

5. Peace negotiations in Europe

- In 2021, seven of the 37 peace processes in the world (19%) took place in Europe.
- All the negotiating processes in Europe involved third parties in supporting roles.
- On the 10th anniversary of the definitive end of ETA's armed activity, new progress was made in terms of coexistence and prisoners in the Basque Country.
- The negotiations around Ukraine faced serious obstacles, given the delay in implementing the Minsk agreements, the massive deployment of Russian troops along the border and Moscow's demands for a new security architecture in the continent from NATO and the US.
- Under Russian mediation, Armenia and Azerbaijan addressed issues related to the opening of transport and economic ties, the delimitation of the border, the exchange of prisoners and demining in an antagonistic atmosphere after the 2020 war.
- Informal contacts in Cyprus during the year failed to resume official negotiations and the parties remained at a standoff.
- Women's civil society organisations from Kosovo, Georgia, Cyprus and other countries demanded effective participation in the negotiating processes, with specific proposals.

This chapter provides an analysis of the main peace processes and negotiations in Europe in 2021. 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 2021.

Table 5.1. Summary of peace processes and negotiations in Europe in 2021

Peace processes and negotiations	Negotiating actors	Third parties
Armenia – Azerbaijan (Nagorno-Karabakh)	Armenia, Azerbaijan	Rusia, OSCE Minsk Group (co-chaired by Russia, France and the USA; the remaining permanent members are Belarus, Germany, Italy, Sweden, Finland and Turkey), Turkey, ¹ EU
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 ²	OSCE, EU and UN; USA, Russia ³
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, Communauté d'Agglomération du Pays Basque (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 ⁴	OSCE (in the Trilateral Contact Group, where Ukraine and Russia ⁵ also participate), Germany and France (in the Normandy Group, where Ukraine and Russia also participate ⁶), USA

1. 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.
2. 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.
3. Ibid.
4. 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.
5. Ibid.
6. Ibid.

5.1. Negotiations in 2021: regional trends

In Europe, seven peace processes were identified in 2021, the same number as in 2020. They account for 19% compared to the total number of peace processes across the globe in 2021 (37 worldwide). Of the two active armed conflicts in Europe, only one (Ukraine) was subject to negotiations, while the war between Turkey and the PKK (active since 1984) continued without dialogue. Five other processes covered crises of varying intensity (Armenia and Azerbaijan, regarding Nagorno-Karabakh; Georgia, in relation to Abkhazia and South Ossetia and Russia; Moldova, over Transdniestria; Cyprus; and Serbia and Kosovo), including the case of Armenia-Azerbaijan, which was the scene of a war in 2020 and was still facing militarised tension in 2021. One case, that of the Basque Country, was not considered a crisis.

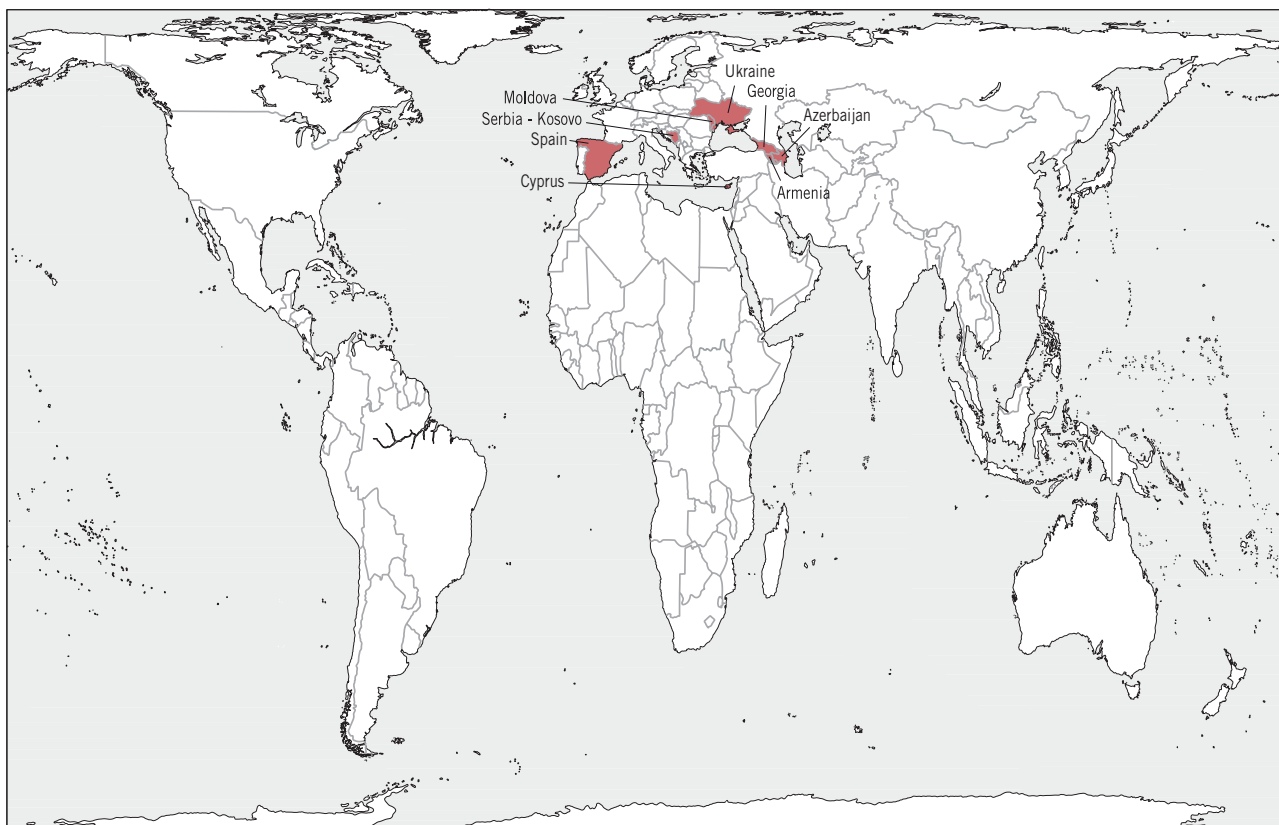
One distinctive feature of Europe was the relatively high proportion of **actors** representing self-proclaimed states (Transdniestria, Abkhazia, South Ossetia, the Turkish Republic of Northern Cyprus, Donetsk People's Republic, Luhansk People's Republic) participating in various formats under the decisive influence of countries exercising political, economic and military influence over them. In 2021, there was a trend towards a greater internationalisation of actors, mainly in relation to Ukraine. The escalation

***Peace processes
in Europe in 2021
accounted for 19% of
all cases worldwide***

of military tension around Ukraine, with the massive deployment of Russian troops near the Ukrainian border and the risk of a military invasion, represented a hardening of Russia's geostrategic stance towards Euro-Atlantic actors, with Moscow making demands of the United States and NATO regarding Ukraine and the entire security architecture of Europe. Stalled in its Normandy format, the negotiating process over Ukraine was extended to direct dialogue between Russia and the US. This was scheduled to continue in early 2022 with more meetings between Russia and the US, also interrelated with the Strategic Stability Dialogue between the US and Russia, as well as dialogue between NATO and Russia and within the framework of the OSCE.

