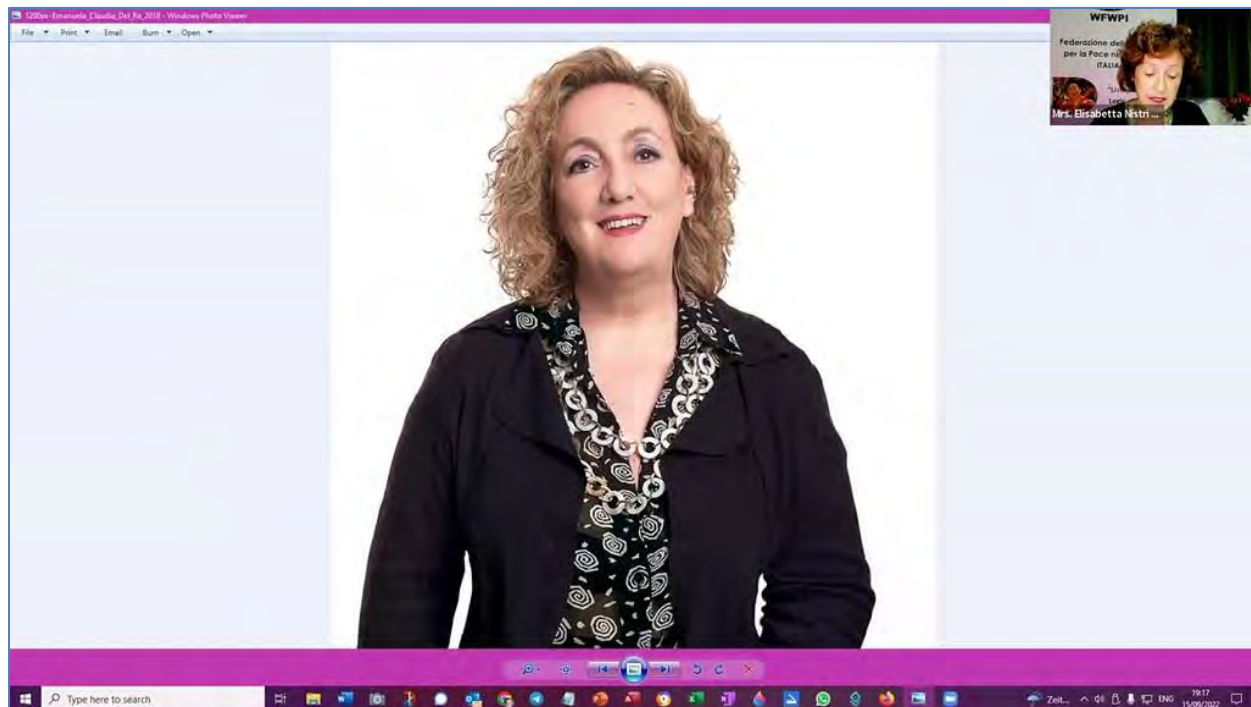


IAFLP, WFWP Europe and the Middle East Convene to Observe UN Day of Peace

Mary Hinterleitner and Renate Amesbauer
September 15, 2022



Europe and the Middle East -- In response to International Day of Peace, a conference of women leaders said, "Peace starts with women."

The webinar "No Peace without Women: What Are Women Bringing to Peace Processes, Conflict Prevention and Human Security?" was held on September 15, 2022, to commemorate the United Nations' International Day of Peace

The Europe and Middle East (EUME) branch of the International Association of First Ladies for Peace (IAFLP), one of the UPF associations, held the webinar jointly with the EUME branch of Women's Federation for World Peace (WFWP), an organization that is affiliated with UPF, and in conjunction with the Rene Moawad Foundation.



Opening Panel

Link: youtu.be/U4MoWO1pG8c

Carolyn Handschin, the EUME coordinator of International Association of First Ladies for Peace and the president of the NGO Committee on the Status of Women, Geneva, thanked co-host **H.E. Nayla**

Moawad and supporting organizations UN Women; NGO Committee on the Status of Women, Geneva; and Soroptimists.

