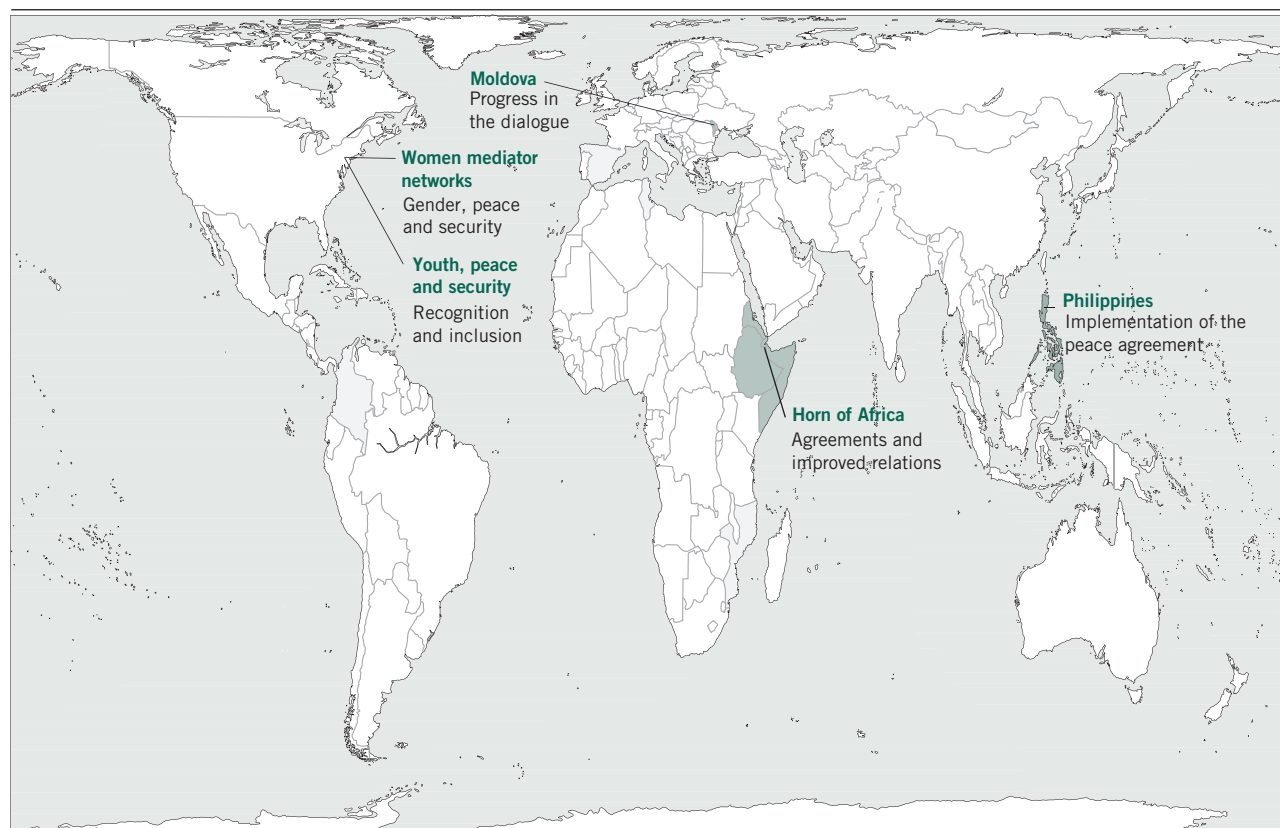


4. Opportunities for peace in 2019

After analysing the year 2018 from the perspective of conflicts and peacebuilding, the UAB's School for a Culture of Peace highlights in this chapter five areas that are opportunities for peace in 2019. They are contexts where there is, or has been, an armed conflict or socio-political crisis in the past where a series of factors converge that could lead to a positive turn in the situation and/or issues of the international agenda that may, in the short to mid-term, contribute to building peace. Opportunities identified for 2019 include the window of opportunity for peace that has opened in the Horn of Africa following the historic peace agreement between Eritrea and Ethiopia; the process to implement the peace agreement between Manila and the MILF in the southern Philippines; progress made in the peace process in Transdniestria; networks of women mediators created to implement the gender, peace and security agenda; and the possibilities of recognising and including young people as peacemakers after the adoption of United Nations Security Council Resolution 2250 and implementation of the youth, peace and security agenda.

All these opportunities for peace will require a real commitment and huge efforts from the parties involved and, whenever required, the support of international actors for the existing synergies and positive factors to lead to the building of peace. In this regard, the analysis by the School for a Culture of Peace aims at offering a realistic view of these scenarios and issues, identifying the positive elements that feed the hope for changes, but without neglecting the difficulties that exist and could be an obstacle for the realisation of these peace opportunities to come true.

Map 4.1. Opportunities for peace in 2019



4.1. Window of opportunity for peace in the Horn of Africa

The historic peace agreement reached between Eritrea and Ethiopia in September 2018 has been the result of much goodwill on both sides of the Red Sea and important changes in Ethiopia that have produced an extraordinary scenario, giving rise to various peace initiatives and new agreements among their neighbours. Stemming from improved relations between Eritrea and Ethiopia, these initiatives had not taken shape previously because both countries had been engaged in a cold war against each other through their regional geopolitical alliances in the Horn of Africa and their policy of proxy war by supporting respective insurgencies. The new scenario resulting from this process has created momentum for peace in the Horn of Africa, though not without risk, since it is based on endogenous elements of fragility and a complex network of relations between the countries of the region and their neighbours in the Arabian Peninsula, which are competing to expand their areas of influence.

