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Associating women in the prevention and the solution of unsolved conflicts in Europe

Report

Committee on Equal Opportunities for Women and Men

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Summary

There are still numerous active or “frozen” conflicts in Europe. Women are too frequently ignored in the crisis management, peace negotiation and reconstruction processes. Treated as passive victims and confined to the stereotyped roles that they have been allocated by society, women remain on the margins of political discussions that nevertheless affect their daily lives and security.

The Assembly believes that gender perspective is an instrument for crisis management. Greater female participation in decision making in public and political life in connection with conflict prevention, management and resolution would give fresh impetus to the process of dialogue and to the mediation efforts of member states and the international community, including the Council of Europe and its Parliamentary Assembly.

With this in mind, the Assembly should invite the member states of the Council of Europe to comply with United Nations Security Council Resolutions 1325 (2000) and 1820 (2008) as soon as possible, to include a gender perspective in intervention, peacekeeping and crisis management operations and to combat all forms of gender-based violence that impede the effective participation of women in public life. In the framework of the follow-up to the Forum on Early Warning in Conflict Prevention (Strasbourg, 24 and 25 September 2009), the Assembly should decide to promote gender mainstreaming in its programme and working methods.

Finally, the Assembly should invite the Committee of Ministers to ensure the balanced participation of women and men in its subordinate bodies which deal with frozen conflicts, current conflicts and post-conflict situations, to take into account women's expertise and adopt without delay a recommendation on the role of women and men in conflict prevention and resolution and in peace building.



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A. Draft resolution

1. The Parliamentary Assembly regrets that in areas of Europe where there are unresolved conflicts, as in other conflict and post-conflict zones in the world, women are too frequently ignored in the crisis management, peace negotiation and reconstruction processes.
2. There are still numerous active or “frozen” conflicts in Europe. Whether these be in Azerbaijan (Nagorno-Karabakh), Cyprus, Georgia (Abkhazia and South Ossetia), in Moldova (Transnistria) or Serbia/Kosovo,¹ the Assembly intends to remain ready to contribute to dialogue, reconciliation and the search for peace. It has to be recognised that it is still exceptional for women to be included and gender issues to be taken into consideration in these political processes.
3. The Assembly considers it essential for the issue of equality between women and men to be taken into account in the context of conflict prevention, management and resolution. Women face particular difficulties in conflict and post-conflict situations. They are the main victims of these conflicts and are exposed, both during and after them, to gender-based violence such as sexual violence. They are too frequently treated as passive victims and confined to the stereotyped roles that they have been allocated by society. Women therefore remain on the margins of political discussions that nevertheless affect their daily lives and security.
4. The Assembly believes that with regard to conflict prevention and resolution women are an underused resource which needs to be mobilised by member states and the international community. It is convinced that including a gender perspective, and in particular greater female participation, in decision making in public and political life in connection with conflict prevention, management and resolution, would give fresh impetus to the process of dialogue and to the mediation efforts of member states and the international community, including the Council of Europe and its Parliamentary Assembly.
5. Bearing in mind its Resolutions 1385 (2004) on conflict prevention and resolution: the role of women” and 1670 (2009) on “Sexual violence against women in armed conflict, the Assembly welcomes the adoption by the United Nations Security Council of Resolutions 1325 (2000) and 1820 (2008) on women, peace and security, which invite the international community to promote women’s role in conflict prevention and resolution and, in particular, combat sexual violence against women in armed conflicts.
6. The Assembly therefore invites the member states of the Council of Europe to:
 - 6.1. acknowledge that women must be fully involved in the conflict prevention and resolution and crisis management process;
 - 6.2. comply with United Nations Security Council Resolutions 1325 (2000) and 1820 (2008) as soon as possible by:
 - 6.2.1. adopting national action plans to implement the United Nations resolutions;
 - 6.2.2. establishing effective machinery, particularly at the parliamentary level, to monitor the undertakings entered into by each member state;
 - 6.3. combat all forms of gender-based violence that impedes the effective participation of women in public life by:
 - 6.3.1. punishing all forms of violence against women committed by belligerents or public authorities;
 - 6.3.2. establishing special programmes to protect and rehabilitate victims of gender-based violence;
 - 6.3.3. enforcing zero tolerance of any form of gender-based violence, including that of making use of the sexual services of the victims of human trafficking, by military or civilian personnel involved in intervention, peace-keeping or crisis management;
 - 6.3.4. if they have not yet done so, signing and/or ratifying the Council of Europe Convention on Action against Trafficking in Human Beings (CETS No. 197);

1. All reference to Kosovo, whether to the territory, institutions or population, in this text shall be understood in full compliance with United Nations Security Council Resolution 1244 and without prejudice to the status of Kosovo.

6.4. include a gender perspective in intervention, peace-keeping and crisis management operations, particularly by:

6.4.1. taking account of the specific needs of women and girls during repatriation and resettlement operations, and in post-conflict recovery, rehabilitation and reconstruction;

6.4.2. taking account of proven gender competence when recruiting staff to work in conflict and crisis zones;

6.4.3. making it obligatory for officials and diplomats involved in conflict resolution and prevention to receive training in issues relating to and the promotion of equality between women and men in the areas concerned;

6.4.4. monitoring, at the highest level, the incorporation of a gender perspective into all peace and security-related activities.

6.5. encourage active policies to empower women in areas of unresolved conflict in Europe, in particular by:

6.5.1. promoting arrangements to permit appropriate - at least 40% - female participation in decisions relating to any peace process;

6.5.2. supporting women's peace initiatives at local level and locally-based conflict resolution processes involving women in all the machinery for implementing peace agreements.

