

5. Peace negotiations in Europe

- In 2020, seven of the 40 peace processes in the world (17.5%) took place in Europe.
- For the most part, peace processes in Europe continued to lack institutionalised mechanisms for the participation of women and other sectors of civil society.
- The resumption of the war between Armenia and Azerbaijan over Nagorno-Karabakh ended with a Russian-mediated agreement that divided the territory of Nagorno-Karabakh and guaranteed Baku's control of the adjacent districts, while leaving the political status of the area unresolved.
- In Ukraine, the parties to the conflict agreed on measures to strengthen the ceasefire, which helped significantly to reduce the violence.
- The EU-facilitated negotiating process between Serbia and Kosovo, which has been at an impasse since late 2018, resumed, but disagreements continued on important issues, such as the creation of the association of Serbian municipalities of Kosovo.
- There were calls for the resumption of the 5+2 negotiating format in Moldova regarding the conflict around Transdniestria.
- The peace process in Cyprus remained deadlocked during the year, while the conflict worsened, with increased militarised tension in the eastern Mediterranean.

This chapter provides an analysis of the main peace processes and negotiations in Europe in 2020. 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. In addition, at the beginning of the chapter there is a map identifying the countries in Europe that hosted peace negotiations during 2020.

Table 5.1. Summary of peace processes and negotiations in Europe in 2020

Peace processes and negotiations	Negotiating actors	Third parties
Armenia – Azerbaijan (Nagorno-Karabakh)	Armenia, Azerbaijan	OSCE Minsk Group (co-chaired by Russia, France and the USA; the remaining permanent members are Belarus, Germany, Italy, Sweden, Finland and Turkey), ¹ Russia, Turkey ²
Cyprus	Republic of Cyprus, self-proclaimed Turkish Republic of Northern Cyprus	UN, EU; Turkey, Greece and United Kingdom (guarantor countries)
Georgia (Abkhazia, South Ossetia)	Government of Georgia, representatives of Abkhazia and South Ossetia, government of Russia ³	OSCE, EU, UN, USA, Russia ⁴
Moldova (Transdniestria)	Moldova, self-proclaimed Republic of Transdniestria	OSCE, Ukraine, Russia, USA and EU
Serbia – Kosovo	Serbia, Kosovo	EU, UN, USA
Spain (Basque Country)	ETA (dissolved), government of Spain, government of the Basque Country, government of Navarre, government of France, <i>Communauté d'Agglomération du Pays Basque</i> (Basque Municipal Community), political and social actors of the Basque Country, Basque Political Prisoners Collective (EPPK)	Permanent Social Forum, Bakea Bidea
Ukraine (east)	Government of Ukraine, representatives of the self-proclaimed People's Republics of Donetsk and Luhansk, government of Russia ⁵	OSCE in the Trilateral Contact Group, where Ukraine and Russia ⁶ also participate); Germany and France (in the Normandy Group, where Ukraine and Russia also participate ⁷)

1. In the run-up to the outbreak of war in 2020, the OSCE Minsk Group was the main mediating actor in the peace process. The November 2020 agreement, mediated by Russia and ending hostilities, made no reference to the negotiating format to be followed thereafter, although the OSCE Minsk Group expressed its willingness to continue to be involved in the search for solutions to the conflict.
2. Turkey's status as a third party may be subject to dispute. It is included in this table due to the establishment by Russia and Turkey of a peacekeeping centre for monitoring the ceasefire. The creation of the centre was ratified in a Memorandum between Russia and Turkey.
3. Russia's status in the Georgian peace process is subject to different interpretations. Georgia considers Russia a party to the conflict and a negotiating party, while Russia considers itself a third party.
4. Ibid.
5. Russia's status in the Ukrainian peace process is subject to different interpretations. Ukraine considers Russia a party to the conflict and a negotiating party, while Russia considers itself a third party.
6. Ibid.
7. Ibid.

5.1. Negotiations in 2020: regional trends

Seven peace processes were identified in Europe in 2020, the same number as in 2019. They accounted for 17.5% of the 40 total peace processes worldwide in 2020. Two of these seven negotiating processes referred to active armed conflicts. One was the armed conflict in Ukraine, which started in 2014. The other was the war between Armenia and Azerbaijan over the Nagorno-Karabakh region, which flared up again between September and November 2020. 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 last such process ended unsuccessfully in 2015. In the course of 2020, the worsening violence in northern Iraq linked to the conflict between Turkey and the PKK highlighted the need for dialogue initiatives. The rest of the active processes dealt with past armed conflicts or socio-political crises and, with the exception of Spain (the Basque Country), all were still taking place in a context of tension, including in Georgia in relation to Abkhazia and South Ossetia, in Moldova in relation to the Transdniestria region and in Cyprus.

Actors representing self-proclaimed entities such as states stood out as negotiating parties, despite enjoying little or no international recognition (Transdniestria,

Abkhazia, South Ossetia, the Northern Turkish Republic of Cyprus, the People's Republic of Donetsk and the People's Republic of Luhansk). An exception was Kosovo, which is recognized by more than one hundred countries. All of them participated in the negotiating tables in their various bilateral or multilateral formats, and mostly under the decisive influence of countries that exercised political, economic and military influence over them. Regarding the self-proclaimed republic of Nagorno-Karabakh, in the new scenario produced by the war and the November ceasefire agreement, Armenia and Azerbaijan remained the negotiating parties, without a direct role for the self-proclaimed authorities of Nagorno-Karabakh. Before the war, they were consulted parties, but without a formal role at the negotiating table.

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. 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: Armenia-Azerbaijan (Nagorno-Karabakh), Georgia (Abkhazia, South Ossetia), Moldova (Transdniestria) and Ukraine (east). However, the resumption of the war between Armenia and Azerbaijan revealed the limits and difficulties of the negotiating process mediated by the organisation thus far and raised questions about the negotiating

Map 5.1. Peace negotiations in Europe in 2020



■ Countries with peace processes and negotiations in Europe in 2020.

format in the new scenario and about how important the OSCE would be as a third party in subsequent phases. Meanwhile, Russia and Turkey strengthened their roles, with Russia as mediator of the November ceasefire agreement that ended the war and Turkey as a key player in support of Azerbaijan and taking on a role in monitoring the ceasefire. Even so, after the end of the war, the OSCE Minsk Group expressed its willingness to remain involved with the parties in promoting the resolution of the conflict. According to the OSCE, the parties to the dispute also expressed their expectations of getting involved with the co-mediators of the Minsk Group. On the other hand, 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.