Europe continued to stand out for the proportion of third parties involved in the negotiations. All the peace processes involved external parties performing mediation and facilitation tasks. Most of the mediating or facilitating actors continued to be intergovernmental organisations, although the role of states increased. 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). On the other hand,

Map 5.1. Peace negotiations in Europe in 2021



■ Countries with peace processes and negotiations in Europe in 2021

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. It also became more actively involved in the negotiating process between Armenia and Azerbaijan during the year. 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. The role of various states increased in 2021, such as Russia in the negotiations between Armenia and Azerbaijan over Nagorno-Karabakh, following the trend of the previous year, in which Moscow mediated the agreement that ended the six-week war. Moscow’s role in Europe continued to be controversial, but also in other regions⁷, considered both a party to the conflict and a third party in Georgia and Ukraine.

Most negotiations in Europe faced obstacles and/or deadlock during 2021

With regard to the peacekeeping and ceasefire observation missions and mechanisms in 2021, there were Russian peacekeeping troops in Nagorno-Karabakh and in the Lachin corridor, which connects the enclave with Armenia. The Russian troops were deployed at the end of 2020 under the agreement that ended the war that year. During 2021, their limitations were revealed, without a clear mandate and with a presence in areas far from the new front lines that resulted from the 2020 conflict. Another development in 2021 was Russia’s veto of the extension of the OSCE Observer Mission (OM) at the Gukovo and Donetsk checkpoints (OM), which had supervised these two checkpoints on the Russian side of the border and was different from the OSCE Special Monitoring Mission (SMM) in Ukraine.

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. In 2021, military and political-military aspects remained relevant in several of the contexts. It was a year of massive deployment of Russian troops along the border with Ukraine, accompanied by a hardening in Moscow’s geostrategic stance towards NATO and the US that placed political-military issues such as Europe’s security architecture in the spotlight. Russia demanded guarantees not to expand NATO membership eastward, including to Ukraine, and to ban deployments of military forces and weapons outside NATO’s 1997 borders. In turn, the United States threatened economic sanctions and other measures in the event of a Russian military escalation over Ukraine. Meanwhile, Ukraine and the self-proclaimed authorities of Donetsk and Luhansk reached a new **ceasefire** in December as part of the Trilateral Contact Group, again adhering to the one reached in 2020, although violations of the ceasefire continued to occur. Despite the armed incidents and violations of the cessation of hostilities agreement that ended the 2020 war, Armenia and Azerbaijan

agreed to establish an EU-supported channel of direct communication between their defence ministers as an incident prevention mechanism. Russian peacekeeping troops were also involved in coordinating and cooperating with the armies of both countries to resolve incidents.

On the other hand, 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. In Ukraine, disagreements continued over the implementation of the Minsk agreements and the sequence of their content, which includes the status of Donetsk and Luhansk, elections and border control. Their unfavourable terms for Ukraine, insofar as they leave recovering control of its border for the end of the process, made it difficult for Ukraine to comply. In Cyprus, with the high-level political process at an impasse and only informal contacts, the gulf between the parties continued to widen and the leadership of the Turkish Republic of Northern Cyprus reaffirmed its defence of a two-state solution. In Kosovo, the Kosovar prime minister forwarded a proposal that included bilateral relations with mutual recognition. It was rejected by Serbia, which called for the creation of the association of Kosovo Serb municipalities in compliance with previous agreements.

Regarding their **evolution**, Europe faced profound obstacles and/or stagnation in most of the negotiating processes, as well as great questions. There was serious deterioration in Ukraine, hand in hand with deep disagreement over the Minsk agreements, the massive deployment of Russian troops along the border with Ukraine and Russia’s arm wrestling with the US and NATO. Even if the highest-level dialogue was restarted for the conflict between Serbia and Kosovo during the year, significant disagreement and tension persisted, as evidenced by the most serious incidents since 2011 between the two territories. Armenia and Azerbaijan committed to work for the delimitation and demarcation of the border, as well as for the re-establishment of transport and economic connections, although the delay during the year regarding these matters demonstrated the antagonism between the parties after the 2020 war. 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. Although the guarantor countries Greece and Turkey resumed their exploratory dialogue, the growing distance between the Turkish Cypriot (and Turkish) and Greek Cypriot positions and the continued tension in the Eastern Mediterranean generated concern. An exception was in Spain the process in the Basque Country, with progress during the year in areas such as transferring prisoners closer to prisons in the Basque Country and

7. See chapter 6 (Peace negotiations in the Middle East).

Navarra and to the autonomous communities closest to them, as well as progress in co-existence.

Faced with the stagnation and obstacles in the formal negotiating processes in Europe, civil society initiatives advocated dialogue and greater participation. Peace process formats mostly focused on the high political level in Europe, with few mechanisms for the participation of civil society and with few links with initiatives promoted from the base. Among other initiatives, around fifty civil society organisations from Serbia and Kosovo urged the leaders of both territories to resume sustainable dialogue and to refrain from incendiary rhetoric against their respective minority populations. In Cyprus, activity and calls for civil society dialogue intensified prior to the informal summit in April.

Regarding the **gender perspective**, the peace processes in Europe continued to be characterised mainly by low levels of women's participation in the negotiating teams, as well as by the lack of mechanisms or gender architecture. Nevertheless, as part of Sweden's rotating presidency of the OSCE, the organisation stepped up efforts during the year to achieve greater female participation in negotiating processes. This impetus took the form of some appeals, consultations and training. The United Nations also urged strengthening the gender dimension in the processes. The UN Secretary-General joined others in calling on the parties in Cyprus to guarantee a minimum of 30% women in their delegations. Women's organisations and women activists in Europe demanded to participate in peace processes and integrate the gender perspective into them. Georgian women raised specific demands in meetings with government representatives participating in the peace process and proposed the creation of a space for direct dialogue between Georgian and Ossetian women, among other initiatives. In Cyprus, the Mediterranean Women Mediators Network called for the integration of the gender perspective and the participation of women in the negotiating process, offering to identify potential participants from both communities. The Kosovo Women's Network told the Kosovo government that it demanded substantive female participation in the negotiations, including in the negotiating team and in consultation formats.