Rejecting the view that violence and confrontation are an inevitable outcome of deteriorating relationships, Mrs. Handschin noted that the tragic consequences, for all parties, of war and conflict should urge everyone to actively seek peaceful solutions.



The webinar's eminent speakers from the United Nations, European Union, public and private sectors and NGOs would enlighten the audience on women's work in preventive diplomacy and neutralizing triggers of violent conflict, Mrs. Handschin said. In addition, they would clarify more effective methods of working in greater solidarity, drawing on previous notable successes.

Alluding to her personal experience as the mother of a large family, Mrs. Handschin reminded the audience of the value of family relationships as a training ground in preventive diplomacy and neutralizing triggers of tensions. Success there was more likely to be achieved through commitment, love and belief in the innate goodness of the perceived offender, she said.

Dr. Julia Moon, the president of WFPW International, director general of the Universal Ballet (1996-), and vice chairwoman of the Sun Hak Educational Foundation, said that the world's current conflicts shake humanity's confidence in achieving sustainable peace.

However, Dr. Moon said she sees reasons to hope. The world's response to the passing of Queen Elizabeth II is an example of the power of one woman to touch the hearts of many people beyond religious or political leanings. Seventy years ago, the queen vowed to serve God and her people, and she remained faithful to that vow despite tremendous challenges. Thus, she demonstrated how the power for change in society is rooted in the heart of loving service for others.

WFPW asserts that human beings are created to seek peace and harmony and are naturally inclined to work toward a peaceful world, Dr. Julia Moon said. She spoke of Dr. Hak Ja Han Moon and the late Rev. Dr. Sun Myung Moon, her beloved parents-in-law, who founded WFPW in 1992 to encourage women to develop leadership qualities and skills in the quest for sustainable peace, recognizing that their experiences as mothers and daughters, sisters and wives prepare them well.

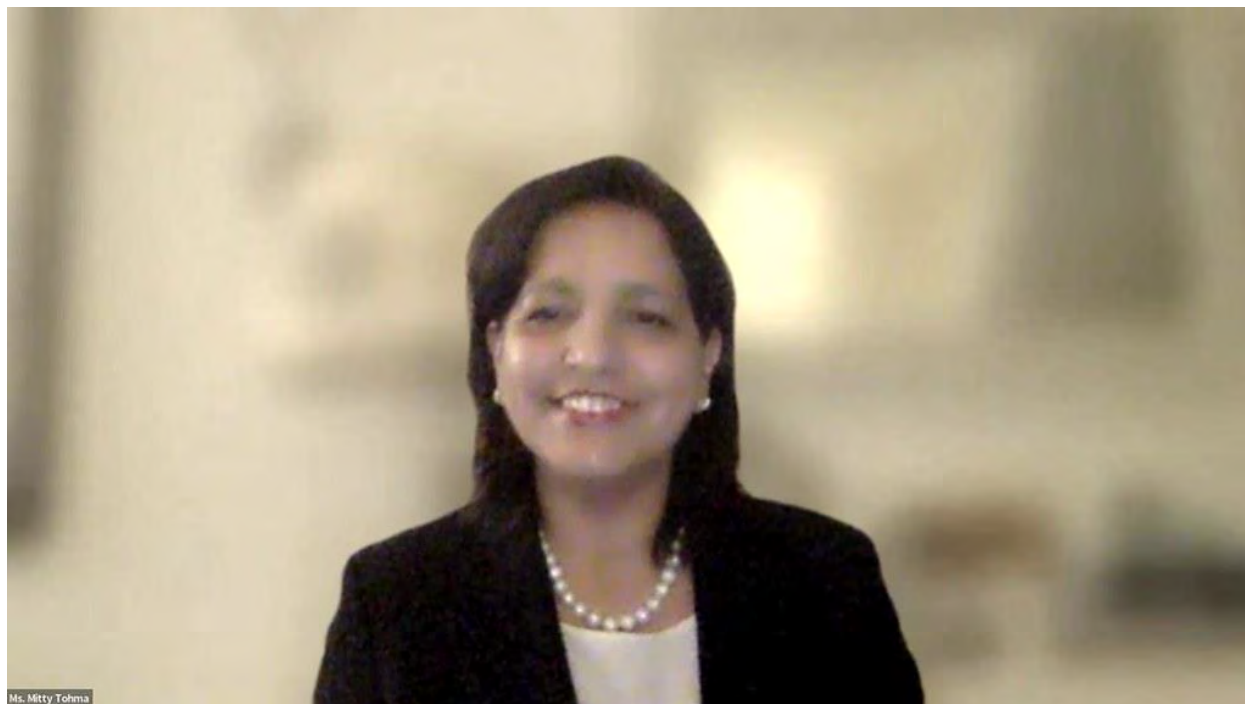
Dr. Moon encouraged participants to find true freedom through taking responsibility for their lives. She reminded the audience of the motto "Peace Starts with Me" -- so simple, yet not so simple to realize. In conclusion, she expressed her appreciation for being able to partner with the great women and men she was meeting today, charting together a course for a sustainable culture of peace.

