

**WEDNESDAY, 10 DECEMBER 2008 (09.00am – 10.30am)**

**Workshop 9 : Women Journalists- Building Bridges Across Conflict Zones**

**ODESSA, LEVEL 1, English, Russian**

**Workshop Title: Women Journalists- Building Bridges Across Conflict Zones**

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**Language: (Please mark one) Russian, English**

**Workshop description:**

1. What are the main points you want to raise in the workshop?

Women journalists have unique experience in covering wars and conflicts – focused mostly on human dimension, on people's experience (including civilians, women, children, soldiers, and other individuals) much more than on strategic military achievements, and political games. There is no exaggeration to say that women journalists already elaborated new form of war reporting as well as new form of reporting on peace building after conflicts- in all parts of the world. Women journalists often work as peace communicators as well, they cooperate with women/human rights groups in post conflict zones, elaborate new language of peace communication instead of hate speech of wars. This experience is visible in former USSR, Balkans, Latin America, Middle East, Africa, Asia. At the same time this unique experience is neglected by many analysis and surveys, is not included in to mainstream agenda of media institutions and organizations in many regions. Gender discrimination, what many women face in profession and in the society in many countries, makes new borders between professionals and civil groups.

Workshop's main goal is to discuss women journalist experience in reporting conflicts and peace making after conflicts, and discuss possible future international strategies to develop this experience. We plan to discuss as well women journalists achievements in different spheres, and in different regions- including post soviet space. We plan to discuss women journalists contribution in opening to public such issues as Chechenian wars, conflicts in Central Asia, and recent Caucasus events as well.

We hope to establish a network of women journalists around the globe to promote peace language and practice of peace making after the conflicts, as well practice to prevent conflicts via media, and to overcome all prejudices we still have.

2. Give some background information to the issue you want to raise.

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Women journalists started covering wars not so long ago. Since Balkan wars, women journalists in Europe played important role in covering the whole conflict, emphasising people's attitude and people's suffering in all combating territories. There is no exaggeration to conclude that gender aspect of conflict, including gender based violence (like rape on ethnic basis and so on) have been understood as crime against humanity thanks to women journalists reports from Balkans. Men journalists traditionally did not pay so strong attention to the issue. The same is true about other wars and conflicts- in Africa, Latin America, Asia, former Soviet Union.

Many people in the world know Anna Politkovskaya's name, the bright journalist covering Chechnya and violation of human rights in the conflict assassinated in October 2006. She combined human rights activism and journalism, and she was not the only professional doing that.

Anna represented women's approach in her work- like other women journalists (some of them have been threatened and even killed) in post soviet space. Many women try to do their best to overcome governmental oppression and propaganda, and to create real bridges with professionals and human rights initiatives beyond the conflicts. We in Russia initiatives like Ekho of War (Russian and Chechen women against violence) since mid 1990<sup>th</sup>, women journalists and peace makers from Caucasian countries tried to establish cooperation since 90<sup>th</sup> as well. New conflict in the Caucasus, information wars and new militarization in the region create new challenge for peace and free journalism. It is important to discuss women's experience and women's strategies to combat propaganda, hate speech, political confrontation and all tricks of power to divide professionals and human beings in the region.

It is important that women journalists have strong experience of peace communication in many conflict and post conflict zones. It gives us a chance. Let's look at this experience, and try to learn.

3. List three key questions you want the workshop to address.

a) Women journalists experiences in covering wars and post conflict zones – across conflicts, overcoming propaganda and hate speech, human dimension of journalism in 21 century

b) Cooperation between women journalists and women/ human rights organizations in post conflict areas, building bridges between women journalists and peace makers across conflicts, new approaches for peace making via media

c) Elaborating of peace communication strategies and language of peace building reporting, global cooperation

4. What would be the main desired outcome of the workshop?

Establishing of vivid network/cooperation of women journalists and media activists and analysts across conflicts – and elaboration of a common strategy for the future

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