7. In the framework of the follow-up on the Forum on early warning in conflict prevention (Strasbourg, 24-25 September 2009), the Assembly decides to promote gender mainstreaming in its programme and working methods and in particular to:

7.1. ensure a balanced participation of women and men in Assembly activities carried out to promote dialogue and reconciliation in unsolved conflict areas in Europe;

7.2. take account of the specific situation and expertise of women in topics considered or case studies;

7.3. arrange systematic hearings of representatives of women's organisations in connection with all activities related to the prevention and resolution of unsolved conflicts.

B. Draft recommendation

1. With reference to its Resolution ... (2010) on associating women in the prevention and the solution of unsolved conflicts in Europe, the Parliamentary Assembly regrets that in areas of Europe where there are unresolved conflicts, as in other conflict and post-conflict zones in the world, women are too frequently ignored in the crisis management, peace negotiation and reconstruction processes.
2. The Assembly is convinced that incorporating a gender perspective into conflict negotiation, management and resolution offers a means of managing crises that would help to make Europe a more stable and safer place.
3. The Assembly considers that greater female participation in these processes is dependent on measures to combat all forms of discrimination and violence against women, machinery to ensure balanced participation of women and men in crisis management and conflict prevention and resolution, and training in gender competence for members of the international community involved in the management and resolution of these conflicts.
4. In particular, it considers that the perpetrators of all forms of violence, including sexual violence, against women before, during and after conflicts must be brought to justice and the victims protected. It refers to its [Resolution 1670 \(2009\)](#) and [Recommendation 1873 \(2009\)](#) on sexual violence against women in armed conflict and calls for them to be fully implemented.
5. The Assembly therefore invites the Committee of Ministers to:
 - 5.1. adopt a recommendation on the role of women and men in conflict prevention and resolution and in peace building as soon as possible;
 - 5.2. monitor the application of this forthcoming recommendation by the member states;
 - 5.3. ensure that the future Council of Europe Convention to prevent and combat violence against women and domestic violence covers acts of violence against women in conflict situations;
 - 5.4. include, in its subordinate bodies which deal with frozen conflicts, current conflicts, and post-conflict situations, a balanced participation of women and men and take into account women's expertise.

C. Explanatory memorandum by Ms Kiuru, rapporteur

1. Introduction

1. Conflicts are marked by gender-specific experiences: on the one hand, women have different access to resources, power and decision-making processes than men do (especially during and after conflicts, but also in the run-up to conflicts), on the other hand they are amongst the main civilian victims of conflicts. Conflicts not only affect faraway countries – in Europe as well, conflict resolution and post-conflict reconstruction remains an issue. Gender-based violence, rape as a weapon of war,² forced pregnancy and trafficking in human beings are common both during and after conflicts, in addition to such problems as displacement and enforced disappearances which also affect men. Unfortunately, in most cases, women's problems remain invisible to the public, and are thus not treated as a priority.

2. The Parliamentary Assembly has called for strengthening the role of women in conflict situations in its [Recommendation 1665 \(2004\)](#) and [Resolution 1385 \(2004\)](#).³ However, five years after their adoption, it has to be said that little progress has been made since then to fully involve women in conflict prevention and resolution. Along with a number of other colleagues, I therefore proposed that fresh impetus be given to this subject,⁴ in particular by stressing women's participation in the prevention and resolution of unsolved conflicts in the Council of Europe area. I was appointed rapporteur on 29 January 2009.

3. With a view to preparing this report, the committee proposed that the 5th meeting of the women members of the Assembly should focus on women's role in conflict resolution and post-conflict reconstruction. This meeting took place in Strasbourg on 24 June 2009 and was attended by Ms Helen Shaw, Chair of the Board of British Irish Rights Watch, the organisation which won the Parliamentary Assembly's 2009 Human Rights Prize, and Ms de Boer-Buquicchio, Deputy Secretary General of the Council of Europe.⁵

4. This report is timely as it is being drafted just as the Committee of Ministers of the Council of Europe has recently reaffirmed the need to improve women's participation in conflict prevention and management and decision-making processes at all levels⁶ and is about to adopt a recommendation on the role of women and men in conflict prevention and resolution and peace building.⁷ The Political Affairs Committee of the Assembly organised the Forum on Early Warning in Conflict Prevention in Strasbourg on 24 and 25 September 2009. I attended this forum in my capacity as rapporteur and took the opportunity to present the committee's first thoughts on the subject.⁸

5. In this report I would like to underline the fact that women can and must play an active and constructive role in conflict prevention and resolution, as well as post-conflict reconstruction. Women's capacities and knowledge should be better used. We need to realise that the commitment of women to decision making is just as important as the commitment made by men. Gender must be recognised as a crisis management instrument, that is, crisis management benefits from taking gender aspects into account. It should be taken more into consideration in the prevention, management and resolution of conflicts, as well as in post-conflict reconstruction. Although gender should not refer only to women, paying attention to gender-based questions will help improve women's situation in conflicts and open new windows of opportunity in ongoing negotiations. It will also contribute to the long-term stability of the society in conflict.

2. See [Resolution 1212 \(2000\)](#) on rape in armed conflicts ([Doc. 8668](#), rapporteur: Mrs Rodica-Mihaela Stanoiu, Romania, Socialist Group), [Resolution 1670 \(2009\)](#) and [Recommendation 1873 \(2009\)](#) on sexual violence against women in armed conflict ([Doc. 11916](#), rapporteur: Ms Miet Smet, Belgium, Group of the European People's Party).

3. See [Doc. 10117 rev.](#) on conflict prevention and resolution: the role of women (rapporteur: Minodora Cliveti, Romania, Socialist Group).

4. [Doc. 11753](#).

