

Speech by Tolekan Ismailova, Chairman of Bir Duino-Kyrgyzstan
Seventh International Conference "Women at Peace Table - More Justice for All"
13 June 2019
Yerevan, Armenia

Dear participants, Dear Gulnara and members of the Working Group on Women's Equality at the OSCE Civic Platform for Solidarity,

I am honored to be with you because I knew Anahit Bayandur back in the 2000s, thanks to Irena Lasota, IDEE Leader, who initiated wonderful, participatory programs for activists in Central Asia and the Caucasus. We learned from each other, shared experiences and solidarity to promote the values of democracy and human rights in the Central Asian and Caucasus region. Anahit has been to Kyrgyzstan and Uzbekistan. These were bridges of solidarity and partnership.

I remember the International Congress of the Federation for Human Rights (FIDH) held in Yerevan in June 2010, and delegates visited Mr. Nikol Pashinyan's prison and gave flowers in support and solidarity. He was then the Editor of the opposition newspaper "Haikakan Zhamanak" and was sentenced to seven years in prison. Today, Armenia has changed and is called a country of "Honour", we are in solidarity with the Armenian people and will support and be with you to promote values and positive changes in your country.

Thanks to the young women Leaders who received the International Award for Peace and Human Rights in memory of Anahit, Shirin from Lebanon, Mouna from Yemen and Malik from Chechnya. You have given us inspiration and new strength to continue our work together in this rapidly changing world. You have shown us courage and courage that we cannot work classically today, we need innovation and new tactics and strategies. And this inspires us all! Good luck to you, and we will always be with you, despite the distances, expanding our solidarity and support networks.

Dear Gulnara, you also raise the issue of continuing peaceful consultations and dialogue platforms, including the Karabakh issue in the decision-making process at all levels. As part of FIDH with colleagues and partners, we have prepared a report «Disputed Entities in Eastern Europe: Human Rights Sacrificed»,

<https://www.fidh.org/en/issues/international-justice/16197-disputed-entities-in-eastern-europe-human-rights-sacrificed> and organized a workshop in Istanbul with CSOs and the expert community in October 2014. Read the report "Assessing human rights protection in Eastern European disputed and conflict entities

We are grateful for your efforts and see that there are already peaceful steps to advance further negotiations, as confirmed by Ms. Gulnara's organization, Democracy Today.

I came from Kyrgyzstan to say that we have experienced two revolutions (2005 and 2010), in June 2010, an ethnic conflict in the south of the country. But so far, the principles of transitional justice have not worked in Kyrgyzstan. The level of political corruption, the growth of poverty and poor quality education marginalize citizens, are obstacles and barriers to the development of democratic leadership and the promotion of gender equality at all levels of government.

Unfortunately, Central Asia is still underrepresented in Asia and few people know it in European countries. Although all five countries are full members of the UN, the OSCE and other international organizations.

All five Central Asian countries differ from each other in their cultural and ethnic aspects and have different experiences of political and economic transformations after the collapse of the USSR and the acquisition of independence. Kazakhstan and Kyrgyzstan have made relative progress in the transition to a market economy, while Turkmenistan and Uzbekistan have not yet completed the transition. Tajikistan has intermediate results.

Central Asia is surrounded by countries with internal/trans-border conflicts; Afghanistan, where civil war is ongoing (since the mid-1970s); China, where large-scale arrests and detention facilities in the Xinjiang Autonomous Region have become more frequent in recent years; India and Pakistan, which are in conflict over Kashmir; the South Caucasus, where unresolved conflicts remain; and Iran, which is in prolonged economic and political isolation. Given these regional realities, Central Asian countries are at the centre of the attention of external actors in the countries who wish to gain control and power over the sub-region and ultimately have unlimited access to natural resources and land in Central Asia [1]. Competing with each other, external actors engage Central Asian countries in various initiatives that may partially contradict each other (e.g. China's One Belt One Road initiative, the Eurasian Economic Union (EAEU), the Shanghai Cooperation Organization (SCO), etc.), which violate human rights through repressive laws and practices of persecution of dissenters. Therefore, your solidarity and support for our efforts in Kyrgyzstan to preserve the secular state and achieve equal participation in the decision-making process at all levels of government, as women, youth and men, is very important and significant for us.