As a co-organizer of this conference, **H.E. Nayla Moawad**, the first lady of Lebanon (November 1989); founder and president of the Rene Moawad Foundation (1991-); member of Parliament; and minister of social affairs (2005-2008), congratulated WFPW Europe and its associated organizations for their continued efforts to promote a culture of peace.

Mrs. Moawad emphasized women's crucial role in promoting peace. Women, particularly mothers, tend to be more compassionate, she said. Due to their sensitive nature, they are more likely to collaborate with and listen to one another. They play a key role in creating harmonious families and raising children. Thus,

it is crucial to have women leaders work side by side with men in building a peaceful and prosperous society.

These kinds of webinars and online gatherings are invaluable in encouraging women to proactively create a culture of peace in their societies and nations, she said.



Olga Algayerova from Slovakia, the executive secretary of the United Nations Economic Commission for Europe (UNECE) (2017-) and a former UN ambassador in Vienna, described various platforms that enable women to take substantial leadership and negotiation roles in support of governments.

Because of vast economic differences between regions, some countries are dealing with existential uncertainties -- turmoil due to conflict and post-conflict situations. Communicating beyond political differences and sharing lessons learned is of great importance, she said. To find solutions, sustainable cooperation within all aspects of society, and between women and men, is much needed.

UNECE collaborates with international organizations and civil society to ensure that women are equally represented in decision-making bodies, she said.

Session moderator Carolyn Handschin, drawing on her own experience, referred to Ms. Algayerova's ambitious efforts to cooperate with NGOs in order to demonstrate more effective methods of engaging with their governments.

Adriana Quiñones Giraldo, director of the UN Women's Liaison Office in Geneva; a former policy advisor in Asia and Latin America; a manager in New York of the UN Trust Fund to End Violence against Women and Girls, highlighted the multiple global crises -- food insecurity, climate change and conflicts -- that have increased in the wake of the COVID pandemic. By the end of 2020 the number of forcibly displaced persons was more than twice that of 2010, she said.

Twenty-two years ago, the UN Security Council approved Resolution 1325 on Women, Peace and Security (WPS). The WPS Agenda was then established with the aim of increasing women's participation in decision-making and peacebuilding. It strives to ensure protection of girls and women in conflict-ridden zones and to prevent sexual and gender-based violence, in addition to implementing relief and recovery measures.

Mrs. Quiñones advocated for increasing WPS funding while reducing military spending. Gender equality projects have a positive impact and yield a high return in peace dividends, she said, while military spending in post-conflict settings puts peace at risk. Generally, conflict-ridden countries spend two or three times as much on defense as on health care. More women need to participate in decision-making processes for peace and security and for defense and security expenditures, she said.

Mrs. Quiñones emphasized the positive impact of women in uniform, such as UN peace-keeping troops. They increase trust-building within a community, which is critical in supporting reconciliation efforts, stability and the rule of law.

Session I: Creating Conditions for Peace and Development

Panel link: youtu.be/CES1FUITaxo

H.E. Senida Mesi, deputy prime minister of Albania (2017-2019) and a member of Parliament representing the city of [Shkodër](#) (2017-2021), was the moderator for the first session.

