

5. Peace negotiations in Europe

- In 2018, 14% of the peace processes in the world (7 of the 49) were in Europe.
- Some progress was made in 2018, such as the agreements on confidence-building measures in Moldova, the establishment of a direct line of communication between Armenia and Azerbaijan and the unilateral and definitive dissolution of the Basque group ETA.
- The peace process in Georgia ran into new difficulties, with the authorities of Abkhazia and South Ossetia withdrawing from the incident prevention mechanisms, although the mechanism on South Ossetia resumed in December.
- Negotiations in Ukraine continued at a standstill, while relations between Ukraine and Russia deteriorated due to escalating military tension in the Azov Sea.
- The South Caucasus Women Mediators' Network was formally established to promote women's participation in peace processes in the region.
- Georgia and Moldova approved action plans on Resolution 1325. It was Georgia's third plan and Moldova's first, with the latter mostly focused on defence and security.

This chapter studies the main peace processes in Europe during 2018. Firstly, the main characteristics and general trends on the dialogue processes in the region are presented, followed by the analysis on the evolution of each specific context during the year, including in relation to the gender, peace and security agenda. At the start of the chapter there is a map identifying the countries in Europe that were the scenario of peace processes during 2018.

Table 5.1. Summary of peace processes and negotiations in Europe in 2018

Peace processes and negotiations	Negotiating actors	Third parties
Armenia – Azerbaijan (Nagorno-Karabakh)	Armenia, Azerbaijan	OSCE Minsk Group (co-chaired by Russia, France and USA, the remaining permanent members are Belarus, Germany, Italy, Sweden, Finland and Turkey)
Cyprus	Republic of Cyprus, self-proclaimed Turkish Republic of Northern Cyprus	UN, EU; Turkey, Greece and the United Kingdom (guarantee countries)
Georgia (Abkhazia, South Ossetia)	Georgia, representatives of Abkhazia and South Ossetia, Russia ¹	OSCE, EU and UN; USA, Russia ²
Moldova (Transnistria)	Moldova, the self-proclaimed Republic of Transnistria	OSCE, Ukraine, Russia, USA and EU
Serbia – Kosovo	Serbia, Kosovo	EU, UN
Spain (Basque Country)	ETA, political and social actors in the Basque Country	International Contact Group (ICG), Social Forum and the Permanent Social Forum, Centre for Humanitarian Dialogue
Ukraine (east)	Ukraine; representatives of the self-proclaimed popular republics of Donetsk and Luhansk; Russia ³	OSCE (in the Trilateral Contact Group, where Ukraine and Russia also participate); Germany and France (in the Normandy Group, where Ukraine and Russia also participate ⁵)

5.1. Negotiations in 2018: regional trends

Seven peace processes were identified in **Europe** in 2018, the same number as in 2017. These account for 14% of the 49 total peace processes worldwide in 2018. Only one of these seven peace processes referred to an active armed

conflict: the war in Ukraine, which began in 2014. The other active armed conflict in Europe, which has pitted the Turkish government against the Kurdish armed group PKK since 1984, continued without negotiations since the

1. Russia's status in the peace process in Georgia is subject to different interpretations. Georgia considers it an actor in the conflict and a negotiating party, while Russia considers itself a third party.
2. Ibid.
3. Russia's status in the peace process in Ukraine is subject to different interpretations. Ukraine considers it an actor in the conflict and a negotiating party, while Russia considers itself a third party.
4. Ibid.
5. Ibid.

last peace talks ended unsuccessfully in 2015, although several political and social actors in Turkey continued to carry out peace initiatives at various levels. The rest of the active processes address past armed conflicts or socio-political crises and, with the exception of Spain (Basque Country), all still occurred amidst socio-political crises, with different levels of intensity (high-intensity socio-political crisis between Armenia and Azerbaijan around Nagorno-Karabakh and low-intensity crisis in Georgia in relation to Abkhazia and South Ossetia, in Moldova and in Serbia-Kosovo).⁶ **Geographically, 57% of the peace processes (four cases) took place in ex-Soviet countries.** Three of these four cases took place in the South Caucasus region, while the fourth dealt with Eastern Europe (Ukraine). The atypical multilateral dialogue process on the Basque issue was the only active process in Western Europe.

The governments of the states in which the conflicts occurred were negotiating parties in all the peace processes in Europe, except for Spain (Basque Country). The 2018 elections in Cyprus (the presidential election in the Republic of Cyprus and the legislative elections in the self-proclaimed Turkish Republic of Northern Cyprus), Azerbaijan (presidential), Armenia (legislative) and Georgia (presidential) did not entail drastic changes in the peace processes in which these countries participated. In the legislative elections in the Turkish part of Cyprus, the Turkish Republican Party, which

All negotiating processes in Europe were supported by external third parties

finished second in the elections and supports unification of the island, formed a government with three other parties. In Armenia, after the so-called Velvet Revolution, whose massive protests forced the government to resign and led to new elections, the new prime minister upheld the Armenian governments' historical position in the dispute, while calling for the representatives of Nagorno-Karabakh to join the peace process as negotiators. However, the year ended with the same format of direct negotiations between Armenia and Azerbaijan intact, mediated by the OSCE, and a secondary role for the representatives of Nagorno-Karabakh, who consult with the mediators.

Moreover, Europe continued to stand out for having third parties in the negotiations taking place there. **All the peace processes involved external parties performing mediation and facilitation tasks. There were international third parties in all the processes, and in the Basque Country there was a combination of local and international facilitators.** Some mediators and facilitators carried out their work through specific structures, such as the OSCE Minsk Group (co-chaired by Russia, France and the US) in the negotiations between Armenia and Azerbaijan regarding Nagorno-Karabakh, and the International Contact Group (ICG) and Social Forum in the Basque Country. Besides, most of the mediators and facilitators were intergovernmental organisations. The OSCE was a mediator or co-mediator in four of the seven peace processes in Europe:

Map 5.1. Peace negotiations in Europe 2018



■ Countries with peace processes and negotiations in Europe in 2018

6. For further information about the development of these tensions, see Escola de Cultura de Pau, *Alert 2019! Report on Conflicts, Human Rights and Peacebuilding*. Icaria, 2019.

Armenia-Azerbaijan (Nagorno-Karabakh), Georgia (Abkhazia, South Ossetia), Moldova (Transdniestria) and Ukraine (east). The EU was the main facilitator of the peace process between Serbia and Kosovo, a co-mediator in Georgia, an observer in Moldova and an “interested party” in the Cyprus peace process. The UN was the mediator of the long-running process in Cyprus and a co-mediator of the Georgian peace process. Through various functions, it also supported the dialogue between Serbia and Kosovo, facilitated by the EU. Some states maintained a prominent role as third parties, such as France and Germany in the so-called Normandy format of the peace process in Ukraine, in which Ukraine and Russia also participate.

Europe was the scene of a historic breakthrough in 2018: the unilateral, definitive and effective dissolution of ETA

There were hardly any changes in relation to third parties in 2018, although in the Basque Country, where ETA announced its dissolution in May, the ICG ended its role after considering that much of its mandate had been completed. In Cyprus, faced with the failure of the peace process in 2017, the UN Secretary-General sent a special envoy, Jane Holl Lute, to explore the prospects for restarting the process. The UN is the main mediator on the island. In addition, Ayse Cihan Sultanoglu was appointed to be the UN representative to the Geneva International Discussions (GID) in 2018. This is the first time that a woman has held the position of co-chief mediator in the peace process in Georgia.

The formal negotiating processes in Europe continued to be characterised by largely non-inclusive formats, with only the parties to the conflict and the mediators involved in the negotiating tables. However, in some cases there were mechanisms of dialogue and consultation with civil society actors, although these were mostly non-institutionalised, with the exception of Georgia. Regular consultations took place in 2018 between Georgian government representatives and the local population, including women. However, despite the lack of institutional mechanisms, various kinds of civil society actors promoted and participated in peacebuilding initiatives in all processes, although their capacity to influence formal negotiations was limited.

