

## **Voices from the Field – chat information from March 14, 2022**

[Note: This document includes information that was pre-prepared for this “Voices from the Field” event as well as useful information that was posted by attendees on March 14.]

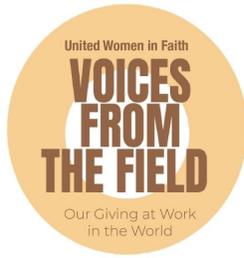
Welcome to “Voices from the Field” and thank you for being here! The program will begin at noon Eastern time (U.S.) after a few brief tech tips.

Please greet each other in the chat box. Note that in a Zoom webinar all participants will be able to see your message, not just the person you’re addressing.

Because we are using a webinar format today, rather than a meeting, you'll only be able to see the speakers, not all the hundreds who are attending today. Please continue greeting each other in chat.

Now speaking: **Tatiana Dwyer**

Tatiana is on the International Ministries staff of United Women in Faith and has been involved in the Women’s Peace Dialogue Platform from the beginning. Tatiana has over 25 years of professional experience in international development, advocacy, and peace-building, with on-the-ground work experience in post-war Kosovo, Bosnia & Herzegovina, Serbia, Tajikistan, and Romania. Tatiana, who is from the Republic of Georgia, was part of peace dialogues between the civil society of Georgia and Abkhazia in 1990s. Later she drew upon this experience in her work in the post-war Kosovo.



Now speaking: **Harriett Jane Olson**

She has served as general secretary and CEO of United Women in Faith since 2007. The Women's Peace Dialogue Platform started during her tenure.

The Women's Peace Dialogue Platform was founded in 2015 by United Methodist Women (now United Women in Faith), the World Federation of Ukrainian Women's Organizations, and five regional organizations. What started as a bilateral dialogue between Ukrainian and Russian women has evolved into a permanent regional forum.

A second round of dialogues happened in 2016, which expanded to include more than 15 women peace leaders from several more countries across the region, including Kazakhstan, Tajikistan, Armenia and Azerbaijan.

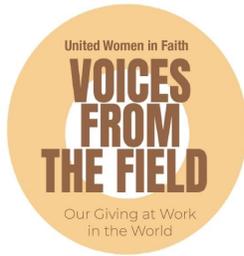
A third round of the Women's Peace Dialogue was held in Austria in June 2017. Twenty-five women leaders from 15 Eastern European and Central Asian countries met for work around critical issues of peace and conflict in the region.

A June 2017 Religion News Service article about the Women Peace Dialogue Platform: <https://religionnews.com/2017/06/30/womens-peace-dialogue-and-united-methodist-women-meet-in-burg-schlaining-austria/>

Now speaking: **Olena Suslova of Ukraine**

Ukraine, formerly with a population of about 44 million, is the second-largest country in Europe. It covers an area about 3 ½ times the size of the state of California. The territory of modern Ukraine has been inhabited since 32,000 BCE.

Olena Suslova is a Human Rights Activist and Researcher, with a focus on gender issues. She worked in Ukraine and in several countries within the former Soviet



Union. She has over 20 years of experience working on gender, conflict resolution, culture of peace and education, strategic planning, advocacy, team building, fundraising, and other issues. Olena is an experienced educator and provides training on several human rights issues. She is also the founder of the “Women’s Information Consultative Center”, a non-governmental organization established in 1995.

Women’s Information Consultative Center website, in Russian:

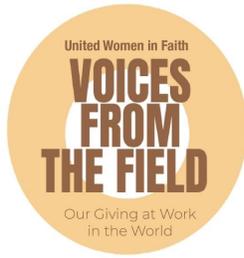
<http://www.wicc.net.ua>

Page related to the war, in Russian: <http://www.wicc.net.ua/category/viyna>

Now speaking: **Julia Kharashvili of Georgia**

The Republic of Georgia, with a population of almost 4 million, is slightly larger than the U.S. state of West Virginia. Georgia’s western border is along the Black Sea.