A key organizer of the event and the mind behind the conference theme, "No Peace Without Women," Ms. Mesi opened the session with the following words: "As a development economist, I always thought that we need a culture of peace and to solve conflicts in order to really invest in health and education and to have sustainable growth." However, it is not always seen that way, she said.



Dr. Sakena Yacoobi, the founder and executive director of the Afghan Institute of Learning (AIL), described her experience of supporting education for Afghan children, especially girls.

In response to frequently asked questions about her passion for learning, she replied that she believes health, prosperity and peace depend on good schooling. Having 31 years of experience in providing education, Dr. Yacoobi has seen wonderful leaders emerge from her schools. However, she currently is faced with oppression and must return to almost zero.

Yet, she has the drive to resume her work in a new form. AIL owns a TV station in Afghanistan, through which it is now broadcasting a curriculum to Afghan children at home or in community centers. While this does not replace school, at least it serves as a temporary solution.

Being close to the people, understanding their culture and seeing their needs are important for the success of any program, Dr. Yacoobi emphasized. Anything coming from abroad will likely fail, she said. In her view, differences within Afghanistan must be overcome in order to achieve unity, which is critical for the country to move forward.

In conclusion, Dr. Yacoobi praised Afghan women, who have persevered regardless of their extreme obstacles while supporting each other.

Dr. Ingeborg Breines from Norway, former director of the UNESCO Culture of Peace Program and a senior advisor to the Permanent Secretariat of the Nobel Peace Prize, thanked the conference hosts for providing a platform to discuss peaceful, just and durable solutions to conflicts. She considers this vital in times of so much polarization.

Referring to courageous women over the centuries who have used their creativity and caring capacity to help build peaceful, non-violent societies, she highlighted the first female Nobel Peace Prize laureate, Bertha von Suttner. Dr. Breines quoted von Suttner's renowned anti-war novel *Lay Down Your Arms*: "We need to 'develop an active disgust for war. Each time weapons and hatred are allowed to take the upper hand, both humanity and humanism lose."

Dr. Breines also cited former U.S. first lady Eleanor Roosevelt: "Nobody won the last war; nobody will win the next" and "War should end in the dustbin of history." She recalled the astronomical military budget (exceeding \$2 trillion annually), which corresponds to more than 600 regular yearly UN budgets. This should be used to cover educational and other activities to enable the UN system to do its work. Eight days of the world's military budget would provide 12 years of free, quality education to all children

worldwide, she said.

Learning to live peacefully together is the most important pedagogical and political challenge for us all, Dr. Breines concluded.

The presentation of **Marcus Lenzen**, senior advisor and deputy chief of the United Nations' Peacebuilding Fund (2017-), dealt with the funding of UN peacekeeping activities. He expressed explicitly the need for greater funding for initiatives that include women. He underscored previously mentioned statements supporting women's inclusion in peace processes and reaffirmed that peace works better and lasts longer when women are meaningfully involved. Therefore, financial support must be used meaningfully, he stated. Financial support for the participation of women in the peace process must be prioritized; unfortunately, this aspect remains underfunded in most cases, he said.



Peacebuilding is a long process, Mr. Lenzen said, in which the three phases of conflict must be considered: before, during and after. Empowering women is just as important as encouraging men to change their attitudes, he said. To address this issue, he and his team are working to help women become economically empowered. He referred to his support for women entrepreneurs' projects in marginalized regions of Colombia.

Therese Comodini Cachia, a member of the European Parliament (2014-2017) and a human rights lawyer, recalled that some years earlier she had faced a career choice between journalism and politics. She chose journalism and focused on human rights activism. She stressed the importance of politics taking a holistic view of the world and of adopting an integrated approach to solving problems together, rather than each nation seeking solutions individually.

In her view, when the international community at the UN seeks the commitment of politicians to work toward peace, conflict prevention and human security, it does so in the belief that the population of every territory is part of the global family. Assuming that all people -- irrespective of race, ethnicity, sex, or religion -- are part of one population, she argued that when one, as part of a national collective, makes the wrong decision, it affects everyone as part of the global collective.