The issues on the **negotiating agendas** were diverse and the details on the various elements and status of discussions of each round were not always public. The substantive issues of many of the conflicts and processes, mostly the **status of the various territories in dispute**, remained missing or deadlocked. In Ukraine, for example, there was no progress regarding the status of Donetsk and Luhansk or the holding of elections under international supervision and Ukrainian legislation, which are provided for in the Minsk agreements. To implement them, Ukraine demands compliance with the security clauses of the agreements, including the withdrawal of weapons and foreign forces and restored control of the border with Russia. Regarding status, the issue of establishing an association of Serb-majority municipalities in Kosovo (a **decentralisation mechanism** included in the 2013 agreements) was on the agenda

of the peace process between Serbia and Kosovo, but it remained a source of disagreement and was not settled in 2018. Serbia and Kosovo also addressed the issue of a final agreement. Some statements by politicians and media outlets pointed out that negotiations on a final agreement

could include the possibility of partition (both Serbian-majority areas of Kosovo and Albanian-majority parts of Serbia). In the Cyprus process, where rounds of meetings were held to explore the basis for resuming negotiations in 2018, the UN raised the need for new ideas for a new phase in the future. Media reports indicated that in the rounds of meetings the parties addressed issues such as alternative formats to a bi-zonal and bi-communal federation status, which has been proposed as a solution to the conflict for decades.

Other items on the agendas of the peace processes in Europe included issues related to **security**, including **incident prevention** in the conflict between Armenia and Azerbaijan over Nagorno-Karabakh. The possibility of a UN peacekeeping mission in Ukraine continued to be addressed in 2018, though no agreement was achieved. The working group on security in the Geneva International Discussions (GID) of the Georgian peace process continued to address the issue of **the non-use of force**, though the parties could not come to an agreement. In the peace process in the Basque Country, the **dissolution of ETA** in May met the demands made by local political and social players and international facilitators for clarity and definitive nature of the dissolution. The processes also addressed some **human rights and transitional justice** issues, such as **victims and memory** as part of the Social Forum in the Basque Country, with some problems still unsolved. The **situation of the displaced population and its right to return**, among other human rights and humanitarian issues, continued to divide the parties to the conflict in Georgia and led to Abkhazia and South Ossetia to abandon the working group on humanitarian issues. Another item on the agenda in Moldova (Transdniestria) was the discussion of **confidence-building measures**, which led to various agreements.

Regarding the **development** of the processes, important progress was made in Moldova (Transdniestria) and Spain (Basque Country), although with difficulties and pending challenges in both cases, while the rest of the processes remained at an impasse and/or with serious problems. In Moldova, the reboost to the process since 2016 resulted in new agreements on confidence-building measures and progress in their implementation in 2018, although not in

all the areas planned and with wide-ranging interpretations of the future course of the process and of the opportunities to move forward on the most substantive issue: political status. **There was a new milestone in the Basque Country: the unilateral, definitive and effective dissolution of ETA, after the progress made in previous years towards the end of armed activity (2011) and disarmament (2017) as part of a peacebuilding process without direct participation of**

The peace processes in Europe continued to be characterised mostly by the lack of gender architectures

the state, which is an important innovation in the global scope of peace processes. Even so, the question of victims and memory remained pending challenges, as did the situation of the prisoners. In contrast, the peace processes in Georgia (Abkhazia, South Ossetia), Serbia-Kosovo and Ukraine (east) faced severe difficulties. Among them, the authorities of Abkhazia and South Ossetia decided to abandon the incident prevention response mechanism (IPRM), though South Ossetia agreed to rejoin it at the end of the year. Disagreements between Serbia and Kosovo became glaring throughout the year, despite talk of a possible final agreement. In Ukraine, the peace process remained deadlocked, with serious difficulties in moving forward on substantive issues and with new developments that added uncertainty about its future direction. These developments included the Law of Reintegration, which authorises the Ukrainian president to impose martial law and to regain disputed areas by military means, as well as a general atmosphere of serious military tension between Ukraine and Russia in the Azov Sea. In relation to Armenia-Azerbaijan (Nagorno-Karabakh), despite the problems and general deadlock, the parties agreed on a direct communication mechanism to help to prevent incidents at the end of the year.

Regarding the gender perspective, the peace processes in Europe continued to be characterised mostly by the lack of female participation and gender mechanisms or architectures. Only in Cyprus was there a gender mechanism in the negotiating process, the gender equality committee, although it remained blocked for most of the year. None of the peace processes had mechanisms for the participation of women active in civil society at the formal negotiating level and only in Georgia did one of the parties establish indirect mechanisms. Specifically, the Georgian government maintained its practice of holding several consultations per year between Georgian government representatives in the negotiations and representatives of civil society and the population affected by the conflict, including women, with the support of UN Women. The rest of the cases lacked institutionalised mechanisms of direct or indirect participation. **Some of the peace processes included women in prominent roles, such as in Moldova (Transdniestria), where the chief negotiator was Cristina Lesnic,** and in Serbia-Kosovo, where the EU High Representative for Foreign Affairs, Federica Mogherini, played the EU's role as facilitator. However, the inclusion of women in the negotiating or facilitating teams did not necessarily entail the adoption of a gender perspective in designing the process or in the negotiating agenda. It should also be noted that the main intergovernmental organisations acting as third parties in Europe, the OSCE and the EU, provided no data on the gender dimension of third parties.

Women active in civil society carried out peacebuilding initiatives and established mechanisms and raised demands for female participation in the peace processes. Developments in 2018 included the **official establishment of the South Caucasus Women Mediators' Network**, the sharing of experiences between women from Cyprus and Northern Ireland and the participation of women from

Serbia and Kosovo in spaces for dialogue to promote confidence-building, reconciliation and other aspects. Regarding the national action plans for UN Security Council Resolution 1325 on women, peace and security, the Georgian government approved its third action plan, which maintains the mechanisms for consulting with women's organisations and women affected by the conflict. The Moldovan government approved its first action plan on Resolution 1325, focused mainly on security and defence.

5.2. Case study analysis

Eastern Europe

Moldova (Transdniestria)	
Negotiating actors	Moldovan government, self-proclaimed Republic of Transdniestria
Third parties	OSCE (mediator), Ukraine and Russia (guarantor countries), and the US and EU (observers) in the 5+2 format
Relevant agreements	Agreement on the Principles for a Peaceful Settlement of the Armed Conflict in the Dniester Region of the Republic of Moldova (1992), Memorandum on the Bases for Normalization of Relations between the Republic of Moldova and Transdniestria (The Moscow Agreement) (1997)

Summary:

Transdniestria is a 4,000 km² enclave with half a million inhabitants that are mostly Russian-speaking. Legally under Moldovan sovereignty, but with de facto independence, since the 1990s it has been the stage for an unresolved dispute regarding its status. The conflict surfaced during the final stages of the breakup of the USSR, when fears increased in Transdniestria over a possible unification between the independent Moldova and Romania, which have both historical and cultural links. Transdniestria rejected Moldovan sovereignty and declared itself independent. This sparked an escalation in the number of incidents, which eventually became an armed conflict in 1992. A ceasefire agreement that same year brought the war to an end and gave way to a peace process under international mediation. One of the main issues is the status of the territory. Moldova defends its territorial integrity, but is willing to accept a special status for the entity, while Transdniestria has fluctuated between proposals for a confederalist model that would give the area broad powers and demands full independence. Other points of friction in the negotiations include cultural and socio-economic issues and Russian military presence in Transdniestria. Since the beginning of the dispute there have been several proposals, partial agreements, commitments and confidence-building measures in the framework of the peace process, as well as important obstacles and periods of stagnation. Geostategic international disputes also hover over this unresolved conflict, which has deteriorated due to the war in Ukraine.