Finally, even if they are not covered by this yearbook as they are not defined as peace processes, other crisis situations in Europe were the subjects of political dialogue or calls for dialogue. This was the case of the negotiations between the governments of Kyrgyzstan and Tajikistan and between Kyrgyzstan and Uzbekistan regarding the delimitation of their borders in a context of security incidents, with an especially serious one between Kyrgyzstan and Tajikistan in 2021. Kyrgyzstan

and Uzbekistan reached landmark border demarcation agreements in 2021. In Bosnia and Herzegovina, international calls and appeals for political dialogue multiplied amid the serious deterioration of the political situation in 2021, with the Republika Srpska approving withdrawal from key federal institutions (army, tax and judicial systems) and opened the door to developing their own. Various international actors warned of the risks to the legal framework established by the Dayton Peace Accords (1995).

In relation to the tension surrounding the status of Catalonia, in June the central government approved pardons for the nine pro-independence political and social leaders sentenced to prison terms of between 9 and 13 years in 2019 under accusations of disobedience and sedition. The pardons suspended their prison sentences but not the penalty of absolute professional disqualification. In September, the dialogue began with a meeting between a delegation from the central government of Spain and another from the government of Catalonia, without the involvement of the Junts per Catalunya party, a member of the coalition government. Different explanations were offered for their absence, but the door was left open to their future participation. This meeting was preceded the same day by another meeting between the prime minister of Spain and the president of the government of Catalonia. Despite the cordial climate, the gulf between the parties' points of departure was clear. The Spanish government adhered to its 44-point "Agenda for Reunion",⁸ or some updated version of it, while the government of Catalonia defended a referendum on independence and amnesty for the people involved in legal proceedings related to the conflict. Both leaders agreed to dialogue without specific deadlines, as well as to hold regular meetings and discreet meetings as well. There were no new public meetings for the negotiations for the rest of the year.

Civil society organisations carried out initiatives and advocated dialogue and greater participation in peace processes, as it was the case in the Serbia-Kosovo and Cyprus processes

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)

8. Government of Spain, *Agenda para el reencuentro*, 6 February, 2020.

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

The negotiating process continued at various levels and progress was made towards resuming the 5+2 format, which brings together the parties to the conflict and the mediators (OSCE, Russia, Ukraine) and observers (USA, EU), though it finally had to be postponed.

Meetings were held among political representatives and joint expert working groups during the year. The chief negotiators of Moldova and the self-proclaimed Transdniestria, Vladislav Kulminski and Vitaly Ignatiev, met in a 1+1 format on several occasions, facilitated by the OSCE mission. Several times, OSCE representatives commented on the constructive atmosphere of the negotiations, the parties' willingness to participate in the 5+2 format, the coordination between the parties in addressing the challenges related to the COVID-19 pandemic and action to restore freedom of movement between Moldova and the territory controlled by Transdniestria. Overall, however, difficulties continued to bog down implementation of the package of measures known as Berlin Plus. The OSCE urged the parties to prepare joint proposals for confidence-building measures related to the package.

The parties to the conflict moved towards resuming the 5+2 format under the impetus of the Swedish rotating chairmanship of the OSCE and 2-3 November were set as the dates for holding a 5+2 round. However, it was finally cancelled at Moldova's request. Transdniestria described the cancellation as alarming, saying that it made addressing many issues impossible. The delegation of the self-proclaimed region had planned to raise various issues during the round, including the ban on the entry of vehicles from Transdniestria to Ukraine

since September. The Transdniestrian authorities also accused Moldova of failing to implement previous agreements, including the Berlin and Berlin Plus packages and the 2017 and 2018 protocols. **The Moldovan government said that it was willing to hold a 5+2 round in the future, but that it must first appoint a new chief negotiator after Kulminski's resignation** in early November, allegedly for personal reasons. Some analysts argued that the issue of Transdniestria was not a priority for the new government, which was more focused on the anti-corruption agenda and European integration, and that the internationalised dimension of the conflict made it difficult to address internally. Others said that resolving the conflict first required internal reforms within the Moldovan state. Although the round was cancelled, the Moldovan authorities and president indicated that the negotiating process was ongoing, that the talks with the participants of the 5+2 format were continuing and that the only option was a political solution to the conflict.

This went on in a year of important political changes in Moldova, with an impact on the geopolitical relations projected onto the conflict and the negotiations. After Maria Sandu was elected the new president in late 2020, defeating the pro-Russian acting president Igor Dodon, the early parliamentary elections in July 2021 handed the victory to Sandu's party, which is pro-European, though favourable to maintaining relations with Russia. Following the election of the new government, the deputy head of the Russian presidential administration, Dmitry Kozak, met with Sandu in the Moldovan capital in a meeting described by Kozak as very constructive and expressive of goodwill. In August, Sandu said that relations with Russia would be based on pragmatism and that one of her goals was not to allow any destabilisation in the conflict. However, relations between Moldova and Russia deteriorated in the last four months of the year due to a serious gas crisis when the contract between Moldova and the Russian company Gazprom expired without an agreement on prices and terms for a new long-term gas agreement. The EU accused Russia of turning gas into a weapon against Moldova and some analysts described the crisis as Russian retaliation against the country for its pro-European electoral shift. The parties reached an agreement in late October, but in November tensions flared again with threats to shut down gas if Moldova did not pay for recent supplies. Finally, Moldova approved amendments to its budget to approve the required payments and prevent a major energy crisis. In this heated context, the negotiating process remained in the background and by early December the new chief negotiator to replace Kulminski had not yet been appointed. Transdniestrian President Vadim Krasnoselsky, who was re-elected in the presidential election in December, though it was not recognised by Moldova or the international community and had only one other candidate, urged Moldova to name a new chief negotiator and resume the 5+2 format.