Two important watchdogs of human rights – journalism and activism – are being endangered rather than being enabled, Ms. Comodini said. Absolute freedom of journalism is a precondition for a free and just world, which should include gender equality, she concluded.

Session II: How Women Negotiate Differently

Panel link: www.youtube.com/watch?v=Y4O8tuZCzR8

Session II moderator **Aleksandra Skonieczna**, the president of WFWP-Poland and a certified business trainer with graduate degrees in psychology and linguistics, referred to a recent statement in a newspaper article: "Women tend to be more cooperative, empathetic and ethical." Such qualities lead to the achievement of lasting sustainable solutions in all areas, she said, adding that women also excel in motivating, guiding and nurturing talents.

As a mother of five, Mrs. Skonieczna affirmed that women's role is more crucial due to the responsibility

for raising future leaders. Thus, when women negotiate mundane issues with their children and partners, they serve as role models for their children for building relationships and communicating with others in adult life.

She referred to her experience of growing up in Russia and, since her marriage, living 30 years in Poland, where she has implemented projects to heal Polish-Russian relationships. Recently it became clear to her that more women are needed in political positions, such as presidents and prime ministers, so that such decisions as declaring war cannot be taken without their consent.

Most experts working in caring professions, she said, are women, who have to deal with the aftermath of tragedies, such as the wounded, post-traumatic stress disorder patients, and schoolchildren who have fled their hometowns.

H.E. Elsie Christofia, the wife of the former president of Cyprus, Dimitris Christofias (2008-2013) and a member of the Central Committee of AKEL Party, spoke on "The Contribution of Cypriot Women in the Struggle for a Peaceful Solution of the Cyprus Problem."

Ms. Christofia criticized double-standard policies of powerful nations that undermine UN peace processes. Referring to women's suffering from wars led by imperialist powers against peaceful people, she emphasized women's worldwide support for UN peaceful purposes. Women see the consequences of violations of international law, such as the division of Cyprus since 1974 despite the efforts of Cypriot women from all communities for a peaceful solution. Many were displaced and lost their lives. Turkey still occupies 37 percent of Cyprus, she said.



Women have helped with reconstructing Cyprus and with providing economic aid. The Women's Mass Movement of Cyprus supports the peaceful reunification of Cyprus on the basis of a bi-zonal, bicomunal federation with political equality, as provided in the UN Resolutions. However, rising global tensions are adversely affecting its prospects.

Negotiations must resume under the auspices of the UN with the aim of ending occupation, restoring territorial integrity, abolishing intervention rights, safeguarding human rights, and demilitarizing, she stated.

History shows that women can emerge as leaders in a crisis. She stressed the need for financial support so that goals are met as NGOs engage for women's issues in communities across the island.

Dr. Liri Berisha, the first lady of Albania (1992-1997); a pediatrician and member of the Faculty of Medicine; president of Albanian Children Foundation; and founder of the "Mother Teresa" Cultural Foundation, drew on evidence indicating that women's involvement in peace negotiations increased opportunities for sustainable peace agreements by 35 percent.

As first lady and beyond, Dr. Berisha has encouraged women to use their transformative power in both charitable activities and decision-making processes, since their voice diminishes the voice of conflict. Dr. Berisha founded the Albanian Children Foundation, focusing on autism spectrum disorders and other illnesses or socio-economic deficiencies. She explained that the more a country cares for the weakest in society, the more it effects positive change for all.

As proponents of peace in media communication, conferences, etc., mothers shake public opinion and outdated politics by changing the mindsets of policy-makers. Referring to women as powerful engines driving society, she explained that a country's efforts should be linked to improving women's and girls' well-being, which will reflect in society's well-being and is critical for conflict prevention. Women working together, promoting and strengthening female leadership in workplaces and organizations, challenge stereotypes and gender roles. Finally Dr. Berisha expressed hope for the world to prosper, grow and stabilize through feminine wisdom, wit and trustworthiness.

Hon. Helina Kokkarinen from Finland, chief of the European Union Advisory Mission to Ukraine (2016-2017) and a former ministerial adviser and head of the Civilian Crisis Management (CCM) Unit in the Ministry of the Interior (2008-2014), highlighted her country's commitment to peace and its focus on promoting women's participation in peace processes.