The peace process made fresh progress in 2018 in various parts of the confidence-building package that has been its focus since its re-launch in 2016, although several areas of the bloc remained pending agreement and implementation. Following the milestone of the signing of the Vienna Protocol in November 2017, in the opening months of 2018 the parties to the conflict moved forward on implementing three of the

five issues agreed upon in that protocol, and which, in turn, form part of the eight major confidence-building measures under discussion in the process: the reopening of the Gura Bicului-Bychok bridge, which connects both banks of the Dniester/Nistru River; Moldova's official certification and subsequent recognition of Transnistrian university diplomas, without Moldova's recognition of Shevchenko State University; and guarantees for the operation of Latin alphabet schools administered by Moldova, but located in Transnistria.⁷ Despite the initial impasse, in April an agreement was also finally reached on another pending issue: the registration of Transnistrian vehicle license plates so that they can travel internationally. In April an agreement was reached on a mechanism allowing it, in September two offices were opened in Transnistria for registering license plates with staff from the Moldovan public administration and Transnistrian institutions and in October vehicles could start circulating with neutral license plates.

In line with the headway made in the early months of the year, the new round of the 5+2 negotiating format held in Rome on 29 and 30 May confirmed that the parties were genuinely committed to making progress in the process, according to the head of the OSCE mission in Moldova and the OSCE mediator in the process, Michael Scanlan. In that round, the parties agreed to the Rome Protocol,⁸ in which they pledged to finalise all aspects of the package of eight measures before the end of 2018. The OSCE Special Representative for the Transnistrian Settlement Process, Franco Frattini, said that 2018 could be a historic year for the peace process.

New achievements were made in the second half of the year. For example, in August the agreement giving Moldovan farmers access to Dubasari farmland began to be implemented. Two pending subjects related to cooperation in criminal cases and telecommunications presented more obstacles. The head of the OSCE mission, Claus Neukirch, stressed in November that the telephone issue was in its end stage. Neukirch pointed to headway made by focusing the approach on small steps. However, he said that the parties were not yet ready to address the final status issue. Some analysts cited the Moldovan government's concerns about the possibility of a telecommunications agreement because of the risks that the Transnistria Sheriff conglomerate (owned by the leader of Transnistria, Vadim Krasnoselsky) will extend its economic power to Moldovan territory.⁹ According to the same analysis, the prospect of legislative elections in Moldova in February 2019 offered little incentive to the Moldovan government to move forward on issues that may reduce votes among the Moldovan electorate.¹⁰ Moldovan President Igor Dodon and the

Moldova and Transnistria made progress on new agreements and on implementing technical confidence-building measures in 2018

leader of Transnistria, Vadim Krasnoselsky, met in December and addressed telecommunications and other subjects. The head of the Moldovan negotiating team, Vice Prime Minister for Reintegration Cristina Lesnic, said in December that Transnistria would introduce issues relating to security and status into the negotiations in 2019, stating that it had the support of some actors of the 5+2 format, which would have been reflected in the Ministerial Council of the OSCE.

Gender, peace and security

The negotiating process continued without mechanisms for women's participation at the formal level. However, some progress was made during the year. **Moldova adopted its first national action plan on women, peace and security in March**, which covers the period from 2018 to 2021. This is the result of dialogue in previous years between institutional and civil society representatives. **However, the action plan has no associated specific budget and is almost entirely focused on security and defence, with only one of the eight objectives referring to women's participation in peacebuilding** and in peacekeeping missions. In August, representatives of various Moldovan ministries and civil society, including Transnistrian civil society, as well as international actors, participated in a conference to design new steps and implementation strategies, designed by the local organisation Gender-Centru, the Global Network of Women Peacebuilders, the State Office for Reintegration, the Foreign Policy Association and the Austrian Development Agency.

Ukraine	
Negotiating actors	Ukraine; representatives of the self-proclaimed popular republics of Donetsk and Luhansk; Russia ¹¹
Third parties	OSCE (in the Trilateral Contact Group, where Ukraine and Russia also participate ¹²); Germany and France (in the Normandy Group, where Ukraine and Russia also participate ¹³)
Relevant agreements	Protocol on the results of consultations of the Trilateral Contact Group (Minsk Agreement) (2014), Memorandum on the Implementation of the Provisions of the Protocol on the Outcome of Consultations of the Trilateral Contact Group on Joint Steps Aimed at the Implementation of the Peace Plan (Minsk Memorandum) (2014), Package of Measures for the Implementation of the Minsk Agreements (Minsk II Agreements) (2015)

7. The remaining five measures that complete the eight-point package are: fixed and mobile telephone communication between Moldova and Transnistria, registration of Transnistrian vehicle licence plates, freedom of movement for the population on both sides of the conflict line, access to farmland in the Dubasari district and termination of criminal cases against public office holders of the parties to the conflict.
8. *Protocol of the official meeting of the permanent conference for political questions in the framework of the negotiating process on the Transnistrian settlement*, 29-30 May 2018.
9. De Waal, Thomas, "Moldova's Conflict: Unfreezing, In a Good Way?", Carnegie Europe, 6th March 2018.
10. Ibid.
11. Russia's status in the peace process in Ukraine is subject to different interpretations. Ukraine considers it an actor in the conflict and a negotiating party, while Russia considers itself a third party.
12. Ibid.
13. Ibid.

Summary:

The armed conflict active in eastern Ukraine since April 2014 pits state forces against pro-Russian separatist militias backed by Russia over the status of those areas and is fuelled by many other contextual factors. It is the subject of international negotiations involving the Trilateral Contact Group (OSCE, Russia and Ukraine) and pro-Russian militias, as well as the diplomatic initiatives of some foreign ministries. Since the Trilateral Contact Group was created in May 2014, various agreements have been attempted, including a peace plan, a brief, non-renewed truce and a pact (Minsk Protocol) including a bilateral ceasefire supervised by the OSCE, the decentralisation of power in areas under militia control; as well as a memorandum that same year for a demilitarised zone, which completed the Minsk Protocol. New escalation of violence led to Minsk II agreement in 2015, but violence continued and disagreements between the sides hindered the implementation of the peace deal. The obstacles to resolving the conflict include its internationalisation, mainly owing to Russian support for the militias and the background of confrontation between Russia and the West projected onto the Ukrainian crisis. The armed conflict was preceded by a serious general crisis in Ukraine (mass anti-government protests, the departure of President Yanukovich and the annexation of Crimea by Russia), when there were also some attempts at negotiation between the government and the opposition.

The peace process remained at a standstill on the substantive issues, while discussions continued, though no agreements were made, on a possible UN peacekeeping mission in eastern Ukraine. All this occurred amidst increased military tension in the Azov Sea and the Kerch Strait, which added uncertainty to the peace process. Regarding the substantive issues, in October the Ukrainian Parliament approved extending the special status law for the Donetsk and Luhansk regions, which it had initially passed in 2014, until December 2019. However, its implementation remained subject to the other parts of the 2015 Minsk agreements (elections in the eastern regions under Ukrainian electoral legislation), as well as the disarmament and withdrawal of Russian forces. In previous discussions about this law in 2018, some politicians questioned whether it was worth renewing, given that it had become less important in light of the new Law of Reintegration, enacted at its first reading in 2017 and definitively in January 2018, then ratified by the president in February. The Law of Reintegration depicts Russia as an aggressor in the conflict and considers it responsible for the physical, financial and moral damage caused to the Ukrainian state and its population; describes the eastern areas as occupied territory; authorises the president to impose martial law and to regain the disputed areas by military means; expands the powers of the Ukrainian Army; and assigns criminal responsibility to people who have been linked to the Donetsk and Luhansk administrations. The Russian government described the law as preparation for a new war. Thus, the new legislative framework added uncertainty to the parties' position on resolving the conflict.

The Law of Reintegration, approved by the Ukrainian Parliament in 2018, authorises the imposition of martial law and recovery of the disputed areas by military means

Several meetings were held during the year in the Normandy format of the peace process (Ukraine, Russia, Germany and France), in addition to a meeting in May without Russia,

but overall the process remained deadlocked. At the June meeting in the Normandy format, Russia insisted on the need to implement the special status law through the Stenmeier formula (parallel implementation of security and political aspects, including elections in the eastern areas, and the establishment of a special status for areas under rebel control). Meanwhile, negotiations continued regarding the possibility of establishing a UN peacekeeping mission once Russia agreed to study that option. These negotiations began in 2017. At the end of the year, however, no agreement had yet been reached.