Gender, peace and security

References to the women, peace and security agenda increased in meetings at different levels of the negotiating process, under the impetus of the Swedish rotating presidency of the OSCE and the new general secretariat of the organisation. Among other pronouncements, the special representative of the OSCE rotating chairpersonship urged the parties to the conflict to strengthen the role of women in the conflict resolution process, including by appointing more women to the co-leadership of the joint expert working groups, among other positions. At the end of the year, the OSCE mission in Moldova joined together with UN Women and the rotating OSCE chairmanship to co-organise an intensive training course for female members of joint working groups focused on capacity-building in mediation, negotiation, conflict analysis and communication, with a gender perspective.

Ukraine (east)	
Negotiating actors	Government of Ukraine, representatives of the self-proclaimed People's Republics of Donetsk and Luhansk, government of Russia ⁹
Third parties	OSCE in the Trilateral Contact Group, where Ukraine and Russia ¹⁰ also participate), Germany and France (in the Normandy Group, where Ukraine and Russia ¹¹), USA
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 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 of the conflict in eastern Ukraine continued to face difficulties at its various levels (Normandy format, trilateral contact group, monitoring mechanisms, among others), amid an impasse in the negotiations and a year of escalating international tension surrounding the conflict, with Ukrainian and US warnings of the risk of invasion by Russia. Overall, no progress was made in the negotiating process. The Normandy format continued, though without meeting at its highest level (leaders from Ukraine, Russia, Germany and France). Meetings did take place among these different countries' political advisors, in which they addressed issues such as ceasefire violations, the implementation of the Minsk agreements and prisoner exchanges, as well as trilateral meetings between Germany, France and Ukraine. The Ukrainian issue was on the agenda of the talks between the US and Russian presidents, including their meeting in Geneva in June and by videoconference in December.

The Trilateral Contact Group (OSCE, Ukraine and Russia, in dialogue with the representatives of Donetsk and Luhansk) held meetings throughout the year, though not in person due to the COVID-19 pandemic. **Disagreements persisted on substantive issues in the security, political and humanitarian working groups. Disagreements in the political working group prevented the development of an action plan to implement the Minsk agreements.** In March, a German-French proposal for a resolution was leaked, which included a concrete proposal on the issues under discussion. Some analysts blamed the leak on Russia as part of a strategy to highlight Ukraine's lack of support for the process and weaken its position. In late October, OSCE Special Representative Mikko Kinnunen, who had taken office in August, replacing Heidi Grau, described the two sides' "continuous differences" as "profound". The parties continued to differ on the sequence of the substantive elements of the Minsk agreements (special status of Donetsk and Luhansk, elections in those areas, Ukrainian-Russian border control and others). Russia continued to give more importance to the Minsk II Agreement, while Ukraine defended the unity of the various agreements together (Minsk I and Minsk II). At the beginning of the year, the OSCE representative had also emphasised the unity of the Minsk agreements.

9. 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.

10. Ibid.

11. Ibid.

Seeking to deny France and Germany's claims that Russia did not want to summon the Normandy format, in November Moscow published confidential diplomatic messages sent between France, Germany and Russia, provoking accusations of breaking diplomatic protocol and demonstrating the gulf between the parties. The French and German governments said that publishing these messages showed Russia's attempts at obstruction with unacceptable preconditions and urged Moscow to return to the Normandy talks.

The escalation of militarisation in November led to a crisis and an increase in diplomatic activity, stoked by intelligence from the US and Ukraine on the massive deployment of Russian troops around the border with Ukraine and warnings of a possible invasion and Russian accusations of the Western-backed militarisation of Ukraine and provocation. **The Russian and US presidents discussed the crisis in a videoconference meeting in early December and again at the end of the month.** Russia demanded legal guarantees that NATO would not expand into Eastern Europe, including Ukraine, and a ban on deploying troops and weapons outside NATO's 1997 borders, among other demands. Moscow also blamed Ukraine for the non-implementation of the Minsk agreements. US President Biden warned of economic sanctions and other responses in the event of a military escalation over Ukraine. Both presidents agreed that their teams would continue to meet to de-escalate the crisis. Negotiations between the US and Russia, NATO and Russia, and the OSCE and Russia were scheduled for early January. Russia expressed its demands in two treaties, addressed to NATO and the US, which it demanded they sign and that would amount to a profound change in Europe's security architecture.

The lack of agreements to restore the 2020 ceasefire during the year, the periodic escalations and ceasefire violations, the presence of weapons in exclusion zones and the restrictions on the OSCE observation mission all illustrated the chronic fragility of the security situation and the negotiating process. **There was also no progress in designating new demilitarised areas** during the year and the situation worsened in one of the three areas, Petrivske. Meanwhile, Russia vetoed the renewal of the OSCE observation mission's mandate at the Russian checkpoints of Gukovo and Donetsk (OM), which expired on 30 September. This led to the dismantling of the mechanism for monitoring the situation on the ground and movements across the border. **The negotiations of the working group on humanitarian issues did not lead to the reopening of any crossing points during the year and only two crossings were open throughout 2021.** Talks on a prisoner exchange continued. A ceasefire was reached at the end of the year, but new ceasefire violations were reported.

Gender, peace and security

The negotiating process continued mostly without women's participation. As pointed out in a gender-themed report by the OSCE Special Monitoring Mission (SMM) covering the period between November 2018 and June 2021, women's voices remained largely unheard on policy issues.¹² The SMM highlighted the roles played by women of civil society in peacebuilding initiatives, including by providing humanitarian assistance and psychosocial support, ensuring access to healthcare and defending the rights of internally displaced people and former combatants (including in areas along the Line of Contact), as well in initiatives launched by relatives of disappeared persons and dialogue activities. Public and non-public efforts at dialogue promoted by female civil society activists continued during the period studied in the report. The OSCE mission noted obstacles and challenges faced by female activists and women's organisations in their peacebuilding initiatives, including security risks, resistance and social distrust, difficulties in meeting because of closed crossing points and pandemic-related restrictions, as well as the trust-building limitations of online formats, the lack of access to the peace process, the lack of interest and support from political actors in women's peace initiatives and from some donors, difficulties in accessing stable and long-term funding, deteriorating socioeconomic conditions (including due to the COVID-19 pandemic), difficulties in promoting local ownership and local priorities with donors.