Julia Kharashvili is the founder and chairperson of the IDP (internally displaced persons) Women Association “Consent”, a non-governmental organization in Georgia, working on protection of rights of IDP and conflict affected women. She herself was displaced by the war in Abkhazia (1992-93). During August 2008 war with Russia, Julia, who worked at the Ministry of Refugees and Accommodation (2008-2010), was involved in organizing the assistance for IDPs. Julia is an expert on issues of peace, gender and displacement. She is a certified trainer, and co-author of UNIFEM training manual on Gender and Peace Education. She is a member of the Georgia’s National Action Plan Coordination Group on the implementation of on Women, Peace and Security. Since 2014 she has served on the High Level Advisory Group for the Global Study on the impact of the UN Security Council Resolution 1325. For her work in the civil society sector, Julia received awards from the High Commissioner for Refugees in 2002 and from the “Voices of Courage” in 2004.



“Consent” website in English: <https://en.idpwa.org/>

Now speaking: **Virginija Aleksejune of Lithuania**

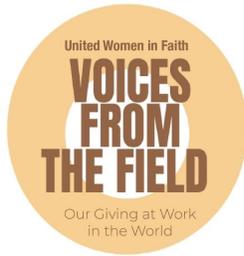
Lithuania lies on the eastern shore of the Baltic Sea. Its 2.8 million people live in an area a little smaller than the state of Oklahoma.

Virginija Aleksejune is an expert on gender equality and non-discrimination. She has built her professional experience in the field of gender equality policies, gender representation in mass culture, and gender-based violence, while working as a coordinator of the Women's Program at the Open Society Fund-Lithuania. Since 2003, Ms. Aleksejune has been the executive director of the Center for Equality Advancement in Vilnius, Lithuania. As director, Virginija is responsible for the strategic planning of organization, managing budget and staff, for more than 15 years of work in the field of gender equality and anti-discrimination. Virginija served as manager of more than 70 national and international projects, conducted research on gender equality, multiple discrimination, including the inclusion of socially excluded groups, tolerance, and diversity. Virginija has also conducted trainings on tolerance, non-discrimination, and human rights in Lithuania and internationally. She is the co-author of several publications. In 2011 she served as an expert for the preparation of inter-institutional plan of action under UN SCR1325 for Lithuania. Virginija is the Board Chair of National development cooperation platform and Reproductive rights and health network; board member of Lithuanian Women's lobby and the Business Women Professional-Vilnius-Lithuania.

Center for Equality Advancement website in Lithuanian: <https://gap.lt/>

Now speaking: **Iluta Lāce of Latvia**

Latvia, a little smaller than the U.S. state of Washington, is home to 1.9 million people. Latvia is a developed country with a high-income advanced economy. Forests account for 56% of the total land area.

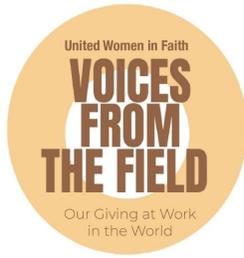


Iluta Lāce is the founder of MARTA Centre, currently the Centre's director and board member. She is a leading expert in Latvia in the field of gender equality, domestic violence and human trafficking, providing expertise on local and global context on domestic violence, knowledge of theory on preventing and combating domestic violence and human trafficking as well as strategies for raising awareness and service provision. She is actively engaged in advocacy for necessary changes in Latvian legislation regarding women's rights and violence against women, especially sexual exploitation. Before zeroing in on the issues of women's rights, she worked with youth and homeless children as a social worker. Iluta has been the vice president of the European Women's Lobby. She facilitated the development of services and promotion of girls and women's rights in Central Asia, Turkey, Seychelles, Moldova, Ukraine, Russia, Belarus, and other countries. In 2021 she was awarded The Order of the Three Stars for meritorious service on behalf of the Fatherland. In 2015, Recognition from the Ministry of Foreign Affairs of Latvia for significant contributions to strengthening the Republic of Latvia. In 2014 the President of Finland awarded her the decoration Knight of the Order of the Lion of Finland. In 2014 the United States Embassy in Riga recognized her for exceptional courage in raising awareness and advocating for legal protection for victims of domestic violence in Latvia.