Moreover, some countries’ governments maintained a prominent role as third parties, such as Russia, which became more important as a mediator for the Nagorno-Karabakh situation. Russia also continued to participate in the Normandy format on the peace process in Ukraine, in which France and Germany also participate, as well as in the Geneva International Talks (GIT) on the conflicts in Abkhazia and South Ossetia. In both peace processes (in Ukraine and Georgia), its status continued to be subject to different interpretations, with Russia self-defined by itself as a third party and interpreted as a party to the conflict by Georgia. Likewise, the United States raised its profile in the negotiating process between Serbia and Kosovo during the year. Thus, in 2020 Washington facilitated economic agreements between the parties, while the EU continued to lead facilitation efforts in the political part of the process.

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. With the restart of the war between Armenia and Azerbaijan in September, issues related to **security and the achievement of ceasefires** stood out in Europe in 2020. After several unsuccessful attempts at a truce and with Armenia and Nagorno-Karabakh losing ground militarily, Baku and Yerevan reached a ceasefire and cessation of hostilities agreement in November that included monitoring of the ceasefire by Russian peacekeeping troops. Despite being a bilateral and mediated agreement, it was interpreted as a military victory for Azerbaijan over Armenia and Nagorno-Karabakh, with the risks that this poses for a sustainable solution in the future. The ceasefire was also a major issue in Ukraine, where the parties agreed on a package of measures to strengthen

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it in July, which led to a very significant drop in violence. Regarding security, the Georgia negotiating process reactivated the Incident Prevention and Response Mechanism for South Ossetia (IPRM), which had been paralysed since 2019, although the Abkhazian one remained blocked. In various cases, issues related to the **withdrawal of military forces** were addressed, such as between Armenia and Azerbaijan. The November agreement ratified Azerbaijan’s control of the districts adjacent to Nagorno-Karabakh and Armenia’s withdrawal of those still in its possession upon signing the agreement. In Ukraine, discussions continued regarding the designation of new disengagement areas, though they encountered difficulties and yielded no concrete results. In Moldova, the newly elected president demanded the withdrawal of Russian troops from Transdniestria.

Moreover, the issue of the **status of the various disputed territories**, the root cause of many conflicts in Europe, continued to be ignored or blocked in the negotiating processes and was fraught with confrontation in political speeches and fait accompli policies. As part of the rekindled war between Armenia and Azerbaijan over Nagorno-Karabakh, Baku seized part of the region militarily, splitting it de facto and creating a new status quo. The November agreement between both sides ratified Baku’s control of those parts of Nagorno-Karabakh, but left the status of the region unresolved. Although the negotiating process between Serbia and Kosovo was resumed, confrontation and impasse continued over the creation of the association of municipalities of north Kosovo, which was to provide certain powers to the Serbian areas of Kosovo. In Cyprus, the promotion of a two-state solution by the newly elected Turkish Cypriot president and his ally Ankara threw uncertainty into an already blocked process structured around a bicomunal and bizonal federation solution. **Humanitarian issues** were also on the agenda of the negotiations. The November agreement between Armenia and Azerbaijan included the return of the displaced population to Nagorno-Karabakh and adjacent districts under the supervision of UNHCR, as well as the exchange of prisoners of war, other detainees and the remains of deceased persons. In the context of the COVID-19 pandemic and in view of the closure of crossing points in areas of conflict and tension such as Ukraine and Georgia, which had a serious impact on the population on both sides of the border crossings, civil society groups demanded action to provide access to healthcare, medicine, food and other goods and services.

Regarding the **trends**, 2020 was a year of deterioration for the process between Armenia and Azerbaijan, given the escalation of violence already in July and the restart of the war in September. The November agreement

ended the hostilities and forcibly imposed a solution to the issue of the districts adjacent to Nagorno-Karabakh, but left substantive issues unresolved, such as the status of Nagorno-Karabakh, a territory that was divided after the war. The new scenario around Nagorno-Karabakh, with the deployment of Russian troops, also raised uncertainty throughout the Caucasus, with parts of Georgian civil society warning of possible impact on the future of the processes in Georgia. Furthermore, the processes in Moldova (Transdniestria) and Cyprus remained deadlocked in their high-level political formats, despite calls by the OSCE for them to resume in Moldova and despite the good offices provided by the UN to explore possibilities for resuming the talks in Cyprus. In both cases, the impact that the newly elected presidents could have on the negotiating processes in 2020 remains to be seen. Of these, the new Turkish Cypriot leader's promotion of a two-state solution in Cyprus, an option also supported by Turkey, added uncertainty to a conflict already aggravated by escalating tension in the eastern Mediterranean around the control of petrol and disputes over the delimitation of the maritime borders between Turkey, Greece and Cyprus, which were intertwined with other tensions such as international rivalries projected onto the armed conflict in Libya. While active, the peace process in Georgia continued to face serious difficulties. In contrast, despite difficulties on substantive issues in Ukraine, progress was made on security issues, with action to strengthen the ceasefire. This led to a significant decrease in violence, although at the end of the year there were alerts of ceasefire violations.

