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Thank you speech on September 21 for Anita Augsburg Prize “Women rebels against war” September 21, 2018

Your excellency mayor of Verden,

friends, colleagues from WILPF, members of Verden city council , citizens of Verden, and very dear members of CSP who joined me in this honorable event ,

I am deeply humbled and honored to receive such an important Prize that means that has great significance for me and many women around the world – Anita Augsburg Prize 2018 – “Women Rebel Against War”.

It is especially important to receive this award on three times symbolic day as today we celebrate International Peace day and in my country we celebrate today 27<sup>th</sup> anniversary of Independence of Armenia and very soon Germany would celebrate the Day of German Unity . These are exceptional dates for peace.

Establishing Anita Augsburg Award is important and extremely timely step. Her rebellious spirit and vision have paved the way to many women around the world and herself and women like her have pioneered the important foundations for the world leading organization “International Women’s League for Peace and Freedom “ . A year ago and more than 100 years after, German branch of WILPF in partnership with city of Verden found very timely and important to initiate this groundbreaking process and establish the Prize to honor her work and spread the spirit of peace all over the world . This is exemplary collaboration for peace that needs to be spread all over the world.

I would like to like to thank Mayor of Verden and German Branch of WILP for recognition and respect of individual’s investment in fighting for the most basic right and condition of human evolution- peace. I would like especially thank Ms. Heidy Meinzolt, whose exceptional work and dedication has been recognized and she has been elected to International board of WILP . Sincere congratulations to Ms.Heidy Meinzolt.

Today as never before we need to raise jointly voices against militarism , nationalism and division and as never before we need to unite our voices to demonstrate our strong commitment and power for peace and vision of Anita Augsborg and many other women around the world who fought for equality and peace is as never actual.

In my professional career, as UN Special Rapporteur on contemporary forms of slavery, I have been working in the most distant parts of the world , meeting and interviewing children and adults mostly the most poor and rightness. Legally abolished slavery is still reality for many millions of people in many parts of the world. There were numerous stories of injustice, exploitation and poverty that are still haunting me and give me strong reason to continue my work. I have come today to share some with you and bring to your attention the interrelation.

In small city in Madagascar I was interviewing child domestic workers, many of them have been given or sold for pennies to other houses to work from the age of five. Many have been sexually and physically abused and horribly exploited. There was a boy of seven, who had never gone to school, similar to many children of his age and much older. He had to carry daily 7 bottles of water each 25 liters on his back to be able to get small bowl of rice to eat .

Another story of 15 years old woman who came to quarry to work with her 2 month child and she said she is doing that as her mother did for generations.

We live in the century with unprecedented number of inventions to make people's life more protected, healthy and safe. We invented vaccines to cure diseases that were killing millions...We have tremendous progress in technology, medicine, but progress in human relations, respect and equality has still a long way to go , as we still allow for so many children and adults around the world continue their lives in slavery .

It is in our century that International law has been established and standards to protects each citizen's rights have been agreed and adopted by the states as well as humanitarian law to protect people from and during conflicts and wars. At the same time we live in the world that this uses power structures to dominate , and states still see security in acquiring more weapons and primitive society instincts to grab more land without considering people there is still reality. Human security- addressing needs of vulnerable is still paper strategy . The Global Peace

Index calculated the cost of conflicts to the global economy in 2017 at 9.21 trillion pounds (\$13.7 trillion) as a result of increased military spending by states and more people driven from their jobs.

Moving from old ineffective mentality , rethinking priorities will make possible to meet all the basic needs related to food , education and health care to majority of poor countries for years ahead. We will be able to meet all Millennium development goals that still look as mirage and are always postponed , under different political explanations. Is stability of the country based on level of militarization, or level of protection and prosperity of people and strengthened human potential? Rethinking priorities will make our societies safer and prosperous. And the boy as many million children thought the world would not need to follow their parents survival patterns and will be able to go to school.

In Haiti I have met with four courageous women , who have been beaten and raped first by local gang , then when approached to peace keepers for help and protection they have been raped again now by those who are stationed there to protect local population. Getting no justice these courageous women decided to open center for abused children with their own meagre resources.

For eight years I was taking the case to many offices receiving no answer or the unsatisfactory explanation. The situations are many, punishments and justice rare. Here is the question of ethics, international law, accessibility of justice protection and enormous budget expenditures. I was always questioning if the approach has been changed in countries like Haiti and money will be spend on covering social protection and creating employment would they need for so long peace keepers with enormous budget spending?

We live in the world that has established important tools to detect and early identify the conflict and urgently react. Are these tools used , similarly to preventive diplomacy?. Diplomacy mostly comes to negotiate possible terms of cease fire or peace after war has been raged.

We live in a world where more than 1.5 billion people live in countries affected by violent conflicts, and the gap between those countries enjoying relative peace and those afflicted by conflict is growing. Globally, the numbers of those forced to leave their home countries due to war, persecution or natural disaster have reached staggering heights: an estimated 19.5 million people have fled their

countries as refugees -- half of them are children. We call it refugee crisis , but would people leave their homes if their home did not become as “a mouth of shark” according to famous African poet Warsan Shane.

Modern conflicts and wars have changed their nature and actors and more and more civil population becomes direct target of wars. Numerous modalities have also exacerbated the impact of conflicts such as hiring mercenaries, emergence on new actors such as terrorist groups.

It is obvious that military solutions are no longer effective and innovative solutions must be utilized. It is that old regressive mentality that drives the world to wars and divide. Modern politics have to be rethought putting in the center rights of people, equality and non discrimination. Modern politics and conflicts require holistic multidisciplinary approach and solution can be achieved only through balanced participation of women in peace building and policy making. There are number of researches that demonstrate women can be highly instrumental in providing mission-critical insight to improve dispute resolutions. Numerous reports have proven that when women participate in negotiations, parties are more likely to reach sustainable peace. Peace agreements brokered by committees that included women are 64% less likely to fail and of these, 35% of the agreements are more likely to last more than 15 years. There are no doubts that gender equality drastically decreases conflicts between states and within states

The vision and aspirations of Anita Augsborg are live and are requirements of today similar to the the statues from declarations of women’s rights written by two Armenian women writers at the same time 100 years ago Zabel Assadur and Serpoui Vahanian – Dusap who were genuine moral forces to lead women’s rights movement from Armenia and the region. I will conclude with some of their stipulations

Equal rights for women and men

Equal rights to choose a career and gainful employment,

Removal from married life all double standards

Rights of women to higher learning as an essential means of improving child rearing and instruction as well as raising the standard of social interaction

Right of women to participate in the social sphere or equal role in the community

Respect for ethnic values and traditions and at the same time acceptance of a modern liberal education that could enhance and strengthen national identity and develop civic consciousness

In conclusion I would like to thank my organization “Democracy Today “ without support of brilliant women there I will not be standing here before you .

Thank you