MARTA Centre website, in Latvian: <https://marta.lv/lv/>

UMCOR is trying to support the UMC churches in the region. As you would assume, churches in Russia are largely out of reach due to the sanctions. They will be expanding partners, but this is where they have started.

We can help with facilitating support. I [Harriett Olson] am hearing that there are issues with some banks getting the funds to the Ukraine national bank account.



If you've been moved by today's stories, consider making a contribution to the Supplementary Fund for International Mission, <https://uwfaith.org/?form=FUNFVPWUTXU>. Or make your gift, marked "International Mission Fund," through your unit, district, or conference treasurer. 100% of your gift will support emergency needs in Ukraine and future international mission emergency needs and emerging programs serving women, children, and youth through United Women in Faith.

Joint statement by the UN Working Group of Experts on People of African Descent, the Special Rapporteur on contemporary forms of racism, racial discrimination, and related intolerance, and the Special Rapporteur on the human rights of migrants:

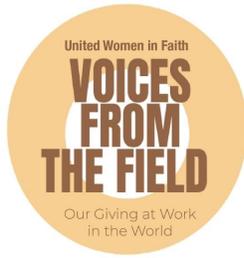
<https://www.ohchr.org/EN/NewsEvents/Pages/DisplayNews.aspx?NewsID=28195&LangID=E>

Statement by the UN Special Rapporteur on contemporary forms of racism, Tendayi Achiume: OHCHR | Ukraine: UN expert condemns racist threats, xenophobia at border

<https://www.ohchr.org/EN/NewsEvents/Pages/DisplayNews.aspx?NewsID=28194&LangID=E>

Statement by the IOM Director General: <https://www.iom.int/news/discrimination-and-racism-against-third-country-nationals-fleeing-ukraine-must-end-iom-director-general#.YiEXph5xKzM.linkedin>

<https://www.adept-platform.org/statement-of-adept-on-the-apparent-inhumane-treatment-of-african-citizens-fleeing-ukraine/>



Link to petition "Mothers of Russian soldiers - stop the war:

<https://www.change.org/p/russian-women-russian-women-stop-the-war-in-ukraine?fbclid=IwAR3cIusvtp2dL6w9LtCw9UN-4cE4hvxCwk9aBMZPByAX8Babm7b6twIr7RM>

There are 5 Russian embassies in the USA: Washington, DC, Houston, TX, Seattle, WA, San Francisco, and New York, NY. Perhaps we could send an avalanche of calls and letters to these locations expressing our concern/anger at the slaughter of men, women and children in Ukraine, our full support of the world community's sanctions on Russia, and our grief that Putin is willing to sacrifice his citizens to these hardships for his ego.

From the UMC Global Ministries website:

Gifts to support the people of Ukraine can be made in the following ways:

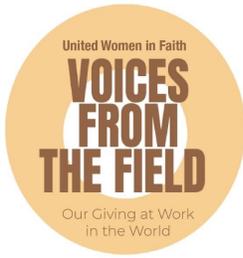
1. Online at <https://umcmmission.org/advance-project/982450>
2. By toll-free telephone: 888-252-6174
3. By check made out to Global Ministries/UMCOR with "Advance #982450-Ukraine" written on the memo line, either mailed and addressed to Global Ministries/UMCOR, GPO, P.O. Box 9068, New York, NY, 10087-9068 or given at or through any United Methodist church

One hundred percent of all Advance contributions go to the designated cause.

Church World Service Ukraine Response Fund: <https://cwsglobal.org/ukraine-response-fund/>

The upcoming FaithTalk will address the question of peace more broadly and will speak more about Resolution 1325.

"Voices from the Field" – sharing stories that bring our giving to life and showing our giving at work in the world.



Thank you to nearly 700 of you for being here today. Please watch for information about the next quarterly “Voices from the Field” event scheduled for June 20, and spread the word. See you next time.

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