

5. Peace negotiations in Europe

- In 2023, six of the 45 peace processes in the world (13%) took place in Europe.
- In 2023, Russia and Ukraine did not resume the political-military negotiations that broke down in April 2022 and talks only continued on limited matters.
- An Azerbaijani military offensive in Nagorno-Karabakh forced almost its entire population to flee and the enclave was reintegrated by force into Azerbaijan.
- Despite the progress made in early 2023, the talks between Kosovo and Serbia ran into serious problems due to profound disagreements about substantive issues and to the deteriorating security situation in northern Kosovo.
- In most of the negotiating processes in the region, women's organisations and female activists and experts demanded and recommended women's greater participation in dialogue mechanisms, in the face of long-stalled processes and the deteriorating regional geopolitical context.

This chapter provides an analysis of the main peace processes and negotiations in Europe in 2023. 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 2023.

Table 2.1. Summary of the peace processes and negotiations in 2023

Peace processes and negotiations	Negotiating actors	Third parties
Armenia – Azerbaijan (Nagorno-Karabakh)	Armenia, Azerbaijan, representatives of self-proclaimed Republic of Nagorno-Karabakh	EU, USA, Russia, Iran, Türkiye, Georgia ¹
Cyprus	Republic of Cyprus, self-proclaimed Turkish Republic of Northern Cyprus	UN, EU, Guarantor Countries (Türkiye, Greece and United Kingdom)
Georgia (Abkhazia, South Ossetia)	Georgia, representatives of Abkhazia and South Ossetia, Russia ²	OSCE, EU, UN, USA, Russia ³
Moldova (Transnistria)	Moldova, self-proclaimed Republic of Transnistria	OSCE, Ukraine, Russia, USA, EU ⁴
Russia – Ukraine	Russia, Ukraine	UN, Türkiye, Centre for Humanitarian Dialogue, ICRC, IAEA, Vatican City, Qatar, United Arab Emirates (UAE), Saudi Arabia ⁵
Serbia – Kosovo	Serbia, Kosovo	EU, UN, USA, Germany, France, Italy

1 Iran and Türkiye are included in this table due to their participation in the 3+3 regional platform. This platform was launched in 2021 at Türkiye's behest with the stated objective of promoting peace and cooperation in the South Caucasus. It brings together Türkiye, Russia, Iran, Armenia and Azerbaijan. Though invited, Georgia has not yet participated in this format. In 2020, Russia and Türkiye established a joint monitoring centre for the 2020 ceasefire. However, the status of Türkiye and the 3+3 platform as third parties may be subject to different interpretations. Since 2023, the OSCE Minsk Group has not been included in this table as it has become inoperative. It was co-chaired by Russia, France and the United States; the rest of its permanent members are Belarus, Germany, Italy, Sweden, Finland and Türkiye. On the other hand, Georgia is included in this table because it facilitated dialogue between the parties in conflict in 2023.

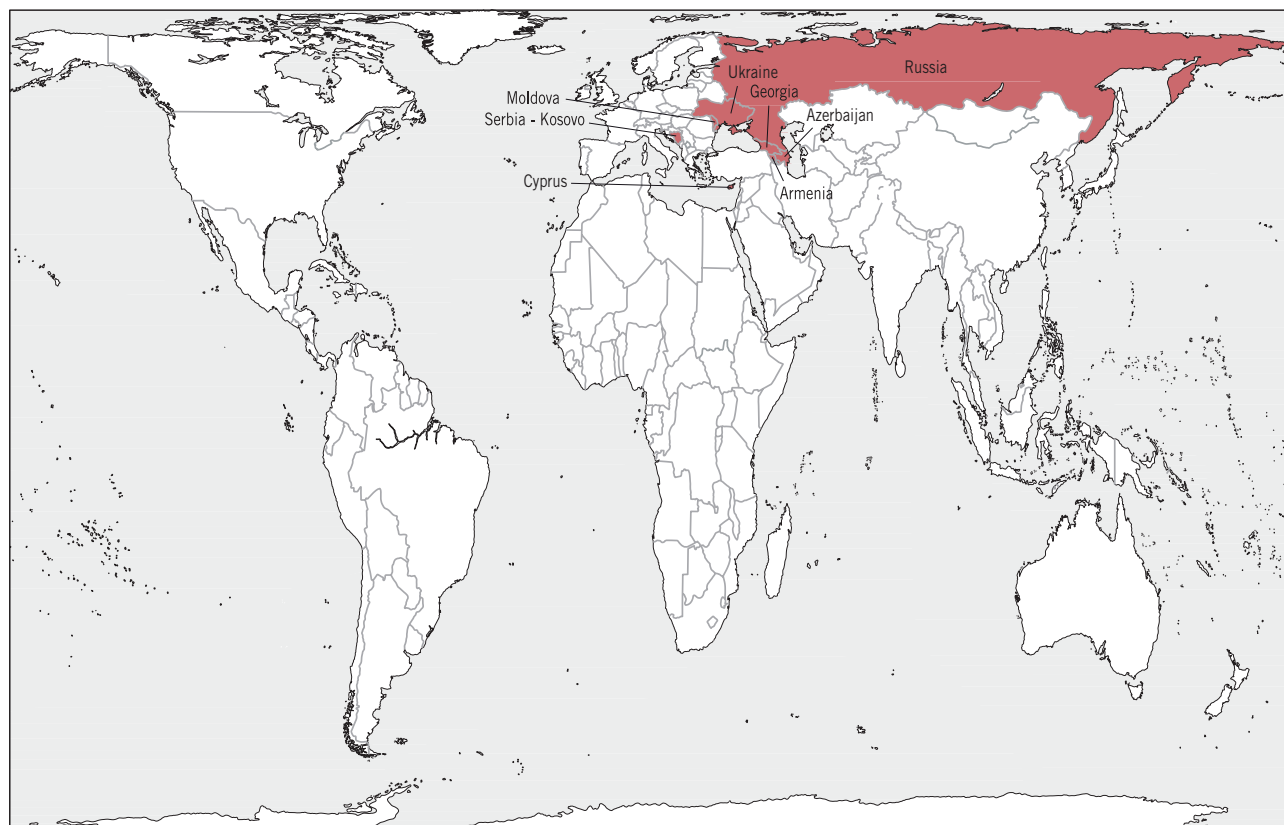
2 Russia's status in the Georgian peace process is subject to different interpretations. Georgia considers Russia a party to the conflict and a negotiating party, while Russia considers itself a third party.

3 Ibid.

4 In 2023, the 5+2 conference format remained inactive. In the 5+2 conference the OSCE was a mediator, Ukraine and Russia were mediators-guarantors, and the US and the EU were observers. The OSCE-facilitated 1+1 format was active and was also attended by participants of the 5+2 format.

5 This table includes actors playing roles of mediation/facilitation and support in any of the areas of dialogue active between Russia and Ukraine in 2023. They are included regardless of the frequency or scope of their involvement. In 2022, the actors playing some role included in this table were: Türkiye, the UN, Israel, the Centre for Humanitarian Dialogue, the United Arab Emirates, Saudi Arabia, the IAEA, the OSCE, Germany and France. Beyond the actors listed in this table, this chapter analyses and includes other actors that promoted dialogue during the year and are not considered third parties in this yearbook.

Map 5.1. Peace negotiations in Europe in 2023



■ Countries with peace processes and negotiations in Europe in 2023⁶

5.1. Negotiations in 2023: regional trends

This chapter analyses six peace processes that took place in Europe in 2023 and that account for 13% of all peace processes worldwide in the last year. However, of those six, the case of Russia-Ukraine only covered negotiations between the parties in limited areas in 2023, such as humanitarian issues, as well as dialogue between Ukraine and international actors for the rollout of the Ukraine's Peace Formula and peace initiatives of various governments. Moscow and Kyiv did not resume the political-military negotiations in 2023 that had broken off the previous year. The other armed conflict in Europe, which has pitted Türkiye against the PKK since 1984, continued without a negotiating process. In February 2023, the PKK announced a temporary "period of inaction" due to the earthquake that rocked southeastern Türkiye and Syria. This cessation of hostilities was extended until the Turkish presidential and parliamentary elections in May, and it ended in June. Türkiye did not reciprocate in the truce. The lack of a negotiating process was especially alarming in the

context of continuing violence between Türkiye and the PKK and escalating conflicts and tension in the Middle East, including hostilities between Türkiye and Kurdish forces in Syria.⁷ The other five negotiating processes dealt with socio-political crises of varying intensity: Armenia – Azerbaijan (Nagorno-Karabakh), Georgia (Abkhazia, South Ossetia), Moldova (Transdniestria), Cyprus and Serbia – Kosovo.

In all the processes analysed, at least one of the **negotiating actors** was the government of a country involved in the conflict. At the same time, in all processes except for Russia – Ukraine, one of the parties was a self-proclaimed state, though only Kosovo enjoyed broad international recognition as such.⁸ However, regarding the peace process between Armenia and Azerbaijan (Nagorno-Karabakh), communication between representatives of Azerbaijan and Nagorno-Karabakh yielded no results in 2023 and the Azerbaijani military offensive dismantled the self-proclaimed republic and provoked the exodus of its Armenian population. As a result, the negotiations were limited to Azerbaijan and Armenia regarding the normalisation of relations,

6 Russia-Ukraine is included due to the humanitarian talks, Ukraine's dialogue with international actors on parts of its Peace Formula and the initiatives promoted by various governments, though political and military negotiations between the warring parties were not resumed in 2023.

