

## **Statement of the CSP Working Group on Women & Gender realities in the OSCE region**

Łódź OSCE Ministerial Council, December 2022

### ***The feminist dimension of peace***

When assessing conflict, a **gender-sensitive perspective is fundamental in understanding underlying, conflict-fuelling dynamics**. Women and marginalized groups (such as minorities, LGBTIQ+ etc.) need to have access to **meaningful participation in social and political life** – at times of peace and conflict – as well as full enjoyment of human rights and ownership of their own bodies. At the same time, their specific vulnerabilities because of constant exposure to gender-based violence, and even more so at wartime, need to be acknowledged, without a generalizing victimization of women.

**A feminist perspective of peace is first and foremost concerned with power hierarchies within societies**. Starting with patriarchal society structures, the analysis of power asymmetries needs to be expanded to an **intersectional perspective** that also considers societal relations based on class, ethnic, racial, or sexual differences. Women and marginalized groups are key actors in post-conflict rehabilitation, trauma healing, transitional justice mechanisms and political and economic reconstruction.

**Active peace commitment requires a radical will to diminish all forms of discrimination within and between states and societies to create egalitarian structures**. For this commitment to expand beyond rhetoric, political will needs to be substantiated not only by the systematic inclusion of affected persons and civil society in political decision-making processes but also in a critical assessment (and respective action) of, for example, trade relations with third countries. In times of global economic and fiscal connectedness, **political messages need economic leverage to unfold their full potential**. Feminist policies are quickly judged to be insufficient tools to respond to today's manifold crises and militarist security narratives. If feminist commitment is however paired with a shifting of monetary resources (i.e. investments and funds tied to democratic standards, gender budgeting, ...), it can unfold great powers and disrupt violent patterns of inter-state behavior.

### ***Striving towards human security***

**Security describes a common transformative peace agenda combining protection, prevention and active participation in defending women's rights as human rights, and peace. To live in security means a life free from fear and violence**. Drawing upon a complex understanding of human security this includes combatting poverty and inequality, struggling for climate justice and sustainable development, preventing violence and caring for peace.

From the beginning of the Covid19 pandemic, we have seen an alarming increase in domestic violence. Furthermore, we witness an increased threat to women's safety in the public sphere in States where the prevalence of patriarchal values linked to (institutionalized and militarised) masculinity promotes the proliferation of arms, lack of accountability and an environment that enables exploitation, violence and other forms of (political) extremism. Women activists, peacebuilders and human rights defenders are disproportionately affected.

**To detect dangerous tendencies of extremism or authoritarianism, the experience (or prevalence) of gender-based violence in all these dimensions is part of early warning systems.** Gender sensitive information is crucial and can reveal otherwise unseen conflict drivers and triggers. It is important to ensure that women's civil society groups are consulted during the formulation of early warning systems and to establish specific channels for women to report information. **A gender-sensitive approach is key against radicalisation, violent extremism and all forms of discrimination and war rethorics that promote hate and militarised answers.**

In the analysis why the peace process failed in Bosnia, women described „that it started the day the war ended and a peace agreement between the ethno-nationalist and international elites was agreed upon, with the people of BiH conspicuously absent from those negotiations. Everything that has happened since then—from corruption, militarisation and the strengthening of ethno-nationalist projects to massive post-war emigration—is an outcome of how this so-called peace was built and by whom.“<sup>1</sup> This is a lesson for the international community, civil society, institutions, think tanks and political decision-makers.

The war against Ukraine has accelerated the current revival of militarism. We decisively stand behind the people of Ukraine, and acknowledge the importance to remain open-minded to channels of civil society dialogue towards peace-building and the sustainable reconstruction of Ukraine after the war.

### ***Understanding intersecting global crises and their impact on Women, Peace and Security***

Based on facts and figures, the climate emergency and risks posed by nuclear threats are the two biggest dangers for humans and for all life on the planet. Climate change **threatens the effective enjoyment of a range of human rights** including those to life, water and sanitation, food, health, housing, self-determination, culture and development.

In view of the ongoing refurbishing of nuclear arsenals by the so-called Superpowers as well as in view of dangers relating to nuclear power plants, such as the one in Zaporizhzya, we request OSCE to take the lead in preventing the destruction of mankind and our planet.<sup>2</sup> Progress on nuclear disarmament will significantly assist the SDGs and climate stabilization. To stop nuclear proliferation and use of nuclear weapons we strongly advocate for the signing of the nuclear ban treaty (TPNW) by all OSCE states.

**As crises which already today have disproportional impact on women and marginalized groups (particularly Indigenous people), they are to be addressed as highest priority under the Women, Peace, Security Agenda** by OSCE in coordination with other relevant international bodies and OSCE participating States.

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<https://www.wilpf.org/the-peace-that-is-not-bosnia-and-herzegovina-is-an-egregious-example-of-failures-of-neoliberal-peacebuilding/>

<sup>2</sup> [Assuring destruction forever: 2022 edition](#). This updated study explores the ongoing and planned nuclear weapon modernisation programmes in China, the Democratic People's Republic of Korea, France, India, Israel, Pakistan, Russian Federation, the United Kingdom, and the United States; [Banning the Bomb, Smashing the Patriarchy - 9781786614896 \(rowman.com\)](#).

All the billions spent for armament are urgently needed for health, climate protection, humanitarian aid, peace promotion and the fulfillment of SDG's by 2030 as well as the Paris Climate Agreement by 2050.

### ***Including Youth in Peace and Security Discourses***

A feminist perspective does not only refer to a gender-sensitive perspective but highlights the importance to include all marginalized and underrepresented groups which are left out in decision-making processes and equal participation in society.

When it comes to peace and security also **young people are often unable to equally participate in conflict resolution and the promotion of peace even though young people are disproportionately affected by conflicts and violent structures.**

The reality of young people is highly gendered, especially in conflict situations. Young men are traditionally seen as potential threats and perpetrators while young women are mostly perceived as victims. These stereotypes must be overcome, and it must be listened to the specific demands and needs of young men and women.

In addition to that, young people are not a homogeneous but a diverse age group with for example different ethnicities, cultures, sex or socio-economic status resulting in the need to acknowledge the intersecting differences of youth and their relation to each other. Therefore, **it is important to implement the UN Youth, Peace and Security agenda and foster youth participation as well as building stronger partnerships with young people from an intersectional approach.**

### ***Women's participation in a (coming) peace process in Ukraine***

Women and other marginalized groups are often excluded from decision-making in armed conflicts as power is concentrated to male-dominated institutions such as the military. **Research shows an increase in the durability of peace when women participate in peace processes.** Decision makers must therefore actively contribute to inclusive peace processes with women's organizations and other civil society organizations participating in accordance with the UN Women, Peace and Security Agenda by:

- mapping out actors with the potential to participate in peace processes and provide support and capacity building,
- using Women's Mediation Networks to identify opportunities for diplomacy and mediation, both on a high level and civil society levels and
- investigating possibilities to initiate trauma-informed reconciliation processes both between the populations in Russia and Ukraine and within each country.

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