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Women & Men Innovating &  
Networking for Gender Equality



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WOMEN MEDIATORS  
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Geneva Centre for  
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**WIIS  
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Women In  
International  
Security



## OSCE Side-Event at the Geneva Peace Week 2024

### *Pathways to Peace: Empowering Young Women as Agents of Change*

*15 October, 2023 (11:00 – 12:30)*

*Geneva, Switzerland & via zoom*

#### **Background**

Women and youth are pivotal for peace and security, offering unique perspectives to conflict resolution. Their active involvement is essential for creating sustainable peace and enhancing community resilience. While each group has its own unique strengths, their combined actions can drive comprehensive peace initiatives and prevent future violence.

Globally, young women face numerous barriers to participation in peacebuilding, including societal norms, gender discrimination, and limited access to education and resources. These challenges are compounded in conflict and post-conflict settings, where young women's voices are often marginalized, and their contributions undervalued. However, when young women are actively involved in peacebuilding, they can play transformative roles in conflict resolution, community cohesion, and the promotion of human rights. Their engagement not only enhances the effectiveness of peace processes but also ensures that the specific needs and rights of young women are addressed, fostering more equitable and resilient societies.

While specific global statistics on young women's contributions to peacebuilding are less commonly cited than those for other groups, several studies and reports highlight the significant impact young people have in this area. A publication by the United Network of Young Peacebuilders found that youth-led organizations are actively engaged in peacebuilding activities, including mediation, dialogue facilitation, and community-building initiatives. Research by the Search for Common Ground organization indicates that youth involvement in peace processes can lead to more inclusive and effective outcomes, as young people bring unique perspectives and innovative approaches to conflict resolution. The Global Youth Peace and Security Index, developed by the Institute for Economics and Peace, shows a positive correlation between youth inclusion in peace processes and overall peace and stability in societies.

#### **Objectives**

In an increasingly interconnected and complex world, the role of young women in fostering peace and stability cannot be overstated. The panel "Pathways to Peace: Empowering Young Women as Agents of Change" aims to highlight some of the pivotal contributions of young women in peacebuilding and conflict resolution processes.



This panel will bring together women leaders and activists experts from diverse backgrounds to share their experiences and insights in the areas of peacebuilding, including the role played by networks in support of their effective involvement in peacebuilding processes and decision-making at local, national, and international levels.

The discussion will also explore strategies for overcoming barriers to young women's participation in peacebuilding, including cultural, social, and institutional obstacles. By showcasing successful examples and providing a platform for dialogue, this panel aims to inspire a new generation of young women to take active roles in creating and sustaining peaceful societies and provide concrete recommendations in support of these efforts.

Ultimately, the panel seeks to underscore the critical need for inclusive approaches that recognize and elevate the voices of young women as essential agents of change in the pursuit of global peace and security.

### **About the Organizers**

The **Organization for Security and Co-operation in Europe** has consistently supported young women to play an active role in peacebuilding, by improving their skills and decision-making to advance peace and security in the region. In 2015, the OSCE Mission in Kosovo launched the Dialogue Academy, fostering connections among young women from Pristina and Belgrade. In 2023, as part of the OSCE Networking Platform for Women Leaders, Including Peacebuilders and Mediators, the OSCE Secretary General launched the Young Women for Peace Initiative. This initiative brings young women's perspectives from conflict and post-conflict settings including Ukraine, South Caucasus, Western Balkans and Afghanistan to the forefront, ensuring their voices are included in strategic discussions. The initiative is also part of the OSCE's efforts to amplify youth voices in peace and security debates, including through the project "Accelerating the implementation of the Youth and Security Agenda in the OSCE region," promoted by the Office of the Secretary General.

The **Geneva Centre for Security Policy (GCSP)** is an international foundation serving a global community of organizations and individuals. Recognizing the need to address gendered power imbalances to achieve collective security, GCSP actively invests in women leaders to build resilience and a network of support and capacity development to ensure more inclusive approaches to security, including by focusing on the link between youth, peace and security.

**Women in International Security - Italy (WIIS- Italy)** is a global network dedicated to promoting the leadership and the professional empowerment of women in the field of international peace and security. WIIS sponsors mentoring and networking programs for women, including young women, as well as formal and informal events focused on current policy problems and policy engagement initiatives on critical international security issues.

The **Mediterranean Women Mediators Network** aims at fulfilling the need to increase the number of women involved in peacemaking efforts and at facilitating the appointment of high-level women mediators at local and international level. In this regard, it is a catalyst for mediation efforts in ongoing and potential crises and post-conflict stabilization processes. The Mediterranean Women Mediators



Network actively promotes inter-generational dialogue among women mediators across the Mediterranean and Arab world. The initiative was launched by the Italian Ministry of Foreign Affairs in 2017 and since then has been jointly implemented by Istituto Affari Internazionali (IAI) and Women In International Security (WIIS) Italy.

Draft Agenda	
11.00 – 11.10	<b>Opening Remarks</b>
	Ambassador Thomas Greminger, Executive Director GCSP
	Dr. Lara Scarpitta, OSCE Senior Adviser on Gender Issues
11.10 – 11.20	<b>Keynote Address</b>
	Ambassador Helga Maria Schmid, President of the European Institute of Peace and Vice President of the Foundation Council of the Munich Security Conference
11.20 – 12.00	<b>Panel Discussion</b>
	Ms. Elham Kohistani, Human Rights Defender, OSCE Women Peace Leadership Programme Alumni
	Ms. Alisa Kockar, Programme Coordinator at National Youth Council of Serbia, and Dialogue Academy Alumnae Network member
	Ms. Rita Berisha, Project Manager, University of Iceland and University of Pristina and Dialogue Academy Alumnae Network member
12.00 – 12.20	<b>Q &amp; A</b>
12.20 – 12.30	<b>Closing remarks</b>
	Dr. Loredana Teodorescu, President of the Mediterranean Women Mediators Network and WIIS Italy

**Moderator:** Mr. Yama Sukhanyar, Founder and Executive Director of the Youth Center for Dialogue and Peace