Regarding the **gender perspective**, the peace processes in Europe continued to be characterised mainly by low levels of female participation in the negotiating teams, as well as by the lack of mechanisms or gender architecture. In 2020 there was still only one case that had a gender mechanism in the formal negotiating process: the Cyprus process and its technical committee on gender equality, with a limited impact on the whole process. During 2020, the committee's discussions focused mainly on gender violence on the island, which got seriously worse during the pandemic, as in other parts of the world. Women's organisations in Cyprus also continued to complain of the difficulties in integrating a gender perspective in the peace process in 2020. None of the peace processes had mechanisms for the direct participation of female civil society activists in formal negotiations. Only one case, in Georgia, were there institutionalised mechanisms for indirect female participation in the peace process. Thus, the Government of Georgia upheld its practice of organising several consultations a year between Georgian Government representatives in the negotiations and representatives of civil society and the population affected by the conflict,

In 2020, the peace processes in Europe faced serious difficulties, such as the reactivation of the war between Armenia and Azerbaijan and the uncertainty in Cyprus due to the tension in the eastern Mediterranean and the demands for a two-state solution of two states

including women with the support of UN Women, that initially promoted this practice. In 2020, women's groups in Georgia demanded solutions to the impacts of the pandemic and the closure of the crossing points between Georgia and Abkhazia and South Ossetia in these meetings. In Kosovo, the Security and Gender Group, which brings together civil society organisations and international political actors and agencies, called for effective female participation in the Kosovo delegation as part of the negotiating process with Serbia. Furthermore, local, regional and international female civil society activists denounced the restart of the war in Nagorno-Karabakh and called for an end to violence and the resumption of negotiations. In 2020, the Network of Women Mediators of the Mediterranean increased its presence in some of the contexts in Europe. As such, the antenna created in Cyprus in 2019 began its activity. The network also established a new antenna, in Kosovo.

5.2. Case study analysis

Eastern Europe

Moldova (Transdniestria)	
Negotiating actors	Moldovan government, self-proclaimed Republic of Transdniestria
Third parties	OSCE, Ukraine, Russia, USA and EU
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

Transnistria. 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. Geostrategic international disputes also hover over this unresolved conflict, which has deteriorated due to the war in Ukraine.

The negotiating process continued to face difficulties and there were calls to resume the 5+2 format, which brings together the parties to the conflict, as well as the mediators (OSCE, Russia, Ukraine) and observers (USA, EU). The last meeting in 5+2 format had taken place in October 2019 in Bratislava, without the parties being able to approve a protocol of new measures. In July 2020, Moldovan President Igor Dodon and the leader of Transnistria, Vadim Krasnoselky, met and announced that they were ready for new rounds of negotiations. In October, the Transnistrian authorities indicated their willingness to resume the 5+2 format without preconditions to solve the problems associated with implementation of the package of measures known as Berlin Plus. This was expressed by the foreign minister of the de facto independent region, Vitaly Ignatyev, after a meeting with the head of the OSCE mission in Moldova, Claus Neukirch. Ignatyev admitted that the process was going through a complicated stage. After her election as the new president of Moldova in the November elections, Maia Sandu, a pro-EU candidate who campaigned on an anti-corruption platform and the first female president of Moldova, affirmed that she supported a political solution to the conflict through the 5+2 format and upheld principles of sovereignty and territorial integrity in any solution to the conflict. She also expressed her willingness to enter dialogue with Russia. Sandu placed the conflict at the level of the elites and not of populations and described it as complicated, but solvable. **Sandu also stressed the need for the withdrawal of Russian military forces** that remain in Transnistria guarding weapons from the Soviet period, as well as the removal of Russian weapons. She also indicated the need for their replacement by a civilian mission under the OSCE. Russia rejected the proposal, arguing that it would lead to destabilisation. In December, the OSCE Ministerial Council called on the parties to restart the 5+2 format as part of the annual ministerial conference. In late December, the leader of Transnistria affirmed the region's willingness to resume talks in both the 5+2 and 1+1 formats (between the leaders of Moldova and Transnistria). The general political atmosphere in Moldova remained tense. The president-elect urged the government of Prime Minister Ion Chicu to resign and to call early elections and accused Parliament of trying to obstruct her anti-corruption programme by transferring some presidential powers to Parliament. Several thousand people (20,000 according to some

media outlets) demonstrated in front of Parliament in the capital in December to demand the resignation of the government and new elections. Ion Chicu resigned in late December and Sandu appointed Foreign Minister Aurel Ciocoi as interim prime minister days later. Likewise, the Constitutional Court had to rule on a motion presented by MPs from Sandu's party to allow the dissolution of Parliament and call early elections.

Gender, peace and security

The peace process continued to lack specific mechanisms for female participation. However, Moldovan women continued to be involved in peacebuilding efforts, such as the defence of women's human rights. Feminist women from Moldova participated with female activists from other Eastern European and Caucasian countries in a series of online meetings on the situation of women's rights and the implementation of the commitments of the Beijing Declaration and Platform for Action 25 years later. At the October meeting, they addressed issues related to the growing attacks on women's rights and gender equality in the region and the challenges associated with the pandemic. The meetings were organised by activists from the region and enjoyed the support of UN Women and the Women Engage for a Common Future network.

Ukraine (east)	
Negotiating actors	Government of Ukraine, representatives of the self-proclaimed People's Republics of Donetsk and Luhansk, government of Russia ⁸
Third parties	OSCE in the Trilateral Contact Group, where Ukraine and Russia ⁹ also participate); Germany and France (in the Normandy Group, where Ukraine and Russia also participate ¹⁰)
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)

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

8. Russia's status in the Ukrainian peace process is subject to different interpretations. Ukraine considers Russia a party to the conflict and a negotiating party, while Russia considers itself a third party.

9. Ibid.

10. Ibid.

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.