Ceasefires were achieved at various times of the year through agreements in the Trilateral Contact Group (Ukraine, Russia, OSCE) and with the representatives of Donetsk and Luhansk. Truces were agreed upon and entered into force in early and late March, coinciding with Orthodox Easter; in early July, to facilitate the agricultural harvest; in late August, to reduce violence at the start of the school year; and in late December. However, the ceasefires were repeatedly broken, highlighting the fragility of the security situation and the constant risks for the peace process. According to the OSCE, the armed actors in the conflict zone continually deployed heavy weapons, tanks, mortars, artillery and multiple rocket launch systems in the areas forbidden by the Minsk agreements and deployed forces very close to each other. Also in 2018, the peace process was affected by rising military tension in the Azov Sea and the Kerch Strait. In the second half of the year, there was an increase in mutual accusations of provocation in the Azov Sea and complaints of Russians searching international ships heading for Ukrainian ports. Russia's capture of three Ukrainian vessels and crew in November triggered the tension. Ukraine responded by enforcing martial law and restricting men of Russian nationality from entering the country. The rise in regional tension added uncertainty to the future of the peace process.

Gender, peace and security

The negotiating process in Ukraine continued to be characterised by the lack of participation by women and civil society in its various levels, including the Normandy format and the Trilateral Contact Group. As part of the 37th session of the Human Rights Council and the Universal Periodic Review of Ukraine, the Women's International League for Peace and Freedom (WILPF) issued a statement recalling that Ukraine had committed to support the effective participation of civil society in implementing the women, peace and security agenda. WILPF also denounced the impact of austerity measures on the women, peace and security agenda in 2018, as it did in 2017, and urged a change in the agenda of economic reforms.

Furthermore, women from civil society and government representatives from Ukraine and Moldova travelled to Georgia in May to learn about Georgia's experiences and

lessons related to the women, peace and security agenda and implementation of the national action plans. As part of the visit, they were able to meet with Georgian women active in civil society and others with institutional positions. The initiative was organised by UN Women. Meanwhile, women's organisations and activists continued to carry out peacebuilding initiatives in various spheres, including dialogues between women from different backgrounds and humanitarian assistance. A report by the Georgetown Institute for Women, Peace and Security published in 2018 highlighted the role of women in peacebuilding in Ukraine¹⁴ and the promotion of the national action plan to mobilise women, although it also pointed to its limitations, such as the shortage of funds associated with it. In addition, UN Women and the Ukrainian government reached an agreement in 2018 that raises the status of the UN Women mission to that of a country office, which will further assist cooperation on gender equality issues.

**Armenia and
Azerbaijan agreed
on a mechanism of
direct communication
to prevent incidents
in late 2018**

Russia and the Caucasus

Armenia – Azerbaijan (Nagorno-Karabakh)	
Negotiating actors	Government of Armenia, Government of Azerbaijan
Third parties	OSCE Minsk Group (Co-chaired by Russia, France and USA; other permanent members are Belarus, Germany, Italy, Sweden, Finland and Turkey)
Relevant agreements	Bishkek Protocol (1994), Ceasefire agreement (1994)

Summary:

The armed conflict going from 1992 to 1994 between Azerbaijan and Armenia over the status of Nagorno-Karabakh –an enclave of Armenian majority belonging to Azerbaijan that declared independence in 1992– ended with a cease-fire agreement in 1994, after causing more than 20,000 dead and one million displaced people as well as the military occupation by Armenia of several districts around Nagorno-Karabakh. Since then negotiations have been in place between Armenia and Azerbaijan, with several failed attempts to reach peace plans during the first years and a renewed impulse through the Prague Process, which started in 2004 and since 2005 has focused on negotiating some basic principles to base the discussions on a future agreement (withdrawal of Armenia from the occupied territories around Nagorno-Karabakh, granting provisional status to Nagorno-Karabakh, the right for displaced persons to return, an eventual decision on the final status of the territory through a binding expression of will, international security safeguards). The deadlock of negotiations since 2010 and the fragile cease-fire have increased the alert warning in a context of an arms race a bellicose rhetoric and a regional scenario of geostrategic tensions.

The negotiating process on Nagorno-Karabakh made no headway during 2018, though the parties did agree to

establish a direct communication mechanism to help to prevent incidents at the end of the year. The main challenges faced by the negotiating process during the year were the change of government in Armenia as a result of the massive anti-government protests, the security situation and pending commitments on incident prevention mechanisms and expanding the team of observers of the Office of the Special Representative of the OSCE Chairperson-in-Office. Peaceful mass protests between April and early May against the continuation in power of president Serzh Sargsyan as new prime minister led to Sargsyan's resignation and replacement by one of the main protest leaders, Nikol Pashinyan. A member of the opposition Civil Contract party, Pashinyan became prime minister in May. The early elections in December resulted in victory for the Pashinyan-led My Step alliance with more than 70% of the vote, while Sargsyan's Republican Party failed to get enough votes to enter the House. However, the elections had low turnout (48.6%), in contrast to the high levels of mobilisation during the so-called Velvet Revolution, a name given to the April and May protests. Regarding the Nagorno-Karabakh conflict, the new prime minister publicly upheld Armenia's historic position of defending the self-determination of Nagorno-Karabakh and of refusing to return territories adjacent to Nagorno-Karabakh to Azerbaijan, although progress towards the end of the year fuelled expectations about the possibility of positive developments. Notable is the appointment of new Armenian Foreign Minister Zohrab Mnatsakanian, who analysts consider a reputable negotiator for his role as the main negotiator with the EU despite the failed association agreement.¹⁵ In a new development, Pashinyan supported the Nagorno-Karabakh authorities' direct participation in the negotiation process, aspiring to raise their status in the current format, in which they are consulted but not directly negotiating. However, the year ended without changes in the negotiating format.

There were no serious escalations of violence, but there was another year of continuous ceasefire violations, which caused at least 15 deaths in 2018 and mutual accusations of provocation and drone attacks. The co-mediators of the OSCE Minsk Group called for confidence-building measures to reduce the tension along the contact line at various times of the year and also urged compliance with the ceasefire and the removal of heavy weaponry. The co-mediators also sought to clarify various statements and security incidents in separate and joint meetings with the Armenian and Azerbaijani foreign ministers outside the UN General Assembly. The Armenian and Azerbaijani governments failed to reach agreement on the commitments made in 2016 and 2017 for the expansion of the Office of the Special Representative of the OSCE, a measure designed to strengthen the mechanisms for monitoring the security situation. Meanwhile, regarding

14. Warren, Roslyn; Applebaum, Anna; Fuhrman, Holly and Mawby, Briana, *Women's Peacebuilding Strategies Amidst Conflict Lessons from Myanmar and Ukraine*, Georgetown Institute for Women, Peace and Security, 2018.

15. De Waal, Thomas, *Armenia's Revolution and the Karabakh Conflict*, Carnegie Europe, 22 May 2018.

the previous commitment to achieve an incident prevention mechanism, Armenia and Azerbaijan reached an agreement in late September to create a direct communication channel between both countries' Ministries of Defence during an informal meeting at the summit of the countries of the Commonwealth of Independent States (CIS). The mechanism began operations in October and was followed by a drop in levels of violence, as voiced by the Armenian and Azerbaijani authorities. The co-mediators of the OSCE welcomed this development during a trip in which they held separate meetings with Pashinyan in Yerevan and with Azerbaijani President Ilham Aliyev in Baku and sat down with the de-facto authorities of Nagorno-Karabakh. The foreign ministers of Armenia and Azerbaijan then met in December as part of the OSCE Ministerial Council. Both agreed to move forward on a negotiated settlement to the conflict. The mediating team held several meetings with various leaders throughout the year, including a joint meeting with the foreign ministers of Armenia and Azerbaijan in Brussels in July, the first since Armenia's change of government.

