

## WFWPI Webinar: Perspectives - Peace And Reconciliation In Conflict Zones

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The WFWPI webinar on "Peace and Reconciliation in Conflict Zones" held on December 11, was attended by 100 people from 33 countries. It started with the welcoming address from the moderator Ms. Renate Amesbauer, President of WFWP Vienna and a member of working groups and conference management teams at the United Nations Headquarters in Vienna. She introduced the main focus of the webinar which was to explore the challenges and victories of movements in conflict zones across the world to understand the capacity and challenges involved for women and youth when they take an active role in leading efforts for reconciliation and conflict transformation.



The three panelists, who are currently working and speaking out for peacebuilding, shared best practices and decision-making processes that have contributed to effectively tackling a huge crisis in their diverse areas of responsibility. The first panelist, Dr. Zilka Spahić Šiljak holds a Ph.D. in gender studies from, MA in human rights and BA in religious studies. Her scope of work includes addressing cutting-edge issues involving human rights, politics, religion, education and peace-building with more than 15 years of experience in academic teaching and work in governmental and non-governmental sectors. She ran the Religious Studies Program at the University of Sarajevo and was a post-doctoral fellow at Harvard University and Stanford University in the U.S and teaches at the Faculty of Philosophy, University of Zenica and at the Roehampton University in London. She also runs Transcultural Psychosocial Educational Foundation (TPO) in Sarajevo with focus on gender equality, intercultural and interreligious education and peacebuilding. Dr. Šiljak began by explaining why it is important to include women in all

stages of the peace process in a presentation titled "Making Women Count, Not Just Counting Them." She also introduced five steps to "make women count": (1) diplomatic pressure at the EU and international level, (2) women's participation in UN institutions, (3) economic support for women and families, (4) provision of peace education, and (5) participation in decision making in politics and business.



The second panelist, Mme. Silvia Escobar is the Founder and first president of Amnesty International of Spain. She is a former Director of Social Services at the Spanish Red Cross and former Director of the Human Rights Office of the Spanish Ministry of Foreign Affairs, former Human Rights Ambassador of Spain. In 2007, as Spanish Ambassador for Human Rights, Mme. Escobar addressed the Security Council during an Open Debate regarding Women, Peace and Security and announced the adoption by Spain of a National Action Plan to implement the resolution. She said "Conflicts can only be resolved through an inclusive process. Transformative change rarely comes from within the system, it comes from women's movements, local, grassroots, and youth movements. The involvement of civil society organizations, including women's groups, makes peace less likely to fail. In terms of assessing the peacefulness of a state, gender equality is one of the strongest indicators."

The last panelist, Dr. Antonieta Rosa Gomes, is a lawyer, writer and poet. She is a researcher at the Center for International Studies (CEI-IUL), in the field of Institutions, Governance and International Relations: Security Challenges, and was Professor Regent of Administrative Law II at the Faculty of Law of Bissau, and was the first female candidate in the presidential elections of Guinea-Bissau and in West Africa. She worked as Minister of Justice and Minister of Foreign Affairs and International Cooperation of Guinea-Bissau and Municipal Deputy of the Municipality of Sintra in Portugal. Dr. Gomes introduced the Women's Platform for Peace in Casamance which is a platform for women to speak with one voice, present proposals that should be taken into account by the state and the MFDC, and involve them in the resolution of the conflict, as per resolution 1325 and appreciated the works of Dr. Hak Ja Han Moon, co-founder of WFWPI, as a true peacemaker. She said, "Conflicts influenced the transformation of the traditional role of women, who in addition to struggling to maintain the cohesion of their families, developed survival strategies and contributions to peace."

The climax of the webinar was a question-and-answer session where participants could directly ask questions about what they were concerned about the role of women in peacebuilding. One of the participants asked what "ordinary women" can do to create a peaceful environment. All the speakers came to the conclusion that peace is built not only by words but also by actions. All the work done for peace and reconciliation is a step towards realizing the vision of one global peaceful family.

This concluded the last in a series of webinars on the theme of "Peace and Reconciliation in Conflict Zones" that WFWPI HQ has been conducting since 2020. The webinar provided the participants with the knowledge, power and inspiration to work even harder toward peacebuilding, not only through emotional connections but also through real communication and partnership.