



IN BRIEF



## LOOKING BEYOND 2020: ADVANCING WOMEN, PEACE AND SECURITY IN EASTERN PARTNERSHIP COUNTRIES

Consultation meeting with civil society organizations organized by the UN Women Regional Office for Europe and Central Asia and the UN Women Georgia Country Office

Photo: UN Women/Tara Milutis

On 16 December 2020, the UN Women Regional Office for Europe and Central Asia and the UN Women Georgia Country Office organized the online consultation “**Looking Beyond 2020: Advancing Women, Peace and Security**”. Forty-one women’s organizations, peacebuilders and activists from Armenia, Azerbaijan, Belarus, Georgia, Moldova and Ukraine came together and highlighted solutions towards the Women, Peace and Security (WPS) agenda in Eastern Partnership countries. Fruitful discussions among participants resulted in a set of recommendations adopted, covering a wide range of perspectives for the future WPS agenda and women’s networks across the region.

As a follow-up to the UN Women CSOs consultative meeting on WPS held in February 2020 in Istanbul, Turkey, this consultation meeting aimed at further deepening the regional network of women peacebuilders and enable exchanges of best practices while promoting and supporting the full, equal and meaningful participation of women in peace processes.

The panel discussions “**Identifying models for a regional network of women peacebuilders**” and “**Innovative solutions to prevent, mediate and resolve conflicts from a feminist perspective in the Eastern Partnership countries**” were followed by working groups in which the participants, experts and panellists further discussed the objectives of the panel

discussions and developed recommendations to adopt for their upcoming work across the region. Throughout the discussions, global and regional barriers to women’s full, equal, direct and meaningful participation were addressed, and the role and contributions of CSOs in peace and confidence-building were underscored. Drawing on the experience of different contexts, participants underlined the importance of **ensuring the safety of women human rights defenders and peace activists** and discussed how women’s networks could be guided by feminist principles of peace to apply diversity and inclusion in all elements and levels of their work. The consultation served as an opportunity to support the discussion on designing a **strong and diverse network of women’s movements across the region** in order to improve dialogue platforms and mechanisms to effectively transform the protracted conflicts in the region and contribute to engendering the regional peace and security processes. Furthermore, the consultations supported the consolidation of regional solidarity-based partnerships among civil society around the priorities and challenges of implementing WPS commitments.

The regional experts in the field stressed the importance of including women from the conflict areas in the regional CSO discussions, including grass-roots women directly affected by the conflicts. CSO representatives recommended bridging the intergenerational gap and interlinking the WPS agenda and the

Youth, Peace and Security agenda. To this end, experts highlighted the importance of taking concrete steps for **young people's involvement, considering that they are not tomorrow's leaders but the leaders of today.**

Finally, the CSOs agreed on the importance of **localizing and decentralizing WPS commitments and implementing the National Action Plans on Women, Peace and Security** in each country of the Europe and Central Asia region, as well as including the voices and needs of women and girls from minority groups, IDPs, migrants, refugees and women survivors of violence in regional WPS efforts.

### Persistent barriers and key recommendations from CSO consultation meeting:

- Upholding peace in the region by collaborating and unifying around common goals to empower women and girls.
- Working towards making peace more appealing, developing a true understanding of its value, and further promoting its benefits and advantages.
- Ensuring the protection and safety of women peace builders and activists and human rights defenders, as well as their political participation.
- Engaging young people from diverse backgrounds to support intergenerational exchange and the inclusion of different voices, perspectives and lived experiences.
- Enhancing diversity and inclusiveness by enabling the networks' strengths to hear unheard voices, including those without platforms or agency, and to value their expertise and experiences.
- Encouraging young women to establish their NGOs and initiatives in order to support intergenerational cooperation and inclusive peacebuilding efforts.
- Supporting women leaders' engagement and participation, coming from different ethnic, religious and other backgrounds and various groups, and by reaching out beyond the usual participants.
- Establishing a transnational feminist movement/platform/network grounded in anti-militarist causes.
- Allocating more investment in women's and girls' empowerment and gender equality principles, namely in conflict-affected settings.
- Underscoring the importance of and taking concrete steps towards building a diverse group of women experts on WPS across the region.
- Enabling conflict-affected women and their voices to have representation, ensuring equal and meaningful participation.
- Establishing feminist principles of peace and applying diversity and inclusion elements in women's networks.
- Creating innovative solutions to prevent, mediate and resolve conflicts from a feminist perspective in the Eastern Partnership countries.
- Reaching out beyond the usual groups and individuals to expand and include other networks.
- Using the network as a space to demote militarism and confrontation and use it as a platform for an early warning system.
- Promoting women to be represented in official negotiation processes and in decision-making roles.
- Connecting local and national networks within the countries and across the region.
- Enabling and empowering female leaders as mediators and negotiators by addressing the lack of opportunities and skills.
- Forging links between the formal and informal peace processes.
- Addressing the challenges faced by women who are in vulnerable situations in conflict contexts.
- Ensuring the inclusion of women in post-conflict relief, recovery, and reconstruction processes.

- Ensuring collaboration beyond the borders and supporting intergenerational dialogue and knowledge exchange.
- Increasing capacity-building efforts while complementing training under the mentorship programmes among women experts “adopting” other women and youth on a volunteer basis to transfer and exchange knowledge. Taking concrete steps for meaningful youth involvement in peacebuilding processes.
- Implementing a non-discriminatory approach towards accountability, including requiring accountability for all stakeholders. Addressing the limited support from donors for regional platforms, as well as the lack of cooperation of women peacebuilders and activists.
- Creating a needs-based and practical network/platform to include the specific priorities and interests of women and youth and to join efforts for broader and more robust advocacy to transform the conflicts and build sustainable peace in the region.
- Strengthening training with practical experience as a complementary limb of training processes, including developing compulsory practice programmes (internship-traineeships).
- Including women from the conflict areas in the regional CSO discussions, including grass-roots women directly affected by the conflicts.