7 See the summary on Türkiye in the chapter on armed conflicts in the Middle East in Escola de Cultura de Pau, *Alert 2024! Report on conflicts, human rights and peacebuilding*, Barcelona: Icaria, 2024.

8 Around 100 countries have recognised Kosovo as an independent state. In 2010, the International Court of Justice issued an advisory opinion establishing that Kosovo's unilateral declaration of independence did not violate international law.

deepening the trend since the 2020 war. The weight, interests and agendas of regional and international actors became evident in the dynamics of various disputes and negotiating processes and perspectives in Europe, such as Türkiye's influence over the Turkish Cypriot Republic and Russia's influence over Abkhazia, South Ossetia and Transdniestria. The dynamics of continental and global confrontation between Russia and the West were projected on the processes in the region in different ways.

Third parties were involved in all the processes in the region, playing supportive roles that included mediation and facilitation. Greater third-party involvement and fragmentation was identified in 2023, partly linked to regional and global geostrategic divisions that had intensified since the war in Ukraine, and to external parties' own strategic interests. This was true of the negotiating process between Armenia and Azerbaijan, where the regional powers of Türkiye, Iran and Russia wielded influence in the 3+3 format. Individually, Georgia carried out dialogue initiatives to bring the parties together. Azerbaijan was averse to the role of Western third parties. Russia, Türkiye and Iran, that were participants in the 3+3 format, were also opposed to the involvement of Western actors as third parties. In 2023, the EU established a new civilian observation mission on the Armenian side of the border with Azerbaijan (EUMA), replacing EUMCAP. In the negotiating process between Serbia and Kosovo, Italy joined the EU, the US, France and Germany in conducting facilitation work in 2023 in a context in which Euro-Atlantic actors were trying to promote a normalisation agreement between the parties, spurred on by the deteriorating geopolitical scenario in Europe and the resulting challenges in the Western Balkans. This multiplicity of actors was also visible in the complex process scheme between Russia and Ukraine, which did not resume their political-military negotiations, yet held direct and indirect talks in limited areas, with support from the UN, Türkiye, the Centre for Humanitarian Dialogue (Switzerland), the ICRC, Vatican City, Qatar, the UAE and the IAEA. Ukraine also discussed and negotiated with international partners and actors over parts of its Peace Formula, such as security guarantees. Though not considered third parties, various countries and actors became involved in initiatives to support the search for solutions.

In some cases, greater regional and global polarisation shrank the space for third parties. The 5+2 format of negotiations between Moldova and Transdniestria (which involved the parties to the conflict, the OSCE as mediator, Ukraine and Russia as mediators and guarantors and the US and the EU as observers), remained inactive due to the war between Russia and Ukraine. The OSCE continued to mediate the 1+1 negotiations in this process and the participants of the 5+2 format attended some of these meetings during 2023, but the platform was not formally resumed. Due to the regional polarisation, Russia opposed the one-

year renewal of the OSCE mission in Moldova, as it did in 2022, so only successive six-month extensions were possible. Disagreements were also visible between Armenia and Azerbaijan over third-party involvement in their peace process. Integration processes and relations with the EU also became more important in 2023, with questions raised about their potential future impact on the negotiating processes and the respective contexts, as well as about the EU's role in the negotiations, in a scenario marked by projected geostrategic confrontation. Another feature related to third parties in 2023 was the uncertainty about the US presidential election scheduled for 2024 and its potential impact on Washington's approach to negotiating processes in the region, such as the war between Russia and Ukraine.

***Peace processes
in Europe in 2023
accounted for 13% of
all cases worldwide***

In terms of the third-party involvement of intergovernmental organisations, the UN played prominent roles as a mediator, co-mediator and co-facilitator in three negotiating processes (Cyprus, Russia – Ukraine (in relation to the negotiations over grain exports) and Georgia, respectively) and a lesser role through the UNMIK mission in Kosovo. The OSCE remained the main mediator in Moldova and a co-mediator in Georgia. However, the OSCE Minsk Group (co-chaired by the US, France and Russia) remained inoperative as a co-mediator in the conflict between Armenia and Azerbaijan due to the dynamics since the 2020 war and the confrontation between the Euro-Atlantic countries and Russia. The EU was a mediator in the negotiating processes between Kosovo and Serbia and between Armenia and Azerbaijan and a co-facilitator in the negotiating process involving Georgia, Abkhazia, South Ossetia and Russia. It was also an “interested party” in the Cypriot peace process and an observer in Moldova's 5+2 format, though it remained inactive.

The **negotiating agendas** were varied, reflecting both the specific characteristics of each process and the type of actors and specific demands of each. 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. Regarding the **use of force and ceasefires**, Azerbaijan and Nagorno-Karabakh reached a cessation of hostilities agreement in September under the terms imposed by Baku with its military offensive. The negotiating process between Georgia, Abkhazia, South Ossetia and Russia continued for another year, addressing issues such as the non-use of force, though the parties could not come to an agreement. Russia and Ukraine did not engage in ceasefire negotiations. Ukraine demanded the withdrawal of Russian troops as a precondition for negotiating any cessation of hostilities. Russia breached its unilateral Orthodox Christmas truce, described Ukraine's Peace Formula as unviable and continued to demand recognition of the annexed territories.

Other items on the agendas included the **normalisation of relations**, such as between Armenia and Azerbaijan

and between Serbia and Kosovo, with different areas covered under that umbrella, such as the demarcation of the border in the dialogue between Yerevan and Baku and the status of Serbian-majority areas in Kosovo and the recognition of symbols and documents in the process between Belgrade and Pristina. On the other hand, the issue of the **status of the various disputed territories**, one of the root causes of many conflicts in Europe, continued to be absent or blocked in the negotiating processes. Negotiations at the highest level did not resume in Cyprus in 2023 due to disagreements over the framework for a solution (a bicomunal and bizonal federation or a two-state model), though talks did continue through the joint technical committees and other forums. Azerbaijan forcibly dismantled the self-proclaimed Nagorno-Karabakh Republic and reintegrated it into its territory. The negotiating process in Georgia only covered security and humanitarian issues, without addressing the disputed status of Abkhazia and South Ossetia. Moldova and Transdniestria addressed many different issues, such as guarantees for the negotiating parties, human rights, freedom of movement, the importation of basic goods, access to land and vehicle registration. Several negotiating processes dealt with **humanitarian issues**. For example, Russia and Ukraine held talks on exchanging prisoners and repatriating the dead, and to a lesser extent on the return of minors forcibly deported to Russia or areas under occupation. They also negotiated over the export of grain, other food products and fertilisers, though the agreement reached in 2022 and renewed several times, including in 2023, expired for good in July 2023, due to Russia's rejection.

In terms of **trends**, 2023 was a year of setbacks, impasse and uncertainty. There was a great setback when Azerbaijan's military offensive eliminated the option of a negotiated solution to the conflict over Nagorno-Karabakh, forced the exodus of the Armenian population from the enclave, worsened traumatic impacts on the population and added a new regional and global benchmark for the use of force to settle disputes. The negotiating processes in Moldova and Georgia remained deadlocked, but in contexts of greater fragility and uncertainty due to the projection of regional and global geopolitical confrontation. The negotiating process in Cyprus remained at a standstill, with great uncertainty about the prospects for resuming. The context of the negotiating process between Serbia and Kosovo deteriorated seriously and it faced great problems during the year as a whole despite some progress being made in the first few months of 2023. The political and military negotiations between Russia and Ukraine that were suspended in 2022 were not resumed and the prospects for this crisis were uncertain, with stagnation on the military front lines, serious tolls of victims and multidimensional damage.

Regarding **participation and inclusivity**, the negotiating processes in Europe lacked formats for the direct formal participation of the civilian population. Civil society actors carried out initiatives and made calls for dialogue during the year, such as in Cyprus and Kosovo, and were involved in providing mutual support and humanitarian aid, like in Ukraine and Armenia. For example, in October around 20 civil society organisations from Serbia and Kosovo jointly called for peacebuilding, normalising relations in the region and building links and cooperation within and between Kosovo and Serbia. Some third-party actors supported confidence-building initiatives. In Moldova, the OSCE facilitated dialogue-related activities between parts of the population on both sides of the Dniester/Nistru River. The UN Secretary-General said that the UN mission in Kosovo would prioritise confidence-building initiatives and intercommunity exchanges, given the deteriorating situation. Organised civil society actors faced persecution and repression in various contexts. As part of this, authorities in Russia and Azerbaijan detained anti-war activists.