She explained why women should be at the forefront. Firstly, and not to be taken lightly, women make up half of the world's population. Secondly, peace agreements by male negotiation teams tend to lack aspects for a sustainable peace since women take care of societal issues.

Ms. Kokkarinen, who had been a municipal administrator in Decani (a municipality in Kosovo), related a personal experience of an unusual negotiating method. During the first municipality elections in Kosovo, the elections went well, but the outcome was problematic. Two political parties had received enough votes to enable both parties to hinder normal development. The winner could have taken key main positions, such as mayor or director, but the other party boycotted the implementation of the municipal statute.

Following a month of fruitless discussion, Ms. Kokkarinen devised a plan. Since she had worked with Albanian refugees and spent time in Kosovo, she understood the society and culture somewhat. She invited the party leaders to her home. When they arrived, she sat on the couch and began crocheting while talking to them. The Albanian culture, particularly in the countryside, considers the man as head of the family outside the home. However, at home, grandmothers in particular hold power. Ms. Kokkarinen played the grandmother role sitting at home. Her strategy resulted in them reaching an agreement, which was signed by everyone and secured by the municipality.

Dr. Thania Paffenholtz, the director of the Inclusive Peace Institute, Geneva, and a researcher focusing on mediation and peacebuilding, process design, inclusion, and participation, and conditions under which peace processes produce sustainable outcomes, offered interesting insights. Women have a number of assets that men lack, she said. In her opinion, women should focus on their strengths, as they have great power and much to say.

She also emphasized taking advantage of being a mother figure. Patriarchal societies, such as in the Middle East, Kenya, or Eastern Europe, believe that the negotiator/mediator needs to be a man. However, Dr. Paffenholtz discovered that men often got bogged down in the process and ended up shouting at each other because they needed to get certain things out. As a mediator herself, at a certain stage in the process she would clap her hands and ask them if they had finished saying everything. They would respect her and take her seriously.

She views this as feminine authority. If a man behaved thus, it would be seen as a power game. When a woman behaves so in those societies, they respond to her as to a mother figure. She considers this a huge advantage and therefore recommends having women as lead mediators and chief negotiators.

Session III: Women in Conflict Resolution/Transformation: Case Studies

Panel link: youtu.be/u5kj_0mtGLg

The session moderator, **Marcia De Abreu**, secretary general for WFPW-Europe and president of WFPW-Spain, referred to the adoption of Resolution 1325 by the UN Security Council in October 2000. On that occasion, women's participation in peace negotiations was declared essential.



Women have been stepping gradually into areas of conflict prevention and resolution, Mrs. De Abreu said. However, despite impressive activities for peace in national and international organizations, it has been a difficult process to reach the negotiation tables. Unfortunately, women have not had the political clout necessary to bring transformation. Women continue to protest peacefully against the horrors of wars through demonstrations, declarations, statements, civil disobedience, peace camps and so forth.

H.E. Emilija Redžepi, the third deputy prime minister of Kosovo for minority issues and human rights, noted that, throughout history, the involvement of women in solving crisis situations always resulted in superior and more sustainable outcomes. Women make decisions wisely and confidently, she said, but the outcomes frequently go unnoticed because of male suppression. Besides highlighting the urgent need for laws protecting women's rights and their strict enforcement, she advocated increasing the number of women candidates at the European level.

Kosovo must strive to ensure that all its citizens have equal rights and importance, regardless of gender, ethnicity or religion, in order to establish a multinational and multicultural state, Ms. Redžepi asserted. Showing mutual respect and willingness to build coalitions while rejecting the stereotype of women's weakness or inferiority are important steps toward that goal, she said. Furthermore, education is vital for prosperity. Particularly in rural areas, many women lack basic education and, as widows, often are unsupported.

Ms. Redžepi named some governmental measures as inadequate but important first steps. These include agricultural projects enabling women to earn an income; free education for children; extra financial support for single and needy mothers.