The peace agreement reached between Eritrea and Ethiopia has put an end to 20 years of confrontation between both countries, putting several countries in the region on edge because of the framework of existing alliances between the neighbours in the Horn of Africa. Eritrea became independent from Ethiopia in 1993, although the 1,000-km border between the two countries was not clearly defined, which brought them to blows between 1998 and 2000, causing over 100,000 deaths. Ethiopia did not accept the opinion of the Eritrea-Ethiopia Boundary Commission (EEBC) that assigned the disputed border town of Badme to Eritrea. When the EEBC's decision was not respected, Eritrea pressured the established UN mission (UNMEE) to supervise separation of the troops, forcing its withdrawal in 2008. From then on, a permanent pre-war atmosphere prevailed in both countries, with hundreds of thousands of soldiers gathered on the shared border, sporadic clashes and belligerent rhetoric. Both sides actively armed and welcomed their rival's respective insurgencies, leading to a proxy war. Ethiopia has also been an important US ally in the Horn of Africa, so in 2009 the UN Security Council decided to impose a host of sanctions and an arms embargo on Eritrea for its alleged support of the Somali al-Shabaab insurgency and other insurgent movements that attacked Ethiopia. Eritrea's occupation of Ras Doumeira in 2008, which had been under the sovereignty of Djibouti, but without a definitive agreement on the border issue, coupled with its refusal to accept a solution to the situation in 2011, led to tougher sanctions and isolation.

Since early 2018, in less than six months, this situation has taken a 180-degree turn. Ethiopia announced the acceptance of the border demarcation in June and peace was formalised between both countries between July and

September. The speed with which these changes have taken place would not have been possible without the vision and political determination of new Ethiopian Prime Minister Abiy Ahmed. The appointment of the new Ethiopian prime minister was crucial for the development of this situation, although according to some sources the process had already begun to take shape during the last year of Hailemariam Desalegn's government. In February 2018, Prime Minister Hailemariam Desalegn resigned under internal social pressure and in March, Abiy Ahmed was appointed by the ruling coalition, the EPRDF. A member of the Oromo community, former military intelligence officer and MP, Abiy Ahmed was put forward by the Oromo Democratic Party (ODP), one of the four parties that make up the ruling coalition (EPRDF). The Oromo community is the largest in Ethiopia. It has also been the most marginalised community from the country's economic development in recent years, which has been one of the main causes of the massive protests rocking the country since 2015. As early as his inaugural address, in April, Abiy Ahmed promised peace with Eritrea. On 5 June, the ruling coalition (EPRDF) announced that it would accept the EEBC's ruling. In a few months, Abiy lifted the state of emergency in the country, ordered the release of thousands of prisoners, allowed dissidents to return home and unlocked hundreds of websites and television channels. In addition, it reached peace agreements with the historical insurgencies of Oromia (OLF) and Ogaden (ONLF).

The rapprochement between Eritrea and Ethiopia is also due to the culmination of non-public talks and contacts last year promoted by the US, and above all, by the United Arab Emirates (UAE) and its ally Saudi Arabia, which have become more prominent in the Horn of Africa.¹ This growing Arab political role is underpinned by economic motivations and above all by their geopolitical strategy to expand their influence in the region and to limit the influence of other actors as a result. According to several analysts, the war in Yemen and the rivalries between the Persian Gulf countries are among the main phenomena demonstrating this growing regional influence and tension, as three groups of countries vie for regional hegemony: the Arab axis (led by Saudi Arabia and UAE and including countries such as Egypt and Bahrain), the Iranian axis and the Turkey-Qatar axis. This interest has taken shape through political alliances, humanitarian aid, investment projects, agreements to establish military bases and contracts for building or expanding commercial ports. The isolation of Eritrea by the international community has enabled the UAE's influence to grow in the country over the course of the last decade. Saudi Arabia is building a military base in Djibouti and the UAE already has a military base in Assab (Eritrea), from where both countries launch their military operations against Yemen. The Abu Dhabi

1. See Allo, Awol, "Ethiopia: Exploiting the Gulf's Scramble for the Horn of Africa", *African Arguments*, 13 August 2018; *African Arguments*, "Ethiopia-Eritrea Peace: Some Unanswered questions", *African Arguments*, 11 July 2018; Fick, Maggie, Cornwell, Alexander, "In Peace between Ethiopia and Eritrea, UAE Lends a Helping Hand", *Reuters*, 8 August 2018; International Crisis Group, "The United Arab Emirates and the Horn of Africa", Crisis Group Middle East Briefing No. 65, 6 November 2018.

company DP World has million-dollar contracts to develop the Somali ports of Berbera (Somaliland) and Bosaso (Puntland). Qatar and Turkey are also heavily involved in Somalia: in addition to various investment projects, Turkey has control of the capital's port and airport, as well as a military base. Somalia is coming under heavy pressure from these two axes, which is causing an internal crisis between the Federal Government of Somalia (allied with Qatar and Turkey) and the federal states (supported by the UAE). Ethiopia has kept out of these regional rivalries and has managed to attract the necessary investment for its country through the incentives proposed by the UAE and Saudi Arabia stemming from the peace with Eritrea, and especially the diversification of the growing economy's access to the Red Sea, which also has an impact on economic incentives for Eritrea. Both Eritrea and Ethiopia wanted this peace agreement, but both countries needed economic and diplomatic incentives to convince the most recalcitrant groups on both sides.