An agreement was reached to strengthen the ceasefire in Ukraine that allowed a drop in violence in the humanitarian context aggravated by the COVID-19 pandemic in 2020, although the underlying issues continued to generate division, such as control of the Russian border, the status of the eastern areas and the elections in those areas. In addition, the pandemic situation forced the parties to hold virtual negotiations. The seven-point agreement reached on 23 July as part of the Trilateral Contact Group (Ukraine, Russia, OSCE) to strengthen the ceasefire bans offensive, reconnaissance and sabotage operations, the operation any type of aerial vehicle, gunfire, including by snipers, and the deployment of heavy weapons in or near settlements and especially civilian infrastructure, including schools, nurseries, hospitals and public places. It also provides for the use of disciplinary action for violations of the ceasefire and the creation of and participation in a coordination mechanism to respond to violations of the ceasefire facilitated by the Joint Centre for Control and Coordination (JCCC).¹¹ Furthermore, the agreement specifies the limited circumstances in which gunfire is allowed in response to an offensive operation, as well as the prohibition of non-compliance under any order. Some analysts pointed out that the agreement implies a greater recognition of status and position for the eastern forces. The levels of violence and death count fell significantly after the agreement and remained at low levels in the second half of the year, although in December the special representative of the OSCE in Ukraine, Heidi Grau, warned of a worrying increase in ceasefire violations. Another notable event during the year was the prisoner exchange agreement in April, prior to Orthodox Easter. Twenty people imprisoned by

The parties to the conflict in Ukraine reached an agreement within the framework of the Trilateral Contact Group (Ukraine, Russia, OSCE) to strengthen the ceasefire

the eastern forces were handed over to the Ukrainian Government, which in turn handed over 14 fighters from the self-proclaimed people's republics, while three chose to remain in territory under the control of the Ukrainian Government.

The parties remained at odds over key issues such as control of the Ukraine-Russia border. The Ukrainian Government continued to demand restored control of the border prior to holding elections and constitutionally granting special status to the eastern areas. On 15 July, the Ukrainian Parliament voted a resolution (No. 795-IX) disallowing elections from being held in the rebel areas of the east and in Crimea until they were “de-occupied”. Russia denounced the breach of the Minsk agreements. The meeting of the Normandy format advisors (Ukraine, Russia, Germany, France) in September did not reach agreement in this area and **in October local elections were held only in land under Ukrainian control**. The disagreements here had repercussions on other areas, such as the discussions about new areas for withdrawing forces. In early September, the OSCE announced that an agreement had been reached on mines and demining, as well as on new areas for withdrawing forces and weapons, but there were no final decisions yet due to discussions on the parliamentary resolution for the elections, which also hindered progress on humanitarian and political issues. Furthermore, in December the Ukrainian Parliament approved extending the law on the special status of self-government of the Donetsk and Luhansk areas (initially enacted in 2014 and renewed several times), thereby facilitating the continuation of negotiations between the parties to the conflict.

In relation to the format of the negotiating process, in March Ukraine and Russia agreed to create a new body, an advisory council made up of 10 representatives from Ukraine and another 10 from areas under rebel control, as well as one representative each from the OSCE, Russia, Germany and France, with the ability to issue non-binding recommendations on the implementation of the Minsk agreements. However, the agreement for this body, which was to be integrated into the Trilateral Contact Group, sparked protests in Ukraine and was rejected by some parts of the ruling party. In April, Russia denounced that Ukraine was not implementing the agreement. In the field of international law, in December the International Criminal Court asked to open an investigation into alleged war crimes and crimes against humanity, determining that there was a reasonable basis to consider that crimes of this nature had been committed by the different parties to the conflict in three situations: in the course of hostilities, in the context of arrests and in Crimea.

11. Monitoring mechanism for the ceasefire that was active between 2014 and 2017 and that included military personnel from Ukraine and Russia and the rebel regions until Russia abandoned it in 2017.

Gender, peace and security

Women remained absent from the peace process, while local civil society actors and international agencies continued to demand participation and mobilise in other spheres of peacebuilding. UN Women in Ukraine launched the “Women are Key to Peace” campaign on the occasion of the 20th anniversary of UN Security Council Resolution 1325 on women, peace and security in order to raise awareness about women’s contributions to peacebuilding in the country. The campaign included various videos on local television with women from various fields, including activists, women from mutual support groups, from the health or education sectors and others. Furthermore, the Government approved the second National Action Plan on UNSC Resolution 1325 for the period 2021-2025.

With regard to the impacts of the conflict and the political processes under way, in February, women’s and civil society organisations in Ukraine presented a report to the Committee on Economic, Social and Cultural Rights in its review on Ukraine that called attention to the impact of the austerity measures and the conflict on economic, social and cultural rights, including the gender impact of cuts to services and social assistance, obstacles in the internally displaced population’s access to the right to work and gender violence and gender discrimination in various fields. Organisations that signed the report included the Ukraine section of the Women’s International League for Peace and Freedom (WILPF), the Women’s Network for Dialogue and Inclusive Peace, the Women’s Perspectives Centre and others.

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), Russia, 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 increased the alert warning in a context of an arms race and a bellicose rhetoric and a regional scenario of geostrategic tensions. War broke out again in September 2020 and in November the parties reached an agreement that entailed a complete change of the status quo (control by Azerbaijan of the districts adjacent to Nagorno-Karabakh and a part of Nagorno-Karabakh, along with the deployment of Russian peacekeeping forces), but left the political status of Nagorno-Karabakh unresolved.

A ceasefire agreement ended the 44-day war over Nagorno-Karabakh that restarted in late September between Armenia and Azerbaijan¹² and gave rise to a radical change in the status quo in the region and uncertainty about its future, since the negotiating format followed until then proved ineffective. The resumption of the war between Armenian and Azerbaijani forces triggered international calls for a ceasefire from the UN, Russia, the OSCE, the EU and others. In a significant exception, Turkish President Recep Tayyip Erdogan expressed his support for Azerbaijan and declared his readiness to provide such support by any means. **There were several failed ceasefires.** These included a ceasefire reached on 10 October after talks between the foreign ministers of Armenia and Azerbaijan in Moscow on 9 October, facilitated by Russian Foreign Minister Sergey Lavrov, which also included an exchange of prisoners, the return of the bodies of the deceased and the resumption of substantive peace talks in their previous format, mediated by the OSCE Minsk group. However, the continuing violence scrapped the agreement. At that time, Azerbaijani President Ilham Aliyev warned that it was Armenia’s last chance to resolve the conflict peacefully, stating that in three decades of the process, no progress had been made on the return of the “occupied territories”, referring to the districts adjacent to Nagorno-Karabakh, under Armenian control since the war of the 1990s, which displaced its Azerbaijani population. The parties to the conflict announced a new ceasefire on 17 October, which was also unsuccessful. Another ceasefire agreement followed on 26 October, this time promoted by the US, which was also not honoured.