5. See AS/Ega(2009)PV 5 add.

6. Recommendation CM/Rec(2007) 17 of the Committee of Ministers to member states on gender equality standards and mechanisms states that "57. Women's participation in conflict prevention and resolution at decision-making levels must, therefore, be increased, as women have a significant contribution to make, particularly as regards peace building and prevention of further armed conflicts. Their participation in decision-making institutions and mechanisms for the prevention, management and resolution of conflict, including peace negotiations, and democratisation of societies after conflict must not fall under 40%, considered as the parity threshold."

7. Address by Maud de Boer-Buquicchio, Deputy Secretary General of the Council of Europe, at the 5th meeting of women parliamentarians, held in Strasbourg, on 24 June 2009, AS/Ega(2009)PV 5 add.

8. See Doc AS/Ega(2009)33, declassified introductory memorandum.

2. Taking the gender issue seriously

6. Since the end of the Cold War, the number of intra-state conflicts has increased worldwide.⁹ Long-suppressed ethnic, religious and regional tensions have turned into trouble spots. So called “frozen conflicts”,¹⁰ involving Council of Europe member states such as Russia, Georgia, Moldova, Armenia or Azerbaijan, remain unsolved and constitute a permanent challenge. Even if conflicts are not active for the time being, living in the shadow of frozen conflicts has a deep impact on daily life, especially for women, since even post-conflict reconstruction cannot really begin.

7. The Council of Europe, and the Parliamentary Assembly in particular, have made numerous efforts over the past few years to promote dialogue and resume contacts in unresolved conflicts. Attention should be drawn in this context to the steps taken during the recent conflict between Georgia and Russia (August 2008) and the work of the ad hoc sub-committee on promoting dialogue between the Georgian and Russian Assembly delegations,¹¹ the long-standing work on the situation in Cyprus,¹² on Nagorno-Karabakh,¹³ including the work of the Ad hoc Sub-Committee on Nagorno-Karabakh, the Middle East¹⁴ and the setting-up of a “Tripartite Forum” bringing together Israeli and Palestinian parliamentarians with members of the Assembly, the meetings of the Ad hoc Sub-Committee for the Organisation of the Round Table on the Political Situation in the Chechen Republic Pursuant to [Resolution 1402 \(2004\)](#), or the hearing on frozen conflicts jointly organised by the Assembly Monitoring Committee and the German Institute for International and Security Affairs (Berlin, 5 and 6 November 2007).

8. However, I am afraid I have to note that in the Council of Europe, as in other international organisations, there are practically no women at the negotiating tables. The gender dimension is too often neglected. Not much account is taken of either the specific difficulties encountered by women¹⁵ or the opportunities for dialogue that they offer. I firmly believe that this dimension would give fresh impetus to the Council of Europe’s efforts – and give women the opportunity to participate fully in peace efforts. As stated earlier, it would also help to make Europe more stable and more secure.

2.1. Women as victims

9. There are two sides to the gender issue in this context: women as victims and women as actors. Women as victims in/after armed conflict are slowly becoming more visible, and action is starting to be taken to defend their rights better. The Assembly has most recently adopted [Resolution 1670](#) and [Recommendation 1873 \(2009\)](#) on sexual violence against women in armed conflict, and United Nations Security Council Resolution 1820 (2008) on women, peace and security is also devoted to combating rape and other forms of sexual violence in armed conflict.

10. It is necessary to underline that prostitution and sex work is often a side effect of protracted conflicts. Sexual work zones surrounding occupying or peacekeeping countries military bases have a long history. Later, these facilities catering for the military often become sex tourist sites and thereby enable continuance of the sexual exploitation of women and girls. Prostitution may also be linked to human trafficking and other

9. <http://action.web.ca/home/cpcc/attach/USAID%20WID%20Publication%20%20Intrastate%20Conflict%20and%20Gender.htm>, The United States Agency for International Development, accessed 3 August 2009.

10. Mykola Kapitonenko, “Resolving Post-Soviet ‘Frozen Conflicts’: Is Regional Integration Helpful?”, *Caucasian Review of International Affairs*, Vol. 3(1), winter 2009, p. 37. http://craionline.org/Journal/6/Done_Kapitonenko_Resolving%20Conflicts.pdf, accessed 29 June 2009.

11. See in particular [Resolution 1633 \(2008\)](#) and [Doc. 11724](#) (1 October 2008) on the consequences of the war between Georgia and Russia, [Resolution 1647 \(2009\)](#) and [Doc. 11800](#) (29 January 2009) on implementation of [Resolution 1633 \(2008\)](#) on the consequences of the war between Georgia and Russia, [Resolution 1859 \(2009\)](#) on the humanitarian consequences of the war between Georgia and Russia, as well as [Recommendation 1869 \(2009\)](#) and [Doc. 11859](#) on humanitarian consequences of the war between Georgia and Russia: follow-up given to [Resolution 1648 \(2009\)](#).

12. See [Recommendation 759 \(1975\)](#) and [Doc. 3600](#), [Resolution 615 \(1976\)](#) and [Doc. 3708](#), [Recommendation 974 \(1983\)](#) and [Doc. 5154](#), [Resolution 816 \(1984\)](#) and [Doc. 5165](#), [Recommendation 1259 \(1995\)](#) and [Doc. 7206](#), [Resolution 1113 \(1997\)](#) and [Doc. 7717](#), [Resolution 1628 \(2008\)](#) and [Doc. 11699](#).

13. See [Recommendation 1690 \(2005\)](#), [Resolution 1416 \(2005\)](#) and [Doc. 10364](#) on the conflict over the Nagorno-Karabakh region dealt with by the OSCE Minsk Conference, [Resolution 1553 \(2007\)](#), [Recommendation 1797 \(2007\)](#) and [Doc. 11196](#) on missing persons in Armenia, Azerbaijan and Georgia from the conflicts over the Nagorno-Karabakh, Abkhazia and South Ossetia regions.