The South Caucasus Women Mediators' Network adopted its Memorandum of Understanding and an action plan to promote the participation of women in peace process in 2018

called "Women for Peace", aimed at promoting a peaceful resolution to the Nagorno-Karabakh conflict. As part of a meeting with women from various parts of Russia in Moscow in July, Hakobyan said that regardless of how the conflict started, the important thing is human lives, including the cost in human lives of young people, so she urged politicians on both sides of the conflict to solve the dispute. With a background in the media, Hakobyan said that young soldiers on both sides of the conflict faced the same experiences of fear and anxiety. The Armenia-Azerbaijan Civil Peace Platform issued a statement in September welcoming Hakobyan's initiative and calling on Armenian and Azerbaijani women to join all peace-friendly initiatives.

Gender, peace and security

The negotiating process between Armenia and Azerbaijan over Nagorno-Karabakh continued in a format without any women or gender experts involved, neither in the negotiating teams nor in direct participation formats or consultations. The negotiating agenda still lacked a gender perspective. Despite their formal exclusion, women from different spheres took steps to defend female participation. **Created in late 2017, the South Caucasus Women Mediators' Network (NWMSC) adopted its Memorandum of Understanding in Turkey in September 2018**, when it was signed by a dozen female peace activists. As a result, the network was formally established and it developed an action plan. Initially launched by the International Centre on Conflicts and Negotiation (ICCN), a member of the Global Partnership for the Prevention of Armed Conflict (GPPAC), the network brings together women from conflict areas in the southern Caucasus, through principles of democracy, mutual trust and others, and aims to promote female participation at different levels of the peace process, including formal diplomacy.

Moreover, both Armenia and Azerbaijan remained without an action plan for Resolution 1325 on women, peace and security. The process to prepare an action plan in Azerbaijan, a project involving the State Committee for Family, Women and Children, as well as civil society experts on gender and children, remained deadlocked. On the other hand, **Anna Hakobyan, a journalist and the wife of new Armenian Prime Minister Nikol Pashinyan, launched a public campaign**

Georgia (Abkhazia, South Ossetia)	
Negotiating actors	Georgia, representatives of Abkhazia and South Ossetia, Russia ¹⁶
Third parties	OSCE, EU and UN; USA Russia ¹⁷
Relevant agreements	Agreement on Principles of Settlement of the Georgian–Ossetian Conflict (Sochi Agreement) (1992), Agreement on a Ceasefire and Separation of Forces (1994) [agreement dealing with conflict on Abkhazia], Protocol of agreement (2008), Implementation of the Plan of 12 August 2008 (2008)

Summary:

The war between Georgia and Russia in August 2008, which began in South Ossetia and spread to Abkhazia and territory not disputed by Georgia, ended in a six-point peace agreement mediated by the EU. The peace plan included the start of international talks on security and stability in Abkhazia and South Ossetia, two small territories in the northwest and north-central Georgia bordering Russia that are internationally recognised as regions of Georgia, though de facto independent since the end of the wars between Abkhaz and Georgian forces (1992-1994) and between Ossetian and Georgian forces (1991-1992) regarding their status. The 2008 agreement gave way to the start of talks known as the Geneva International Discussions (GID), which bring together representatives of Georgia, South Ossetia, Abkhazia and Russia under international mediation (the OSCE, EU and UN, with the US as an observer). According to the agreement, the talks were supposed to focus on provisions to guarantee security and stability in the region, the issue of the refugees and displaced populations and any other issue agreed by the parties, so the disputed status of the territories was not explicitly addressed. Thus, after the 2008 war, Russia formally recognised the independence of Abkhazia and South Ossetia and established agreements and a permanent military presence there despite Georgian opposition. The post-2008 phase involved the dismantling of previous dialogue and observation mechanisms, including the OSCE and the UN missions, and replaced the previous separate talks with a single format covering both disputed regions. An EU observation mission was also authorised, though it was given no access to the disputed territories. The GID have two working groups (on security and humanitarian

16. Russia's status in the peace process in Georgia is subject to different interpretations. Georgia considers it an actor in the conflict and a negotiating party, while Russia considers itself a third party.

17. Ibid.

issues) and under its aegis one Incident Prevention and Response Mechanism was created for each region in 2009, facilitated by the EU and OSCE. Amidst a context of geopolitical rivalry between Russia and Western political, economic and military players (the US, EU and NATO) and chronic antagonism between the disputed regions and Georgia, the negotiating process faces many obstacles.

The peace process ran into new difficulties in a year marking the 10th anniversary of the August 2008 war between Georgia and Russia, which led to Moscow formally recognising the independence of Abkhazia and South Ossetia, and the beginning of the Geneva International Discussions (GID). The negotiations suffered a reversal when **Abkhaz and South Ossetian authorities abandoned the Incidents Prevention Response Mechanism (IPRM)**, forums of dialogue between Georgian and Abkhaz representatives on one hand and Georgian and Ossetian representatives on the other hand that are integrated into the structure of the multi-level peace process and focus on technical and security issues. Abkhazia and South Ossetia abandoned the IPRM in June and September, respectively, in protest of what they considered Georgia's political persecution against Abkhaz and Ossetian citizens and public officials. The controversy arose from the decision of the Georgian Parliament and government to impose sanctions and draw up a list of Abkhaz and South Ossetian suspects of crimes against the Georgian population following the death of a Georgian citizen from South Ossetia in South Ossetian police custody in February. The breakdown of the IPRM was a new setback for a peace process that was already affected by background difficulties. In the October round of the GID, the IPRM was one of the main items on the agenda and the co-mediators urged the parties to the conflict to resume it. According to the Russian government, all parties supported the need to take steps to restore the IPRM. However, **the authorities of Abkhazia and South Ossetia stated that they would only resume their participation in the IPRM if issues that they considered unacceptable were withdrawn from the agenda.**

The October round revealed disagreement and unresolved issues. While the security situation remained mostly calm and the parties to the conflict applied de facto non-use of force, **no joint commitment of the non-use of force could be committed to writing.** This is one of the main issues pending in the GID. The GID co-mediators also said that **the situation of the displaced and refugee population remained unresolved, as both sides continue to dispute it.** There were also still challenges regarding the rights and needs of the population affected by the conflict. In the December round of the GID (the 46th), both sides held to their opposing positions, with Georgia complaining about the installation of barriers and lack of investigation into two deaths. Russia, South Ossetia and Abkhazia

Abkhazia, South Ossetia and Russia abandoned the Incident Prevention Response Mechanism in 2018 in a new setback for the peace process with Georgia

Ayse Cihan Sultanoglu was appointed the UN representative in the Geneva International Discussions in 2018, the first time that a woman holds the position of chief co-mediator in the peace process in Georgia

criticised the cooperation between NATO and Georgia. Both actors abandoned the working group on humanitarian issues during their session on displaced people. In a breakthrough, South Ossetia agreed to resume the IPRM in this round and it was restarted in mid-December.

Meanwhile, in April 2018 the Georgian government announced a new legislative initiative aimed at improving the situation of the people of Abkhazia and South Ossetia and promoting rapprochement under the name "A Step for a Better Future". The plan envisages boosting trade between both sides of the conflict line, providing products from both regions with better access to Georgia and international markets by simplifying procedures. In November, the government presented the financial programme to support those exchanges. The initiative also plans for measures in other areas, such as access to public services, through a neutral personal identification mechanism with respect to the status of the regions, as well as better educational opportunities for Abkhaz and Ossetian people in Georgia and abroad. However, the Abkhaz and South Ossetian authorities criticised the initiative.

