

# Regional civil society advocacy strategy paper for the advancement of the WPS agenda in the OSCE region

## 1. Background and context

Conflicts in Eastern Europe and South Caucasus are often described as “frozen.” However, many of the conflicts in the region have been characterized by low-intensity violence that span more than a decade. Despite the ongoing peace negotiations or settlement efforts, the violence and insecurity continue to affect local populations every day.

Women have been disproportionately affected by conflicts and insecurity in Armenia, Azerbaijan, Georgia, Moldova and Ukraine. However, the negative impact of conflict is just one aspect of their lives. Women are activists, mediators, political leaders, community organizers, humanitarian workers, educators, civil servants, peacebuilders, veterans and security personnel. The project “Local, National and Regional Strategies to Improve the Implementation of the UN Security Council Resolution (UNSCR) 1325 on Women, Peace and Security and its supporting resolutions in Armenia, Azerbaijan, Georgia, Moldova and Ukraine” and this regional civil society advocacy strategy paper is informed by the diverse realities of women’s lives in these countries.

In Armenia, women were at the frontlines of the mass popular protests in April 2018, which unseated the long-time ruler, Serzh Sarkisian.<sup>1</sup> Women’s rights groups have also been critical actors in calling for an effective and inclusive resolution to the conflict, the contested region of Nagorno-Karabakh, and in addressing the impacts of conflict on women refugees and internally displaced people.

In Azerbaijan, women’s civil society have been promoting social cohesion, and the development of the of the country’s first National Action Plan (NAP) on the UN Security Council Resolution (UNSCR) 1325, despite the heavy political repression against civil society and persecution of political dissidents.

In Georgia, more than 10 years after the end of the war, there are still over 200,000 IDPs, majority of them women. Women in municipalities such as Gori and Zugdidi, which host the highest number of IDPs, are among the first responders bringing aid to the IDPs, and seek to increase social cohesion within the communities. However, their voices are still marginalized.<sup>2</sup>

In Moldova, the chief negotiator in the settlement process is a woman – the Deputy Prime Minister Cristina Lesnic. However, women living in Gagauzia, an autonomous region of Moldova bordering the Transnistrian region, face many challenges in carrying out their work, and are often not aware of their rights.<sup>3</sup>

This strategy was developed by the Global Network of Women Peacebuilders (GNWP) with support from the Austrian Development Agency as part of the project “Local, National and Regional Strategies to Improve the Implementation of the UN Security Council Resolution (UNSCR) 1325 on Women, Peace and Security and its supporting resolutions in Armenia, Azerbaijan, Georgia, Moldova and Ukraine.”

The strategy builds on the next steps and recommendations identified during the Regional Conference on Women, Peace and Security in Central and Eastern Europe, South Caucasus and Central Asia held in Vienna on 13-14 September 2018; as well as on the Regional Monitoring Conference on Women, Peace and Security held in Borjomi on 21-22 March 2019.

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<sup>1</sup> Radio Free Europe/Radio Liberty, “Thousands celebrate as Armenia’s Longtime Ruler Sarkisian steps down”, 23 April 2018. Available at: <https://www.rferl.org/a/armenia-fresh-protests-sarkisian-yerevan-pashinian/29186416.html>

<sup>2</sup> Based on the discussions during the Regional WPS Monitoring Conference held by GNWP and IDP Women’s Association “Consent” in Georgia in March 2019.

<sup>3</sup> Based on the discussions during the Regional WPS Monitoring Conference held by GNWP and IDP Women’s Association “Consent” in Georgia in March 2019.

In Ukraine, the unresolved conflict in the east of the country continues to affect people living along the frontlines, and women are disproportionately affected. For example, over 63 per cent of IDPs in Ukraine are women.<sup>4</sup> Moreover, the conflict resulted in the emergence of new groups of women, such as women veterans and widows of war. According to Ukraine's Ministry of Defense, there are over 10,000 female veterans in Ukraine.<sup>5</sup> However, their specific needs are not adequately addressed.

The centrality of women's leadership and women's rights in all efforts in peacebuilding, conflict prevention, sustaining peace, and political stabilization is highly evident. In this context, the implementation of UNSCR 1325 and the supporting Women, Peace and Security (WPS) resolutions is of vital importance in Eastern Europe and South Caucasus regions.