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 gender mechanisms or gender architecture and lack of integration of the gender perspective in formal processes. Only the negotiating process in Cyprus had a gender-specific mechanism in the formal negotiating process, the Technical Committee on Gender Equality. Some complained during the year about the lack of implementation of the action plan adopted by the gender equality committee in 2022 in Cyprus and identified obstacles like the lack of accountability mechanisms for compliance with the plan and other issues.⁹ In Moldova, the Informal Women's Advisory Council was constituted in late 2022. Established by UN Women, it aimed to bring women's voices and perspectives to the negotiating process. It had 14 civil society experts and representatives: seven from the right bank of the Dniester/Nistru River and seven from the left. In 2023 this new forum held various meetings and sessions during the year, including the identification of the collective and personal security needs of women and girls on both sides of the conflict line. However, there were no meetings between the OSCE, a mediating actor in the process, and the Informal Women's Advisory Council in 2023. The government of Moldova approved its second national action plan on women, peace and security (2023-2027) in 2023. With support from UN Women, government representatives participating in the negotiating process in Georgia continued to hold meetings with civil society representatives, including women's organisations and displaced women, to exchange information and generate dialogue. In previous years, however, women from Georgian civil

9 See the case of Cyprus in this chapter.

society had identified gender limitations to the formal negotiating process involving Georgia, Abkhazia, South Ossetia and Russia.¹⁰ In various contexts, women's organisations and activists engaged in confidence-building initiatives, calls for dialogue and demands for greater female participation in peace processes, like in Serbia and Kosovo and Cyprus. In 2023, the Network of Women Mediators of South Caucasus (NWMSC) published a study that analysed points of concern in conflicts in the region and positive and negative trends in conflict resolution, among other issues.

Finally, even though they are not covered in this yearbook because they are not considered peace processes, various types of other conflict situations in Europe were the scene of political dialogue or calls for dialogue. Türkiye and Cyprus achieved a certain degree of rapprochement in 2023. In December Turkish President Recep Tayyip Erdogan visited Greece for the first time since 2017 and met with Greek Prime Minister Kyriakos Mitsotakis as part of the Greece-Türkiye High-level Cooperation Council. Both signed a non-binding 10-point declaration to pursue “good neighbourly relations” in which they committed to keeping communication channels open, carrying out military-related confidence-building activities and boosting trade, according to media reports. According to media outlets, they did not address disputed issues such as the delimitation of the Aegean continental shelf and the exclusive economic zone of Greece, which Athens said could be addressed in subsequent talks.

As part of negotiations for the investiture of the new Spanish government, various agreements were reached to create several dialogue tables regarding the conflict over the status of Catalonia in 2023. The PSOE, the main party of the coalition government, and ERC, the Catalan independence party which governs Catalonia, agreed on plans to promote institutional talks between the Spanish and Catalan governments through a forum for dialogue created in 2020 and to create another space for negotiations between the two parties. Meanwhile, the PSOE and Junts, the main opposition Catalan independence party in Catalonia, agreed to create a forum for dialogue between both parties. For both forums (the one for the PSOE and ERC and the one for the PSOE and Junts), the parties agreed to designate support and verification mechanisms, which would be international for the latter. The Catalan parties' forum in the Catalan Parliament remained inactive, though at the end of the year the Catalan president said he intended to convene the forum to open the discussion there on a clarity agreement to resolve the conflict. In October, a group of experts presented the results of a report commissioned by the Catalan government on this agreement, called the Clarity Agreement, which proposed five possible agreed referenda. At the end of the year,

the parties' forum showed no signs of convening. As a result of the investiture deals, in November the PSOE proposed a draft organic amnesty law that provides for annulling the judicial procedures and penalties linked to the pro-independence events that occurred between January 2012 and November 2023. The law was admitted for processing.

5.2. Case study analysis

Eastern Europe

Moldova (Transdniestria)	
Negotiating actors	Moldova, self-proclaimed Republic of Transdniestria
Third parties	OSCE, Ukraine, Russia, USA, EU ¹¹
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 for 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 talks remained active only at the 1+1 level of political representatives and joint working groups. As a whole, the negotiating process underwent a period of uncertainty about its future direction, put in a different context than previous stages due to various factors.

¹⁰ See the case of Georgia in Escola de Cultura de Pau, *Peace talks in focus 2022: report on trends and scenarios*, Barcelona: Icaria, 2023.

¹¹ In 2023, the 5+2 conference format remained inactive, in which the OSCE was a mediator, Ukraine and Russia were mediators-guarantors, and the US and the EU were observers. The OSCE-facilitated 1+1 format was active and was also attended by participants in the 5+2 format.

These factors included the Russian invasion of Ukraine since 2022 and the escalating tension between Moldova and Russia, including allegations of Russian plans to overthrow the Moldovan government and destabilise the country in February 2023 and the process to integrate Moldova into the EU, with candidate country status from June 2022 and the opening of negotiations in December 2023. The main negotiating architecture of the process, the 5+2 format (Moldova, Transnistria, the OSCE, Ukraine, Russia, the US and the EU) continued without meeting. **The Moldovan negotiator and Deputy Prime Minister for Reintegration Oleg Serebrian pointed out that this format was no longer active, considering its work cancelled by the war in Ukraine, and said that it could only be resumed with the normalisation of relations between Russia and Ukraine.** In the presentation of the new government's priorities in February, new Prime Minister Dorin Recean mentioned the withdrawal of Russian troops from Transnistria and the demilitarisation of the strip. According to analysts, other priorities for the government included the search for a diplomatic solution that would restore full Moldovan sovereignty over Transnistria, as well as the continuation of the 1+1 dialogue with Transnistria on economic and technical issues, the bilateral talks with each of the actors of the 5+2 format and the promotion of freedom of movement between both sides of the Dniester River in the transitional period.¹²

During the year, Moldova highlighted Law No. 173-XVI of 22 July 2005 about basic provisions of the special legal status of settlements on the left bank of the Dniester (Transnistria) as a framework for resolving the status of Transnistria.

In November, Serebrian said that some aspects of this law could be revised, but that it contained the main lines and that any action regarding the status of Transnistria would have to comply with its provisions. According to analysts, this law treats Transnistria as a sum of settlements and not as an entity in itself and envisions a status compatible with the Constitution of Moldova, with legislative and executive powers to be negotiated between the parties and with international guarantees.¹³ Serebrian cited the importance of any future status guaranteeing that Moldova remains a sovereign state and offered the Kozak Memorandum as an example to avoid—a draft resolution prepared by Russia in 2003 that provided for an asymmetric federation and Russian troops stationed during a transitional period that Moldova rejected at the time. During the year, Moldovan President Maria Sandu defended the option that Moldova can enter the EU in two

phases: first the territory under the control of Moldova, followed by Transnistria, in case reunification is not achieved before. Overall, the EU integration process placed the enclave in the position of having to decide which scenario to pursue.¹⁴ Transnistria already had a high degree of commercial integration with the EU, with extensive work and family ties with Moldova and most of its population holding Moldovan passports, though it maintained its political orientation and cultural ties with Russia, and 1,500 Russian troops in its territory.¹⁵ **Transnistria and Russia demanded the restart of negotiations in the 5+2 format during the year.**

In this new geopolitical context, dialogue between the parties in conflict was limited during the year to the 1+1 level and joint working groups. At the 1+1 level, meetings took place between the main negotiators of Moldova and Transnistria, Oleg Serebrian and Vitaly Ignatiev, and were facilitated by the OSCE. At the meeting on 17 February, held at the mission office in Tiraspol, the delegations addressed the reform of the penal code that criminalises separatism, individual human rights cases, the freedom of movement and the import of basic goods, according to the OSCE. In February 2023, Moldova had approved changes to the criminal code that provide for punishing the funding and incitement of separatism and conspiracy against Moldova. Serebrian said that the changes would not hinder the negotiating process, but the Transnistrian authorities complained of a lack of guarantees. At the 1+1 meeting on 20 June, held at the mission headquarters in Bender, which was also attended by representatives of the mediators and observers of the 5+2 format, **Transnistria again raised the issue of the lack of guarantees since the**

reform of the criminal code and proposed restoring the 2019 mechanism of guarantees created by the OSCE mission. The conflict parties also addressed other issues such as freedom of movement, human rights, access to Dubasari agricultural land, vehicle registration and the import of medical equipment to Transnistria, according to the OSCE. There were also diplomatic efforts made and separate meetings held by actors such as EUBAM and the OSCE. Throughout the year, the OSCE mission facilitated dialogue between parts of the population on both sides of the Dniester/Nistru River. As in 2022, **Russia opposed the one-year renewal of the OSCE mission, so its extension was only possible for six months (in June and again in December, until 30 June 2024).** Moscow warned that the future of the mission would be subject to progress in the 5+2 format.

The 5+2 negotiating format on the conflict between Moldova and Transnistria remained inactive, influenced by Russia's invasion of Ukraine

12 Socor, Vladimir, "Moldova Extricates From Russian-Dominated Process of Negotiations on Transnistria (Part One)", *Eurasia Daily Monitor*, Vol. 20, No. 33.

13 Douglas, Nadja and Stefan Wolff, "Confidence Building in the Shadow of War: Moldova, Transnistria, and the Uncertain Future of the 5+2 Process" in Friesendorf, Cornelius and Argyro Kartsonaki, *OSCE Insights 2023*, Baden-Baden: Nomos, 2024.

14 Pleșca, Laurențiu and Lucas Dastros-Pitei, "Why Transnistria's future depends on the war in Ukraine", *LSE Blog of EUROPP*, LSE, 27 September 2023.