Alongside the failure of the successive ceasefires, the hostilities continued as the Azerbaijani military forces advanced. One day after the fall of Shusha/Shushi, a strategic location for capturing the entire enclave of Nagorno-Karabakh, **the parties reached a full ceasefire and cessation of hostilities agreement on 9 November. Mediated by Russia, it was signed by the Azerbaijani president, the Armenian prime minister and the Russian president** and entered into force on 10 November. It

12. See the summary on Nagorno Karabakh in chapter 1 (Armed conflicts) in Escola de Cultura de Pau, *Alert 2021! Report on conflicts, human rights and peacebuilding*. Barcelona: Icaria, 2021.

was a nine-point agreement. In addition to the ceasefire, the nine points **yielded to Azerbaijan the territories of Nagorno-Karabakh seized militarily by Baku during the war, including Shusha, de facto dividing the region. It also included the withdrawal of Armenian forces from the districts adjacent to Nagorno-Karabakh that were still under its control when the agreement was reached (Agdam, Kelbajar and Lachin).** By default, the agreement ratified the military takeover of the rest of the adjacent districts by Azerbaijan. It also included **the deployment of Russian peacekeeping forces (renewable for five years)** along the new line of contact and the Lachin corridor (which connects Nagorno-Karabakh and Armenia) and with the dual function of supervising the implementation of the agreement and the ceasefire and cessation of hostilities. The agreement also provides for the return of the displaced population to Nagorno-Karabakh and adjacent areas under the supervision of UNHCR. It also provides for the exchange of prisoners of war, other detained persons and the remains of the deceased, as well as the unblocking of all transport and economic connections in the region, including transport routes between Azerbaijan and the Nakhichevan exclave in Armenia. The agreement includes the creation of a peacekeeping centre to monitor the ceasefire, which gave implicit scope for a role for Turkey in the agreement. After it was signed, Russia and Turkey signed a memorandum for the creation of the monitoring centre. According to Russia, Turkish forces will be restricted to Azerbaijani soil, without entering Nagorno-Karabakh.

Despite the inclusion of various dimensions in the agreement, **it did not include any reference to Nagorno-Karabakh's political status, leaving it unresolved.** It also failed to allude to the negotiating format maintained until the war under the mediation of the OSCE Minsk group and did not indicate any negotiating process going forward. Still, the OSCE Minsk group issued a statement in December praising the cessation of hostilities on the basis of the 9 November agreement, outlining the action taken by Russia and urging the conflicting parties to take advantage of the ceasefire to undertake substantive negotiations on outstanding issues to achieve a lasting and sustainable peace agreement. In mid-December, the co-chairs of the OSCE Minsk group travelled to Baku and Yerevan, where they met respectively with the Azerbaijani president and foreign minister and with the Armenian prime minister and foreign minister. The November agreement marked a significant change in the status quo in the region, with profound consequences for Nagorno-Karabakh, Armenia and Azerbaijan, as well as the entire southern Caucasus region. The countries' respective political classes and populations evaluated the agreement in terms of victory and defeat, which together with the high degree of militarisation in both societies raised questions about

the future of the region. In Armenia, the agreement sparked political and social protests and demands for the resignation of Armenian Prime Minister Nikol Pashinyan, who became leader after Armenia's Velvet Revolution in 2018, the establishment of an interim government and early elections. Regarding the implementation of the agreement, in subsequent weeks the ceasefire was mostly sustained, despite some incidents and several fatalities. The handover of the Kelbajar district was delayed until 25 November, while that of Agdam and Lachin occurred on the dates specified in the agreement, 20 November and 1 December. In mid-December, the parties began implementing the prisoner exchange.

Gender, peace and security

Faced with the outbreak of war, local activists and women's organisations in the region and abroad called for an end to the violence and for the resumption of the peace negotiations. In the first few days, Women in Black from Armenia denounced what they called Azerbaijan's unprecedented large-scale attack and urged the international community to get involved to stop the violence from spreading. The global Women in Black network expressed its opposition to the war and all forms of violence, urging a ceasefire and the restart of negotiations, without supporting either of the warring parties, and also recognised women who worked for peace in Azerbaijan. The Women Engage for a Common Future network and various state sections of the Women's International League for Peace and Freedom (WILPF) also called for peace and human rights in Nagorno-Karabakh and for the participation of local civil society in the process to follow after the 10 November agreements, urged the deployment of OSCE observers and demanded an investigation into war crimes. They also demanded an end to the export of arms to the parties to the conflict and to other actors involved in providing arms-related materiel, and urged the inclusion of criteria of peace and sustainable development in future cooperation with the region. Some analyses of the situation warned of the threats of militarisation to the achievement of gender equality objectives following the outbreak of the war. In contrast to her involvement in the previous two years in support of a peaceful and negotiated solution to the conflict, Armenian journalist Anna Hakobyan, who is the wife of Prime Minister Nikol Pashinyan, announced that she was starting military training together with other Armenian women in September, and that a collaboration programme was beginning with the ministry of defence to provide military training to women between 18 and 27 years of age. In October, she said she would move to the military front. She also urged Armenian men to join the military front to protect their homeland, wives, children and relatives.