## **2. The Women, Peace and Security implementation in Eastern Europe and South Caucasus**

At the regional level, the European Union has adopted the EU Strategic Approach to Women, Peace and Security in December 2018 which replaced the 2008 Comprehensive approach to the EU implementation of UNSCR 1325 and 1820 on women, peace and security. The EU Strategic Approach calls for concrete commitments and actions to empower, protect, and support women and girls in order to achieve sustainable and lasting peace and security. It also underlines the importance of inclusive peace as a pre-requisite for the achievement of human rights and sustainable development. The European External Action Service has a Principal Advisor on Gender and on Women Peace and Security whose role is to ensure exchanges and coordination of the EU with other international, regional and national actors on policy and action related to gender and UNSCR 1325.

The North Atlantic Treaty Organization (NATO) has approved the NATO/EAPC Action Plan for the implementation of the NATO/EAPC Policy on Women, Peace and Security.<sup>6</sup> It has also created the position of NATO Secretary General's Special Representative for Women, Peace and Security; and a civil society advisory group on WPS.

The Organization for Security Cooperation in Europe (OSCE) has created a policy framework to assist its participating States in the implementation of UNSCR 1325. The framework covers all four pillars of UNSCR 1325: participation, prevention, protection and relief and recovery. A number of OSCE participating states have adopted NAPs on UNSCR 1325 and highlight their collaboration with the OSCE in their NAPs. THE OSCE Special Representative of the Chairperson-in-Office on Gender and the OSCE Gender Advisers actively ensure the integration of the WPS resolutions in the work of the organization.

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<sup>4</sup> UN Women, "Internally displaced women of Ukraine find voice through interactive theatre", Tuesday, July 18, 2017. Available at: <http://www.unwomen.org/en/news/stories/2017/6/feature-internally-displaced-women-of-ukraine-find-voice>, accessed May 19, 2019.

<sup>5</sup> Democracy Development Center, "Mapping of peacebuilding actors and initiatives in Ukraine", the Global Network of Women Peacebuilders, 2017 (unpublished).

<sup>6</sup> [https://www.nato.int/nato\\_static\\_fl2014/assets/pdf/pdf2016\\_07/160718-wps-action-plan.pdf](https://www.nato.int/nato_static_fl2014/assets/pdf/pdf2016_07/160718-wps-action-plan.pdf)

Between 2017 and 2019, the Global Network of Women Peacebuilders (GNWP) with support from the Austrian Development Agency (ADA) and in partnership with national and local civil society, governments and UN Women country offices implemented the project “Local, National and Regional Strategies to Improve the Implementation of the UN Security Council Resolution (UNSCR) 1325 on Women, Peace and Security and its supporting resolutions in Armenia, Azerbaijan, Georgia, Moldova and Ukraine.” The project aimed to enhance the implementation of the WPS resolutions in these countries, and to contribute to addressing root causes and the lingering impacts of conflicts.

At the local level, GNWP has facilitated Localization workshops with civil society, local and national authorities to draft Local Action Plans and/or integrate the WPS resolutions into local development plans. At the national level, a mapping of peacebuilding initiatives has been carried out in Armenia, Azerbaijan, Georgia, Moldova and Ukraine and has produced baseline data on the existing projects and programs on WPS. In addition, GNWP co-organized workshops on NAPs to formulate new strategies to accelerate implementation in these countries. Prior to the start of the project, Georgia and Ukraine had existing NAPs on WPS, while Armenia, Azerbaijan and Moldova did not have NAPs. The project brought voices of marginalized groups of women – including local and rural women; women IDPs; women veterans and widows of war – into the review and revision of the Ukrainian NAP; development of the third generation NAP in Georgia; and the development of first generation NAPs in Armenia and Moldova.

The Localization and NAP workshops provided a space for key stakeholders to strategize and make concrete commitments to implement the agenda. In their commitments, the local authorities and civil society leaders focused not only on the immediate aftermath of conflict, but also on addressing long-term impacts, such as psychological trauma, displacements, lack of economic opportunities, environmental degradation; provision of basic social services, and diffusing tensions in communities to prevent future violence. Consequently, the Local Action Plans and implementation commitments were aligned with the spirit of the Sustaining Peace agenda; and recognized the linkages between peace; gender; and Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs).