The peace process between Eritrea and Ethiopia has also led to the normalisation of relations between Eritrea and Djibouti. The port of Djibouti accounts for 95% of Ethiopia's exports and imports. Qatar had tried to mediate between Eritrea and Djibouti in the dispute over Ras Doumeira since 2008, reaching an agreement in 2010 according to which both countries agreed on the establishment of a Qatar-led ceasefire observation mission in the disputed area. However, Qatar withdrew its mission in June 2017 after both countries supported Saudi Arabia's accusation that Qatar was supporting radical Islamism and Iran. Doha denied the accusation, which led to a major diplomatic crisis between the countries of the Persian Gulf and forced the different actors to align around the different regional leaders. Although the dispute is ongoing, on 7 September 2018, both countries announced the normalisation of their relations after a visit to Djibouti by the Eritrean foreign minister. This was preceded in July by the restoration of diplomatic relations between Eritrea and Somalia (Ethiopia has been an important ally of Somalia in its fight against al-Shabaab, so peace between Ethiopia and Eritrea opens the door to improved relations with their mutual neighbour) after years of accusations by the Somali government of Eritrean support for the Somali insurgent group that had been reflected in the UN sanctions on Eritrea. This normalisation of relations between Djibouti and Eritrea was also preceded by a meeting of the Somali, Eritrean and Ethiopian foreign ministers in Asmara in early September. The resolution of this dispute was the last obstacle to lifting of UN sanctions on Eritrea and ending its international isolation. Meanwhile, Djibouti's peace with Eritrea reduces the risks of its isolation in the regional context due to its high dependence on Ethiopia and its uncomfortable international alliances (the French, US, Chinese and

Japanese military bases in Djibouti bring strategic income to the country, but are also subjects of domestic criticism).

However, this important progress may be overshadowed by different issues still to be taken into account. First, at the domestic level, the decisions taken in Ethiopia have not been supported by the old guard dominated by the Tigrayan People's Liberation Front (TPLF), one of the four parties of the ruling coalition, and have been met with misgivings by parts of the military, but enjoy major popular support. In this regard, on 24 June, days after the prime minister's announcement of accepting the border decision, an attack occurred at one of his meetings in which two people were killed and dozens were injured. Thus, the important steps taken must be grounded in implementation of structural legislative and institutional reforms to strengthen democracy and governance in the country, as stressed by Berhanu Nega, a major political leader who returned to Ethiopia in September. The opening

of the border with Eritrea has prompted thousands of Eritreans to seek refuge in Ethiopia in recent months due to the poverty and lack of freedoms in the country, exposing the reality of the situation there.

Second, in relation to the peace process between Eritrea and Ethiopia, although both countries have taken many steps to foster a climate of trust in recent months, such as the resumption of flights, the opening of telephone communications and the organisation of family reunions, the border continues to be one of the most militarised areas on the planet with hundreds of thousands of soldiers from both countries and unknown amounts of antipersonnel

mines. Quick regional and international supervision of the demilitarisation of this border is essential to prevent backsliding in the process. Third, it should be noted the alliance policy that has helped to weave together the different peace initiatives and that has also helped to stoke rising tensions, as the situation in Somalia demonstrates, which teeters on the brink of conflict between the Federal Government of Somalia and the federal states resulting from this regional geopolitical struggle, to which the UAE could make a positive contribution.

Despite the many challenges and difficulties, the countries of the region and the international community must take advantage of this historic regional scenario of peace. It is essential to strengthen the peace initiatives and promote the agreements to give them enough domestic support to no longer depend on the favourable political winds, help to democratise and improve the governability of Eritrea and Ethiopia, provide fresh impetus to promoting peace in other situations of political violence and open conflict the region and prevent the old guard from perceiving these processes as a loss of their privileges that could potentially lead to regression.

The rapprochement between Eritrea and Ethiopia reflects internal changes in Ethiopia and the culmination of contacts promoted by the US and, above all, by the United Arab Emirates and Saudi Arabia, countries that have become more prominent in the Horn of Africa

4.2. Implementation of the peace agreement in the southern Philippines

The MILF and the Philippine government, as well as a large part of the international community (United Nations, the EU, the Organisation of Islamic Cooperation and many countries), described President Rodrigo Duterte's signing of the Organic Law for the Bangsamoro Autonomous Region in Muslim Mindanao (OLBARMM) in July as a historic opportunity for peace in Mindanao. Both sides consider this law the core and politically most sensitive part of the peace agreement signed by Manila and the MILF in 2014 after 17 years of negotiations. According to both sides, the enactment of this law opens the door to full implementation of the peace agreement and establishes the structural conditions to overcome a conflict whose armed activity dates back to the late 1960s and has led to the deaths of 120,000 to 150,000 people, according to sources.