14. See [Resolution 1550 \(2007\)](#) and [Doc. 11250](#) on the situation in the Middle East.

15. There are a few laudable exceptions, such as references made by Ms Jonker to the specific risks and difficulties met by women in her report on the humanitarian consequences of the war between Georgia and Russia (see [Doc. 11789](#)).

kinds of forced labour and exploitation – as has happened in the Balkans. All organisations and actors in conflict management must therefore act as role models and have a zero tolerance policy towards prostitution in conflict zones.¹⁶

11. Violence against women, including domestic violence and human trafficking, both of which particularly affect women, are crimes that unfortunately tend to become more frequent during and, above all, after armed conflicts.¹⁷ The Council of Europe is particularly active in these fields, with its Convention on Action Against Trafficking in Human Beings and the forthcoming convention on preventing and combating violence against women and domestic violence.¹⁸ The Council of Europe's member states should also place particular emphasis on protecting victims and combating gender-based violence, because the latter is a serious violation of women's fundamental rights and an obstacle to their full participation in society.

12. When it comes to crimes and human rights violations which are not considered gender-based, be it forced displacement, enforced disappearance, torture, murder, etc., the fact that women are at the same (if not a higher) risk of being victimised during and after conflict is often less recognised. As the committee pointed out in its opinion on "The state of human rights in Europe: the need to eradicate impunity",¹⁹ it is necessary to punish and put an end to all forms of violence against women. Access to the law and to justice is one of the fundamental rights that must be safeguarded, not only for men but also for women.

13. Thus, many women are being threatened because of their peace-building work, as they stand up for justice and human rights.²⁰ Thus, for example, a number of women activists who led peace organisations during the wars in the Chechen Republic were detained and tortured by Russian and pro-Moscow Chechen forces; some of them died.²¹ These women commit themselves to a cause and risk their lives, as can be seen from the recent murders of Natalia Estemirova, who worked for the well-known Russian human rights NGO Memorial in Chechnya (July 2009)²² and Zarema Sadulayeva, Chair of the NGO "Save the Generation" in Chechnya (who was murdered with her husband in August 2009). The Assembly should take action in this case, to ensure that the perpetrators of these crimes are brought to justice, and other human rights defenders in the region are better protected.²³ Paradoxically, women become victims also when they act politically in the conflict. For instance, in the Chechen conflict, the Russian Government and media have framed all Chechen women as combatants, as "black widows", thereby taking away the protection they might have had from the conflict had they been considered civilians.²⁴

16. Sara Mendelson (2005), "Barrack and Brothels. Peacekeepers and Human Trafficking in the Balkans", CSIS report: www.csis.org/media/isis/pubs/0502_barracksbrothels.pdf, pp. 42-44.

17. Even in their homes, women face a greater risk of violence, particularly where there is conflict or tension. In Northern Ireland, members of the security forces such as police, prison staff and military personnel are authorised to carry arms – and keep them at home – for their personal protection. A certain number of politicians, judges and business people are also thought to carry arms. This easier access to firearms in Northern Ireland makes women vulnerable to more serious forms of violence in their homes (see R. Emerson Dobash and Russel P. Dobash, *Rethinking Violence against Women*, Sage Series on Violence Against Women, 1998, pp. 129-131, and Parliamentary Assembly [Resolution 1524 \(2006\)](#) on the need for greater transparency in the arms trade). The International Action Network on Small Arms says that the risk of violent death is three times higher for women if there is a firearm in the home and that for every one woman who is killed or wounded there are many more who are threatened with firearms. The network therefore launched a campaign in 2009 entitled "Disarming Domestic Violence", which calls for measures to protect women from gun violence.

18. See, for example, the Council of Europe's 2006-2008 campaign Stop Domestic Violence against Women. The Council of Europe is currently drawing up a new convention on preventing and combating violence against women and domestic violence. See also www.coe.int/violence.

19. [Doc. 11964](#), opinion presented by Ms Curdová (Czech Republic, Socialist Group).

20. www.1000peacewomen.org/typo/index.php?id=162&L=1, accessed 3 August 2009.

21. www.rawinwar.org/content/view/53/185, accessed 10 August 2009.

22. See the press statement issued by PACE President Lluís Maria de Puig and PACE rapporteurs Herta Däubler-Gmelin (Germany, SOC), Dick Marty (Switzerland, ALDE) and Holger Haibach (Germany, EPP): <http://assembly.coe.int/ASP/Press/StopPressView.asp?ID=2192>.

23. See [Resolution 1660 \(2009\)](#) and [Recommendation 1866 \(2009\)](#) on the situation of human rights defenders (rapporteur: Holger Haibach (Germany, EPP)).

24. Laura Sjoberg and Caron E. Gentry (2007), *Mothers, Monsters, Whores: Women's Violence in Global Politics*, Zed Books.

2.2. Women as actors

14. Women as actors and women as victims are, of course, interlinked. Women who are marginalised, invisible, ignored and overexposed to gender-based violence are also confined to stereotyped roles – and being an actor in preventing and resolving conflicts, and participating in post-conflict reconstruction decisions is not one of those roles! This means that women who do not conform to stereotyped roles and become actors in conflict situations also put themselves at high risk of becoming victims.