As part of the project, on 13-14 September 2018, GNWP in collaboration with OSCE and UN Women, and with support from ADA, convened over seventy representatives of civil society, governments, security sector, OSCE and UN Women from Central and Eastern Europe, the South Caucasus, Turkey and Central Asia in a Regional Conference on WPS in Vienna. The Conference participants discussed how to improve the implementation of the WPS resolutions and further support women’s contributions to peacebuilding, conflict prevention and sustaining peace in these geographic areas. As several of the regions’ conflicts remain unresolved, and women continue to be underrepresented—if not totally absent—in peace negotiations and settlement processes, the participants emphasized that the primary aim should be to ensure women’s meaningful participation in peace negotiations and implementation of peace agreements. and conflict settlement. One of the important courses of actions identified at the conference was to consider creating a network of women mediators encompassing Central and Eastern Europe, the South Caucasus, Turkey and Central Asia. Some important insights that came up during the conference and the follow up discussions among the organizers (GNWP, OSCE and UN Women) were that if a new women mediators’ network should be formed, it should go beyond the issue

of women's representation. This is because mere representation does not guarantee influence in the substance of the negotiations nor does it ensure implementation of the ensuing peace agreement. In this light, the women mediators network also entails training more women with a broad range of expertise such as gender, peace, security, development, finance, legislation, governance, etc. to avoid being sidelined as "women's rights advocates only."

On 21-22 March 2019, GNWP convened civil society, local and national government actors who participated in the project at a Regional Monitoring Conference in Borjomi, Georgia. The participants reflected on the achievements of the project, remaining challenges, and next steps to ensure sustained and effective implementation of the WPS resolutions in their countries and across the regions. They recommended a continued support to localization, stronger emphasis on human security in implementing WPS in the region, and continued regional experience exchange and media engagement.

The present strategy document builds on the next steps and recommendations identified through these regional conferences, as well as through GNWP's continued engagement with local, national and regional stakeholders.

### **3. Strategies for strengthening the implementation of WPS implementation in the region**

#### **Strategy 1: Continue localization efforts and promote exchange of experiences among local actors from different countries in the region**

##### **1. Enhance capacities of local authorities on data collection, needs assessment and monitoring and evaluation.**

**Actors responsible:** National and local civil society; regional organizations; international development partners; international non-governmental organization; national authorities

##### **2. Engage a wide range of local actors, including mayors, local councilors, women and youth groups, security agents, community mediators, teachers and religious leaders, among others, in the implementation of the WPS resolutions at the local level.**

**Actors responsible:** National and local civil society; international development partners; regional organizations; international non-governmental organizations; national authorities

##### **3. Develop Local Action Plans, based on needs assessment, and with a strong focus on human security, including women's access to education and economic opportunities as important drivers of peace.**

**Actors responsible:** Local authorities and civil society; international development partners, regional organizations, national authorities and international non-governmental organizations

##### **4. Improve coordination between the national and local stakeholders, including by establishing an open and constant dialogue between the local and national authorities on WPS issues; ensure balance between local and national actors in trainings and meetings on WPS to promote sharing of responsibilities and accountability among the different sectors.**

**Actors responsible:** National and local civil society; international development partners; regional organizations; international non-governmental organization; national authorities

5. **Support regional peer-to-peer experience sharing (Peace Exchange) between local authorities and civil society from different countries and from different regions within a country.**

**Actors responsible:** International development partners; regional organizations; international non-governmental organizations

**Assumptions/Facilitating factors for strategy implementation:**

- Local Ministries/Departments or equivalent structures of local governments, as well as relevant national government Ministries and agencies officially support Localization through the passing of a government directive that identifies Localization as a government mandated strategy for implementation.
- Predictable funding for GNWP and other organizations/institutions that have expertise in Localization in order for them to replicate Localization training including Training of Trainers and ensure that there is a steady pool of Localization experts.
- National governments support full decentralization, including fiscal decentralization, and implement decentralization reform to provide local governments with the autonomy and decision-making power necessary to effectively implement the WPS resolutions.

**Strategy 2: Institutionalize women's meaningful participation in peace processes and mediation in the region**

1. **Build capacities and enhance expertise of women mediators on a broad range of issues both in informal processes (community mediation or Track 1.5 and 2<sup>7</sup>) and formal peace negotiations**

**Actors responsible:** National authorities; international development partners; regional organizations; national and international non-governmental organizations.

2. **Promote inclusion of women from different levels – such as grassroots community leaders, national political leaders, civil society, academia – who would work together while taking on different roles in official negotiation processes**

**Actors responsible:** National authorities; negotiators and mediators in peace processes; international development partners; regional organizations; national and international non-governmental organizations.

3. **Support the formation of a network of women mediators from Central and Eastern Europe, the South Caucasus, Turkey and Central Asia, to complement the existing networks and mechanisms. Integrate the recommendations 1 and 2 in this section in the formation of the network.**

**Actors responsible:** National authorities; negotiators and mediators in peace processes; international development partners; regional organizations; international non-governmental organizations.