While governments have little or no response to the rise of religious fundamentalism, there has been a rapid spread of Islamic fundamentalism in the region, for example, in the Fergana Valley (which is partly in Uzbekistan and Kyrgyzstan). Often, governments use Islamic fundamentalism as a pretext for arresting or persecuting their political opponents to consolidate their rule in the region. Central Asian countries recognize gender equality as a prerequisite for sustainable and inclusive development, as outlined in national development programmes. Each country has the necessary institutional and regulatory mechanisms, such as national action plans, gender equality action plans and gender-sensitive policies. However, there are still problems related to the observance of women's rights, especially those of vulnerable groups, such as women from rural areas, migrants and poor urban dwellers. Political support for women's rights is declarative and has not brought about significant structural changes in Central Asian countries.

Patriarchal values and gender discrimination against women and their gender roles largely determine many aspects of women's public and private life in Central Asia. Women's rights to property, land and livelihoods are often not recognized, including their rights to inheritance, decision-making and natural resource management. Customary law as well as marriage traditions in Central Asia do not allow women to own land and property. In addition, land redistribution to large (foreign) corporations, facilitated by trade and investment agreements, deprives people of land and any opportunities for women to exercise their rights to land and earn a livelihood.

Land degradation, deforestation, soil and water pollution, loss of biodiversity and reduction of water resources are major problems in the region, which exacerbate women's health problems and plight. Since the Soviet era, Central Asian countries have been used as repositories of radioactive waste, sites for uranium, antimony, mercury and other fossil fuel extraction, and a landfill for various nuclear experiments. The countries of the region have underground mineral

and mineral deposits that attract foreign mining corporations that do not care about the environmental, social and economic costs to local communities and countries as a whole.

In July 2018, GNDR invited applications for National Coordinating Organizations to implement Views from the Frontline (VFL) 2019. In September 2018, after a rigorous screening process, "Human Rights Movement – Bir Duino Kyrgyzstan" was selected as the National Coordinating Organization for Kyrgyzstan. A National Advisory Committee was set up in February 2018, and communities and respondents were identified.

<http://www.birduino.kg/en/press/883-advertisement-for-po-vfl-2019>

In most countries of the region, the gender pay gap is high, for example, women's pay is only 60-80% of men's pay. Women often face so-called glass ceilings, which limit their career development and opportunities to take up leadership positions; and women often face "hidden" discrimination in the labour market. Most female migrant workers live and work in poor conditions without any legal safeguards.

Poverty, high unemployment and low wages force Central Asian women to become labour migrants both within and outside the region. The majority of women migrants from Central Asia work in the informal sector of the labour market, often in conditions similar to those of slaves, as domestic staff, nurses, nurses, service providers, catering, local market vendors and workers in garment shops, as well as commercial sex workers.

Women's political participation has declined dramatically. Women's representation in Kazakhstan's parliament is about 27.1 percent, 25 percent in Turkmenistan's parliament, 19 percent in Tajikistan's parliament, 16 percent in Uzbekistan, and 19.2 percent in Kyrgyzstan's parliament.

Understanding the processes of environmental degradation for women and youth development, I was one of the initiators, together with Heidi and Julia, of the creation of the Working Group on Promoting Gender Equality at the OSCE Civic Platform for Solidarity. And it is a very important tool for influencing advocacy behavior at different levels of international organizations and within the OSCE.

Ms. Graziella Pavone, Human Rights, Gender and Security Officer at OSCE Office for Democratic Institutions and HR (ODHIR). is with us here, doing a lot for us both at the level of the OSCE and within each country, especially on the implementation of UN Resolution 1325 and others. WWGG needs your special attention and support!

International experts should know and understand our countries well, because we often lose time and opportunities, because the specifics of countries and roots of emerging conflicts in different countries are not clear. Therefore, I would like to reiterate to us the importance of real solidarity and support in order to positively change the environment for the better.

Last, I would like to invite us all to reflect on a common vision of how we can promote parliamentary oversight principles, ensuring broad participation of women and youth for their equal participation in monitoring and evaluation? There is a good experience in the Kyrgyz Republic, on the initiative of young deputy Aida Kasymalieva this work is done jointly with the Committee of Mrs. Natalia Nikitenko.

Thank you!