H.E. Nataša Mičić, the president of Serbia (2002-2004), a lawyer, and the founder of the *Otpor!* ("Resistance!") student movement, emphasized the necessity of women in ending conflicts -- not only the current conflict between Russia and Ukraine, but all conflicts. This is reaffirmed by UN Resolution 1325, which was ratified by Serbia and adopted in its National Action Plan. Yet, women's participation in formal negotiations is not enough.

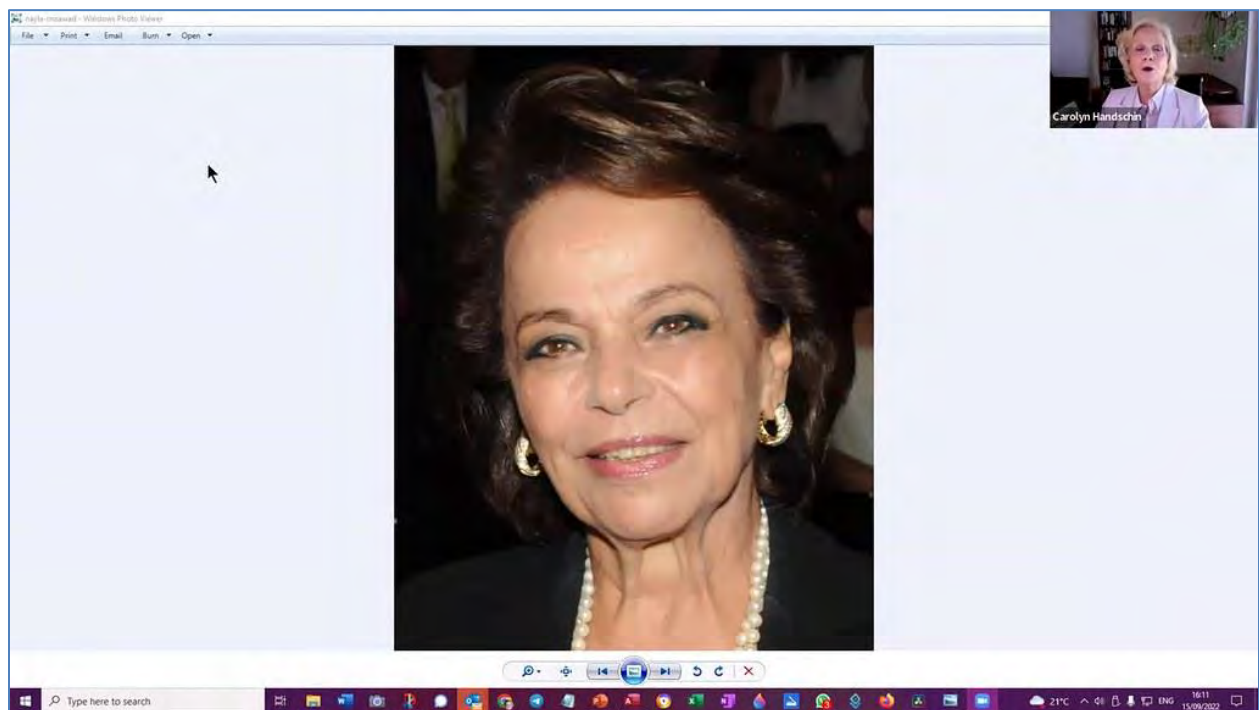
Women did not participate in the armed conflicts between Serbia and Kosovo, she said, but rather led the anti-war policy through NGOs. After the war, women insisted on bringing perpetrators to justice and paved the way for peaceful reconciliation. The Regional Women's Lobby uncovered numerous examples of courage, such as saving the lives of people of other nationalities and helping them in need.

Ms. Mičić gave the example of the Kosovan minister of justice whose two sons and husband were taken from their home and never returned. Yet she found the strength to advocate for reconciliation and peace.

Despite rapid changes worldwide, the role of women is growing slowly, Ms. Mičić said. Thus, women need to persevere against marginalization and promote peace and justice.