Indeed, after six months of intensive sessions and many hearings, a joint committee of the Senate and the House of Representatives approved the final version of OLBARMM, initially known as the Bangsamoro Basic Law and commonly known as the Bangsamoro Organic Law, which the president ratified days later. This committee had to standardise the versions of law presented by the Bangsamoro Transition Commission (a body made up of 21 members, led by the MILF and in charge of composing the first draft of the law), the Senate and the House of Representatives. Although the MILF publicly stated that the law that was finally passed included more than 80% of the provisions of the 2014 peace agreement, it had been highly critical of the drafts of law written by the Senate and the House of Representatives in previous years, claiming that they did not respect it either to the letter or in spirit. In fact, on one occasion the MILF had declared that the enactment of one of these two versions of the law would have led to the resumption of the armed conflict in Mindanao. Thus, some analysts have highlighted the pragmatic vision of the MILF, which has yielded in various ways to ensure that the core provisions of the peace agreement were respected, and the political will of President Duterte, who some said had to deal with massive resistance from large parts of both chambers. Notably, the law was passed three years behind schedule, during which there were episodes that generated great opposition to implementing the peace agreement, such as the so-called Mamasapano clash in January 2015, when some members of the MILF were involved in some way in the murder of over 40 policemen, and the siege of the city of Marawi between May and October 2017 by the Maute Group and other armed organisations that have pledged allegiance to ISIS, which killed more than 1,100 people and forcibly displaced 600,000.

Despite the significant delays and obstacles in passing the law and the reluctance it still elicits in Congress, the judiciary and certain parts of the MILF, the truth is that the final approved version enjoys the support of both sides, the international community, much of organised civil society in Mindanao (the League of Bangsamoro Organisations, the National Ulama Council of the Philippines) and

even the governor of the current Autonomous Region in Muslim Mindanao (ARMM). This last point is especially important because the most important aspect of the 2014 peace agreement is the replacement of the current ARMM (which was established in 1989 and considered a failed experiment by both the Philippine government and the MILF) by the Bangsamoro Autonomous Region in Muslim Mindanao (BARMM), a new political entity that should broaden and strengthen its powers, ensure access to adequate financing and expand the territorial base of the region. If the law is ratified in the plebiscite that will be held in January and February 2019, the next step will be the establishment of the Bangsamoro Transition Authority, which will be in charge of governing the new region until elections are held in the BARMM in May 2022, at the same time as the upcoming national elections. The Bangsamoro Transition Authority will be made up of 80 members (the president has until late March to appoint them), although the governor and vice governor of the ARMM and 23 other members of its Legislative Regional Assembly will also form part of that transitional body until late June 2019 so they can complete the term for which they were elected. The law establishes that the MILF will lead this body and opens the possibility that the MNLF may also participate in it. It should be remembered that the MNLF has splintered into several factions. Although the faction led by the group's founder, Nur Misuari, opposes the peace agreement between the Philippine government and the MILF, for fear that it would undermine the peace agreement signed by Manila and the MNLF in 1996, most of the MNLF supports the peace process between the government and the MILF and agreed to form part of the Bangsamoro Transition Commission that wrote the first draft of the Bangsamoro Organic Law. In fact, shortly after his election as president of the country in 2016, Duterte expanded the membership of the Bangsamoro Transition Commission precisely to accommodate the incorporation of the MNLF and to facilitate the harmonisation and convergence of negotiations with both groups.

Despite the hope and optimism provoked by the enactment of the OLBARMM, enormous challenges loom in the short and medium term. In the short term are the possibility of appeals to unconstitutionality before the Supreme Court regarding the text approved by Congress and the difficulties linked to ratifying the law through a plebiscite in January and February 2019. Regarding the first point, some critics of the organic law have already lodged appeals to unconstitutionality or have announced their intention to do so. The governor of Sulu, one of the provinces encompassed by the ARMM, Abdusakur Tan III, filed an appeal on the grounds that Congress does not have the authority to abolish the ARMM, and that doing so would require an amendment to the current Constitution. Similarly, other organisations have expressed doubts about the constitutionality of several precepts of the OLBARMM if there is no constitutional amendment sustaining them beforehand. Even though both chambers of Congress expressed their conviction of

the complete constitutionality of all the articles of the OLBARMM and the Supreme Court has already rejected two appeals to unconstitutionality lodged against the two peace agreements on which the OLBARMM is based in 2016 (the Framework Agreement on the Bangsamoro, passed in 2012, and the Comprehensive Agreement on Bangsamoro, approved in 2014), some fear the effects that modifying or eliminating some content of the OLBARMM may have on the peace process, recalling how the declaration of unconstitutionality of the Memorandum of Agreement on Ancestral Domain of the Moro people shortly before it was signed in August 2008 caused the worst spiral of violence in Mindanao in recent years and shut down the peace negotiations for years.