15 De Waal, Thomas, "A Fragile Stability in Moldova", *Carnegie Europe*, 10 May 2022.

Gender, peace and security

Since October 2022, the negotiating process in Moldova has had a Women's Advisory Board on Sustainable Peacebuilding (WAB), an informal body established by UN Women. The body had 14 experts and civil society representatives, including seven from the right bank of the Dniester/Nistru River and seven from the left. According to UN Women, the main objective was to bring women's voices and perspectives to the negotiating process. In 2023, its members carried out various joint work and training sessions. At the joint working session in October, they approved positioning documents and identified group and individual security needs for women and girls on both sides of the Dniester River, according to UN Women. There were no meetings between the OSCE and the WAB in 2023.

The 1+1 level of the negotiations was led by two men, Oleg Serebrian and Vitaly Ignatiev, while the meetings were facilitated by the OSCE's head of mission, American diplomat Kelly Keiderling, who was appointed to the office in October 2022. In February 2023, OSCE Chairperson-in-Office Bujar Osmani visited Moldova and met with the leaders and negotiators of Moldova and Transdniestria, as well as with civil society members from both sides, including women, to address their role in promoting confidence-building and with the OSCE Chairperson-in-Office's special representative on gender, Liliana Palihovici, as reported by the OSCE. There were no subsequent follow-up meetings. In March 2023, the government of Moldova approved its second national action plan on women, peace and security (2023-2027).¹⁶

Russia – Ukraine	
Negotiating actors	Russia, Ukraine
Third parties	UN, Türkiye, Centre for Humanitarian Dialogue, ICRC, IAEA, Vatican City, Qatar, United Arab Emirates (UAE), Saudi Arabia ¹⁷
Relevant agreements	Initiative on the Safe Transportation of Grain and Foodstuffs from Ukrainian Ports (22th July 2022)

Summary:

Russia launched an invasion of Ukraine in February 2022, resulting in the military occupation of southern and eastern parts of the country and affecting other areas with bombings

and attacks that had serious impacts on human security, such as mass forced displacement, extrajudicial executions, disappearances, sexual violence, food and energy insecurity and other crises. The invasion was preceded by previous cycles of conflict, including Russia's 2014 seizure and annexation of Crimea, the war in eastern Ukraine between Russian-backed local militias and Ukrainian security forces, and deadlocked negotiations, all following the change of government in Ukraine caused by the Maidan uprising between late 2013 and 2014. In contravention of international law, Russia's invasion and war targeted Ukraine's sovereignty and territorial integrity. The antagonism between the US, the EU and NATO on one side and Russia on the other, as well as a failed security architecture in Europe, also influenced the context of the conflict and the prospects for resolution. Shortly after the invasion began, Ukraine and Russia began peace talks in various formats, addressing different topics. Facilitated by Türkiye, the political and military negotiations reached a certain degree of rapprochement around a possible permanent neutrality agreement with respect to NATO, security guarantees and postponement of the Crimean issue, to be resolved through diplomatic channels in 15 years. However, the negotiations broke down in April. Russia annexed four regions in September 2022, despite not controlling them in their entirety, and stated that any negotiations should recognise this new situation. Ukraine stated that it wished to regain control of the entire territory, including Crimea and Donbas. The talks on humanitarian issues, nuclear safety and grain exports continued.

In 2023, Russia and Ukraine did not resume the political or military negotiations that had been broken off in April 2022 and talks only continued on prisoner exchanges, grain exports (until July) and the protection of nuclear infrastructure. Ukraine rolled out its own road map ("Ukraine's Peace Formula") and the multilevel talks associated with it, while third-party initiatives to promote the search for a solution to the conflict increased during the year. The Russian invasion caused serious impacts on human and environmental security in its second year, while the military front lines remained stagnant despite the Ukrainian military counteroffensive that began in June.¹⁸ Ukraine rejected a Russian truce proposal for Orthodox Christmas in January 2023, calling it propaganda, and accused Moscow of failing to comply with it. Türkiye, a facilitating actor in the 2022 negotiations, expressed its willingness to promote local ceasefires and localised de-escalations in January 2023, saying that neither party was in a position to win the war militarily. Other actors during the year discussed the stagnation on the front lines, including Ukrainian Commander-in-Chief Valerii Zaluzhnyi,¹⁹ as well as the improbability of military victory.²⁰ The parties remained

16 See the chapter on Gender in Escola de Cultura de Pau, *Alert 2024! Report on conflicts, human rights and peacebuilding*, Barcelona: Icaria, 2024.

17 This table includes actors playing roles of mediation/facilitation and support in any of the areas of dialogue active between Russia and Ukraine in 2023. They are included regardless of the frequency or scope of their involvement. In 2022, the actors playing some role included in this table were: Türkiye, the UN, Israel, the Centre for Humanitarian Dialogue, the United Arab Emirates, Saudi Arabia, the IAEA, the OSCE, Germany and France. Beyond the actors listed in this table, this chapter analyses and includes other actors that promoted dialogue during the year and are not considered third parties in this yearbook.

18 See the summary on the Russia-Ukraine armed conflict in Escola de Cultura de Pau, *Alert 2024! Report on conflicts, human rights and peacebuilding*, Barcelona: Icaria, 2024.

19 The Economist, "Ukraine's commander-in-chief on the breakthrough he needs to beat Russia", *The Economist*, 1st November 2023.

20 Charap, Samuel, "An Unwinnable War: Washington Needs an Endgame in Ukraine", *Foreign Affairs*, July/August 2023.

greatly at odds on the issues throughout the year and there was no resumption of negotiations, ceasefire agreements or humanitarian truces.

At different times of the year, **Ukraine asserted that the withdrawal of Russian troops was a precondition for negotiating a ceasefire with Russia.** Ukraine also refused to exchange territory for a ceasefire or a peace agreement and said that any possible demilitarised zone must be on the Russian side of the border. **Overall, Ukraine promoted what it called its Peace Formula (2022), its own road map including the restoration of territorial integrity, the withdrawal of Russian troops and the cessation of hostilities, a security architecture in the Euro-Atlantic space and the signing of the Kyiv Security Compact.**²¹ It reflects the Ukrainian approach that a peace plan for Ukraine cannot be created by Russia, the aggressor. Russia's position was reflected in Russian **President Vladimir Putin's press conference in December, in which he noted that his goals remained the "denazification", "demilitarisation" and "neutral status" of Ukraine. He called southeastern Ukraine historically Russian territory.** At other times of the year, representatives of the Russian regime indicated that recognition of the "new territorial reality" was a requirement for ending hostilities. In September, Russian Foreign Minister Sergei Lavrov rejected Ukraine's Peace Formula, arguing that even though it was presented as the only basis for negotiations, it was unviable. Regarding the NATO issue, David Arakhamia, who was the Ukrainian chief negotiator in the 2022 negotiations, said in an interview on a Ukrainian TV channel in November that the issue of neutrality towards NATO had been Russia's main objective in the 2022 negotiations. According to Arakhamia, Ukraine did not accept neutrality then because it would require changes to the Constitution, due to a lack of trust and of full guarantees, as well as the position of UK Prime Minister Boris Johnson at the time, who rejected any agreement and supported war with Russia.²² Türkiye, a facilitating actor maintaining relations with both parties and an ally of Russia on different international issues, expressed its interpretation through presidential advisor Ibrahim Kalin that the war would end once the West, and specifically the United States, treated Russia as a world power that rejects NATO's presence in its vicinity.

Amidst this great disagreement and prioritisation of the battlefield, **there were no bilateral negotiations on substantive issues (sovereignty, territory, NATO and Russia-West relations).** Instead, **Ukraine rolled out its**

Peace Formula alongside its military counteroffensive. **To do so, it promoted the organisation of international peace conferences,** with security advisers and mid-level ministerial positions of dozens of countries (in Denmark in June, with 15 countries; in Saudi Arabia in August, with 43 countries, including China; and in Malta in October, with 65 countries, without China). It also activated **internationalised working groups on Peace Formula-related issues, maintained regular dialogue with allied governments and conducted negotiations on security guarantees with partners.** Ukraine claimed that given the increasing participation of countries in peace conferences, Russia would have to give in and accept the conditions for peace. However, disagreements also arose at the conferences, from which Russia was excluded. At the summit in Jeddah (Saudi Arabia), Brazil argued that any real negotiations had to include all parties and that even though Ukraine was the biggest victim, Moscow would have to be involved in the process somehow. Overall, even without tangible results, the conferences revealed Ukraine's greater capacity to

In 2023, Russia and Ukraine did not resume the political-military negotiations that had been broken off in April 2022 and talks only continued on prisoner exchanges, grain exports (until July) and the protection of nuclear infrastructure

bring together international actors with different positions and interests in the conflict. Russia rejected and criticised the conferences. During Ukraine's talks with its allies on security guarantees, the G7 issued a joint statement on 12 July, during the NATO summit, announcing the start of negotiations to establish security guarantees for Ukraine through bilateral and long-term commitments with a largely military focus, including the supply of land, air and maritime military equipment, support for the development of the Ukrainian defence industry, the training of Ukrainian forces, intelligence cooperation, support in cyber defence and other forms of support, as well as possible forms of military and non-military response in case of future aggression. According to the G7, this support will run parallel to Ukraine's path towards future integration into the "Euro-Atlantic community". As part of this G7 declaration, **Ukraine began bilateral negotiations in the following months with the US, the United Kingdom, Canada, Japan and France on security guarantees.** In addition, over 20 countries signed the G7 declaration. At its July summit, NATO stated that Ukraine's future was in NATO. In support for the country, it withdrew the requirement for an Accession Action Plan, but did not formally invite Ukraine to join or set a schedule for that.

