

RECOMMENDATIONS FROM THE WOMEN OF CENTRAL AND EASTERN EUROPE AND THE COMMONWEALTH OF INDEPENDENT STATES RELATING TO WOMEN AND ARMED CONFLICT

We, the women of Central and Eastern Europe and the Commonwealth of Independent States, having gathered in Budapest, Almaty and Geneva on the eve of the second millenium to share our experience and join our voices, while reaffirming our commitment to the Strategic Objectives of Section E on Women and Armed Conflicts of the Beijing Platform for Action, remind the international community, UN Members states, international and regional intergovernmental organizations that at the time of the Fourth World Conference of Women in Beijing, the Platform for Action could not reflect our tragic experiences with the wars in the Balkans, the Caucasus and other regions. Therefore, we urge the global community and the UN Member States to support our efforts at conflict prevention and peace-building in the region. Towards that end, we recommend:

Recommendation 1:

To create an enabling environment for conflict prevention, conflict transformation and peace-building, all governments should ensure women's full and equal participation in conflict prevention, conflict transformation, peace-building and reconstruction.

Actions to be Taken:

- The international community and negotiators should end the practice of consulting only presidents and governments. Instead, they should consult, listen to, and partner with civil society, including women 's organizations, to take account of their warnings regarding rising tensions, and to collaborate with women to take steps to prevent conflict at the earliest moment.
- To prevent further bloodshed in the Balkans, the Caucasus and other regions, the international community should make all efforts to support fragile democracies, push for free elections, in the Federal Republic of Yugoslavia in particular.
- All governments must engage in dialogue with their civil societies, particularly with women, before making momentous decisions that affect the daily lives and the futures of their people. To ensure that such consultations are meaningful, formal processes for regular consultations should be established and their results respected, particularly for nations facing the risk of armed conflict, and in post-conflict countries where reconstruction is taking place.
- Governments in the region should introduce legal and financial measures to increase women's participation at all levels of power and decision-making, for both elected and appointed positions, to enable women's equal participation in all institutions of governance, particularly in nations at risk of armed conflict.

- UN Member States and the international community including International Financial Institutions should thoroughly consult with women's organizations about development plans and programs on an ongoing basis, particularly in pre- and post- conflict situations, during conflict resolution processes and in the state of "no war no peace", and provide financial and political support to women's organizations working on building genuine democracies based on the rule of law and a culture of tolerance, peace and respect for human rights.

Recommendation 2:

To prevent war, keep under control arms supply to parties involved in conflict and to build institutions of good governance including secure and civil societies, all governments should take immediate action to make significant reductions in military expenditure and to redirect those funds to the promotion of human security.

Actions to be Taken:

- UN Member States should take concrete and coordinated action to stop the illegal trade in armaments and the profiteering by criminals who produce and promote the purchase and use of arms, and to eradicate the endemic corruption that prevails in the region.
- UN Member States should substitute mandatory military service with programs that enable young people to participate in civil and community service activities that work to support peace-building and reconstruction of their communities.
- UN Member States should make all efforts to ensure de-facto and de-jure full and equal citizenship rights to all ethnic and religious minorities.
- UN Member States should redirect funds planned for military expenditures to social protection, particularly to support vulnerable groups, education, and to build a culture of tolerance and peace.

Recommendation 3:

To ensure a just, expeditious and peaceful settlement of armed conflicts, all governments in the region should implement and enforce their existing commitments to international legal instruments and mechanisms.

Actions to be Taken:

- The international community and UN Member States should take action to ensure that the current rules of law and diplomacy, which allow only combatants and major political parties at the negotiation table, are changed and enable civil society, and particularly women's organizations, to participate in conflict prevention, conflict transformation and peace negotiation processes.
- All governments in the region and the international community as a whole should take all necessary measures in order to make the implementation of relevant human rights and international humanitarian law instruments more effective, in particular through a wide dissemination of these standards as well as through the adoption, already in times of peace, of all necessary measures of implementation in their domestic legislation.

- All governments in the region and the international community as a whole should take immediate and concerted action to bring to justice not only those who executed orders to commit war crimes and other international crimes, but also those who issued those orders.
- All governments in the region and the international community as a whole should cooperate to the fullest with the International Criminal Tribunal for the former Yugoslavia (ICTY) and should immediately start and expeditiously complete the process of ratification of the Statute of the International Criminal Court.
- Anyone who commits a crime of sexual violence, including members of the UN peacekeeping forces, should be prosecuted to the full extent of the law.
- In the name of justice but also of reconciliation and future peace, all governments of the Region should establish a Truth and Reconciliation Commission within the Stability Pact for South-Eastern Europe to the extent that it does not undermine the work of ICTY.
- States should at all times respect and implement the international standards pertaining to the prohibitions and restrictions on the methods and means of warfare, in particular the role of distinction between combatants and non-combatants, and the prohibition of weapons causing superfluous injury or unnecessary suffering, such as anti-personal landmines. They should inform people of the chemicals, poisons and other threats to personal health and the environment used during a military operation.