

STATEMENT TO CEDAW COMMITTEE

For the Global Consultations on the issues “Women in conflict and postconflict situations” from Ms. Iulia Kharashvili, the IDP Women Association “Consent”, Georgia

My name is Iulia Kharashvili, I come from Georgia – country, where after several conflicts and wars more than 6 percent of population is displaced. My statement is based as on the experience from work with conflict affected women from my country, as well as on knowledge which we gained from cooperation with the other countries being in conflict, also in our sub-region, and in other parts of the world.

Women should participate at all stages of conflict prevention, conflict phase and postconflict rehabilitation—everybody agree on this, but no real mechanisms are elaborated to make this participation possible and successful. In our case, even very few women are participating in Geneva peace talks or security meetings near *de facto* borders, it does not make difference, as there is not the mechanism in place to include gender concerns and to translate women's voices into practical decisions, changing their lives, as the process is very politicized. Mechanisms for participation in official negotiations require from women to have specific positions in state administration and comprehensive knowledge - this can be achieved by training and preparing women from the State agencies (or, as an exception, from the civil society with relevant experience) and by regular reflections of society about specific problems of women's protection and participation. During and after the conflict access of women's organizations to immediate assessment of needs and provision of assistance should be unrestricted that will allow to include specific women's needs in programs (based on positive practice from Georgia in 2008 when rapid assessment made by the UNIFEM allowed to include displaced women's needs in emergency assistance and further practices).

2. The second observation is that the biggest international funds come during the conflict and emergency assistance phase, when the monitoring and use of these funds are more difficult. In phase of stabilization, when women groups/organisations/movements can significantly contribute to postconflict rehabilitation, the funds are already very limited and often do not give the opportunity to create really sustainable environment for postconflict community development. To become really self-reliant, women need more prolonged and more equally distributed assistance; also, as women usually are less corrupted, they should have an opportunity for monitoring of international and state funds for recovery and possibility to voice their views for correction of use of these funds. Women agree for any work to save their families – that is why decent conditions of work and equal labor rights for them should be protected, and women affected by the conflicts and working in private companies, markets other places should benefit equally alongside with women and men from society at large.

3. The crucial issue for conflict and post conflict period continues to be sexual violence against women and girls - during the conflict committed by militaries, paramilitaries and mercenaries, in postconflict situations - by those distributing aid; the latter was not a case in Georgia, but we see it in the majority of conflict situations. Regardless of existence of UNSC resolutions, in some cases even official armies are using massive rape as a weapon of genocide. We propose to the States which did not yet included provisions prohibiting use of rape during the conflict in their domestic laws, to do so, and to include in their Criminal Codes, Statutes for Army and other normative documents the provision that criminal responsibility for committing rape and sexual violence during the conflict or in postconflict rehabilitation period, is aggravated by these circumstances. There are now 17 countries which accepted the Action Plan for Resolution

1325, Georgia also works on its Action Plan, and this year will report about the implementation of CEDAW, but it is necessary to mainstream these provisions in other legislative acts.

Finally, we think that solidarity of women across the boundaries is crucial factor for promotion of tasks of CEDAW and support of anti-discrimination measures. Having experience to work with NGOs/women activists in regional scale and, following the initiative expressed by women's organisations from South Caucasus/Central Asia region and supported by the UN Secretary General and UN Women about creation of Women's Peace Corps, we have strong feeling that creation of such group of experienced women mediators, psychologists, negotiators will open new window of opportunities for increased protection and participation of women in conflict and postconflict situations and will contribute to prevention of escalation of violence.