Actors already involved in facilitation work in 2022, such as Türkiye and the UN, continued their efforts to promote dialogue in different spheres during the year. **Other actors, mainly from outside the Euro-Atlantic**

21 For more information on the Peace Formula and elements of the Kyiv Security Pact, see Escola de Cultura de Paz, *Negociaciones de paz 2022. Análisis de tendencias y escenarios*, Barcelona: Icaria, 2023; and Vilellas, Ana, *La invasión de Rusia en Ucrania (1). Las negociaciones fallidas entre Rusia y Ucrania y retos para una vía de solución diplomática*, Apunts ECP de Conflictes i Pau No. 24, March 2023.

22 Kyiv Post, "Russia Offered to End War in 2022 If Ukraine Scrapped NATO Ambitions – Zelensky Party Chief", *Kyiv Post*, 26 November 2023.

sphere, also took steps or promoted the search for non-military solutions. On 24 February, China presented a 12-point document with its position on a political settlement of the conflict. The points included respecting the sovereignty of all countries and their independence and territorial integrity (point 1) and addressing the security concerns of all parties and achieving a balanced, effective and sustainable security architecture in Europe (point 2). China also appointed diplomat Li Hui, the former ambassador to Russia (2009-2019) and the special representative for Eurasian affairs since 2019, as Beijing's special envoy to resolve the conflict. China maintained separate contacts with the parties (Xi Jinping's visit to Russia in March, his call with Zelensky in April and the special envoy's trip to Ukraine, Russia and other European countries in May). In his meeting with Zelensky, Li Hui pointed out that all parties had to create conditions to end the war and start peace talks. **Saudi Arabia also raised its diplomatic profile in the conflict, hosting the second conference organised by Ukraine for its Peace Formula in Jeddah in August.** Previously, in May, Zelensky visited Saudi Arabia, where he met with Saudi Prince Mohammed bin Salman and participated in the Arab League summit to rally support for Ukraine's Peace Formula. The leaders of both countries held calls almost monthly, according to Ukrainian media outlets. Meanwhile, the Indonesian defence minister presented a five-point proposal to promote a ceasefire and a solution to the conflict in June, though it was criticised by Ukraine and the EU. A delegation of six African leaders (from South Africa, Senegal, Egypt, Zambia, Comoros and Uganda) held meetings in Kyiv and Moscow in June and issued a 10-point peace proposal that included the de-escalation of hostilities, respect for state sovereignty and security guarantees. In May, Vatican City appointed Cardinal Matteo Zuppi as its special peace envoy for Ukraine, who was involved in efforts and meetings mainly about humanitarian issues to promote the return of minors after Ukraine requested support from the Vatican in this area in April.

Russia and Ukraine negotiated and reached agreements to exchange prisoners and repatriate the dead for much of the year, as well as some specific agreements for the return of minors forcibly deported to Russia or to areas under occupation. This area involved negotiation between a host of actors, including human rights commissioners and military actors, with the support and facilitation of the ICRC, Türkiye, Qatar, UAE, Vatican City and some Ukrainian non-governmental organisations. Preceded by prior warnings and demands for conditions, **Moscow ended**

Ukraine asserted that the withdrawal of Russian troops was a precondition for negotiating a ceasefire with Russia and in 2023 Ukraine began bilateral negotiations with the US, UK, Canada, Japan and France on security guarantees

China, Saudi Arabia, Indonesia, Vatican City and African leaders were involved in promoting dialogue between Russia and Ukraine in 2023

its participation in the Black Sea Grain Initiative (2022) in July. As an exception to the sanctions imposed on Russia, this agreement had allowed the export of grain, other food products and fertilisers from three Ukrainian seaports and through a humanitarian maritime corridor in the Black Sea, as well as the export of Russian food and fertilisers to global markets through a Memorandum of Understanding. After 60-day renewals in March and May 2023, it was finally broken in July. Russia said it left the agreement mainly because its demand that the Russian Agricultural Bank be reconnected to the SWIFT international banking system had been rejected. The UN Secretary-General regretted the failure to renew the agreement and Russia's rejection of an alternative proposal for connecting a subsidiary of the Russian bank to the SWIFT system. Moscow began to consider

ships crossing the Black Sea as military targets and bombed grain warehouses and port facilities several times. Ukraine reorganised exports through other routes, causing tension with Poland, Hungary and Slovakia due to the impacts on local prices. Finally, **the International Atomic Energy Agency (IAEA) spoke separately with the parties on protecting nuclear infrastructure.** In 2023, it shifted from its previous focus of trying to achieve an agreement on a demilitarised protection zone around the Zaporizhzhia plant (the largest in Europe) to promoting protection of the plant itself, without any territorial dimension, by getting the parties to agree to some principles. The situation in Zaporizhzhia remained fragile, exacerbated by the destruction of the Kakhovka Dam in June 2023, blamed on Russia. Meanwhile, activists from Ukraine and Russia and civil society organisations from around 30 countries met in Vienna in July at the International Summit for Peace in Ukraine, where they urged international actors to promote a ceasefire and negotiations.²³ In Ukraine, the population continued to be involved in multiple areas of mutual support in the face of the Russian invasion.

Gender, peace and security

There was no information on the integration of the gender perspective in the active direct or indirect talks (prisoner exchange, grain export and the protection of nuclear infrastructure), nor in the rollout of the Ukrainian Peace Formula with dialogue with international actors in multiple levels. In the negotiations between Russia and Ukraine for the release of prisoners, Russia had a female negotiator, Tatiana Moskalkova, who is Russia's commissioner for human rights. All the same, the Russian government maintained its opposition to policies of gender equality

23 International Summit for Peace in Ukraine, *Final Declaration*, June 2023.

and sexual diversity. The UN mediation team in the negotiations on grain exports was co-led by UNCTAD Secretary-General Rebeca Grynspan, together with the UN Under-Secretary-General for Humanitarian Affairs Martin Griffiths. Participating in the session “Advancing the sustainability and adaptability of the women, peace and security agenda” during the UN General Assembly in September, Grynspan called for greater female participation in peacebuilding efforts around the world. Both in Russia and in Ukraine, women relatives of soldiers protested to demand their demobilisation and return from the war front.

Russia and the Caucasus

Armenia – Azerbaijan (Nagorno-Karabakh)	
Negotiating actors	Armenia, Azerbaijan, representatives of self-proclaimed Republic of Nagorno-Karabakh
Third parties	EU, USA, Russia, Iran, Türkiye, Georgia ²⁴
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), cessation of hostilities agreement between Azerbaijan and the self-proclaimed republic of Nagorno-Karabakh (2023)

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 ceasefire 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. Baku and Yerevan carried out various stages of negotiations, including around some basic principles (Madrid Principles, 2007) proposed by the OSCE Minsk Group for resolving the conflict (withdrawal of Armenia from the occupied territories around Nagorno-Karabakh, 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, corridor linking Armenia to Nagorno-Karabakh). Over the years, the negotiating process faced deadlock, a fragile ceasefire line, belligerent rhetoric, an arms race and geostrategic disputes. War broke out again in September 2020, with an Azerbaijani military offensive resulting in Baku’s seizure of districts adjacent to Nagorno-Karabakh and part of the enclave, a fragile ceasefire and the deployment of Russian peacekeeping forces. In 2023, Azerbaijan seized control of all of Nagorno-Karabakh through military means, prompting its Armenian population to flee. The self-proclaimed republic was

dismantled. The process between Baku and Yerevan moved to a focus on the normalisation of relations (the delimitation of borders, the recognition of sovereignty and territorial integrity, transport routes), influenced by Azerbaijan’s position of hegemony in a regional and global context affected by the war in Ukraine and geostrategic competition.

The South Caucasus faced serious setbacks in terms of peacebuilding. Three years after the Azerbaijani offensive and war of 2020, another Azerbaijani attack in September led to the exodus of almost the entire population of Nagorno-Karabakh, amounting to over 100,000 people, and the enclave’s forcible reintegration into Azerbaijan. Meanwhile, talks between Armenia and Azerbaijan on normalising their relations continued during the year, which ranged between messages about agreement on principles for a final peace treaty and disagreements, as well as Armenian fears of the risk of attacks on its soil. The process was influenced by the geopolitical context and dynamics, which included Azerbaijan’s military and economic hegemony, tensions between Armenia and Russia and Armenia’s rapprochement with the EU, the dispute between Russia and the West, alliances between Azerbaijan and Türkiye and some cooperation between the regional powers, including Iran.