15. Academic research and policy discourse attest indeed that conflicts are influenced and based on specific roles and stereotypes of women and men and power hierarchies among them.²⁵ For example, the widespread belief that the woman's profession is to be a housekeeper, the lack of feminist literature, the absence of women's confidence in handling power and a general refusal to take women's needs seriously are reasons why women are not involved in any peace negotiations in Cyprus.²⁶ In Georgia, many internally displaced women have adapted to extreme stress and have quietly taken the lead in providing basic income and food for their families.²⁷ But this leading role of women as income earners has not led to the empowerment of women in Georgia.²⁸ In fact, they do not consider themselves as working²⁹ and are often unaware of their rights: of the 105 displaced women questioned in a survey, only five were aware of their basic human rights.³⁰

16. Women's roles as political activists and combatants have often been left in the shadow. Disarmament, demobilisation and reintegration (DDR) initiatives developed by UNIFEM showed that female combatants and females in supportive roles needs are neglected and became invisible. They have had unequal access to DDR benefits. This has given them again a position of a victim. The women-specific DDR measures are essential, especially for those women who have experienced sexual abuse or been rejected by their communities.³¹

17. I therefore believe there is an urgent need to take the issue of gender equality in unresolved conflicts seriously. In this respect, I would like to quote Donald Steinberg: "even today, people within our institutions refer to gender issues as the "soft side" of security and military matters. There is nothing "soft" about going after traffickers who turn women and girls into commodities. There is nothing "soft" about preventing armed thugs from abusing women in internally displaced persons' camps or about holding warlords and other human rights violators accountable for their actions against women. There is nothing "soft" about forcing demobilised soldiers to refrain from domestic violence or about insisting that women have a seat at the table in political and peace negotiations and a prominent position in peace operations."³²

3. Lessons learned on women's participation in conflict situations: gender as a crisis management tool

18. Practice has shown³³ that women are community leaders, with formal and informal authority. Often they are working in non-governmental organisations and citizen-empowerment movements which have the purpose of supporting democracy in their countries. In many cases, women outnumber men after a conflict, which means they take an active part in the basic implementation of peace agreements. Unfortunately,

25. www.forumzfd-akademie.de/node/1479, Akademie für Konflikttransformation, accessed 3 August 2009.

26. AS/Ega(2004)PV 3, Appendix I, Open Colloquy on Conflict Prevention and Resolution: The Role of Women, minutes of the meeting held in Strasbourg on 27 January 2004, p. 2.

27. "Aftermath: Effects Of Conflict on Internally Displaced Women in Georgia", Center for Development Information and Evaluation, Washington, Working Paper No. 310, September 2000, p. 6. [www.internaldisplacement.org/idmc/website/countries.nsf/\(httpEnvelopes\)/1CB724C9B055FA74C12575EC003475BD?OpenDocument#18.8.1](http://www.internaldisplacement.org/idmc/website/countries.nsf/(httpEnvelopes)/1CB724C9B055FA74C12575EC003475BD?OpenDocument#18.8.1).

28. Ibid., p. 9.

29. Ibid., p. 7.

30. Ibid., p. 9.

31. Women, War, Peace and Disarmament, Demobilisation and Reintegration (DDR), www.womenwarpeace.org/node/4: "Women and men have different access to services provided in post-conflict situations. Many women ex-combatants and women associated with the armed forces become 'invisible' after a conflict ends, making it difficult for DDR programming to reach them. In addition, women who perform roles in support of male combatants have also been intentionally excluded from DDR programming because of presumptions that these women are not entitled to the same benefits as their male counterparts, rendering many ineligible to access the services and benefit packages they need."

32. Donald Steinberg is Deputy President for Policy at the International Crisis Group, former US ambassador and member of the Joint Commission in Angola, in: *OSCE magazine*, Issue Number 2/2009, p. 13. www.osce.org/item/38315.html.

33. www.huntalternatives.org/pages/460_the_vital_role_of_women_in_peace_building.cfm, accessed 16 July 2009.

experience shows that, when it is time to create a new constitution and basic law, women who worked hard on developing a post-conflict government were not consulted any more. Women in Kosovo³⁴ like Vjosa Dobruna, founder of the Pristina Centre for the Protection of Women and Children, for example, had this experience.³⁵

19. Women are often skilled at bridging ethnic, religious, political and cultural divides. Research has shown that women are more collaborative than men are and therefore more willing to seek consensus and compromise. Northern Ireland provides a good example of women sitting around the negotiating table.³⁶ In 1996, they managed to put up 70 candidates in nine weeks so that, in the end, two of 12 members in the peace negotiations were women. Mutual concerns and common visions made it possible to continue the discussions while the men left the table during the peace talks that finally led to the Good Friday Agreement.³⁷ Helen Shaw, Chair of the Board of British Irish Rights Watch, therefore believes that women can be tough, strategic, hard-headed and impartial, just like men, but that they can also be empathetic, sympathetic, and emotional when some men may find it more difficult to express their emotions – although not impossible.³⁸

20. Women have excellent connections to community life due to their role in society. They can provide important information about potential activities leading to an armed conflict, since women live and work close to the roots of conflict. But they can also become an active part in mobilising their communities in rebuilding after hostilities are over. Vjosa Dobruna, former paediatrician in Kosovo, collected evidence to prove massacres in Kosovo. “There’s a tendency to think that women can work on social issues, but not in ‘higher’ politics – that’s why women aren’t usually brought to the negotiating table. I was at the table because there was respect for my work. People started to recognise that I had the information, knowledge, and will.”³⁹ Furthermore, the Union of the Committees of Soldiers Mothers of Russia⁴⁰ is a good example illustrating how women – even during a conflict – organise across the lines to fight for justice when conscripted soldiers had to suffer from beatings, humiliation, torture and other crimes.

21. The empowerment of women often in fact means that women can work more freely. During the first Intifada between Israel and Palestine, the group Jerusalem Link, a co-ordinating body of two independent women’s centres from both sides, was permitted to have meetings although cross-border community gatherings were not allowed. The explanation for this exception was that Jerusalem Link was “just a group of women talking”.⁴¹ This example shows that women are often seen as less threatening and thus have access where men may not. Men in power very often consider them to be less dangerous, ironically because of their status as “second-class citizens”. This is the way of thinking that we want to change.