Furthermore, a plebiscite will be held in early 2019 to ratify the OLBARMM in areas that are already part of the ARMM (and that will automatically become part of the BARMM) and that would eventually be incorporated into the new region-specifically, the cities of Isabela (in Basilan province, which is already part of the ARMM) and Cotabato (in Maguindanao province, which is also part of the ARMM), six cities in the province of Lanao del Norte and 39 municipalities (barangays) belonging to six cities in the province of North Cotabato. In this sense, the government's deficient public information campaign on the contents of the law has come under fire and there is concern about the impact that clientelism in some regions of Mindanao may have on the outcome of the plebiscite. There is also uncertainty about whether the thousands of people still remaining in displacement or evacuation camps as a result of the months-long fighting that took place in Marawi in 2017 will be able to vote, and there is special concern about voting patterns in areas under the influence of the MNLF or other armed groups (such as the BIFF, the Maute Group and Abu Sayyaf) that have expressed their opposition to the peace process with the MILF and have even announced their willingness to step up their attacks.

If the OLBARMM is finally ratified, the main challenges in the medium term, during the transition period until 2022, include fully implementing the peace agreement, demobilising the MILF and turning it into a political party, lowering the still-high levels of violence in the region

and empowering the Bangsamoro Transition Authority to promote public policies that result in better governance and development among the provinces that will make up the BARMM, which are among the poorest in the country. Regarding the MILF's transformation into a strictly political actor, in 2014 it notably created and registered the United Bangsamoro and Justice Party (UBJP) with the intention of becoming the main political force of the BARMM. Days after the OLBARMM was approved, MILF leader Ebrahim Murad guaranteed the complete demobilisation of the

group. According to the peace agreement, 30% of the MILF fighters will begin to disarm and demobilise following enactment of the Bangsamoro Organic Law, another 35% after the plebiscite is held and the Bangsamoro Transitional Authority is appointed and the remaining 35% after a new government is elected in the autonomous region. Murad also claimed that six of the largest MILF camps in Mindanao were already in the process of turning into what he calls "productive civilian communities" to help reintegrate the MILF ex-combatants into civilian life. According to most media outlets, the MILF has approximately 12,000 combatants, but the group's main leaders say it has around 40,000.

Beyond the challenges that can be seen in the short and medium term and the obstacles and massive delays slowing down the peace process, especially the establishment of

a new elected government in the BARMM six years behind schedule, according to the 2014 agreement, the approval of the OLBARMM provides a unique opportunity to resolve or overcome one of the most complex armed conflicts of the 20th century. The 2014 peace agreement and its legislative materialisation in the OLBARMM are part of a long historical chain of efforts to try to design an institutional arrangement that can solve the historical grievances of the Moro people and accommodate the demands made by some Moro armed organisations in the Philippines. The last phase of this historical process, which goes back to the Tripoli Agreement of 1976, signed by the government of Ferdinand Marcos and the MNLF, began in 1997 with the establishment of peace talks between the Manila and the MILF and should culminate, 22 years later, with the plebiscite sanctioning the creation of the BARMM, exactly 30 years after the plebiscite that led to the creation of the ARMM.

The approval of what is known as the Bangsamoro Organic Law opens the door to the replacement of the current Autonomous Region in Muslim Mindanao with another entity with greater powers and territory and the full implementation of the peace agreement, including the demobilisation of tens of thousands of MILF combatants

4.3. Peace process in Transdniestria: possible rapprochement

Transdniestria, a strip of land on the left bank of the Dniester River with 500,000 inhabitants that formally belongs to Moldova, has been the scene of a peace process between the authorities of Moldova and Transdniestria regarding its legal status since the 1990s. Amidst the unravelling of the USSR and fears in Transdniestria about the possible unification of Moldova and Romania and the consequences that could have for the region, which has a diverse population and a Russian-speaking majority, Transdniestrian and Moldovan forces engaged in a brief armed conflict in 1992 that caused several hundred fatalities and ended with a ceasefire agreement and the start of negotiations. The main issues in dispute include the status of the region: the defence of its territorial integrity with Moldova's acceptance for a special status and Transdniestria's demand for models with sweeping powers, such as federalism and full independence. Other sticky points of dispute in the negotiations include cultural and socio-economic dimensions and the Russian military presence in Transdniestria. Over the decades, the process has been affected by antagonistic obstacles and positions, as well as periods of deadlock. Since 2016, the negotiations have undergone a revival, with significant progress made between 2017 and 2018, providing an opportunity to move towards achieving an agreement in the years to come. The factors contributing to this progress include the pragmatic and practical approach of the current phase of the negotiations, the promotion of mediation efforts and Russia's support for the process, as Moscow has influence over the leaders of Transdniestria. However, there are also obstacles, such as differences over the current phase of confidence-building measures, uncertainty about future electoral and geostrategic dynamics and risks of disagreements over the region's status.

The negotiating process between Moldova and Transdniestria has undergone significant progress, including agreements on confidence-building measures, that provide a significant opportunity to resolve the conflict

One factor favouring progress is the gradual and pragmatic approach to the negotiations in their current phase since they were resumed in 2016, reversing their suspension since 2014. In 2016, during German OSCE chairperson-in-office, Moldova and Transdniestria signed the Berlin Protocol, which included detailed steps for moving towards resolving specific issues. Thus, the process adopted what became known as the Berlin approach, based on specific and achievable objectives and a defined timetable. The negotiations focused on confidence-building measures, leaving substantial matters such as the region's legal status for later. This approach continued in 2017 and 2018, focusing on eight preferred areas, known as the "package of eight". It is an approach that has been paying off.

