

Workshop: Peace and Reconciliation

At the European IPPNW Meeting in Wroclaw, Prof. Bohdan Wasilewski moderated the workshop on „Peace and reconciliation“.

After short introductory round on expectations for the workshop of each participant, the discussion started with a simple question: „What does peace mean to you? “.

Participants came from various different countries, with different backgrounds and different life experiences. This fact explains many differing views on the term „peace“.

Participants coming from economically-developed countries with no recent history of armed conflicts highlighted the role of the arms industry and trade as a leading cause for ongoing violence and wars. To my Bosnian ears, this sounded rather abstract and not very convincing. One question constantly came to mind while listening to this „first world“ problem. This question is: „Who pulls the trigger? “ Nobody can convince me that some silly businessman, who's only interested about money, can make two neighbours shoot at each other. So where does that come from?

I had to react, to tell the story from an angle of someone who has seen the tanks, heard bombs and sirens, although I was only 2 years old, and as someone who still witnesses the residues of war, in terms of human behaviour and relationships.

We humans should take responsibility for our own acts. It's not the fault of the government nor of industry. We, as individuals with our own moral values and principles, are responsible for how we feel and how we act towards other people. Building peace inside our own souls and minds offers the capacity to build peace on a higher level. By working on ourselves, promoting peaceful values in small local communities, schools, kindergartens might seem like small steps, but they are crucial! No big change can be made without changing every small piece of the puzzle.

Eventually, almost everyone agreed that this is the strategy we should implement in the future, while still not forgetting to advocate banning weapons.