Talks took place in two tracks over the course of 2023, before the invasion on 19 September. The first focused on negotiations between Armenia and Azerbaijan with various formats and mediators (EU, USA, Russia) on the normalisation of relations, territorial integrity, the delimitation of borders, transport routes and other issues. There were meetings in Washington, Brussels and Moscow, as well as diplomatic efforts and trips to the region by the mediating actors. The meetings had difficult moments and the rhetoric was sometimes confrontational, interspersed with statements that progress was being made. Some analysts identified a change in Baku’s rhetoric from previous stages, shifting from urgency and accusations that Armenia was delaying the process to the emphasis that time was on Azerbaijan’s side.²⁵ The second track of discussion included communication between Azerbaijan and representatives of Nagorno-Karabakh resulting from Azerbaijan’s refusal to negotiate with Armenia over Nagorno-Karabakh since its 2020 military victory, which it considered an internal issue, burying the previous negotiating framework. Armenia had accepted Azerbaijan’s territorial sovereignty over Nagorno-Karabakh since 2022, but still demanded guarantees of rights and security for the Armenian population there. **On 1 March 2023, the first meeting took place with high-ranking political delegations from**

²⁴ Iran and Türkiye are included due to their participation in the 3+3 regional platform. This platform was launched in 2021 at Türkiye’s behest with the stated objective of promoting peace and cooperation in the South Caucasus. It brings together Türkiye, Russia, Iran, Armenia and Azerbaijan. Though invited, Georgia has not yet participated in this format. In 2020, Russia and Türkiye established a joint monitoring centre for the 2020 ceasefire. However, the status of Türkiye and the 3+3 platform as third parties may be subject to different interpretations. Since 2023, the OSCE Minsk Group has not been included in this table as it has become inoperative. It was co-chaired by Russia, France and the United States; the rest of its permanent members are Belarus, Germany, Italy, Sweden, Finland and Türkiye. On the other hand, Georgia is included because it facilitated dialogue between the parties in conflict in 2023.

²⁵ Kucera, Joshua, “Schedule for Armenia-Azerbaijan agreement slipping into the future”, *Eurasianet*, 15 July 2023.

Azerbaijan and Nagorno-Karabakh, led respectively by MP Ramin Mammadov and by a representative of the enclave's national security council and sponsored by Andrei Volkov, the commander of the Russian peacekeeping forces at their headquarters in Khojaly. There were substantive disagreements during the meeting. **According to Azerbaijan, discussions began on the integration of the Armenian population of Nagorno-Karabakh into Azerbaijan, under the umbrella of the Constitution and Parliament of Azerbaijan. Nagorno-Karabakh's delegation refused to discuss integration into Azerbaijan and said days later that Baku was threatening more drastic steps if they did not give up their demands for independence.** The parties disagreed over the location for subsequent meetings. Nagorno-Karabakh demanded international mediation, which was rejected by Baku. No further meetings of this kind emerged before the attack on 19 September. In the months running up to September, there were armed incidents and ceasefire violations, the humanitarian situation worsened due to Azerbaijan's blockade of the Lachin corridor (the only route connecting Nagorno-Karabakh with Armenia) since December 2022 and statements and analyses indicating risks of an Azerbaijani military operation increased. In a speech on 29 May, Azerbaijani President Ilham Aliyev urged Nagorno-Karabakh to dissolve its institutions and get its population to accept Azerbaijani citizenship or go elsewhere, warning that Baku could launch a military operation.

Azerbaijan's military attack on 19 September led to the capitulation of the forces of Nagorno-Karabakh. In a complete cessation of hostilities agreement signed on 20 September, facilitated by Russia and on the terms imposed by Baku, the parties agreed to the withdrawal of all Armenian Armed Forces present in Nagorno-Karabakh (of which there were none, according to the government of Armenia) and the dissolution and complete disarmament of the armed forces of Nagorno-Karabakh. In the first few days after the attack, the advisor to Azerbaijani President Hikmet Hajiyev anticipated a plan for the socioeconomic integration of the Armenian population of Nagorno-Karabakh and an amnesty plan for the military forces of the enclave that laid down their arms, though it would not be applicable to those considered responsible for crimes during the Nagorno-Karabakh War of the 1990s. In the days after the cessation of hostilities, meetings took place between

The South Caucasus faced serious setbacks in terms of peacebuilding, with an Azerbaijani military offensive in Nagorno-Karabakh that led to the exodus of almost the entire population of Nagorno-Karabakh and the enclave's forcible reintegration into Azerbaijan

Women's and LGBTIQ+ groups and organisations in Armenia condemned Azerbaijan's military attack on Nagorno-Karabakh in September and become involved in the humanitarian response to the crisis

representatives of Nagorno-Karabakh and Azerbaijan that addressed humanitarian issues, disarmament and the integration of the Armenian population of Nagorno-Karabakh. **Nagorno-Karabakh's President Samvel Shahramanyan issued a decree on 28 September dissolving the self-proclaimed republic, by which it would cease to exist on 1 January 2024.** Between late September and early October, Azerbaijan arrested several political and military leaders of the Nagorno-Karabakh Republic. Azerbaijan presented its integration plan in early October, claiming that it contained guarantees of educational, cultural, linguistic and religious rights. However, **Azerbaijan's promises of guarantees contrasted with the fears and mistrust of the local population, almost all of which had already left Nagorno-Karabakh.** A UN mission visited parts of Nagorno-Karabakh on 1 October and noted that according to their interlocutors, only between 50 and 1,000 of around 120,000 Armenian inhabitants remained in the region.

After the invasion and the issue of the integration of Nagorno-Karabakh into Azerbaijan was settled through military force, the direct talks between Armenia and Azerbaijan were separated from what had been their main obstacle, Nagorno-Karabakh, but were strained nonetheless. In late November, the border commissions of Armenia and Azerbaijan met, though there were no significant results. In December, they announced **confidence-building measures,²⁶ including the exchange of military prisoners, and reaffirmed their desire to achieve a peace treaty based on principles of sovereignty and territorial integrity.** However, in the last four months of the year the parties to the conflict increasingly disagreed with some mediators, with Azerbaijan rebuffing France and the EU and Armenia snubbing Russia in some forums and meetings.²⁷ Meanwhile, regional actors gained momentum, such as the 3+3 platform (Russia, Türkiye, Iran, Armenia, Azerbaijan and Georgia, though still without the latter's participation) and Georgia's offers to mediate. In the final months of the year, there were mutual accusations of delaying the negotiations and public messages of progress, including statements by the parties that there was agreement on the principles for a peace treaty. **At different times, Armenia indicated the risks of new Azerbaijani military operations leading to the forcible seizure of parts of Armenia.** In December, the EU agreed to boost the strength of the

26 Joint statement of the Presidential Administration of the Republic of Azerbaijan and the Office of the Prime Minister of the Republic of Armenia, 7 December 2023.

27 See Escola de Cultura de Pau, *Risk scenarios and scenarios and opportunities for peace*, January 2024.

civilian observation mission on the Armenian side of the border with Azerbaijan (EUMA) from 138 to 209 members. Launched in February, the EUMA replaced the EUMCAP, which was operational from October to December 2022.

Gender, peace and security

Women’s and LGBTIQ+ groups and organisations in Armenia condemned Azerbaijan’s military attack on Nagorno-Karabakh in September, such as the Coalition to End Violence Against Women and Pink Armenia. The anti-militarist Azerbaijan Feminist Peace Collective also spoke out against the invasion, calling on the Azerbaijani population not to let their grievances be exploited for war. Armenia’s population, including women and women’s organisations, engaged in grassroots initiatives in a humanitarian response to the forced displacement of the Armenian population from Nagorno-Karabakh, including the provision of basic goods. During the months of blockade of the Lachin corridor, women from Nagorno-Karabakh engaged in forms of solidarity and mutual support.

The various formats of the negotiations took place without the participation of women negotiators or mediators, nor the integration of the gender perspective in the negotiations. There was no evidence that the mediators had mechanisms for indirect participation with civil society or with women’s organisations. Aside from the negotiating process, the EU mission in Armenia (EUMA) met with representatives of women’s organisations at a conference in November co-organised by the EUMA and the Centre for Women’s Rights, in which the organisation Women’s Agenda also participated. According to the latter, the meeting addressed the mission’s work and operations and aspects of them related to the women, peace and security agenda.

Georgia (Abkhazia, South Ossetia)	
Negotiating actors	Georgia, representatives of Abkhazia and South Ossetia, Russia ²⁸
Third parties	OSCE, EU, UN, USA, Russia ²⁹
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), aggravated since the Russian invasion of Ukraine in 2022, 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 largely remained deadlocked and beset with difficulties, including the entrenched parties’ positions and regional and global geostrategic tension. In 2023, there were fresh delays in the negotiating process. In 2022, the year of the start of Russia’s invasion of Ukraine, the co-mediators of the Geneva International Discussions (GID) had delayed the rounds of talks to “protect” the process from the negative effects of the war in Ukraine and the international context of division, holding only one of the four usual rounds of the GID per year. One year later, on 31 January, the co-mediators (UN, OSCE, EU) announced that they were postponing the 57th round, scheduled for early February 2023, until April, citing timing issues. The authorities of Abkhazia, South Ossetia and Russia criticised the decision, which they described as unilateral and lacking objective reasons, and refused to hold the preparatory meetings scheduled for February with the co-mediators in their respective territories. However, the delegation of co-mediators was received by the Georgian authorities. In total, three of the four annual rounds were held in 2023 (the 57th in April, the 58th in July and the 59th in December).