In these years since the process resumed, agreements have been reached in several areas, including the

environment, the reopening of the Gura Bicului-Bychok bridge, the recognition of diplomas issued by Shevchenko Transdniestria State University, guarantees for the operation of schools managed by the Moldovan government that use the Latin alphabet, authorisation for Moldovan farmers to access land in the Dubasari region and the registration of Transdniestrian vehicle license plates so they can circulate internationally. These measures have practical implications for the population of Moldova and Transdniestria. Agreed between 2016 and 2018, they have begun to be implemented in 2018, which represents a quantitative and qualitative leap in the peace process and highlights the political desire to make tangible progress in the negotiations. The pragmatic orientation of the leaders of Transdniestria has injected new life into the process, according to some analysts.

Another important factor in the dialogue's progress is Russia's support for resolution. As in other unresolved conflicts in the ex-Soviet sphere, Russia's role is ambiguous, shifting between a party in conflict and a mediating party. Thus, it supports Transdniestria and maintains troops in the region, while simultaneously acting as a third-party guarantor in the 5 + 2 format of the peace process, in which the OSCE acts as mediator, Ukraine as a co-guarantor with Russia and the EU and the US as observers. However, in contrast to its position in South Ossetia and Abkhazia, whose independence it has formally recognised, and in Ukraine, where it is said to have an interest in perpetuating the country's fragility, including by dragging out the conflict in the Donbas, Russia has been in support of a special-status solution for Transdniestria within Moldova and has continued to facilitate tangible agreements. This, together with the new mediating boost given by the OSCE in recent years, has contributed to further progress in the process.

There are several stumbling blocks, however, including differences between both sides on how and to what extent the agreements reached on the package of confidence-building measures are being implemented. Some analysts also question the direction that the implementation is taking and assert that the Transdniestrian authorities could be instrumentalising the agreements reached to move towards their de facto secession. Thus, for example, analysts warn of Transdniestria's deployment of border and customs posts on the Gura Bicului-Bychok bridge, a piece of infrastructure that was supposed to be guarded by the tri-lateral forces of the Joint Control Commission (Moldova, Transdniestria and Russia).³ Also pending is an agreement of other confidence-

2. De Waal, Thomas, *Moldova's Conflict: Unfreezing, In a Good Way?*, Carnegie Europe, 6th March 2018.

3. Socor, Vladimir, "De-Sovereignization: Testing a Conflict-Resolution Model at Moldova's Expense in Transnistria", in *Eurasia Daily Monitor*, vol. 15, no.135.

building measures and their implementation. This reveals problems in the full achievement of the Berlin approach and points to future difficulties. Yet the influence of the parliamentary elections in Moldova and the geostrategic dynamics in the peace process also remain to be seen, in a context in which the Moldovan president's pro-Russian Socialist Party is trying to gain more traction in the country before a weakened pro-EU coalition government rocked by corruption cases. Likewise, there are still risks that future negotiations about the substantive issue of status may lead to new disagreements, given the history of the conflict.

The resumption of the negotiating process between Moldova and Transdniestria and the progress made in agreements on confidence-building measures between 2017 and 2018 reveal an opportunity to move forward in resolving the conflict in the years to come, supported by factors such as political desire and a practical and pragmatic approach. For all these reasons, and in order to cope with the obstacles, local and international actors involved in mediation and in support of peacebuilding should redouble their efforts to consolidate the progress made thus far.

4.4. Women mediator networks

Since 2000, when the UN Security Council adopted Resolution 1325 on Women, Peace and Security (WPS), giving rise to the agenda of the same name, female participation in peace processes has achieved a certain international visibility. In recent decades, women's organisations have demanded to participate in all peacebuilding efforts, as established by Resolution 1325. However, these demands have not effectively resulted in international peace and security policies, as shown by the figures provided by the Council on Foreign Relations. According to this centre, women accounted for 2% of the mediators, 5% of the witnesses and signers of peace agreements and 8% of the negotiators in the peace processes that took place between 1990 and 2017. However, despite these alarming figures and the fact that the United Nations recognises that women's low participation in peace processes is one of the main obstacles to implementing the commitments established by the WPS agenda, the international standards on what peace processes with a gender perspective should look like have undergone considerable development in recent years. According to these standards, those involved in mediation efforts should always include people with technical knowledge specialised in gender issues to advise negotiators and mediation teams; they should consult periodically with women's organisations from the beginning and throughout the entire process; the agenda and agreements must explicitly address the needs and priorities of women; and there must be significant female representation in the negotiations and in the institutions responsible for implementing the agreements eventually reached.

