

ANNUAL CONFERENCE
OF THE GENDER EQUALITY COMMISSION

CONCEPT NOTE

9 June 2026
Strasbourg
France

Women forging lasting peace

Dismantling barriers to gender-inclusive
conflict resolution and peacebuilding



■ Gender equality is essential for peace and security. Women's participation in conflict resolution and peacebuilding significantly increases the probability of lasting peace. Yet women's participation in peace and security efforts remains low and has in recent years declined.

■ The annual conference of the Council of Europe Gender Equality Commission will in 2026 support the implementation of the Organisation's standard in this area, the Recommendation (2010)10 of the Committee of Ministers on the role of women and men in conflict prevention and resolution and in peace building. The Conference will also contribute to global discussions on women's participation in the context of UN Security Council Resolution 1325 and the related agenda on Women, Peace and Security.

■ A particular focus on Russia's war of aggression against Ukraine will align with the Council of Europe's commitment to support democracy, human rights and the rule of law in Ukraine, and with the recognised need to integrate gender equality in efforts regarding peace and security in Ukraine. Feeding into the process of preparing a New Democratic Pact for Europe, the Conference will also highlight women's participation in conflict resolution and peacebuilding as a key element of democracy and stability in Europe, as inclusive decision-making enhances legitimacy, accountability and public trust in institutions.

■ The Conference will bring together representatives of member States, experts, women's rights organisations, broader civil society, international organisations, and other key stakeholders, to discuss synergies and strategies on advancing women's participation in conflict resolution and peace building.



Présidence de / Presidency of
MONACO
Conseil de l'Europe / Council of Europe
05/2026 - 11/2026





Thematic focus of the Conference

Gender norms and gender-based violence as barriers to women's participation

Various Council of Europe standards and its Gender Equality Strategy (2024-2029) recognise gender norms and gender-based violence as key obstacles for women's participation in political, public, social and economic life and speak to the silencing effects of sexism and violence. These tendencies increase during conflict and war, including through the systematic use of conflict-related sexual violence as a weapon of war. As a result, women are sidelined and left out of decision-making related to peace and security.

Women's rights organisations are often among the first ones to detect gendered risks and gender-based violence in situations of conflict and war. In Ukraine, too, women participate in new ways in various spheres of society. At the same time, gender-based violence has reportedly increased, fuelled by ever more entrenched gender stereotypes. In the context of militarisation a glorification of masculine values also resonates at a global scale. The latest reports to the United Nations General Assembly by the Independent International Commission of Inquiry on Ukraine illustrate that women are particularly vulnerable to violence and sexual abuse and reflect the gendered nature of their treatment, for instance in detention and during forced searches.

The Council of Europe Convention on Preventing and Combating Violence Against Women and Domestic Violence (Istanbul Convention) and Recommendation 2010(10) refer to States' responsibility to promote change in gendered social and cultural norms and related patterns of silencing and violence against women. Gender norms and gender-based violence hinder women's participation in democratic life generally. Clearer insight is needed into the consequences that gender norms and gender-based violence can have on the participation of women in efforts related to peace and security.

Building inclusive and cohesive societies through the meaningful participation of women

In societies affected by conflict and war, the risk of social fragmentation is high. Stronger participation and leadership of women in all their diversity broadens the range of perspectives shaping peace agreements and reinforces accountability and transparency. Building on Council of Europe standards, the Conference will identify key elements for effectively advancing women's participation at all levels of peace and security efforts – from local, community-driven conflict resolution to high-level diplomacy and negotiation tables.

The Conference will discuss how to address discrepancies in participation compounded by intersecting factors – such as age, disability, income level, sexual orientation and gender identity – as a crucial element in building inclusive and cohesive societies and preparedness for stability and sustainable peace.



This initiative is a contribution towards the
New Democratic Pact for Europe