Gender, peace and security

Some progress was made during the year on the participation of women and the integration of a gender perspective in the peace process. The Georgian government approved the third national action plan (NAP) for implementing the resolutions of the UN Security Council on women, peace and security (2018-2020). The new NAP established the promotion of female participation in peacebuilding as a government priority. The NAP planned to strengthen the mechanisms of periodic dialogue already in place between the governmental representatives of the GID and the IPRM and the civil society, including women's organisations and activists, and to guarantee inclusion of women's needs and priorities in the negotiating agenda. The NAP raised the target of transferring 70% of the recommendations made by women to the negotiations, the same threshold that according to the NAP document was achieved in 2017. The government also planned to boost support for women's organisations involved in civic diplomacy initiatives. The NAP also commits the government to establish a mechanism for periodic dialogue (involving at least three meetings per year) that will ensure the inclusion of displaced women and young people in policy development, especially in the definition of their status and the development of reforms related to sustenance and resettlement. It also commits to the creation of another mechanism of dialogue to ensure the inclusion of women and young people affected by the conflict in the development of specific programmes in locations adjacent

to the administrative boundary line. These commitments take after the recommendations from the evaluation of the NAP 2016-2017 by the Georgian organisation Women's Information Centre and the Office of the Ombudsman.

During 2018, consultations continued between government representatives participating in the GID and the IPRM with the population, including women's organisations and women affected by the conflict. These mechanisms of consultation were started by UN Women in 2013 to promote women's participation in the peace process. Later institutionalised, they became directly organised with the government, targeting women but also other parts of the population. Held after the 44th round of the GID in March, the July meeting focused on how to enhance female participation in the GID and IPRM. The Women's Information Centre called for women's rights organisations to meet with the new UN co-mediator in the GID, **Ayse Cihan Sultanoglu, the first woman to hold the position on the teams of chief co-mediators.** In a step forward, the **December round of the GID included a session on women, peace and security.** In consultations in August, women residing in Perevi and in other locations near the administrative separation line spoke of the difficulties related to their lack of access to public transport, the shortage of drinking water, the loss of property, the separation of members of families on both sides of the line and the lack of economic opportunities.

Meanwhile, the **South Caucasus Women Mediators' Network (NWMSC), which was created in late 2017 and involved women from Georgia, Abkhazia and South Ossetia, adopted its Memorandum of Understanding in Turkey in September 2018,** formally establishing the network. It was signed by a dozen women peace activists, and they developed a plan of action. Initially promoted by the International Centre on Conflict and Negotiation (ICCN), a member of the Global Partnership for the Prevention of Armed Conflict (GPPAC), which together with the EU Mission in Georgia (EUMM) supported the event in Turkey, the network aims to promote women's participation in different levels of the peace process, including formal diplomacy.

South-east Europe

Cyprus	
Negotiating actors	Republic of Cyprus, self-proclaimed Turkish Republic of Northern Cyprus
Third parties	UN; EU (observer in the Geneva International Conference); Turkey, Greece and the United Kingdom (guarantor countries)
Relevant agreements	13 February agreement (2004)
Summary: Inhabited by a Greek majority, a Turkish population and other minorities, the island of Cyprus faces a situation of long-lasting unresolved conflict. Preceded by the violence of the 1950s, followed by independence in 1960, Cyprus	

was affected by a crisis in which the Turkish Cypriot population was displaced from power, calling into question the distribution of power stipulated in the Constitution and triggering new violent incidents, which led to the deployment of the UNFICYP peacekeeping mission in 1964. There was an underlying confrontation between the aspirations of enosis (union with Greece) of the Greek Cypriot population and taksim (partition) by Turkish Cypriot population. A coup in 1974 with the aim of promoting unification with Greece triggered a military invasion of the island by Turkey. The crisis led to population displacement and the division of the island between the northern third under Turkish Cypriot control and two-thirds in the south under Greek Cypriot control, separated by the "Green Line", under UN monitoring. Since the division of the island there have been efforts to find a solution, such as high-level dialogues in the 70s and initiatives in the following decades promoted by successive UN Secretaries-General. The Annan Plan for a bizonal bicomunal federation was approved in referendum in 2004 by the Turkish Cypriots and rejected by the Greek Cypriots. After the failure of the Christofias-Talat dialogue (2008-2012), a new phase of negotiations began in 2014, which generated high expectations.

The peace process in Cyprus remained at an impasse, without the possibility of resuming it since the negotiations were called off in July 2017, and amidst a rise in regional tension regarding the exploitation of fossil fuels on the coasts off Cyprus. Both parts of the island started the year off with elections. Incumbent Greek Cypriot leader Nicos Anastasiades held on to power in the February presidential election, while a coalition led by the Turkish Republican Party, which supports unifying the island, formed a new Turkish Cypriot government after legislative elections in January, as the ruling Party of National Unity did not achieve a majority of the vote in elections marked by the debate on relations with Turkey and other issues. One year after the conclusion without agreement of the historic Cyprus Conference of 2017, **the United Nations consulted with the parties to evaluate whether or not conditions were ripe for restarting the negotiating process.** The Special Representative and Head of the United Nations Peacekeeping Force in Cyprus (UNFICYP), Elizabeth Spehar, held meetings with Greek Cypriot leader Nicos Anastasiades and Turkish Cypriot leader Mustafa Akinci in July as a previous step to a round of in-depth meetings between the UN Secretary-General's special envoy for Cyprus, Jane Holl Lute, and the parties and guarantor powers between July and September. UN Secretary-General António Guterres met with the leaders of the island on the margins of the UN General Assembly in late September. Based on all this, in his October report to the UN Security Council, **Guterres expressed his conviction that the prospects for a solution to the conflict were still good.** At the same time, while highlighting the six-point framework for dialogue (security, guarantees, territory, ownership, equal treatment and power sharing) used at the talks in Crans-Montana (Switzerland) in 2017 as a framework recognised by both sides, he said that new ideas will be needed, in addition to in-depth preparation and a certain sense of urgency for a new negotiating

phase. In that sense, some media outlets pointed out that the meeting between Guterres and the two leaders of the island in New York **had addressed issues such as alternative formats to a bi-zonal and bi-communal federation, like a confederation, a decentralised federation** or something else entirely. In October, the two leaders of the island held a meeting in Nicosia under the auspices of Spehar where they shared their ideas about the way forward. In a joint statement after the meeting, both leaders announced the upcoming opening of two new border crossings in Lefka/Aplici and Deryneia/Derinya in November and spoke of their willingness to hold new meetings with UN special envoy. In December, Lute held new rounds of meetings separately with Anastasiades and Akinci, as well as with the Turkish foreign ministry, in order to establish the terms of reference for restarting the talks. Meanwhile, despite some partial progress, such as the opening of border crossings, **the technical committees of the peace process remained operational, although they mostly lacked momentum and their levels of activity were unequal**, as indicated by the UN Secretary-General in his October report.

The gender committee of the peace process on Cyprus remained largely inactive during 2018, while women's organisations demanded greater participation in the negotiating process

Gender, peace and security

Various peace initiatives for women in Cyprus in the second half of the year sought to reinvigorate and strengthen the role of women in the island's deadlocked peace process. The Cyprus Women's Lobby organised a meeting in Cyprus in July with about 30 women from the Greek Cypriot and Turkish Cypriot communities, with support from the Mediterranean Women Mediators Network, the Commonwealth Women Mediators Network, the international organisation Women's International League for Peace and Freedom (WILPF) and the UN mission in Cyprus (UNFICYP). The meeting aimed to address the current situation, needs and demands, identify peacebuilding opportunities and design strategies. The priorities included expanding the focus of action and moving the discussions out of the capital in order to broaden the social base and the participation of women in peacebuilding. There were also several meetings in September between women of the island from different backgrounds and two of the founders of the Northern Ireland Women's Coalition (a women's political party of the two communities in conflict in Northern Ireland that participated in the peace negotiations leading to the Good Friday peace agreement of 1998). Organised by the PRIO Cyprus Centre and the Irish Embassy in Cyprus, with the support of the UN mission of good offices and the UNFICYP, the meeting served to share experiences and lessons learned in order to boost female participation in the Cyprus peace process.