Hon. Emanuela Del Re, the [European Union special representative](#) for Africa's [Sahel](#) region since 2021 and the Italian [deputy minister of foreign affairs](#) (2018-2021), emphasized the need for women to play a central role in the design and implementation of post-conflict resolution and peacebuilding activities.

She referred to the recommendations of the second "Women in Conflicts" conference, held in Brussels on June 9, 2022. This event was co-hosted by European Council President Charles Michel, together with the organizations UN Women, Nadia's Initiative and the Dr. Denis Mukwege Foundation. The participants concluded that clear actions are required to support the full, equal and meaningful participation of women and girls in conflict prevention, crisis management and long-term peacebuilding. The European Union will continue supporting states in conflict and post-conflict zones, she said.



Ms. Del Re is the EU representative for the Sahel, a region of Africa that has seen an increase in armed conflict in recent years. This is seriously impacting the most vulnerable -- youth and women -- and more action is needed, she said. Currently the European Union is working with local and regional partners to include Sahelian women in conflict prevention and resolution, mediation, post-conflict negotiation and reconstruction, as well as security sector reform.

Integrating gender into peace programs and processes is critically important, she said, as well as adopting and implementing policies to empower gender equality. In conclusion, women make a difference and can be real agents of change.

Srruthi Lekha, the coordinator of the "Peacebuilding Commission" youth peace conference of the WFWPI UN Office in Geneva, a Germany-based development consultant and human rights activist, and the co-founder and director of Polity Link International, strongly emphasized youth participation in decision-making processes, for which certain criteria must be fulfilled. The youth need to be educated in expressing their viewpoints, and they need to be given space to participate and offer their ideas.

Ms. Lekha, aged 22, invests in Youth Peace Accord programs, whose function simulates the real (UN) peace talks. In 2021 she co-organized the Peace Accord dealing with the Israeli-Palestinian situation, with representatives from both sides and other students playing the role of other countries: It was an intense two-day period in which both sides gave their views. Eventually they proposed several practical steps that could contribute to sustainable peace.

This year, in their attempt to tackle the North-South Korean issue, they faced the challenge of finding representatives for the participant nations. It was an amazing experience for both the participants and the audience as the youth adopted their roles exceedingly well. Again, they invented and offered several practical steps toward peace, which was astonishing given that most were high school students without special education in the field. Ms. Lekha concluded that NGOs are obliged to provide training for young people, and government bodies must create the space for them to come to the table.

Mitty Tohma, the vice president of WFPW for Europe and the president of WFPW for the United Kingdom, introduced a special humanitarian project titled Emergency Appeal for Ukraine, which was being launched at this conference.

Mrs. Tohma spoke about meeting internally displaced persons during visits to Ukraine. She recalled one woman whom she will never forget: Her face was etched in pain and her whole body was shivering, as she just had lost every member of her family. She was almost unable to talk. Mrs. Tohma said a center for social and psychological rehabilitation is essential.

Mrs. Tohma then introduced **Anna Kalmatskaya**, the vice president of WFPW-Ukraine.



Referring to WFPW-Ukraine's extensive experience since 2014 and more intensely since February 2022, Mrs. Kalmatskaya thanked European partners for their generous support for ongoing activities, which have included humanitarian aid distribution to 100 internally displaced persons and evacuation assistance to 50 families.

Although most WFPW-Ukraine members became refugees or internally displaced persons, their activities did not cease. For example, Tatiana Kotseba, the president of WFPW-Ukraine and the mother of five, remains in Kyiv despite hostilities.

As their work has increased substantially since the outbreak of the war, Mrs. Kalmatskaya presented details of their new project. This consists of a mobile team providing humanitarian, medical and psychological relief to approximately 100 families who had fled the frontlines to small villages and are now surviving in difficult conditions. Many are traumatized and require psychosocial support, and some families have elderly and disabled members. They lack access to information on legal or social assistance, are in financial need and cannot apply for status as IDPs.

A register is kept by the Ministry of Veteran Affairs of the Kyiv-Svyatoshin Center for Social and Psychological Rehabilitation in the city of Boyarka, the cooperating partner of WFPW since 2014.

A full description of the project is available at WFPW chapters.

[Link to poster, click here.](#)

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