Amidst this development of the women, peace and security agenda and alongside the lack of progress in its implementation, multiple women mediator networks have emerged since 2015, bringing together women involved in mediating and facilitating peace processes from different spheres. The first of these networks was the Nordic Women Mediators Network. Describing itself as a collaborative forum, is composed of women from the five Nordic countries (Norway, Sweden, Finland, Denmark and Iceland) with experience and knowledge in areas such as peace negotiations, ceasefires, constitutional amendments, human rights and others. A second network was created in 2017: the Network of African Women in

Conflict Prevention and Mediation (FemWise-Africa). Sponsored by the African Union, this network brings together women mediators from Africa, joining other initiatives promoted by the African regional organisation, such as the appointment of its special envoy on women, peace and security. The Mediterranean Women Mediators Network was also created in 2017. Promoted by the government of Italy, it groups women from countries throughout the Mediterranean basin. The most recent network, Women Mediators across the Commonwealth, was officially established in 2018 with the support of the government of the United Kingdom to bring together women mediators from the Commonwealth of Nations. It should also be noted that all four regional networks have been developed in parallel with other initiatives (some of them local, like the Women Network for Peace and Dialogue in Burundi and the Network of Women Mediators of South Caucasus) and have also joined forces in collaborative on initiatives that transcend each network's internal efforts (such as jointly asking the UN Secretary-General for greater UN commitment to the representation and participation of women in peace negotiations).

These are innovative experiences aimed at promoting the significant participation of women in peace processes, overcoming the obstacles that women have traditionally faced in order to access politically important positions, such as mediators in peace processes. Alongside research indicating that inclusiveness is one of the factors of success in peace processes, these networks of women mediators promote collaborative formulas for mutual learning and support, as opposed to the elitist and exclusionary models that have prevailed in traditional peace diplomacy. These networks are also platforms where women can meet from different spheres, combining the participation of diplomats, government officials, academics and civil society activists and strengthening collaboration between important players in any peace process. Women's networks promote a broad conception of mediation and facilitation in peace processes above and beyond the tasks carried out in traditional Track One diplomacy. Women mediator networks provide a chance to make the WPS agenda effective, boosting women's effective participation in peace processes and promoting inclusiveness and innovation as a formula for strengthening peace negotiations at the same time.

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4. Council on Foreign Relations, *Women's Roles in Major Peace Processes, 1990–2017*, <https://www.cfr.org/interactive/womens-participation-in-peace-processes>
 5. Rhadika Coomaraswamy, *Preventing conflict, transforming justice, securing peace: a global study on the implementation of United Nations Security Council Resolution 1325*, UN Women, 2015.

4.5. The recognition and inclusion of young people as agents of peace

Discourses and narratives about young people and conflicts are often loaded with myths and stereotypes that associate young people with violence or that portray them notably as victims, as is the case with young women. In many contexts, young people feel excluded and frustrated by the feeling that they are viewed as a problem to be solved, rather than as possible allies for driving change. However, in recent years the international community and studies on peace and conflict have paid greater attention to the role of young people as peacebuilders and as actors in the sustainable transformation of violent conflicts. The approval of United Nations Security Council Resolution 2250 in December 2015, which seeks to promote greater recognition and involvement of youth in preventing and resolving conflicts, has been key to giving impetus to this approach. As part of this resolution, the first global study on implementation of the youth, peace and security agenda was made public in 2018, offering a sweeping view of young people's contributions in this sphere and outlining a series of recommendations for boosting their inclusion in peace initiatives.¹ Progress made here may give young people more room to contribute to peace in the future.

Resolution 2250 was based on other previous initiatives, such as the Guiding Principles on Young People's Participation in Peacebuilding and the Amman Declaration on Youth, Peace and Security. It is considered a turning point by introducing a new narrative on youth and conflicts, ensuring visibility for peace initiatives promoted by young people, boosting the representation and participation of young people at all levels of peace processes, guaranteeing accountability by establishing a yearly discussion on their implementation and, above all and for the first time, providing a comprehensive framework for the needs and opportunities for a specific demographic group: young people. The independent progress study on youth, peace and security released in 2018 addresses some of the complexities of working with this cohort, taking into account that there is no universal and consensual definition of "youth" (Resolution 2250 defines them as people between 18 and 29 years of age) and that they should not be reduced to simplifications or romantic visions. Unlike other categories of identity, youth constitutes a transitional period in the life of all people and is not a homogeneous group. Young people are characterised by their plurality, with diverse types of interaction with aspects such as gender, religion, ethnicity, social class, political affiliations, etc.

The global study (the result of various specialised reports, a participatory process and consultation with more than 4,200 young people), analyses and questions several stereotypes linking young people with violence. On the

one hand, it notes the immense impact that conflicts have on young people. In 2016, a total of 408 million people between the ages of 15 and 29 lived in contexts affected by armed conflicts or organised violence. Estimates for 2015 indicated that more than 90% of all direct deaths from armed conflicts were young men. The report calls into question some recent theories that have attempted to establish a causal relationship between the percentage of young people in a society and the likelihood of social upheaval and violent conflict, as age does not seem to be the only factor explaining participation in acts of violence. The global study also questions representations that associate youth with violent extremism and notes that narratives framing the young displaced and migrant population as a potential threat do not take into account that many of them have preferred to flee than to fight or be recruited by armed actors. Although a majority of the members of extremist groups are identified as young people, the report also stresses that those who join them account for a very low proportion of the young population in general.