Regarding the formal negotiation process, **the technical committee on gender equality, one of the technical committees that make up the formal structure of the negotiations, remained mostly at a standstill during the**

year, in line with the peace process as a whole. Even so, the UN Secretary-General's October report highlighted the participation of several people from the gender committee in a meeting in September to mark the visit of the Northern Ireland Women's Coalition. At the international level, and more specifically in connection with the UNFICYP, civil society organisations grouped under the NGO Working Group on Women, Peace and Security in July asked the UN Security Council to recognise the role of women in the Cypriot peace process when it renews the UNFICYP mandate and to include a provision urging greater female participation. The United Nations actors in Cyprus were also asked to support the full inclusion of women in the process and the integration of the gender perspective in the process and the results. UN Security Council Resolution 2430 of 26 July 2018 –S/RES/2430 (2018)–, which renews the UNFICYP mandate, included a new appeal to the Secretary-General to increase the number of women in UNFICYP and guarantee the substantive participation of women in all aspects of its operations. As in previous resolutions, the text also reiterates the importance of the substantive participation of civil society and women in particular in all phases of the peace process, but also and for the first time adds the need to revitalise the gender committee and address the UN Secretary-General's proposal for a socio-economic impact assessment that takes the gender perspective into account.

Serbia – Kosovo	
Negotiating actors	Government of Serbia, Government of Kosovo
Third parties	EU, UN
Relevant agreements	Military Technical Agreement between the International Security Force (KFOR) and the Governments of the Federal Republic of Yugoslavia and the Republic of Serbia (1999), First agreement of principles governing the normalization of relations between the republic of Kosovo and the Republic of Serbia (Brussels Agreement) (2013)

Summary:

Since the end of the 1998-1999 war between Serbia and the Kosovar Albanian armed group KLA, with the participation of NATO, the status of Kosovo has remained in dispute. This Albanian-majority land has historically been part of the Ottoman Empire, the Kingdom of Serbs, Croats and Slovenes and more recently the Republic of Serbia in Yugoslavia (as an autonomous region and autonomous province, successively). Following an interim international administration for Kosovo with a mandate from the UN Security Council (Resolution 1244, of 1999), a process to discuss its status began in 2006 under the aegis of the United Nations. Kosovo supported the proposal made by the UN Secretary-General's special envoy, Martti Ahtisaari, entailing internationally supervised independence for Kosovo and decentralisation for its Serbian minority, though Serbia rejected it. This was followed by fresh attempts at dialogue facilitated by a troika (USA, EU, Russia) that also failed. In 2008 Kosovo unilaterally proclaimed its independence

and pledged to implement the Ahtisaari plan. The start of a new process of dialogue between Serbia and Kosovo in 2011 under facilitation of the EU (Brussels Process) opened the doors to rapprochement on technical and political issues. Since its inception there has been significant progress, including the agreement to dismantle parallel political, judicial and security structures of the Serb-inhabited areas of Kosovo; as well as to create an association/community of Serb municipalities in Kosovo. However, there are still outstanding pending challenges, especially in the field of implementation of the agreements, reconciliation and the final resolution of the political status.

The negotiating process between Serbia and Kosovo experienced moments of deadlock and difficulty, including in connection with the still-pending association of Serbian majority municipalities and a final agreement to normalise relations, in a year that marked the tenth anniversary of Kosovo's unilateral declaration of independence. The

negotiating process facilitated by the EU developed erratically in 2018. The assassination in January in North Mitrovica of Kosovo Serb politician Oliver Ivanovic, leader of the Civic Initiative and candidate for mayor in the local elections of 2017, prompted Serbia to cancel the technical-level talks planned for mid-January. Also in January, the Kosovo government appointed Chief of Staff Avni Arif to be the new head of the negotiating team, replacing Minister for Dialogue Edita Tahiri, who left office in 2017 after the Kosovar opposition's motion of censure against the government. During her time in office, she had promoted spaces of dialogue and civic diplomacy between Serbian and Albanian women in Kosovo on her own personal initiative. Technical negotiations between Serbia and Kosovo resumed in late February and continued throughout the year. Political negotiations facilitated by the High Representative of the EU for Foreign Affairs, Federica Mogherini, resumed in March after being shut down since August 2017. At the March meeting in Brussels, Serbian President Aleksandar Vučić and Kosovo Prime Minister Hashim Thaçi addressed the status of the agreements reached thus far, as well as the development of a framework agreement for normalising relations. **The agreements pending implementation included the creation of an association of Serb-majority municipalities in northern Kosovo**, one of the key aspects of the 2013 agreement on the principles for normalising relations. Given the lack of progress, the Kosovo Serb representatives in the Kosovar coalition government warned that they would take unilateral steps to establish the association of municipalities starting in April. The Kosovar government finally announced the resumption of work for creating the statute of the association of municipalities in April and established a four-month deadline for its conclusion. The announcement sidelined the Serbian unilateral plans. However, Vučić complained of a breach after the date for submitting the first draft of the statute expired. The Serbian authorities denounced related breaches at other times of the year. In December, following a meeting of the Stabilisation and Association Council

The negotiating process between Serbia and Kosovo experienced difficulties during 2018 while the association of Serbian municipalities had not yet been created in northern Kosovo

between the EU and Kosovo, the EU stressed the need to implement the association of municipalities without delay.

One of the main aspects of the negotiating process during the year was the issue of an agreement for normalising relations. **Negotiations on a final agreement were accompanied by political controversy over the possibility that it might include a territorial exchange.** Kosovar leaders argued that municipalities with a Kosovo Albanian majority in southern Serbia should be able to become absorbed by Kosovo. The option of Kosovo Serb-majority municipalities integrating into Serbia was also discussed. International diplomats and governments expressed opinions both supporting and rejecting a possible territorial exchange. The German government was opposed, pointing to the risks of the idea spreading to other countries with territorial conflicts. In August, US National Security Advisor John Bolton said that the US would not oppose any territorial change if it was agreed between both parties. The negotiating process deteriorated in the final months of the year, alongside rising tension between both sides, leading the Serbian president to cancel a joint meeting with Kosovo and the EU scheduled for September. The Serbian and Kosovar leaders met again in November, in a worsening atmosphere. Vučić announced an end to the talks with Kosovo until it withdraws various measures, including the rise in customs duties introduced in response to Serbia's obstruction of recognition of Kosovo. The EU urged Kosovo to withdraw the customs duties. Tensions rose against at the end of the year when the Kosovar Parliament passed legislation to transform the security forces into the Kosovar Army. The UN and the EU expressed concern and NATO regretted the decision.

Gender, peace and security

The negotiating process continued without mechanisms of participation for Kosovar or Serbian women or civil society, although during the year women's organisations joined forces with international actors to carry out activities to promote women's participation and trust-building initiatives. Women from Kosovo and Serbia continued to participated in dialogue initiatives as part of a project that promotes reconciliation by building trust and dialogue between women and human rights activists, implemented by the Women's Association for Human Rights (Mitrovica, Kosovo) and the Udruženje Žena Peščanik women's association (Krusevac, Serbia) with support from Sweden and the Swedish NGO Kvinna till Kvinna. As part of this process, 50 women met in Krusevac in March. Meetings were also held in Vrnjacka Banja (Serbia).

