

## **„Women in Peace Building and Conflict Resolution“**

Having had to listen to rising voices of necessity to upgrade military expenses, investing more money in better weapons, etc. encouraged us to counter with voices for conflict resolution, Peace building, reconciliation- all favourite topics of WFWP.

We decided we will have a series bringing out this topic, through the voices of experts among our associates and Ambassadors of Peace.

This has been our first event:



**Women's Federation for World Peace Int.**  
WFWP UN –Vienna Office  
Global Women's Peace Network  
NGO-ECOSOC/DPIUN/VIE, Z.V.R.367192876

### **Women in Peace Building and Conflict Resolution**

June 5th, 2020, 19.00 to 20:30

Carolyn Handschin, Director WFWP UN Office int. Words of greeting

- Prof. Zilka SPAHIC -SILJAK, Director: TPO Found.Sarajevo, [www.tpo.ba](http://www.tpo.ba)  
*„The Role of Women in Peace Building“*
- Laleh ASHRAFI: Masterstudy- internat. Relations; *Women in Peace Building*, research
- Dr. Maria RIEHL: WFWP UN -Vienna Office- Director,  
*„Bridges of Peace“ – 4 steps towards reconciliation*  
Time for Q+A

Moderator: Renate Amesbauer, President WFWP-AUSTRIA,  
Information and Registration: [renate.amesb@gmail.com](mailto:renate.amesb@gmail.com), +43 (0) 650 751 4073



Through a wonderful cooperation on all levels, in Austria, (NL, UPF, Technical support-Tony Cook) but also with the WFWP-chapters all over Europe and Dr. Zoe Bennet, WFWP Middle East we were able to hold an event with close to 100 persons listening.

Mrs. Carolyn Handschin, in her opening remarks, gave an overview of the worldwide activities of WFWP, highlighting the strength in grassroots work in more than 120 Nations.

She emphasised that **Reconciliation, education and engagement in sustainable development** are three essential steps towards sustainable peace. WFWP in its various activities is putting a focus on them.

**Prof. Zilka Spahic- Siljak** has been the main speaker of the evening. Dr. Spahic holds PhD in Gender studies and her scope of work includes addressing cutting edge issues involving human rights, politics, religion, education and peace-building with more than fifteen years experience in academic teaching, and work in governmental and non-governmental sectors. She teaches Cultural Studies at the University of Zenica and at the Center for

Interdisciplinary Studies of the University of Sarajevo. Dr. Spahic is former research associate at Stanford University and Harvard University. Her publications includes: *Bosnian Labyrinth: Culture, Gender and Leadership* (2019); *Living Values: Global Ethos in Local Context of BiH* (2018); *Shining Humanity – Life Stories of Women Peacebuilders in Bosnia and Herzegovina* (2014); *Contesting Female, Feminist and Muslim Identities. Post-Socialist Contexts of Bosnia and Herzegovina and Kosovo* (2012); *Women Religion and Politics*.

Dr. Spahic has also been one of the speakers at the WFPW panel in the frame of South East European peace Summit, in Albania Oct. 2019.

She shared much of her profound experience with us. The motherly heart of women, compassion and empathy are essential in building/rebuilding a society.

Dr. Spahic also explained that these characteristics are not limited to women but can also be developed by men. As well as a healthy, peaceful society can only be built by women in cooperation with men! (Dr. Spahic is married and her husband is a great supporter of her work!).

Another point that she puts an emphasis on is that there cannot be a investment in peace without an economical foundation; if mothers have to worry about having enough food for the children, you cannot ask them to think about peace. So there needs to be support that a living can be earned. On the other side, if people are supported with their economics, they should also feel obliged to invest in activities of reconciliation and peace building.

One point Dr. Spahic mentioned at the very beginning: Peace is not something that comes by itself; it does not come easily. It is a matter of ongoing investment.

And – as she mentioned in her closing words- those who have experienced the war have a strong desire to build and keep peace. The younger ones, who do not have this personal suffering, often do not realize how important it is!

Therefor it has to become part of education.

**Ms. Laleh Ashrafi** is student of International Relations, with focus on anti-corruption, but also conflict resolution and peacebuilding, in her master studies she is working with some of the UN bodies in Vienna (UNODC, CTPTO). She is a WFPW Intern in Vienna.

She is half Iranian and half Russian from her background.

Ms. Ashrafi has experienced war herself (Iran- Iraq). She shared how women stay strong through community building, in their neighbourhood and in society.

Furthermore she mentioned about East Timor, where we could see a rise of the number of women in parliament. She linked this to the fact that many women had come back from

other places, eg. Australia. There they could gain confidence and get another picture of what it means to be a women. So by returning home they would encourage their friends and colleges to take on public roles.

Dr. Maria Riehl, WFP UN Director of Vienna Office, introduced “Bridges of Peace” a tool for reconciliation, that has been practised by WFP chapters worldwide to heal resentments that result from war and other conflicts. Dr. Riehl described the inner steps and determination to bring about a future of hope, dignity and peace for all the world’s children!

After answering some questions, we closed with a short resume by each speaker. It has been 90 minutes filled with amazing expertise and encouraging experiences!

There have been a lot of positive responses from ladies in the audience per email. Zoe Bennett’s guest felt very encouraged, and realised that life is not easy in other places too!

The topic will be continued with a next Zoom conference . “Women in conflict Zones2, Monday June 22<sup>nd</sup>.

Report written by Renate Amesbauer

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For information: We had informed all Women Austrian Parliamentarians and received an answer from 5 of them, with apologies, that they will not be able to attend!