The Nagorno-Karabakh war concluded with an agreement ratifying the division of control of the enclave and transferring the adjacent areas to Baku, but left its status unresolved and did not include references to negotiating formats

Georgia (Abkhazia, South Ossetia)	
Negotiating actors	Government of Georgia, representatives of Abkhazia and South Ossetia, government of Russia ¹³
Third parties	OSCE, EU, UN, USA and Russia ¹⁴
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 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 negotiating process continued to face obstacles in a context aggravated by the COVID-19 pandemic. At its highest level, the Geneva International Discussions (GID) slowed down. The 51st round, scheduled for late March and early April, was postponed due to the pandemic. The 51st round was cancelled again in October, although in that case Georgia blamed Russia for its refusal to participate, which according to Tbilisi put the entire peace process at risk. Russia noted that its decision not to participate

had been taken together with the Abkhazian and South Ossetian authorities and was motivated by pandemic-related restrictions, stating that they had proposed a video conference instead, but the co-mediators of the peace process rejected the idea. However, throughout the year the GID co-mediators made various trips to and held meetings in Georgia, Abkhazia, South Ossetia and Russia. Despite the structural difficulties of the process, **one breakthrough during the year was the reactivation in July of the Incident Prevention and Response Mechanism (IPRM) for South Ossetia**, facilitated by the EU mission in Georgia and by the special representative of the rotating OSCE Chairperson-in-Office after weeks of intensive contacts. The South Ossetian IPRM had been inactive since August 2019. The Abkhazian IPRM remained suspended. The OSCE Group of Friends of Georgia called for its resumption. At the end of the year, the head of the Security Council of Abkhazia and former foreign minister of the region, Sergei Shamba, expressed Abkhazia's readiness for dialogue, noting that there were issues that could be addressed bilaterally, such as the opening of transport communications, the management of the Enguri hydroelectric plant and tackling crime. He also pointed out that the dialogue between civil society organisations could be reinvigorated.

Throughout the year, issues such as the installation of border elements by the forces of South Ossetia, Abkhazia and Russia came up both in Georgia's political rhetoric and in meetings of the parties to the conflict with international mediators. Georgia continued to complain about what it considers "borderization", referring to the expansive displacement of the barriers that delimit the areas under control of Abkhazia and South Ossetia. Georgia also reported arrests of Georgian citizens, while Abkhazia, South Ossetia and Russia reported what they consider to be illegal border crossings. In the context of the pandemic, Georgia criticised the impact of closing the border crossings between the two regions and stated on several occasions that it had provided humanitarian assistance to Abkhazia during the pandemic, despite the restrictions. Civil society groups in Georgia also urged the Georgian authorities to boost humanitarian and medical assistance to Abkhazia. Instead, Georgia claimed that the South Ossetian authorities continued to refuse to cooperate with Georgia in the context of the pandemic. The process took place in the context of political tension in Georgia linked to the parliamentary elections in late October and the second round in November. The opposition did not recognise the results, which gave the victory to the governing party, Georgian Dream, and sparked protests in the streets.

Gender, peace and security

As in previous years, various meetings were held between representatives of the Georgian Government participating

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

14. Ibid.

in the negotiating process and representatives of civil society organisations, including women's organisations, though the pandemic led to them being held online. Organised by the Government and with the support of UN Women and the involvement of other actors such as the EU at the head-of-mission level, in July the head of Georgia's delegation to the Geneva International Discussions (GID) shared updated information on the negotiating process and the challenges associated with the pandemic. The participants highlighted the impacts of the conflict aggravated by the context of COVID-19, with difficulties such as problems of access to services, including health care, education, food and other goods for the population on both sides of the administrative border as part of the closure of crossing points and containment measures. In a new meeting in October, focused on the situation of the IPRM, the representatives of participating women's organisations repeated their views on the impact of the closure of the crossing points and the challenges in accessing medicines and health care during the pandemic, as well as needs to acquire skills and tools for online learning. They also pointed out how the restriction of movement had affected access to pensions and social benefits for the Georgian population in the Gali region (Abkhazia). Furthermore, women from Georgia, Abkhazia and South Ossetia participated in online meetings organised by UN Women and the Institute for War and Peace Reporting (IWPR) on issues that affected women on both sides of the administrative border line. They addressed issues such as coping mechanisms, stress due to the pandemic and others.

South-east Europe

Cyprus	
Negotiating actors	Republic of Cyprus, self-proclaimed Turkish Republic of Northern Cyprus
Third parties	UN, EU; Turkey, Greece and 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 a demilitarised zone known as the buffer zone or "Green Line", supervised by the UN. 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 has generated high expectations at various moments, while it has also faced stagnation.

The peace process remained largely deadlocked, with the mediators and actors supporting the dialogue focusing their efforts on exploring and promoting its possible resumption, while the context of the conflict worsened, in part due to the serious increase in regional tension over hydrocarbon exploration and the delimitation of maritime borders that pitted Turkey against Greece and Cyprus in a dispute that also involves international players such as France, Italy, Egypt and the United Arab Emirates (UAE) in support of Greece and Cyprus, and which was also projected onto the armed conflict in Libya.¹⁵ In addition, the COVID-19 pandemic influenced the process throughout the year, restricting confidence-building activities for civil society and the work of the joint technical committees for the negotiating process. In his mid-year report on his good offices mission, UN Secretary-General António Guterres found that three years after the international talks in Crans-Montana (Switzerland), which brought together the parties to the conflict, the guarantor countries and the UN, **resuming the negotiations was more difficult**. At the same time, Guterres reaffirmed in his commitment made in November 2019 to study an informal meeting with the parties, the guarantor powers and the UN, but cautioning that it should be different. He also said that dialogue at the technical committee level could not replace a broad negotiating process and called on the parties to agree to the terms of reference for the negotiations and to strengthen the political will to achieve a solution to the conflict.

During the year there was no resumption of the dialogue at the formal high level, although in early November there was an informal meeting between Greek Cypriot leader Nicos Anastasiades and Turkish Cypriot leader Ersin Tatar, the new president of the Turkish Cypriot authority elected in the postponed October elections, which were sponsored by the UN. Furthermore, at the end of the year it became evident that difficulties and challenges were increasing. **The position of the new Turkish Cypriot leader against a federation and in favour of exploring other types of solutions, such as a confederation and a two-state solution, threw uncertainty into the negotiating process**, which has relied on the parties' support for negotiating a bizonal and bi-communal federation solution with political equality. During his

15. See the summary on Turkey, Greece and Cyprus in chapter 2 (Socio-political crises) in Escola de Cultura de Pau, *Alert 2021! Report on conflicts, human rights and peacebuilding*. Barcelona: Icaria, 2021.

time in office as prime minister (from May 2019 to October 2020), he revealed that he is against the bizonal federation. Turkish President Recep Tayyip Erdogan also called for discussing and negotiating a two-state solution, stating that in Cyprus there were currently two separate peoples, two democratic orders and two separate states. He made his remarks during a controversial visit to Varosha, a coastal city whose Greek Cypriot population fled after the invasion of Turkey in 1974. Abandoned and closed since then, it was partially reopened shortly before the elections, though this drew heavy criticism from the Greek Cypriot Government.