28 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.

29 Ibid.

Amidst an extremely complex geopolitical climate, the co-mediators said that the participants' positions unanimously supported the continuity of the GID. However, they also noted the lack of agreement on the non-use of force, a main issue on the negotiating agenda. As in previous years, Abkhazia, South Ossetia and Russia demanded bilateral agreements on the non-use of force between Georgia and each of the two de facto independent regions. Russia argued that the military training activities of NATO and the United States in the region and Georgia's intention to join NATO made it more important to reach these agreements. Georgia, which already issued a unilateral commitment not to use force in 2010, maintained its position that such an agreement should be bilateral between Russia and Georgia, as it considers Russia the main party to the conflict.

The representatives of Abkhazia, South Ossetia and Russia walked out the working group meeting on humanitarian issues in the three rounds of the 2023 GID, preventing the issue of the right of return of the Georgian internally displaced and refugee population from being addressed in its entirety, as in previous years. While in the July round the participants indicated that the situation in the border areas was stable, the December round took place amidst increased tension there after one Georgian citizen was shot by Russian border troops near the border between South Ossetia and Georgia in November and another Georgian citizen was arrested. The incident led to a meeting between representatives of Georgia, Russia and the EU Observation Mission and the activation of the communication hotline managed by the mission. The Ergneti Incident Prevention and Response Mechanism (IPRM) remained active during the year, with meetings in January, March, April, September, November and December. It deals with South Ossetia and is co-facilitated by the EU and the OSCE. The Gali IPRM remained non-operational, as it has been since 2018. The negotiating process as a whole took place in a local and regional context of various kinds of tension, which added uncertainty. Russia's invasion of Ukraine, in its second year, and Azerbaijan's military offensive in Nagorno-Karabakh both projected instability throughout the region. In 2023, Georgia received the status of an EU candidate country while dynamics of political and social polarisation there caused concern.

Gender, peace and security

In previous years, gaps had been identified between the gender-related limitations of the negotiating process, indicated by members of civil society, and the commitments taken on by the co-mediating actors. There were no significant changes in 2023. Georgia held meetings between government representatives

participating in the IPRM and representatives of civil society, including women's organisations, as well as internally displaced people and women affected by the conflict, to exchange information and produce discussion, with the support of UN Women. On the other hand, in the GID negotiations, the main co-mediators' delegation continued to have one woman out of a total of three co-mediators (the UN representative in the GID, Cihan Sultanoglu, OSCE representative Siegfried Wöber and EU special representative Toivo Klaar). A man continued to lead the EU observation mission in Georgia (EUMM), which co-facilitates the IPRMs with the OSCE, following the appointment of Dimitrios Karabalis as the new head, who took over from Tibor Kozma in January 2023.

Georgia issued its thematic report on the implementation of the women' peace and security agenda, with recommendations such as facilitating women's effective participation in the GID and IRPM and parliamentary oversight of compliance with the recommendations. In terms of civil society, **the Network of Women Mediators of South Caucasus remained involved in promoting the transformation of conflicts in the region** and women's participation in peacebuilding there. In 2023, it published a study that included an analysis of the current situation of the various conflicts in the entire South Caucasus region and provided recommendations based on individual and group interviews with civil society actors involved in peacebuilding from different sectors. It identified a profound lack of trust, the reactivation of trauma in different populations as a result of the war in Ukraine and concerns about human security, resource degradation, the reintegration of former combatants, violence against women and children, the impacts of militarisation and economic issues. It also recommended the need for direct dialogue between the parties to the conflict and public diplomacy.³⁰

South-east Europe

Cyprus	
Negotiating actors	Republic of Cyprus, self-proclaimed Turkish Republic of Northern Cyprus
Third parties	UN, EU, Guarantor Countries (Türkiye, Greece and United Kingdom)
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

30 Network of Women Mediators of South Caucasus, *Is there a key to conflict resolution in the South Caucasus?*, NWMSC, 2023.

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 Türkiye. 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. An international negotiating conference in Switzerland in 2017 ended without an agreement between the parties. Since then, the process has remained stalled at the highest political level.

The parties to the conflict did not reach an agreement to resume formal joint negotiations at the highest political level, so the negotiating process between leaders remained deadlocked for another year with large gaps between their positions regarding the solution framework. The dialogue did continue at other levels of the process, with UN facilitation, allowing the parties to successfully address a crisis in August regarding incidents that caused minor injuries to several members of the UN peacekeeping forces. The negotiating process took place in an election year in 2023, with a presidential election in the Republic of Cyprus (January-February) and a parliamentary and presidential election in Türkiye (May). Greek Cypriot President Nikos Christodoulides, a former foreign minister (2018-2022) and independent candidate supported by conservative forces, indicated that resuming the talks was a priority. Throughout the year, he advocated the Greek Cypriot solution based on reunification and a bizonal and bicomunal federation, a framework defended by the United Nations and on which the negotiating process, stalled since 2017, has pivoted. Turkish Cypriot President Ersin Tatar continued to argue that this framework was outdated and demanded a two-state solution, as he has maintained with the support of Türkiye since coming to power in 2020. The re-election of Turkish President Recep Tayyip Erdogan in 2023 ensured the continuation of that position. Throughout the year, Tatar demanded the recognition of Turkish Cypriot sovereignty as a requirement for resuming formal negotiations at the highest level. There was diplomatic rapprochement between Greece and Türkiye during the year, but it remained to be seen if it would have an impact on the Cypriot issue.

The dialogue continued over the unresolved conflict in Cyprus, though it was not formally resumed at the highest political level

Though the negotiating process between the leaders did not formally restart, they held an informal meeting in February under the auspices of the UN Secretary-General's Special Representative on Cyprus Colin Stewart. In July, Christodoulides and Tatar visited a laboratory of the joint technical committee about missing persons together. According to Cypriot media outlets, during the visit the Greek Cypriot president raised the possibility of establishing a truth commission that could operate alongside the technical committee. There was no agreement for a joint meeting of the two Cypriot leaders with the UN Secretary-General during the UN General Assembly in September and they held separate meetings. In his speech at the UN General Assembly, the president of Türkiye said that there could be no solution based on a federal model and urged the international community to accept the situation and recognise the independence of the Turkish Republic of Northern Cyprus. The two leaders held another informal meeting in December as part of an end-of-the-year reception organised by UNFICYP. In late December, the parties to the conflict accepted the appointment of a personal envoy to the UN Secretary-General, former Colombian Foreign Minister María Ángela Holguín Cuéllar. She was officially appointed in early January 2024 with a mandate of good offices to seek common ground on how to move forward on the Cypriot issue. The parties' acceptance came after months of diplomatic discussions.

The dialogue was maintained on some level throughout the year. The UN Secretary-General's Deputy Special Adviser on Cyprus held regular separate meetings with the two leaders and with other political and social actors on the island. UN Under-Secretary-General for Political and Peacebuilding Affairs Rosemary A. DiCarlo and the

Assistant Secretary-General for Europe, Central Asia and Americas in the United Nations' Department of Political Affairs, Miroslav Jenca, held separate meetings with both leaders in their visits to the island in March and August, respectively. During the year, the Greek Cypriot leader promoted the idea of a more active role for the EU in resolving the conflict. Analysts said that the appointment of an EU special envoy for the Cypriot issue was being ruled out for the moment, but the EU had offered to play an active role in supporting the process.³¹

The joint technical committees remained active in the negotiating process, though with unbalanced results and an uneven pace.

A brief crisis broke out in August over the Turkish Cypriot authorities' unilateral decision to build a road between the towns of Pyla and Arsos, through the Green Line buffer zone. Three UNFICYP members were slightly injured when they were attacked after trying to

31 International Crisis Group, “How to Reinvigorate the UN's Mediation Efforts in Cyprus”, *ICG Commentary*, 18 August 2023.

stop the road work. The parties reached a UN-facilitated agreement in October that authorised the construction of the road, the prohibition of military vehicles along the new road and the installation of a new checkpoint with UNFICYP personnel, among other points. Stewart praised the agreement, calling it a model to make headway elsewhere in the negotiating process. However, there were other incidents during the year, including a brief incursion by Turkish soldiers into the buffer zone. Other avenues of non-governmental dialogue remained active, such as conversations between representatives of political parties, facilitated by Slovakia, talks between religious actors, facilitated by Sweden, and the Cyprus Academic Dialogue. Civil society organisations conducted activities and initiatives to promote dialogue during the year.