Disagreements over the implementation of the Minsk agreements continued in Ukraine during a year of escalating militarisation and warnings of a possible Russian attack on the country

Russia and the Caucasus

Armenia – Azerbaijan (Nagorno-Karabakh)	
Negotiating actors	Government of Armenia, Government of Azerbaijan
Third parties	Russia, OSCE Minsk Group (Co-chaired by Russia, France and USA; other permanent members are Belarus, Germany, Italy, Sweden, Finland and Turkey), Turkey
Relevant agreements	Bishkek Protocol (1994), Ceasefire agreement (1994), Statement by President of the Republic of Azerbaijan, Prime Minister of the Republic of Armenia and President of the Russian Federation (2020)
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	

12. OSCE Special Monitoring Mission, *Gender dimensions of SMM monitoring: women's perceptions of security and their contributions to peace and security. 1 November 2018 – 15 June 2021*. OSCE, September 2021.

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 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.

After the six-week war in 2020 between Azerbaijan and Armenia over Nagorno-Karabakh that ended with a trilateral ceasefire agreement, the situation in 2021 was marked by **deep antagonism between the parties, disagreements and difficulties in implementing the points of the agreement, the fragility of the ceasefire and uncertainty about the future resolution of the status of the enclave**. An ad hoc negotiating framework was adopted, with Russia predominant as the main mediator (it hosted two meetings at the highest political level, in January and December). This led to a certain displacement of the OSCE Minsk Group, though it held some separate meetings with the parties, as well as a joint meeting alongside the UN General Assembly and another in November that supported the Russian initiatives. Thus, in addition to being a donor, the EU became involved in efforts to facilitate dialogue between the parties.

Various points of the 2020 agreement were addressed with great difficulty during the year. In contrast, the issue of the political status of Nagorno-Karabakh, which was excluded from the 2020 agreement, was left out of the ad hoc dialogue held during the year. At the January summit between Azerbaijani President Ilham Aliyev and Armenian Prime Minister Nikol Pashinyan, mediated by Russian President Vladimir Putin, **a trilateral working group to negotiate the opening of transport connections and economic relations** was announced and began meeting that same month. **However, it was suspended for several months of the year**. In relation to the difficulty to reopen the connections, the ceasefire was fragile and volatile and tension rose due to armed incidents, with escalations in May and November that ultimately led to a new truce. In this context, in May Russia proposed **creating a joint commission to delimit and demarcate the border between both countries**. The proposal was accepted by the parties at the trilateral meeting in November, where they also promised to intensify efforts to establish transport connections and economic relations. In December, at

a meeting of the Azerbaijani and Armenian leaders in Brussels, mediated by EU Council President Charles Michel, both sides reaffirmed their previous commitments and **agreed to proceed with the restoration of railway lines** based on the principle of reciprocity and through border control and customs agreements. The EU also offered technical support in the form of an expert mission or border delimitation consultation group. Meanwhile, a new regional dialogue format to promote cooperation was launched in Moscow in December, bringing together Azerbaijan, Armenia, Georgia, Russia, Iran and Turkey, at the proposal of Baku and Ankara. Also that month, Turkey and Armenia announced the appointment of special representatives to normalise their relations.

In relation to the **ceasefire**, Russia kept its peacekeeping mission troops deployed in the Lachin corridor connecting Nagorno-Karabakh with Armenia as well as inside Nagorno-Karabakh. The troops were located on the main roads of Nagorno-Karabakh but far from the front lines and did not patrol them or nearby settlements. By mid-year they still did not have a clear mandate due to the disagreements between Armenia and Azerbaijan, which added uncertainty. In practice, the Russian troops were involved in many tasks, including support for reconstruction and accompaniment of civilians on the move, as well as coordination and cooperation with the respective Armenian and Azerbaijani top military commands regarding their daily activities and resolving incidents.¹³ In January, the joint Turkish-Russian observation centre began its operations based in the Aghdam district, under Baku's control since the 2020 war, while monitoring the situation on the front lines using drones. Taken together, the close physical distance between the Armenian and Azerbaijani troops and their closer proximity to civilian settlements due to the shift of the front lines after the 2020 war, as well as the limitations of observation mechanisms, all highlighted **the fragility of the situation and the ceasefire system**. As a step forward, in dialogue with the EU, in November the parties **agreed to establish a direct communication channel between their defence ministers** as an incident prevention mechanism.

The issue of **prisoners of war** remained contentious. Even though both governments claimed to have complied with the point of the 2020 trilateral agreement committed to the exchange of prisoners of war, international actors (the Council of Europe, the EU and others) expressed concern that not all Armenian prisoners were being released by Azerbaijan. For example, Baku considered dozens of Armenians detained after the November 2020 agreement to be terrorists and not prisoners of war. It also claimed to be unaware of the whereabouts of several dozen other detainees during the war, prompting concern about possible forced disappearance. Nevertheless, several limited agreements were reached during the year for prisoner swaps (January, February, September) and for the release of Armenian prisoners by Azerbaijan and the delivery of maps with the location of mines by Armenia (in June, July and

13. International Crisis Group, *Post-war Prospects for Nagorno-Karabakh*, ICG Report n° 264, 9 June 2021.

December). Nagorno-Karabakh and its adjacent districts remained one of the most heavily mined regions in the world.

In relation to other **humanitarian consequences** of the conflict laid out in the 2020 agreement, particularly the return of the displaced population, supported by UNHCR, the parties did not reach an agreement regarding international access to the Nagorno-Karabakh region, an obstacle linked to their antagonism around the issue of its status. Each party demanded that access to Nagorno-Karabakh only be allowed from its territory, which blocked any potential support from UNHCR in the population returns that took place in the months after the end of the war. In the political and social sphere, narratives linked to patriotism and militarism predominated. Some local civil society peacebuilding initiatives were produced on a limited scale and in a regional context of obstacles, including the stigmatisation of civil society that was involved in critical analysis of the war and promoted peacebuilding.

Gender, peace and security

The new negotiating scheme did not include the participation of women from civil society or a gender dimension, in continuity with their exclusion prior to the 2020 war. In this sense, a resolution of the European Parliament in May on prisoners of war in the period after the recent armed conflict between Armenia and Azerbaijan included a call to the governments of both countries, as well as to mediators, to systematically include women in the peace process as well as to consult with female human rights activists. Female human rights defenders and activists from Armenia and Azerbaijan cited the high degree of militarisation between women and men in both countries, including through the roles that citizens of both countries played in promoting and exalting military mobilisation in 2020, in a context of entrenched military propaganda and patriotism in multiple spheres and structures (political, educational and social). Female activists also noted the rise in discourse on the links between motherhood, defence of the nation and militarism, as well as the obstacles to performing peacebuilding work in the current situation, including because of their stigmatisation.

Georgia (Abkhazia, South Ossetia)	
Negotiating actors	Government of Georgia, representatives of Abkhazia and South Ossetia, government of Russia ¹⁴
Third parties	OSCE, EU and UN; USA Russia ¹⁵
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)

14. 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.