The new Turkish Cypriot leader was opposed to a solution for Cyprus based on a federation and defended exploring other options, such as a confederation or a two-state solution

impacts on specific groups of women, such as migrant women and domestic workers. At a Hands Across the Divide meeting in June, in which the UN mission UNFICYP participated, its members pointed out that the political sphere continued to be dominated by men and that there were still problems in integrating a gender perspective into the peace process and political processes, as well as in questioning patriarchal structures in the respective communities. The Cypriot antenna of the Mediterranean Women Mediators Network also started its activity in 2020.

The year was influenced by the **COVID-19 pandemic, which led to the establishment of restrictions on movement and face-to-face meetings, which made the work of the technical committees difficult. Still, in his mid-year report, the UN Secretary-General highlighted that there were signs of revitalisation and increased involvement of the committees.** The work carried out included joint statements from various committees. In the context of the pandemic, the members of the technical health committee maintained daily contact. Other levels and spaces of the peace process remained active online, such as the meetings between Greek Cypriot and Turkish Cypriot political representatives supported by the Slovak Embassy and the Religious Track, led by leaders of the two main religious communities on the island, which issued several joint statements during the year.

Gender, peace and security

As part of the formal peace negotiating process, the technical committee on gender equality remained active, although the scope of the gender dimension throughout the process continued to be limited. The committee held two meetings throughout the year, in online format due to the pandemic, and focused its discussions mainly on gender violence, which has worsened during the expansion of COVID-19. Civil society organisations warned at different times of the increase in violence against women. For example, the local organisation Hands Across the Divide, which has brought together Greek Cypriot and Turkish-Cypriot women since 2001, expressed concern about the serious increase in reports of domestic violence against women, noting that the cases reported are only a fraction of the total. The technical gender committee of the negotiating process gave figures from local civil society that indicated a 58% increase in complaints of domestic violence against women and girls in the Greek Cypriot community between mid-March and mid-April and of a 10% increase in that period among the Turkish Cypriot population. Female peacebuilders also cited other impacts of the pandemic among women, such as an increase in invisible care work and disproportionate

Serbia – Kosovo

Negotiating actors Serbia, Kosovo

Third parties EU, UN, USA

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 EU-facilitated negotiating process between Serbia and Kosovo was resumed after being stalled since the end of 2018, although disagreements continued on

important issues such as the creation of the association of Serbian municipalities of Kosovo. All this took place in a complex context, in the face of the COVID-19 pandemic and the Kosovar political crisis, which included the prosecution of the president of Kosovo for war crimes in the conflict in the 1990s. The Serbian president and the Kosovar prime minister restarted the EU-facilitated dialogue on 12 July, preceded by an online summit that same month that was sponsored by France and Germany and did not achieve great results. The dialogue resumed under the EU umbrella included rounds at the high political level and meetings at the technical level. The restart was facilitated by Kosovo's lifting of 100% tariffs on Serbian products, which had led to the cancellation of the talks in November 2018 after they were imposed. However, the resumption of the dialogue faced difficulties, including **disagreement over the establishment of an association of Serbian municipalities in Kosovo**, which was included in an agreement in 2013 and again in 2015, but was still pending implementation. Kosovar Prime Minister Avdullah Hoti warned in October that the association would only be established if a final agreement was reached to resolve the conflict with Serbia and include mutual recognition. He also said that such a structure would not have executive powers. The 2015 agreement provided that the association would control economic development, education, health care, urban and rural planning, and that Serbia would contribute financially to the budget of the association of municipalities. **Some progress was made in the process, such as the achievement of an agreement in September on cooperation in relation to missing persons and internally displaced persons.** Other topics of the dialogue included integrated border control and the related agreement reached in previous years was implemented in October. The parties also discussed property and financial claims issues in Brussels in October.

The **United States increased its role in the process** during the year. After an unsuccessful attempt to convene the parties in the US in June, in early September (and prior to the restart of the dialogue facilitated by the EU), the Serbian president and the Kosovar prime minister met in Washington with US President Donald Trump. The parties signed **separate agreements with the US to normalise economic relations between Serbia and Kosovo**, which included a provision to strengthen diplomatic relations with Israel and establish embassies in Jerusalem, which was criticised by the EU. The economic normalisation agreements were preceded by US-facilitated agreements in January and February to reopen commercial flights and to restore rail and road transport. Some analysts pointed out that the strengthened role of the US, especially since the appointment of the US envoy Richard Grenell in October 2019, represented a division

of areas between US facilitation, focused on economic issues, and the EU's politics of dialogue.

The dialogue took place in a convulsive context on various levels. Kosovo remained embroiled in an **internal political crisis** stemming from the early legislative elections of October 2019 after the resignation of Prime Minister Ramush Haradinaj in July 2019. The new coalition government led by Vetevendosje and with LDK as partners, which assumed power in February, collapsed in late March due to a motion of no confidence promoted by the LDK due to disagreements over the approach to the pandemic and the powers of President Hashim Thaçi in managing it, among other aspects. It was succeeded in June by a new government led by the LDK, with Avdullah Hoti as prime minister, thought it was criticised by Vetevendosje, which called for new elections and staged protests. The new government announced its willingness to restart the dialogue facilitated by the EU, although once it was resumed, it started setting limits, such as the principle that nothing would be decided until everything was decided, a fact that added uncertainty to the agreements reached previously in the process. Furthermore, **Kosovar President Thaçi resigned in November after the charges filed against him by the Special Court for Kosovo**, based in The Hague, for war crimes, including the murder of at least 100 civilians while he was commander of the KLA in the war between Serbia and Kosovo in the late 1990s.