Gender, peace and security

The action plan adopted by the Technical Committee on Gender Equality in 2022 with recommendations to the Greek Cypriot and Turkish Cypriot leaders to promote the integration of the gender perspective in the negotiating process and women’s substantive participation remained pending implementation in 2023, according to Maria Hadjipavlou, an academic and member of the Gender Advisory Team (GAT), a platform for women activists and academics promoting a negotiated resolution with a gender perspective. Hadjipavlou is also a member of the Cyprus Antenna of the Mediterranean Women Mediators Network (MWMN).³² Hadjipavlou described several obstacles to implementing the plan, such as the lack of mechanisms of accountability for compliance with the plan and bureaucratic and hierarchical procedures to carry out activities promoted by the committee that required authorisation from the leaders and coordinators of the committees, producing delays and frustration. Hadjipavlou recommended more autonomy for the technical committee. She also addressed other hurdles and difficulties, such as the disconnect between the different levels of the peacebuilding process and the historical, structural, political, psychological and social factors that influenced women’s lower levels of participation in decision-making and the peace process.

Cyprus’ delegation at the OSCE Forum for Security Cooperation session on 25 October, which focused on the women, peace and security agenda, said that women’s effective participation and leadership in all decision-making levels was a crosscutting priority. It alluded to the national action plan on women, peace and security, but emphasised military aspects, such as the establishment of a military gender advisory council and training material for personnel in military and civilian missions,

all without reference to the action plan to promote women’s participation in the conflict resolution process and its degree of implementation.³³ Women’s civil society organisations participated in initiatives and forums for building bridges and dialogue throughout the year.

Serbia – Kosovo	
Negotiating actors	Serbia, Kosovo
Third parties	EU, UN, USA, Germany, France, Italy
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), Agreement on the path to normalisation between Kosovo and Serbia (2023) and its associated annex (2023)

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 was some 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, the negotiating process faces many problems due to substantive disagreements on pending issues and the failure to implement previous agreements. Other challenges include intercommunity tensions and strain between Kosovar institutions and the Kosovo Serb population, as well as shortcomings in transitional justice.

Despite some progress made in the first few months, the dialogue remained at an impasse for the rest of the year and was influenced by a serious spike in tension

32 Hadjipavlou, Maria, “The Exclusion of the Women, Peace and Security Agenda in the Cyprus Peace Negotiations: A Critical Perspective”, *IAI Commentaries*, 39, August 2023.

33 Permanent mission of the Republic of Cyprus to the OSCE, United Nations and other International Organizations in Vienna, *Statement by the Delegation of Cyprus. 1060th Plenary Meeting of the Forum for Security Cooperation (25 October 2023). Agenda Item 1, Security Dialogue: “Women Peace and Security”*, 27 October 2023

between Kosovo and Serbia, as well as within Kosovo.³⁴

On 27 February, Kosovo and Serbia verbally accepted the Agreement on the path to normalisation between Kosovo and Serbia, and its implementation annex on 18 March, both proposed by the EU and based on a French and German concept. According to the EU, together they constituted a binding agreement for both parties. The February agreement contained 11 articles,³⁵ including the parties' commitment to mutual recognition of their respective national documents and symbols, without requiring Serbia to formally recognise Kosovo as a state, Serbia's promise not to object to Kosovo's entry into international organisations, both parties' pledge to establish ways to ensure an "appropriate level" of self-government for the Kosovo Serb community, an obligation to implement previous agreements and the continuation of EU-facilitated talks to reach a legally binding agreement for the comprehensive normalisation of relations. The March annex included content and procedural aspects, such as the acceptance that all articles would be implemented independently of each other and that the parties would not block the application of any article.³⁶ The February agreement and its annex were the outcome of meetings between the parties facilitated by the EU, as well as diplomatic efforts involving the US, France, Germany and Italy. On 18 April, the parties established a Joint Monitoring Committee to oversee implementation.

Despite the verbal support for the agreement and the annex, problems arose very quickly, hand in hand with disagreements on substantive issues such as the creation of an association of Serbian-majority municipalities in Kosovo, agreed on in 2013 and paralysed ever since, and the political and social tension in northern Kosovo and between Kosovo and Serbia. Kosovar Prime Minister Albin Kurti rejected the draft statute of association presented at the 2 May meeting between Serbian and Kosovar leaders in Brussels, sponsored by EU High Representative Josep Borrell, and announced that he would present their own proposal. The lack of agreement on how to stage the implementation of the February agreement and its March annex was also evident. Various EU-facilitated meetings in Brussels between May and September in various formats did not reach an agreement to move the process forward, which came to a standstill. Serbia accepted and Kosovo rejected an EU proposal to simultaneously address the issues that each side advocated addressing first.

The deadlock in the negotiating process influenced and was affected by the deteriorating situation in northern Kosovo and between Kosovo and Serbia.

The lines of tension, which had an impact on the impasse in the negotiating process, included political tension, reflected in the Kosovo Serbs representatives' abandonment of the institutions in 2022 and their boycott of the municipal elections in April 2023 after making their turnout conditional on the establishment of the association of Serbian-majority municipalities in Kosovo, one of the main subjects of the negotiations. Without their turnout, the elections in the Kosovo Serb majority municipalities were won by Kosovo Albanian parties (3.4% turnout). Post-election protests led to seriously violent incidents in late May. The United States and the EU imposed some

Despite the progress made in early 2023, the talks between Kosovo and Serbia ran into serious problems due to profound disagreements about substantive issues and to the deteriorating security situation in northern Kosovo

sanctions on Kosovo, with the EU urging its government to de-escalate, including by withdrawing special police units from around municipal facilities and by holding early elections in those municipalities. In July and August, Kosovo withdrew part of the special police units, but it did not hold new elections. After various incidents over the following months, tension escalated with a paramilitary ambush against a police patrol in Banjska (northern Kosovo, 15 km from the border with Serbia) on 24 September and the subsequent entrenchment of the assailants (around 30 armed men, according to Kosovo) in an Orthodox monastery. A police officer and three of the assailants died. Kosovo accused Serbia of

organising the assault, which the Kosovar authorities said was aimed at annexing northern Kosovo. Belgrade denied any involvement. Milan Radoičić, the vice president of Kosovo's main Serbian party, Srpska Lista, claimed responsibility for the attack. He was arrested in Belgrade and released. Serbia said that he would be prosecuted and refused to extradite him to Kosovo. NATO increased its troops in Kosovo. The attack on 24 September greatly increased the challenges in relations between Kosovo and Serbia and international actors warned that the lack of dialogue could lead to a new escalation. After separate meetings with the parties, in October a delegation of the special representative of the EU, the US and advisors to the leaders of France, Germany and Italy submitted to Kosovo and Serbia a plan to normalise their relations based on the February and March agreements. According to analysts, the new plan was a slight variation of those agreements and included Serbia's non-opposition to other governments recognising Kosovo or its incorporation into international organisations, as well as a proposal for a statute of

34 See the summary on the socio-political crisis in Serbia (Kosovo) in Escola de Cultura de Pau, *Alert 2024! Report on conflicts, human rights and peacebuilding*. Barcelona: Icaria, 2024.

35 See the full agreement at: EEAS Press Team, "Belgrade-Pristina Dialogue: Agreement on the path to normalisation between Kosovo and Serbia", EEAS, 27 February 2023.

36 See the full agreement at: EEAS Press Team, "Belgrade-Pristina Dialogue: Implementation Annex to the Agreement on the Path to Normalisation of Relations between Kosovo and Serbia", EEAS, 18 March 2023.

association for the Serbian-majority municipalities in Kosovo.³⁷ The Kosovar leader demanded sanctions against Serbia for the events in Banjska and warned that there would be no talks without sanctions. Both leaders were invited to meet with the high representative of the EU, the French president, the German chancellor and the Italian prime minister in Brussels on 26 October. They held separate meetings that yielded no progress and both sides traded blame. In November, the EU Special Representative for the Belgrade-Pristina Dialogue, Miroslav Lajčák, held meetings in Kosovo and in Serbia with their political representatives and other actors, as well as separate meetings with the chief negotiators in Brussels. In December, Kosovar government representatives said that the draft municipal association proposal was better than previous ones, while Kosovar opposition parties like DLK rejected the document. **Around 20 civil society organisations from Serbia and Kosovo warned of the profound impact that the violence of 24 September had on relations within and between Kosovo and Serbia, as well as the previously deteriorated context. In October, these civil society organisations jointly called for peacebuilding and the normalisation of relations**

Civil society organizations from Serbia and Kosovo called for more meaningful participation of women in the negotiations

in the region and urged the authorities at all levels to support the building of links and cooperation within and between Kosovo and Serbia.³⁸

Gender, peace and security

Around 20 civil society organisations from Serbia and Kosovo issued a joint letter on 8 March calling for the more meaningful participation of women in the negotiations between Serbia and Kosovo.³⁹ In their letter, they expressed concern about the failure to incorporate gender-related considerations in the various agreements and specifically in the Agreement on the Path to Normalisation between Kosovo and Serbia reached on 27 February. The letter calls for mainstreaming the gender perspective so that decisions made in the negotiating process consider women's needs and concerns. After a decade of dialogue between Kosovo and Serbia, the letter deplored that very few women have been able to participate in the process and warned that if women continue to be excluded, it will be detrimental to Serbia and Kosovo, as well as to the objectives expressed by the EU.

37 Prelec, Marko, "The best deal Kosovo and Serbia can get", *EUobserver*, 30 October 2023.

38 Vv.Aa., Renewing commitments to the cause of peace, 26 October 2023.

39 Vv.Aa., Women's voices for peace in Serbia and Kosovo, 8 March 2023.