Meanwhile, female politicians and civil society representatives from Serbia, Kosovo, Bosnia and Herzegovina, Croatia, Montenegro, Macedonia and Albania gathered in Istanbul in November at a meeting organised by the Regional Women's Lobby for Justice, Peace and Security

in South East Europe, with support from UN Women. **The participants criticised the underrepresentation of women in the peace and governance processes in the region.**

Western Europe

Spain (Basque Country)	
Negotiating actors	ETA, Basque Country political and social actors
Third parties	International Contact Group (GIC), Social Forum to Promote the Peace Process and Permanent Social Forum, Centre for Humanitarian Dialogue
Relevant agreements	--

Summary:

Since the end of the Franco dictatorship in Spain, there have been several attempts to resolve the conflict involving the armed organisation ETA, created in 1959 with demands for self-determination of the territories considered Euskal Herria and for the creation of a socialist state. Throughout decades of conflict, multiple forms of violence were denounced, including deaths caused by ETA's violence (837 deaths), by security forces action (94) and paramilitary groups (73), as well as other human rights violations, including torture by security forces and ETA's economic extortion. Negotiations in 1981 and 1982 led to the dissolution of ETA political-military at the Seventh Assembly in 1982. The Conversations of Algiers in the late 1980s under the social-democratic PSOE-led government failed. The conservative PP-led government's approaches to ETA in the late 1990s, accompanied by truces, were also unsuccessful. The socio-political and military tension continued in the 2000s, with new attacks by ETA and the banning of the Batasuna party (2003), as well as the arrest and prosecution of other political and social actors alongside secret rapprochement between Basque socialist leaders and the Basque pro-independence left (Abertzale), public calls for dialogue, new political proposals and a transformation in the Abertzale left in support of peaceful means. Exploratory meetings led to the formalisation of a new process in 2005, which included two parallel negotiations: one between political parties and the other between the government and ETA, which was backed by a new truce. The process failed amidst multiple hurdles and a new ETA attack in late 2006. The following decade began with new initiatives and declarations, such as the Abertzale left's Alsasua Proposal (2009) and Zutik Euskal Herria (Euskal Herria on Its Feet) (2010), which included the Mitchell principles of negotiation, and the Brussels Declaration (2010), signed by international figures. International facilitators called for ETA to observe a permanent, unilateral and verifiable ceasefire and civil society organisations called for a new push for peace, with international cooperation. Following the Aiete International Peace Conference (2011), ETA announced the definitive end of its armed activity in 2011 and in subsequent years took new steps towards unilateral disarmament (2017), with the involvement of civil society, and ETA's final dissolution in 2018.

A historic milestone was achieved in the Basque Country with the unilateral dissolution of ETA, preceded in previous years by other crucial measures such as disarmament (2017) and the definitive cessation of armed activity (2011). In any case, the process continued to face substantive challenges on the subjects of victims

and prisoners. **ETA announced its definitive dissolution on 3 May, which involved dismantling all its structures** and ending all its non-armed activity, thereby finalising the cessation of armed activity in 2011. According to the group itself, around 3,000 members participated in the process that resulted in the decision to dissolve, with 93% voting in support. **ETA's dissolution was confirmed by the Centre for Humanitarian Dialogue**, an international organisation that has played a discreet facilitating role in the last 15 years and that received and published ETA's statement from its headquarters in Geneva. The announcement put an end to the 60-year-old ETA organisation, responsible for 853 deaths, according to the count kept by the Spanish Ministry of the Interior. Prior to its dissolution statement, ETA issued another statement in April acknowledging the damage caused by its armed activity and its direct responsibility for the pain. It also asked for forgiveness, though only from part of the victims.

Nearly seven years after the Aiete Declaration (2011), which urged ETA to end the violence, **international figures presented the Arnaga Declaration, in which they celebrated the dissolution of ETA.** The signatories said that now the challenge of reconciliation lies ahead. They called for more efforts to recognise and assist victims and pointed to the need for honesty with the past and generosity to address the wounds and rebuild a shared community. They also indicated that the issue of prisoners and escapees must still be resolved. This was expressed during an international event in the French town of Cambo on 4 May, organised by the International Contact Group, the Permanent Social Forum and the Bake Bidea organisation, where the announcement of dissolution took place. The event was attended by leaders of the political parties PNV, EH Bildu, Elkarrekin Podemos and others, with the support of local authorities, but there was no institutional representative from the Basque, Navarran, Spanish or French governments. In his official reaction to the end of ETA, the head of the Spanish government at the time, Prime Minister Mariano Rajoy, affirmed that there would be no impunity for the group. His spokesman said there would be no changes in prison policy. **Moreover, the presidents of the Autonomous Communities of the Basque Country and Navarre, Iñigo Urkullu and Uxue Barkos, made a joint institutional appearance** celebrating the unilateral, effective and definitive dissolution of ETA as a result of institutional and social demand. However, they also regretted the lack of an ethical and critical look at the consequences of its activity and recognition of the damage caused to all victims. As such, they presented a battery of short and medium-term proposals for the new post-ETA period, including in the short term a critical reflection on the past shared by all political forces, as well as their agreement to adapt prison policy to the new context. In the medium term, they proposed to consolidate a plural shared memory based on the clarification of human rights violations, to advocate public policies for recognition and reparations for victims of terrorism, violence and human rights violations and to promote education and culture for coexistence. One of the commitments made involved the creation of a working group on prison policy between the governments of the Basque Country, Navarre and Spain.

The change of government in Spain after a motion of censure (31 May to 1 June) generated expectations about the future of the country's prison policy. The agreement of the PNV and PSE-EE coalition government in the Basque Country in 2016 already included moving prisoners closer to the Basque Country to facilitate the process of normalisation and coexistence. In June, the new head of the government, Prime Minister Pedro Sánchez, defended a review of the prison policy before Congress to adapt it to the current context with empathy for the victims. **During the year, there were several cases of individual prisoners being moved closer in compliance with the law.** However, most ETA prisoners remained in a first-degree situation and complained that their requests for passage to the second degree were blocked. Incoming Interior Minister Fernando Grande-Marlaska held meetings with victim associations during the year, which had demanded transparency and information.

Meanwhile, the Human Rights Commission of the Parliament of the Basque Country's Committee on Memory and Coexistence remained active. Created in 2011 and reactivated in 2017, the committee focused that year on victims of violence. In 2018, it addressed memory and prison policy with the participation of all groups, except the PP. The Social Forum submitted its proposals for reintegrating prisoners, the result of a process of work and discussion, including through the fourth Social Forum, held between 2017 and 2018, through rounds of meetings with political and social actors. **The Forum called for adapting the prison policy to the new context, as well as for triangulating agreements between the Basque and Navarre governments, the prisoner collective and civil society,** without compensation or privileges. The Social Forum also approved the battery of proposals submitted by the Basque and Navarre presidents, as well as the agreements adopted in the Basque and Navarran parliaments and in the general assemblies of Guipúzcoa, Vizcaya and Álava, without the PP's support, in demand for changes to prison policy. In October, the Forum also organised the fifth Social Forum, focused on victims, mechanisms of truth and reparations.

The unilateral and definitive dissolution of ETA took place in 2018, while peacebuilding in the Basque Country continued to face challenges on the subjects of victims and prison policy

Furthermore, after ETA announced its dissolution, the bishops of Navarre, the Basque Country and Bayonne (France) asked for forgiveness for the Church's complicity, ambiguity and omissions.

Gender, peace and security

Created in 2017, the Social Forum's gender group tackled the reintegration of prisoners, escapees and deportees in 2018. It raised the need for a study on the needs and conditions for such reintegration and indicated the lack of quantitative and qualitative gender information.¹⁸

Participants in the gender group pointed out that 40 of the 300 prisoners are women (12 in France and 28 in Spain), while the number of women among the 100 who have fled or been deported to third countries is unknown. According to the information available, they said that female prisoners are farther from their places of attachment than male prisoners, and that they face higher levels of isolation in prisons than men. Based on the information available, they also said that female prisoners' levels of job placement are lower and in more precarious conditions than male prisoners. In San Sebastián, the Social Forum organised a day in November to hear the testimonies of women

who suffered torture and to present the conclusions of the Report on Torture (1940-2014) from a gender perspective, prepared by the Basque Institute of Criminology of the University of the Basque Country, commissioned by the Basque Government and published in 2017. Seventeen per cent (17%) of the 4,113 reported cases of torture were suffered by women. According to the conclusions of the report, female prisoners reported torture practices to a greater extent, such as sexual violence (including physical and verbal violence), humiliation, pushing, hair-pulling and others. The event raised the need to make progress in recognition and reparation from a gender perspective. It was part of the Forum's work on victims, which held non-public and public meetings with victims of various acts of violence throughout the year.

18. Dañobeitia Ceballos, Olatz, Mencia Azkue, Irantzu, *Construyendo la verdad de las mujeres vascas. Pasos hacia una paz no patriarcal*, Revista Marea, June 2018.