15. Ibid.

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 involving Georgia, the regions of Abkhazia and South Ossetia and Russia remained active, though beset with chronic obstacles. At the highest-level negotiating arena, four new face-to-face rounds of the Geneva International Discussions (GID) were held in March, June, October and December, co-mediated by the OSCE, EU and UN. After the slowdown in 2020, when only one round had been held in situ due to the pandemic (December), along with a series of prior consultations by videoconference and trips to the region by the co-mediators, the normalised resumption of the rounds of the GID in 2021 was hailed as a sign of progress by mediating actors such as the EU, faced with the challenges that the pandemic posed to the negotiating process. However, **the obstacles and the gulf between the parties on substantive issues became evident in the GID throughout the year.**

Within the GID working group on security the key issue of the non-use of force remained deadlocked. Abkhazia, South Ossetia and Russia continued to demand bilateral

agreements between Georgia and each of the regions on the commitment to the non-use of force, while Georgia maintained its position that the agreement on this matter should be between Russia and Georgia, which Russia rejected as it does not consider itself a party to the conflict. Georgia also expressed concern at the GID about the action plan for creating a common socio-economic space adopted by Abkhazia and Russia in late 2020, which includes “harmonisation” in areas such as dual nationality, double taxation and customs and which regulates the activity of NGOs and “foreign agents”, among many other aspects. Georgia also denounced Abkhazia, South Ossetia and Russia’s fait accompli practices of extending the administrative border, expanding the territory under their control. The de facto independent regions denounced what they consider to be the militarisation of Georgia within the framework of Tbilisi’s relations with NATO and its member states, such as the modernisation of its forces, joint military exercises and other activities. They also advocated delimiting the border between them and Georgia.

Other issues addressed in the security and humanitarian GID working groups included the detention of people crossing the administrative border, movement restrictions, people missing due to the conflict, ways to cope with the COVID-19 pandemic, the language rights of the Georgian minority in Abkhazia and others. The humanitarian working group continued to struggle, with some sessions being abandoned by representatives of Abkhazia and South Ossetia, as in previous years. On a positive note, the 2021 rounds included spaces for discussion on “human security” and common challenges faced by the populations of the conflict zone, and some aspects related to the women, peace and security agenda were addressed at the GID level. **International actors welcomed a certain degree of cooperation between the parties in conflict in dealing with the pandemic.** Even so, most of the year the crossing points of the administrative border remained closed. This closure aggravated the humanitarian and socioeconomic situation of the population living in the conflict zone.

The Ergneti Incident Prevention and Response Mechanism (IPRM) for South Ossetia, co-facilitated by the EU and the OSCE, remained active. In contrast, **the Gali IPRM remained inactive and was not reactivated during the year, although both parties expressed their willingness to do so in the last round of the GID of the year, in December.** The co-mediators also cited positive signs about its possible restart. Issues such as the prolonged closure of crossing points and their impact on the population were addressed at the Ergneti IPRM. On a positive note, cooperative measures regarding the use of water during the summer were praised. The co-facilitators highlighted the constructive climate of the Ergneti IPRM throughout the year.

Gender, peace and security

The women, peace and security agenda was promoted at various levels in the country throughout the year, although civil society organisations continued to state that greater implementation was necessary. **Meetings continued to take place between Georgian government representatives participating in the GID and the IPRM and women’s organisations,** coordinated by Georgian institutions with the support of UN Women, with other actors such as the EU participating. These meetings addressed challenges and dynamics of the negotiating process, initiatives to strengthen women’s participation and women’s priorities and proposals. At the April meeting, Minister of State for Reconciliation and Civic Equality Tea Akhvlediani announced the establishment of a working group on women, peace and security with women’s organisations involved to facilitate exchange and consultation on reconciliation and peacebuilding policies and strengthen the structured participation of displaced women and other women affected by the conflict in the peace process. At the November meeting, women’s organisations raised the need to address issues such as participation formats, specifically for displaced women and women affected by the conflict; awareness and access to vaccines against COVID-19; the property rights of new generations of displaced people and access to education in the Georgian language. At a meeting in May, Georgian participants of the Ergneti IPRM and women’s organisations **proposed creating a space for direct dialogue between Georgian and Ossetian women** to address and negotiate common problems, according to UN Women.

At the briefing of the three co-mediators before the OSCE Permanent Council, UN mediator Ayşe Cihan Sultanoğlu said that they continued to advocate for measures for women’s participation and that the UN’s Department of Political and Peacebuilding Affairs (DAPCP) was working on a gender analysis of the conflict aimed at strengthening inclusive peacebuilding under the GID. In turn, Annika Soder, the special representative for the South Caucasus of the OSCE rotating chairmanship, whose appointment increased the proportion of women at the highest levels of co-mediation, described a greater understanding of the different gender impacts of conflict in the GID, a basis on which progress is expected in the coming rounds. The process to draft Georgia’s fourth national action plan on women, peace and security began in July. Various participatory meetings were held with women’s civil society organisations, representatives of municipalities and other stakeholders to identify priorities and actions for the new plan. The needs identified at the meeting with 15 municipalities included the daily needs of the displaced population and those affected by the conflict, specifically women and girls, including access to healthcare and other essential services, infrastructure, transportation and education according to UN Women, which co-organised participatory meetings for the new plan.

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.

The peace process remained deadlocked, with no resumptions of formal negotiations. Following the preparatory meetings, an informal 5+1 summit was held in Geneva in April, convened by the UN Secretary-General, bringing together the Greek Cypriot and Turkish Cypriot leaders, the three guarantor countries (Greece, Turkey and the United Kingdom) and the UN. The three-day meeting, which included bilateral and multilateral meetings of the UN Secretary-General, aimed to assess conditions for the resumption of formal negotiations for a solution to the conflict. The summit highlighted the growing gulf between the parties’ views on the Turkish Cypriot position (already expressed in 2020 after the election of the new Turkish Cypriot leader, Ersin Tatar) in defence of a two-state solution, also defended by Turkey, which broke with the consensual solution of a bizonal and bicomunal federation with political equality promoted by the UN and supported until then by the parties. The Turkish Cypriot leadership claimed