4. **Support experience sharing and mentorship initiatives between women mediators, including between those involved in Track 1 and track 1.5 - 2 processes.**

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<sup>7</sup> Track 2 diplomacy is a term used to refer to unofficial dialogue and conflict-solving activities aimed at building relationships and encouraging new thinking that can inform the official process. Track 2 activities typically involve influential academic, religious, and NGO leaders and other civil society actors, as well as grassroots activists and populations, who can interact more freely than high-ranking officials. While Track 2 initiatives can take forms resembling official negotiations (e.g. dialogue forums, roundtables etc.), they can also take more innovative approaches to building relationships and reducing tensions, including economic and livelihood activities; educational initiatives; etc. Track 1.5 diplomacy is a term used to denote a situation in which official and non-official actors work together to resolve conflicts. Source: <https://www.usip.org/glossary/tracks-diplomacy>.

**Actors responsible:** the donor community, international and regional development partners

**Assumptions/Facilitating factors for strategy implementation:**

- National governments participating in peace negotiations establish a quota for women's participation in peace talks;
- The UN and other international organizations acting as observers, mediators, and facilitators in peace processes put pressure on negotiating parties to ensure meaningful participation of women, including women from the civil society and from different background, in formal peace negotiations;
- Predictable funding for organizations/institutions that provide training to women mediators, especially at the local level, and to initiatives that establish links and experience exchange between Track 1 peace negotiations and Track 1.5 – 2 processes, in which local women are often actively involved.

**Strategy 3: Increase the capacity and engagement of local, national and regional media for the implementation of WPS in the region**

**1. Organize trainings and capacity building workshops to build the capacity of journalists and editors to report on WPS**

**Actors responsible:** National and local authorities and civil society; international development partners; regional organizations; international non-governmental organizations; journalism schools; regional and national media agencies

**2. Guarantee safety, security and access for journalists, including women journalists, working in conflict situations in the region**, including through adopting guidelines for the protection of journalists at the local, national and regional level;

**Actors responsible:** National and local authorities and civil society; international development partners; regional organizations; international non-governmental organizations; journalism schools; regional and national media agencies

**3. Provide incentives for journalists to effectively report on WPS**, including through organizing competitions, establishing media awards, fellowships and scholarships for journalists working on the issue.

**Actors responsible:** National and local authorities and civil society; international development partners; regional organizations; international non-governmental organizations; journalism schools; regional and national media agencies

**Assumptions/Facilitating factors for strategy implementation:**

- National governments, and in particular institutions responsible for the oversight of the media, adopt and enforce laws and policies for the protection of journalists, with consideration for the specific risks that women journalists confront;
- National, regional and international media and journalism institutes conduct in-depth research and concrete recommendations on institutional reforms needed to preserve independence of journalism in the face of political pressures, shifting media landscape (characterized increased significance of the online media and social media; prevalence of “fake news” and the fact that journalists often do not receive salaries or receive inadequate salaries due to budget cuts);
- National governments guarantee press freedom.

**Strategy 4: Ensure proper costing, budgeting, and monitoring and evaluation frameworks for NAPs on WPS in the region**

**1. Build or enhance knowledge and capacities to effectively cost, budget, and monitor NAPs on WPS among national and local stakeholders.**

**Actors responsible:** National and local civil society; regional organizations; international development partners; international non-governmental organization; national authorities

**2. Support the creation of proper systems and legal framework for NAP financing and monitoring, including laws on gender-responsive budgeting and NAPs with objectives that are Specific, Measurable, Achievable, Relevant and Time-bound (SMART), so that they can be costed and monitored.**

**Actors responsible:** National and local civil society; regional organizations; international development partners; international non-governmental organization; national authorities

**3. Strengthen the synergies between the WPS agenda and other international instruments and treaties, such as the Convention on the Elimination of All Forms of Discrimination Against Women (CEDAW), to guarantee accountability to the WPS resolutions.**

**Actors responsible:** National and local civil society; regional organizations; international development partners; international non-governmental organization; national authorities

**Assumptions/Facilitating factors for strategy implementation:**

- National governments create proper institutional channels for regular reporting on NAP implementation (for example, through regular reporting to the parliament) and make it mandatory for national and local ministries or equivalent structures to report through them.
- Regional and international bodies with strong reporting frameworks (including the CEDAW Committee) integrate Women, Peace and Security in their guidelines for Member State reporting; CEDAW Committee continues to raise the status of WPS implementation – including Localization – in their review of State Party reports.