Serbia and Kosovo restarted their EU-facilitated dialogue, but maintained their disagreements on important issues such as the implementation of the agreement to create an association of municipalities with a Serb majority in northern Kosovo

Gender, peace and security

The Security and Gender Group called for the effective participation of women in the Kosovo delegation to the negotiating process between Serbia and Kosovo and its working groups during the year. It did so in a letter presented in June, signed by members of the group, including local organisations such as the Kosovo Women's Network (which includes 151 organisations) and international actors, including various embassies of EU countries, international UN agencies (UN Women, UNHCR, UNDP and others) and EU actors (EULEX mission, special representatives). The Security and Gender Group urged Kosovo's institutions to increase their efforts to implement the Law on Gender Equality, which enforces female inclusion in decision-making spaces in the executive, legislative and judicial spheres, and the Gender Equality Programme of 2020-2021, which calls for female participation in peace and reconciliation processes. The members of the Security and Gender Group denounced the under-representation of women in the negotiating process and in consultations with the population and pointed to the lack of a gender perspective in the process. They called for participation through transparent and open processes based on

participatory consultations. Furthermore, the Network of Women Mediators of the Mediterranean established an antenna in Kosovo in November.

Western Europe

Spain (Basque Country)	
Negotiating actors	ETA (dissolved), government of Spain, government of the Basque Country, government of Navarre, government of France, <i>Communauté d'Agglomération du Pays Basque</i> (Basque Municipal Community), political and social actors of the Basque Country, Basque Political Prisoners Collective (EPPK)
Third parties	Permanent Social Forum, Bake Bidea
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 to meet 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. During these decades the conflict continued in multiple expressions, including the violent activity of ETA and the GAL police organisation, protected by parts of the central government. 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 Abertzale left, 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 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, ETA announced the definitive end of its armed activity in 2011 and took new steps towards unilateral disarmament in subsequent years, with the involvement of civil society, and ETA's final dissolution in 2018. Stakeholders such as the International Contact Group and the Centre for Humanitarian Dialogue (Switzerland) were involved as third parties in the negotiating process.

Nine years have passed since the definitive end of ETA's armed activity and two years since the final dissolution of its structures, while steps continued to be taken and challenges remained in areas such as the transfer of inmates to prisons closer to home, memory and reparations. The Basque Government asserted that the dismantling of ETA in a short period of time was great news and that the model followed for ending the violence was a benchmark for other parts of the world, while pointing out that issues such as the clarification of the past violence and reparations for the victims remained unresolved. Progress continued with initiatives promoting co-existence in various areas. However, disagreement continued over public tributes to imprisoned ETA members. In September, several associations asked some Basque city councils to block public tributes or messages idealising ETA in public, citing them in many towns in the Basque Country and demanding that co-existence be built on a basis where perpetrators are not considered heroes. The Victims of Terrorism Group (COVITE) identified over 100 acts of support for ETA between January and June, counting 158% more than in the previous year. Moreover, the Permanent Social Forum presented a report on society's pending challenges regarding ETA victims after a meeting in September with victims of the armed organisation. The Social Forum also denounced attacks in the media and social networks against victims at various times and called on political parties, victims' associations and social actors to protect the victims and demand an end to the attacks and re-victimisation.

Many political and social figures in the Basque Country continued to call for inmates to be transferred to prisons in the autonomous community. These calls increased in the context of the coronavirus pandemic so that relatives and friends could travel to visit. The Basque Government filed a request with the central government in this regard in May. Various approaches were made during the year. In November, the central Government indicated that the pace of relocation had increased and that in the previous five months, 64 transfers of the 103 approved since 2018 had been authorised, of which 21 were sent to prisons in the Basque Country and two in Navarre. In December, the Permanent Social Forum pointed out that although steps were being taken in the right direction, many prisoners were still incarcerated too far from home. The Permanent Social Forum repeated figures from the Behatokia Observatory to point out that from September 2018 (the date of the first prisoner transfer movement) until November 2020, there had been 69 effective transfers, while another 15 were still pending. Of the total, 192 prisoners belonged to the majority group of EPPK prisoners, another six to ATA (considered dissidents of the *abertzale* left), three to Vía Nanclares and another four had no affiliation. However, only 14 of those 69 were transferred to Basque prisons, while 26 were transferred within a radius of 260 km, 16 within a radius of 385 km and the other even further away, including one case 1,100 km away. The Permanent

Social Forum also claimed that the government's figures included movements of the same people. In December, various political parties (EAJ-PNV, EH Bildu, Elkarrekin-Podemos/IU) and unions (ELA, LAB, CCOO, UGT, STEILAS, ESK, Hiru, Etxalde, EHNE, CGT and CNT) presented a public statement **demanding a plan to move inmates to prisons in the Basque Country and demanded the application of ordinary legislation for the prisoners.** The statement was the result of joint work done at the initiative of Etxerat, a prisoners' relatives association.

Gender, peace and security

Women from the Basque Country continued to contribute useful lessons for the Basque context. In November,

the Basque women's initiative Ahotsak presented a report prepared by researchers from the Autonomous University of Barcelona's Escola de Cultura de Pau that analyses Ahotsak's experience as an initiative of women through dialogue, its background, contributions and obstacles to peacebuilding in the Basque Country.¹⁶ In the presentation of the report, members of Ahotsak highlighted the validity of consensus building, as employed by Ahotsak throughout its history, to move forward on pending issues in the Basque Country, such as higher thresholds of co-existence. Ahotsak presented the document during a conference organised with the Permanent Social Forum called "Women in peace processes", which featured female speakers from various countries and territories, including Guatemala, Colombia, Western Sahara and Turkey.

16. Vilellas, Ana, Vilellas, María and Urrutia, Pamela, *La experiencia de AHOTSAK: Mujeres por el diálogo en el conflicto vasco*. Quaderns de Construcció de Pau no. 28, Escola de Cultura de Pau, February 2020.