Informal meetings in Cyprus failed to resume official negotiations and the positions of the parties remained quite at odds during the year

that the formula was exhausted. The Greek Cypriot side continued to advocate a bizonal and bi-communal federation solution. Despite the gap, the parties agreed to continue the dialogue. In his mid-year report, the UN Secretary-General said that the UN Security Council had made it clear in resolutions for half a century that there was only one sovereign state on the island, while noting that it took note of the situation of the island and the importance conveyed by the parties to achieve a framework for political equality to take the form of shared and effective participation.¹⁶

In September, the UN Secretary-General hosted separate meetings and a new informal joint meeting with the leaders of both communities on the island, outside the UN General Assembly. **The Turkish Cypriot leadership entrenched its position in defence of a two-state solution. Meanwhile, it was revealed that the Greek Cypriot proposed solution of a decentralised federation in a reunified state, which could be reached through a multi-step roadmap, including the signing of a strategic agreement, the return to the 1960 Constitution,** arguing that this was not a step towards a unitary state, but one in which the Turkish Cypriot side could take the positions to which it was entitled, and the start of negotiations for the establishment of a decentralised federation, including territorial adjustments. Each side rejected the other’s position on resolving the conflict. The UN Secretary-General’s High Representative Jane Holl Lute, a senior United Nations official who ended her mandate in autumn 2021, held meetings with the leaders of both communities and their representatives and with guarantor countries. In his December report, the UN Secretary-General repeated that the parties’ positions remained very much at odds.¹⁷

During the year, the complexity of achieving rapprochement was compounded by obstacles related to the context of regional tension around Cyprus, including the continuing dispute between the guarantor powers Turkey and Greece and their respective allies over the delimitation of maritime borders and exclusive economic areas, access to hydrocarbons and the sovereignty of some islands. In 2021, Greece and Turkey resumed exploratory dialogue after five years and held several rounds, though they yielded no tangible results. They also kept the military communication channel active under the NATO umbrella, although militarised tension continued in the waters around Cyprus and in the region, albeit at a lower level than in 2020, when it escalated, involving the collision of two warships. Distrust between the parties also continued to be fuelled by tensions over Varosha, an island city taken by Turkish forces during Turkey’s 1974 invasion, from which its Greek Cypriot population

16. UN Secretary-General, *Mission of good offices in Cyprus*, S/2021/634, 9 July 2021.

17. UN Secretary-General, *Mission of good offices in Cyprus*, 2/2021/1109, 31 December 2021.

fled. Abandoned, closed and partially reopened in 2020, Varosha continued to be reopened by the Turkish Cypriots 2021, including with the transfer of part of the town from military to civilian control. The move sparked criticism from Greek Cypriots and calls from international actors such as the UN Security Council to reverse the reopening.

Along with informal meetings with the UN Secretary-General and with the High Representative Lutte, meetings were held between the UN Secretary-General Special Representative Elizabeth Spehar, whose term ended in November and was succeeded by Colin Stewart, and representatives of the leaders of both communities, to promote trust between the parties and address various issues, though little progress was made. In December, both leaders met informally at a reception by the UN mission in their first meeting on the island in a year. The joint technical committees continued to face obstacles and most met only sporadically. The work of the technical health committee was notable, with frequent exchanges and harmonisation of measures between the parties to address the pandemic.

Other areas of dialogue remained active, such as the Swedish-backed Religious Track, which brings together religious leaders from both communities, and which during the year held meetings and made calls for dialogue and a solution to the conflict and reciprocal visits, as well as the dialogue among political party representatives promoted by Slovakia. Civil society organisations were also involved in intercommunity activities to promote a solution to the conflict, including actions prior to the informal summit in June. Overall, the UN identified a trend of increased intercommunity activity in favour of a solution.

Gender, peace and security

Civil society women's organisations continued to demand greater participation in the peace process as well as integration of the gender perspective in the process. These demands were put forward to the parties and the international community in meetings and actions prior to the informal 5+1 summit in June. Along these lines, the UN Secretary-General urged the parties to the conflict to draw up an action plan to promote and guarantee women's participation and the integration of the gender perspective into the process and to promote links with civil society organisations in developing that plan. In relation to the 5+1 summit, the UN Secretary-General lamented the low participation of women and called for future delegations to at least reach the threshold of 30% women. As part of the peace process' joint technical groups, the gender committee remained partially active during the year, with changes in the composition of its Turkish Cypriot members, as the Turkish Cypriot elections and the change of leadership in 2020 led to changes in the Turkish Cypriot teams of the technical committees.

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 negotiating process faced obstacles during the year and the gulf between the parties was evident.

International actors were involved in calls for the resumption of dialogue, including the EU, the US, Germany and France. Following the early parliamentary elections in Kosovo in February, in which the Vetëvendosje party emerged victorious, with 48% of the vote and a parliamentary majority of 58 of the 120 seats, and which made Albin Kurti the prime minister, various meetings of EU representatives with the leaders of Serbia and Kosovo took place separately, in both territories and in Brussels. Through its special envoy for the Western Balkans, Matthew Palmer, the United States also participated in meetings in the region.

The high-level political dialogue resumed in mid-June in Brussels, facilitated by the EU, followed by a new meeting in that format in July. No progress was made and substantive disagreements were evident. **Serbia**

accused Kosovo of breaching the agreement aimed at establishing an association of Serb municipalities in Kosovo and of instead insisting on recognition for Kosovo. Meanwhile, Kosovo accused Serbia of other breaches and criticised Belgrade for its lack of openness towards a multi-point Kosovar proposal (creation of a free trade area in southeastern Europe on equal terms; commitment not to attack each other; bilateral relations with mutual recognition, including issues relating to their respective minorities, with the proposal to create a national council for the Serb population of Kosovo; and replacement of the chair of the commission on missing persons of Serbia). After the July meeting, Serbia agreed with three points proposed by the EU (increasing joint efforts on missing persons, refraining from actions that could destabilise the situation on the ground and monthly meetings between the chief negotiators) and accused Kosovo of not accepting the second point. Kosovo delved into the points of its June proposal with a new proposal for a declaration, while continuing to accuse Serbia of not being open to its proposals. **The special representative of the EU, Miroslav Lajčák, confirmed the gulf between the parties and the work ahead. The planned meeting between Serbian president Aleksandar Vučić and Kurti in September did not take place, due to the lack of sufficient progress for technical meetings.**

The negotiating process was also affected in September by the political and security crisis around the border between Serbia and Kosovo after Kosovo decided not to renew a previous temporary agreement on vehicle registration and instead issued requirements for a temporary Kosovar license plate to enter its territory, in reciprocity of action taken by Serbia. This led to protests and barricades by the Serb population in northern Kosovo, blocking key crossing points, and the deployment of special armed Kosovo Police units. Serbia raised the alert level of the Serbian Army in the border area and its warplanes flew over the area, in what was considered **the worst crisis since the 2011 border incidents. After international calls for de-escalation, Serbia and Kosovo reached an interim solution agreement in late September**, facilitated by the EU, that included the withdrawal of police forces and barricades, the deployment of NATO at the crossing points for two weeks and the concealment of the emblems of each territory with white labels, as well as an agreement to create a joint working group to reach a permanent solution to the vehicle registration issue.