The global study and other recent research also illustrate the range of youth initiatives at different stages of the peace and conflict cycle and in the face of diverse forms of violence. Examples include initiatives led by young people to prevent the escalation of violence in different contexts (through inter-community dialogue in Kenya, peace education in Colombia and Myanmar and others) and actions carried out during open violent conflicts (by facilitating communication between the parties to the conflict in Kyrgyzstan, supporting the disengagement and reintegration of members of the al-Shabaab armed group in Somalia, conducting humanitarian aid activities amidst the withdrawal of international organisations in Yemen and documenting human rights violations in Burundi). In post-war contexts, young people have also been involved in truth and reconciliation processes, like in Liberia or Sierra Leone, and remain active in nuclear disarmament campaigns, such as in Japan. The study also addresses initiatives promoted by and for young people to make them more resilient in the face of extremist violence and prevent their recruitment by armed groups in countries such as Pakistan and Yemen, as well as actions against sexual and gender-based violence, including abuse against the LGBTI population in India and Jamaica.

One of the pending challenges identified is related to young people's involvement in formal peace processes, as it remains very limited. Young people from different contexts feel excluded from political processes and complain about both corruption and co-optation by political elites. The global study also confirms the

Recognising that young people must be included in peace processes is not only important for the dividends for peace and because their exclusion is counterproductive, but above all because it is an issue of rights

6. United Nations, *The missing peace: independent progress study on youth, peace and security*, A/72/761-S/2018/86, 2 March 2018.

paradox (applicable to other cohorts) that young people who actively participate as armed actors tend to have better chances of reaching the negotiating table than those who have eschewed violence or have worked as peacebuilders. This stresses the advantages of young people's meaningful participation in peace processes, as the frustration caused by exclusion can lead to recurrent violence. Moreover, from a more positive perspective, the lasting validity and implementation of a peace agreement and the achievements of a peace process depend in part on their acceptance by young generations. It should be noted, however, that it is not only important to recognise that young people must be included in peace processes for the possible dividends for peace and because their exclusion is counterproductive for sustainably transforming conflicts, but above all because it is an issue of rights: specifically, the right of young people to have a voice and to participate fully in these spheres.

The analysis of some experiences of young people's participation in official negotiations sheds some light on formulas for inclusion. In some cases, like in the negotiations between the Philippine government and the MILF between 1997 and 2016, their involvement was mainly based on informal relationships, including family relations, which favoured their contribution in technical and logistical terms. In South Sudan, facilitation by the UNHCR allowed a group of young refugees to serve as observers of the High Level Revitalisation Forum in the country. In Syria, young people have promoted the creation of an advisory board for direct dialogue with the UN special envoy like the one created for Syrian women. Meanwhile, Yemen is paradigmatic in showing the impact of shares of young people's involvement after the National Dialogue Conference (2011), in which 20% of the participants were young people. Despite criticism of the process, young Yemenis value its importance in changing mindsets about the participation of young people and women and their possibility of opining on complex issues and of questioning the hierarchical structures of the country. It should be noted, however, that some studies in this field have advised against putting all expectations on young people's participation in formal spheres, which are often elitist and gerontocratic, and recognising the importance of young people's contributions in informal spheres that are essential for achieving negotiations and crucial for the success of formal processes and for transforming conflicts in sustainable ways.⁷ This calls for a broad concept of

inclusion, which does not necessarily entail inviting young people to established spheres or processes already under way, but rather highlighting those that they themselves have created to advocate peace.

The international women, peace and security agenda (WPS), which was developed following the adoption of UN Security Council Resolution 1325 (2000), is a benchmark for the youth, peace and security agenda. Regarding to peace processes, the lessons of the WPS agenda have pointed out the need to pay attention not only to the quantity but also to the quality of participation and women's capacity for real influence. The gender perspective in the youth, peace and security agenda has also emphasised the need to examine how gender identities fuel violent conflicts and to work particularly with masculine identities, taking into account that youth is a key stage in the construction of identity. The experience of the 1325 agenda can also be useful for identifying challenges in implementation, considering the lack of political desire for many of the commitments made to truly take shape and, in some instances, tokenistic approaches indicating superficial or merely symbolic inclusiveness.

Looking ahead, the youth, peace and security agenda has recommended three complementary action strategies. The first is to invest in the abilities, agency and leadership of young people, recognising their diversity and own forms of organisation. The second is to address the structural barriers that hinder young people's participation in the sphere of peace and security. The third is to support associations and collaborative actions that recognise young people as equal allies in peacebuilding. These recommendations are outlined in a set of specific proposals that should be adopted by governments, donors and international organisations, including the ambition to invest 1.8 billion dollars (1 dollar per young person) before 2025, coinciding with the tenth anniversary of Resolution 2250; use quotas for young people, with a gender perspective, for their direct participation in all stages of peace processes and political transitions; and conduct more research and identify good practices in the field of youth, peace and security. In the years to come, periodic review of the implementation of the youth, peace and security agenda will offer an opportunity to assess progress in this area, directly related to the Sustainable Development Goals of the 2030 Agenda, which highlights the interdependence between peace, justice and inclusive institutions.

7. Mir Mubashir and Irena Grizelj, *The Youth Space of Dialogue and Mediation: An Exploration*. Berlin: Berghof Foundation, 2018.