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# Making women part of the peace process

## BICOMMUNAL WOMEN'S CONFERENCE HELD IN NICOSIA

By *Demetra Molyva*

**W**omen should have an active role in Cyprus peace efforts because they practice peace on an every day level, experts told The Cyprus Weekly yesterday.

"Conflict has often been associated with men although we know that, in conflict, women are almost as likely to be affected, if not more affected, on what's historically called the home front," said Carrie Hamilton of the University of Roehampton.

Her message came on



*Carrie Hamilton*

the sidelines of a bicommunal women's peace conference in the Nicosia buffer zone.

"The idea that women participate in every level in the conflict itself and then it reaches a peace stage and women take a back seat makes absolutely no sense because we don't see the full angle," she added.

Peace negotiators



*Magda Zenon*

need to take into consideration that there are also specific areas in which, in many different conflicts, women experience different forms of repercussions, including police custody, torture and in very particular conflicts, sexual violence.

"I also think that to imagine a civil society in which there is peace

without having all members of that society present in the peace process is illogical," said Hamilton.

"Women are also the ones living in the society after the conflict is over, they are usually responsible for resettling families that have been displaced and are central in this process.

"Women's voice needs to be at the table discussing the peace process because they are the ones putting the peace in practice on an everyday level," she added.

With 35 participants from both sides of the divide and abroad, the conference aimed to bring together women involved in peace activism to raise awareness about UN resolution 1325 on women, peace and security.

"It's about including

women in the conflict, in the post-conflict, in rebuilding peace, at all levels, bringing in the gender dimension because women experience conflict in a different way so their needs are different," said Magda Zenon of the Gender Advisory Team (Gat Cyprus), one of the organisers.

"This conference is about raising awareness, about bringing women and the gender dimension into the peace negotiations in Cyprus. They are not present," she added.

The meeting was organised in association with the Prio Cyprus Centre with funding from UNDP.

Gat is a Cyprus-based ad hoc team of women academics and activists from both sides of the divide.