

REPORT

POLICY BRIEFING: My Voice, Our Peace! Connecting Women Peace Leaders from Ukraine and Afghanistan

Organizers:

- OSCE Secretariat
- Centre for Dialogue and Progress-Geneva (CDP-G)
- Geneva Centre for Security Policy (GCSP)

Key Discussions:

Women's inclusion in peace processes; Women peacebuilders; Networks; Ukraine; Afghanistan.

Summary of the Session:

Women's inclusion in peace and security processes, as well as women's leadership in conflict resolution and peacebuilding, are essential prerequisites for long-lasting sustainable peace and stability. On 31 October, the OSCE, the Centre for Dialogue and Progress Geneva and the Geneva Centre for Security Policy organized a high-level event on challenges faced by women in peace processes and how networks can play a role in empowering peacebuilders and supporting women's leadership and agency. The event also offered the opportunity to identify concrete steps and recommendations for joint international actions towards greater inclusivity. The event was opened by the OSCE Secretary General, Helga Maria Schmid (through video message) and moderated by GCSP Senior Diplomatic Adviser, Amb. Marc P George.

Key Takeaways:

1. Women's role in peace negotiations is still very limited. Only the meaningful inclusion of women in peace processes will ensure long-lasting peace and security in post-conflict countries. Women should not only be included in peace negotiations when women's issues are discussed. Their voices need to be heard and included in every aspect, from economic reconstruction to security and the support from international organizations should not stop while women get a seat at the table.
2. Sustainable and just peace requires collective efforts and should be accepted by the community, never imposed on it. The absence of war and physical violence is not, per se, a signal of sustainable peace.
3. Networks can be a powerful tool to amplify women's voices, advance the WPS agenda, and serve as a bridge between civil society and political leaders.

Key Points from the Panel Discussion:

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Fawzia Kofi

- Peace processes that include women are more diverse and sustainable. Women bring enriching views and in-depth knowledge but are still hardly represented in Track I processes.
- War in Afghanistan is about women and they are a tool of this war.
- Need to look beyond humanitarian crisis: we need to have a political solution for this conflict and women want to be part of it.

Shah Gul Rezaie

- The main goal is to achieve a sustainable and just peace in Afghanistan but peace is a process and not a project. It needs to be accepted by all and should not be imposed at the expense of women and minorities.
- The mere absence of war and physical violence is not peace: peace is related to justice and equality. There is no peace without ensuring gender equality.

Anna Popsui

- Peace requires combined efforts from the grassroots & and international communities. One conflict in one region creates repercussions around the globe.
- Implementing WPS at a national level is of utmost importance to make sure women are meaningfully included in all decision-making roles.
- Since 2014, women have played a powerful role in Ukraine by delivering social and medical services and leading humanitarian efforts. Women-led organizations supply vital services but their work is often hidden and high-level discussions related to the ongoing conflict hardly include them.

Loredana Teodorescu

- Networks remain a strategic tool to advance the WPS agenda.
- Stress the added value of networks: advocating for the inclusion of women, bridging between different levels, a tool for soft diplomacy, giving visibility to women and showcasing them as powerful agents of change.
- WPS should be seen as a crosscutting agenda.

Closing Remarks: Dr Lara Scarpitta

The session was closed by highlighting the challenges of the inclusion of women in peace processes, stressing the importance of peace for social justice and human dignity, and with the proposal of three concrete actions: Involving, Empowering and investing in women as well as including them in all stages of conflicts.

Questions by audience:

During the session a variety of questions were raised on the role of networks across contexts, engaging men and how to deal with toxic masculinity and the work of NGOs in Afghanistan to address gender-based violence.