The negotiating process remained stalled in the final months of the year. Around fifty civil society organisations from Serbia and Kosovo urged the leaders of both territories to resume sustainable dialogue and to refrain from incendiary rhetoric against their respective minority populations. At the end of the year, Kurti insisted on the need for a new approach, with mutual recognition at the centre.

Gender, peace and security

The Kosovo Women's Network (KWN), a platform that groups together over 150 civil society women's organisations from Kosovo, continued to demand women's participation in the negotiating process between Serbia and Kosovo, as well as the inclusion on the agenda of priority issues for women. **During the year, the KWN complained that the group of experts in the negotiating process did not include women. As a specific demand, it called on the Kosovar government to substantively involve women in decision-making processes related to the talks, including in the formal negotiating team and in public consultations.** The KWN repeated that it was willing to provide suggestions of qualified women for the negotiating process and that it supported holding consultations to move towards an inclusive and transparent process.

KWN representatives also met in June with new female Kosovar President Vjosa Osmani-Sadriu, elected in April as the new leader by the Kosovar Parliament. KWN's goals for the meeting included boosting women's participation in the negotiations between Serbia and Kosovo.

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> (asque 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.

On the 10th anniversary of the definitive end of ETA's armed activity, significant steps were taken in the peacebuilding process in the Basque Country, including in areas such as coexistence and prisoners. The 10th anniversary of the Aiete International Conference was commemorated, which in October 2010 brought together political, social and trade union actors from the Basque Country and international stakeholders and resulted in the Aiete Declaration, to which ETA responded days later by announcing the definitive end of its armed activity. The achievement of 10 years without armed activity was celebrated by institutional, political and social actors in the Basque Country, which as a whole assessed the current situation as better than it had been a decade before. Institutional and social events were held for the anniversary of the end of the armed action and the Aiete Declaration. **One of the milestones was the statement made by the political parties EH Bildu and Sortu on behalf of the Basque pro-independence left, which included specific reference to the victims of ETA violence and conveyed "regret and pain for the suffering caused" while affirming that it "never should have happened" and that they "should have reached Aiete before", recognising that it was not possible to undo the damage and promising to try to mitigate it.** The statement was hailed by many political and social actors that said it was a very important step forward in coexistence, including the Collective of Victims of Terrorism (Covite), though it and other actors such as the president of the Basque government demanded more steps and self-criticism.

The Basque government presented the Coexistence, Human Rights and Diversity Plan (Udaberri 2024) in September after months of contrast and modification as part of consultations with political parties, victims' associations and various groups since the draft was

presented in May. Among other aspects, **the plan recognises the start of a new era and a new challenge after the end of ETA, described as one of coexistence in plurality and diversity, and calls for sincere self-criticism of those who exercised, justified or contextualised the violence, as well as acknowledgment that it was unfair.** One of the major coexistence-related events of the year was the announcement by the group of ETA prisoners (EPPK) in November that the reception of prisoners leaving prison (*ongi etorris*) would be carried out "privately" and "discreetly". This responded to an issue that had created political and social tension and had led to significantly less public celebrations in recent years. The EPPK said that it did not want to fuel controversy in a context in which they saw some actors and parties seeming to seek confrontation and recognised that the receptions cause pain to the victims. The announcement was widely celebrated by political and social actors, including the state government, though some said that it was late in coming and more steps were needed. In November, the Permanent Social Forum presented the conclusions and recommendations of its work during the previous year on democratic coexistence. The Permanent Social Forum said that the time had come to move from confrontation and the "battle over the narrative" to a framework of constructive discussion, and to establish the new landscape with critical contributions from the past by the different actors. Progress continued to be made on municipal policies to promote coexistence, with discussion tables for local politicians and citizen groups and forums, with external facilitation support as well as institutional support.

On the 10th anniversary of the Aiete Conference and the definitive end of ETA's armed activity, new progress was made in terms of coexistence and prisoners

In relation to other key issues, the situation of ETA prisoners yielded significant progress. New steps to transfer prisoners to prisons in the Basque Country or closer were taken and at the end of the year the Spanish government announced the end of the dispersion policy, revealing that **all prisoners were at least 200 kilometres from their homes and none were in a first-degree situation.** In May the central and Basque governments signed an agreement for the transfer of penitentiary powers to the Basque Country, which entered into force in October. **In the middle of the year, the Permanent Social Forum assessed the results of what it considered the first stage of the change in prison policy,** one of the main lines in the peacebuilding process, and signalled the move to the second stage, for which it set objectives such as having all prisoners in prisons in the Basque Country and Navarre serve their sentences; reclassifying as third-grade over 100 prisoners who have served half their sentence and meet the conditions for it; providing access to ordinary exit permits for the around 30 prisoners who have served at least one fourth of their sentence and meet the conditions for it; getting public institutions to provide a reintegration plan agreed with different actors; and addressing the issue of the accumulation of sentences served in France. According

to the Permanent Social Forum, the change had been made possible by the determination of the Spanish and Basque governments and the group of prisoners, and their efforts were promoted and supported by institutional, political, trade union and social actors. In May, 125 Basque city councils had signed the Euskalduna Declaration, in favour of bringing the prisoners closer and the end of the exceptional prison policy, promoted at the end of the previous year with the support of all the unions of the Basque Country and various political forces. The organisation SARE, a civic network for defending the rights of ETA prisoners, escapees and deportees, praised the transfers, which it described as a great relief for many prisoners' families, saying that the process to end the distancing policy was

beginning. SARE and the association for the relatives of prisoners, Etixerat, called for the end of the blockade against grade progressions, among other demands.

Gender, peace and security

Women from the Basque Country continued to participate in many different areas of peacebuilding, including in local policies to promote coexistence, in various spaces to support and defend the rights of victims of violence and in the promotion of dialogue and political and social consensus-building. Female survivors of different kinds of violence shared testimony in joint public spaces as part of coexistence initiatives.