22. Though women have experienced good practices, such good practices tend to be the exception and often the result of hard-working women who achieved their goal, not only to be heard but also to be involved in political decisions. In Kosovo, women’s groups were struggling for years to become part of the decision-making process. The international staff who came to their country assumed that, in an extremely patriarchal society, no women’s movement could thrive. The existing women’s groups had to put all their energy into explaining to those expert groups that they were willing to share and get involved in post-war reconstruction. “We were eager to work with the international agencies in developing effective strategies for responding to the pressing needs of Kosovar women, but most of those agencies did not recognise that we existed and often refused to hear what we had to say on decisions that affected our lives and our future”.⁴² The gap between being involved in a non-governmental organisation or in a women’s movement and official roles in politics still seems irreconcilable. As the late Lord Russell-Johnston (United Kingdom, ALDE) said in his 2006 report on the situation in Kosovo: “Despite their potential for innovation, women and youth are marginalised from the political process”.⁴³

34. All reference to Kosovo, whether to the territory, institutions or population, in this text shall be understood in full compliance with United Nations Security Council Resolution 1244 and without prejudice to the status of Kosovo.

35. www.huntalternatives.org/pages/398_vjosa_dobruna.cfm, accessed 9 July 2009.

36. AS/Ega(2004)PV 3, Appendix I, Open Colloquy on Conflict Prevention and Resolution: The Role of Women, minutes of the meeting held in Strasbourg, 27 January 2004, p. 2.

37. www.huntalternatives.org/pages/460_the_vital_role_of_women_in_peace_building.cfm, accessed 16 July 2009.

38. Address by Helen Shaw at the 5th meeting of women parliamentarians of the Assembly, Strasbourg, 24 June 2009, AS/Ega(2009)PV 5 add.

39. www.huntalternatives.org/pages/398_vjosa_dobruna.cfm, accessed 9 July 2009.

40. www.ucsmr.ru/english/ucsmr/hra.htm, accessed 21 July 2009.

41. www.huntalternatives.org/pages/460_the_vital_role_of_women_in_peace_building.cfm, accessed 10 August 2009.

42. Letter addressed by the Kosovo Women’s Network in April 2003 to women in Iraq, in www.bridge.ids.ac.uk/reports/cep-conflict-report.pdf, accessed 2 August 2009.

43. Doc. 11018.

23. Finally, NGOs' role in promoting women's participation in conflict prevention and resolution should be underlined: NGOs and special focus groups can help raise awareness, build and mainstream professional practice on how to implement Security Council Resolutions 1325 and 1820. Therefore, more work should be done at the grass-roots level to support women's organisations and to see how they can use Resolution 1325 to advance the interests of women and girls.⁴⁴ National networks mobilising the international community and seeking the adoption of national action plans by governments, such as Operations 1325 in Finland and Sweden established by NGOs,⁴⁵ ought to be supported to encourage national governments to take concrete steps.⁴⁶

4. How to improve women's role in the solution of unsolved conflicts

24. There are many specific measures and tools by which the participation of women in the solution of unsolved conflicts in Europe can be enhanced. In the first place, they must be able to play a full part in public affairs, and be fully eligible for decision-making posts. The domestic legislation of the countries concerned must include arrangements and positive measures to encourage the balanced participation of women and men in elective offices.⁴⁷

25. Other measures could also improve women's participation in the solution of unsolved conflicts in Europe.

- All parties to armed conflicts must fully respect international law applicable to the rights and protection of women and girls as civilians. If a perpetrator infringes upon human rights in a conflict area, the country's legislation should be compatible with the statute of the International Criminal Court and other international legal instruments in order to prevent and pursue crimes against women. Adopting appropriate laws and other measures help to prevent any form of violence against women, including sexual violence against women in armed conflict.
- Education about gender mainstreaming is crucial. On the one hand, the support for gender-sensitive training and recruitment of gender advisers is strongly recommended to achieve a gender-based perspective and expertise at peace negotiating tables, post-war reconstruction as well as military and civilian crisis management operations. But the education of children is nevertheless just as important so that they can be aware of gender issues, in order to avoid future generations' repeating the crimes being committed today.
- Gender equality and women's empowerment are unattainable without education in general, but still education for a lot of girls and women remains insufficient.⁴⁸ To become leaders at decision-making levels, to have the knowledge and self-confidence to take active part in politics, education plays a key role. Especially after a conflict there is the possibility to change such basic matters and existing discriminatory power relations. A sad example in Tajikistan underlines this situation: during a five years' civil war women gained from this setting by liberating themselves progressively from the traditional role of women. But after the conflict, the return to local customs and traditions destroyed women's gains by placing a low premium on education for girls, and putting pressure on girls to marry early and to agree to arranged marriages.⁴⁹
- Empowering women's groups in areas of serious conflict and enhancing their access to meetings dealing with peace and security in order to prevent conflicts are further measures. There are numerous examples.⁵⁰

44. "A Parliamentary Response to Violence against Women", Conference of Chairpersons and Members of Parliamentary Bodies Dealing with Gender Equality, Geneva 2008, www.ipu.org/PDF/publications/vaw_en.pdf, p. 40.

45. Operation 1325 is an umbrella organisation consisting of five main Swedish NGOs. Together with its member organisations in Sweden and abroad, Operation 1325 mobilises approximately one million people. It aims at raising awareness on UN SC Resolution 1325, organises debates, seminars, training and courses. It encourages decision makers to take actions in line with UN SC Resolution 1325. See www.operation1325.se/content/view/30/42/, accessed 25 June 2009.

46. "A parliamentary response to violence against women", Conference of Chairpersons and Members of Parliamentary Bodies Dealing with Gender Equality, Geneva 2008, www.ipu.org/PDF/publications/vaw_en.pdf, p. 40.

