and policies related to human rights, good governance and civil society development, and leads the Academy for Women Leadership on empowering a new generation of women for civic and political participation.

Liliana is a former Member of Parliament and Deputy Speaker of Parliament (2010-2017). She was previously Member of the Standing Committee for National Security, Defence and Public Order; Chairperson of the Committee for Social Protection, Health and Family; Co-founder of the Women's Caucus and the Women Democracy Network branch; Head of the Youth Directorate; and Vice-President and Head of the national delegation to the Parliamentary Assembly of the Council of Europe.

Liliana advocates for women and children's human rights, with focus on their increased representation with platforms for their voices to be heard and needs taken into account.



11. Natalia Duminica (Moldova) representing marginalized groups

Natalia joined the human rights movement in 2011 collaborating with a number of non-government organizations - Roma National Center, Non-discrimination Coalition, Amnesty International Moldova and PromoLEX. Natalia has worked on Roma and Sinti rights and discrimination issues) with the United Nations Office of the High Commissioner for Human Rights (Moldova) and the Organization for Security and Co-operation in Europe/Office for Democratic Institutions and Human Rights (Poland).

Natalia is Country Coordinator of the Law and Humanities Scholarship Program of Roma Education Fund, and co-founder of the Group of Youth for Interethnic Solidarity - a platform for young people of national, ethnic and religious minorities to advocate and promote minority rights. Natalia's area of expertise includes documentation of discrimination cases; advocacy and lobby for the rights of Roma people, in particular women and youth, and national minorities; monitoring online hate speech; and election observation.



12. Sanja Nikolin (Serbia) representing marginalized groups

Sanja is an entrepreneur in the knowledge economy and committed to innovation and collaborative problem-solving. She brings with herself a wealth of experience - 30 years of activism, 25 years of international development, 20 years of management, 15 years of consulting and 3 years of coaching.

As an activist of Serbia's Women's Platform for Development, Sanja has brought together activists from the women's movement, experts, Members of Parliament, entrepreneurs, journalists, academics and politicians.

Sanja has also supported institutionalization of gender responsive budgeting, as well as gender analyses of national and local social protection and economic measures and programmes, including economic development measurements that go beyond Serbia's Gross Domestic Product and tackle work-life balance and quality of life issues.

For the last 20 years, Sanja is an active supporter of the disability movement and supported self-advocacy efforts of other groups working towards equality and non-discrimination.



13. Özgül Kaptan (Turkey) representing marginalized groups

Özgül is an independent feminist activist since 1998.

Her wide-ranging professional background includes: International trading specialist in the garment business (4 years); Sectoral publications and trade fair organizations in the IT Sector (4 years); and International trade fair organizations in the travel business (6 years). Özgül has also engaged in a number of self-business ventures.

Since 2003 Özgül has been working with the Women's Solidarity Foundation (KADAV) on displacement during disasters, gender based violence including against migrant women, support to imprisoned women and LGBTI+, and women's economic empowerment. Between 2003 to 2013 Özgül was a Member of KADAV and is presently their General Coordinator.



14. Şehnaz Kıymaz Bahçeci (Turkey)

Şehnaz has been working with Women for Women's Human Rights - New Ways (WWHR-New Ways) since 2004 and as Executive Board Member (2013-2018) and Chair (2016-2018). In her 15 years of experience, she became a trainer for WWHR's Human Rights Education Program for Women, and has taken part in national and international advocacy efforts in women's human rights, gender equality and human rights processes. Şehnaz wrote the alternative report for Turkey's Voluntary National Reviews for the High-Level Political Forum 2016 and contributed to their 2019 report. She has contributed to civil society shadow reports for CEDAW and the Istanbul Convention, and to Turkey's 11th Development Plan. Şehnaz is a non-formal trainer on gender equality, women's human rights, violence against women and youth and human rights, and has been a part-time instructor at Istanbul Bilgi University, with a full-online course titled "Gender in Everyday Life".



15. Natalia Karbowska (Ukraine)

Natalia has more than 20 years of experience in development work. Since 1997, Natalia has worked in development and women's rights, first as the Women's Program Director of the International Renaissance Foundation in Ukraine, then as Director of the Women's Economic Empowerment Project at Winrock International and later as Deputy Director of USAID's Healthy Women of Ukraine Program. Natalia is the co-founder and director on strategic development of the Ukrainian Women's Fund - the only women's fund in Ukraine. Under her leadership the Fund has provided over \$ 3 million in grants to women's rights non-governmental organizations in Ukraine and neighboring countries.



Natalia is a Board Member of Prospera - an International network of women's funds. Natalia believes that the voices and ideas of women and girls should be at the forefront of social change and women's funds play important role in this providing them with access to resources, expertise, and structural support.

16: Zelfira (Zola) Kondur (Ukraine) representing Roma community

Zola has been a lifelong human rights advocate. She was raised in a traditional Roma family, but unlike many traditional families her parents provided education to all their 6 children.

In 1997, Zola became the head of the Roma Association's Sunday school. During that time, she encountered Roma children whose rights were violated, including those who lacked access to quality education and health care, including Roma girls and women.

In response to a severe lack of services for Roma girls, Zola helped to launch the Chiricli International Roma Women's Fund in 2000 to advocate on behalf of Roma women across Eastern Europe.

Zola's advocacy on human rights and passion for Roma issues has led to consultancies with international human rights organizations, including with the Council of Europe, and she is a keynote speaker and Tolerance Ambassador of UNDP Ukraine.