47. See the numerous activities of the PACE and its Committee on Equal Opportunities for Women and Men, particularly Document AS/Ega/Inf(2009)6, "PACE recommendations on increasing women's participation in the decision making process", and the introduction in 2009 of an Assembly Gender Equality Prize (<http://assembly.coe.int/equalityprize>).

48. See [Resolution 1669 \(2009\)](#) and [Recommendation 1872 \(2009\)](#) on the rights of today's girls – The rights of tomorrow's women (rapporteur: Ms Ingrida Circene, Latvia, Group of the European People's Party).

49. *OSCE magazine*, Issue Number 2/2009, p. 25, www.osce.org/item/38315.html.

- Governments should actively support actions which aim at strengthening women's active role in conflict solutions, by systematically consulting, involving and including women and women organisations in official peace processes and, *inter alia*, by training them as mediators. Unfortunately, even the United Nations has a lot to learn in this field. For instance, it has never appointed a female peace negotiator so far. In fact it should be made mandatory to appoint both female and male negotiators and to include gender analysis in all peace negotiation processes. In this context, special tribute should to be paid to Martti Ahtisaari, the former President of Finland, Nobel Peace Prize in 2008 "for his important efforts, on several continents and over more than three decades, to resolve international conflicts". As a United Nations diplomat and mediator, noted for his international peace work, he has put great emphasis on women's participation in conflict resolution.⁵¹
 - The inclusion of the gender component in field operations such as peacekeeping troops, the participation of women in conflict resolution areas and civil crisis management as well as the gender expertise and perspective should be guaranteed at all stages. A good example of the latter is the effort of the OSCE and the Interior Ministry in Azerbaijan which are currently trying to defy women's stereotypes by mainstreaming gender into the community-oriented police force since 2008.⁵² A good example of the former is from East Timor where a special civilian police unit, staffed by women, was established to handle cases of rape and other gender-based crimes. It appears that women felt safer to report cases.⁵³ On the other hand, the example of peacekeeping troops in South Ossetia demonstrates that there is still the need to promote the idea of women in armed military forces: out of 20 unarmed military monitoring officers in August 2008 just before the war broke out, there was just one woman.⁵⁴
 - The international monitoring of the widespread practice of impunity in cases of gender-based violence has to increase. Various international instruments are not used because of the absence of monitoring, accountability and enforcement mechanisms.⁵⁵ A good example is the training of monitors in November and December 2008 for the European Union monitoring mission in Georgia, where the gender perspective was included.⁵⁶ Support organisations monitoring the implementation of resolutions and international instruments are strongly needed to denounce and effectively combat human rights violations.
26. Another problem is the lack of awareness of the existing above-mentioned resolutions. International and regional bodies should use their influence convincing governments to support women's peace organisations and to incorporate the gender perspective into organisations.
- Out of 12 peace agreements reached between 1991 and 2001 in Afghanistan, Bosnia and Herzegovina, Cambodia, El Salvador, Eritrea, Ethiopia, Guatemala, Kosovo, Liberia, Rwanda and Sierra Leone and East Timor, only four (El Salvador, Liberia, Sierra Leone and East Timor) included a provision directly related to women.⁵⁷
 - Although the problem of the role of women in conflicts has been raised in the international community, few countries set up national action plans to implement international instruments, such as United Nations Security Council Resolutions 1325 (2000) and 1820 (2008) on women, peace and security. So far just 10 European countries (Austria, Denmark, Finland, Iceland, the Netherlands, Norway, Sweden, Switzerland, Spain and the United Kingdom) have adopted specific national action plans to implement United Nations Security Council Resolution 1325.⁵⁸

50. For example, the Swedish Kvinna till Kvinna foundation offers support for women's organisations in conflict zones. In Northern Ireland, the action of the Women Coalition enabled women to take part in the negotiations and to be elected in the Parliament of Northern Ireland (see AS/Ega (2009) PV 5 add).

51. www.unosek.org/unosek/en/speenvoy.html, http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Martti_Ahtisaari.

52. OSCE magazine, Issue Number 2/2009, p. 14, www.osce.org/item/38315.html.

53. "Women, War, Peace: The Independent Experts' Assessment on the Impact of Armed Conflict on Women and Women's Role in Peace-Building" (*Progress of the World's Women 2002*, Vol. 1):

www.unifem.org/attachments/products/217_chapter05.pdf, p. 9.

54. OSCE magazine, Issue Number 2/2009, p. 17, www.osce.org/item/38315.html.

55. Ibid., p. 13.

56. SG/Inf(2009)04, "Council of Europe Activities Following the Conflict in Georgia", 17 February 2009, p. 8.

57. United Nations Development Programme, Crisis Prevention and Recovery:

www.undp.org/cpr/we_do/8_pa_key_stats.shtml, accessed 11 July 2009.

58. "Peace? Resolution 1325 – An Introduction", Operation 1325, Stockholm:

www.operation1325.se/images/stories/infobroschyr_1325_webb.pdf, accessed 25 June 2009.

27. Finally, it is important to improve the socio-economic rights of women through adequate legislation. Tackling female unemployment and access to the labour market, the right to land and property ownership and the provision of physical and mental health services for women injured and traumatised during a conflict is a precondition for post-war reconstruction.

5. Conclusions and proposals

28. This report shows several examples of good practice and the importance of the participation of women in conflict prevention, resolution and post-conflict reconstruction. But it also attests that women are an unexploited resource in conflict prevention and resolution which should be used by member states and by the international community.

29. The resolution and recommendation adopted five years ago by the Parliamentary Assembly already proposed a series of possible actions and alerted the international community. However, to date not much has changed. Therefore, we need to launch new initiatives and mobilise parliaments and governments to include women in conflict prevention, resolution and post-conflict reconstruction.

30. The Assembly recently organised the Forum on Early Warning in Conflict Prevention (Strasbourg, 24 and 25 September 2009). One outcome has been the setting up of a sub-committee on conflict prevention through dialogue and reconciliation. This offers an excellent opportunity to try out various novel approaches. I hope that the sub-committee will include a gender perspective in its programme and working methods to ensure a balanced participation of women and men. One suggestion might be to ask national delegations to appoint full and substitute members of different sexes. The sub-committee should also take account of women's specific situation in connection with topics considered or case studies, particularly by means of systematic hearings of representatives of women's organisations. It could also organise a seminar on women's contribution to the prevention process and the settlement of unresolved conflicts in Europe.

31. Furthermore, the Assembly should ensure that, when entrusting ad hoc committees and sub-committees to deal with frozen conflicts, conflicts and post-conflict situations, there is balanced participation of women and men in this work and that they take into consideration women's expertise and consult women organisations.

32. Finally, taking into account gender equality when preparing monitoring reports on the countries concerned would help to better assess the respect of fundamental rights, the difficulties and potential of women in unsolved conflicts in Europe.

33. The Assembly should urge its member states to:

- protect and respect the fundamental rights of women and girls and combat all forms of gender-based violence;
- implement Resolutions 1820 (2008) and 1325 (2000) on women, peace and security of the United Nations Security Council, in particular by adopting national action plans;
- adopt national action plans on the implementation of United Nations Security Council Resolutions 1325 and 1820 including efficient monitoring mechanisms;
- include a gender equality dimension and expertise in peacekeeping operations and crisis management missions;
- make gender equality training courses mandatory for officials and diplomats working in the field of conflict prevention and resolution;
- ensure that all peace- and security-related actions are gender sensitive and that the implementation of gender mainstreaming is monitored at the highest level;
- take account of the specific needs of women and girls during repatriation and resettlement and for rehabilitation, reintegration and post-conflict reconstruction;
- support women's peace initiatives at local level and indigenous processes for conflict resolution that involve women in all of the implementation mechanisms of peace agreements.

34. The Parliamentary Assembly should urge the Committee of Ministers to:

- adopt, as soon as possible, a recommendation to member states on the role of women in conflict prevention and resolution;

- ensure that the future Council of Europe convention to prevent and combat violence against women and domestic also covers the situation of women in armed conflicts;
- include in its subordinate bodies which deal with frozen conflicts, current conflicts, and post-conflict situations, a balanced participation of women and take into account women's expertise.

Reporting committee: Committee on Equal Opportunities for Women and Men

Reference to committee: [Doc. 11753](#), Reference 3512 of 26 January 2009

Draft resolution and draft recommendation unanimously adopted by the committee by on 27 January 2010

Members of the committee: Mr José **Mendes Bota** (Chairperson), Ms Gisèle **Gautier** (1st Vice-Chairperson), Ms Mirjana Ferić-Vac (2nd Vice-Chairperson), Ms Doris **Stump** (3rd Vice-Chairperson), Ms Sonja **Ablinger**, M. Francis Agius, Mr Florin Serghei Anghel, Ms Magdalena Anikashvili, Mr John **Austin**, Mr Lokman Ayva, Ms Deborah Bergamini, Ms Oksana Bilozir, Ms Rosa Delia **Blanco Terán**, Ms Olena Bondarenko, Mr Han Ten Broeke, Ms Sylvia Canel, Ms Anna Maria Carloni (alternate: Ms Federica **Mogherini Rebesani**), Mr James **Clappison**, Ms Ingrida **Circene**, Ms Anna **Čurdová**, Mr Andrzej **Cwierz**, Mr Kirtcho Dimitrov, Ms Mesila Doda, Ms Lydie **Err**, Ms Pernille Frahm, Ms Doris Frommelt, Ms Alena **Gajdůšková**, Mr Giuseppe Galati, Ms Sophia Giannaka, Mr Neven Gosović (alternate: Mr Obrad **Gojković**), Ms Claude Greff, Mr Attila Gruber, Ms Ana Gutu, Ms Carina **Hägg**, Mr Håkon Haugli, Ms Francine **John-Calame**, Ms Nataša Jovanović, Ms Charoula Kefalidou (alternate: Mr Dimitrios **Papadimoulis**), Ms Birgen Keleş, Ms Krista **Kiuru**, Ms Elvira **Kovács**, Ms Athina **Kyriakidou**, Ms Sophie Lavagna, Mr Terry **Leyden**, Ms Mirjana Malić, Ms Assunta Meloni, Ms Nursuna **Memecan**, Ms Danguté Mikutienė, Ms Hermine Naghdalyan, Ms Yuliya Novikova, Mr Mark Oaten (alternate: Mr Tim **Boswell**), Mr Kent Olsson (alternate: Ms Marietta **de Pourbaix-Lundin**), Ms Steinunn Valdis Óskarsdóttir, Ms Beatrix Philipp, Ms Carmen **Quintanilla Barba**, Mr Stanislaw Rakoczy (alternate: Ms Jadwiga **Rotnicka**), Mr Frédéric Reiss, Ms Mailis Reps, Ms Maria Pilar Riba Font, Ms Andreja Rihter, Mr Nicolae Robu, Ms Tatiana **Rosova**, Ms Karin Roth, Ms Klára Sándor, Mr Manuel Sarrazin, Ms Albertina Soliani, Ms Tineke **Strik**, Mr Michał **Stuligrosz**, Ms Elke Tindemans, Mr Mihal Tudose, Ms Tatiana Volozhinskaya, Mr Paul Wille, Ms Betty Williams (alternate: Baroness **Gale**), Ms Gisela Wurm, Mr Andrej Zernovski, Mr Vladimir Zhidkikh (alternate: Ms Natalia **Burykina**)

NB: The names of the members who took part in the meeting are printed in **bold**

Secretariat of the committee: Ms Kleinsorge, Ms Affholder, Ms Devaux