



After Show Conversation: **“Gender Geopolitics: The Women’s
Empowerment Movement of the Indo-Pacific”**

Speakers:

Peter Grk, Secretary General, Bled Strategic Forum, Ministry of Foreign and European Affairs, Slovenia

Rani Yan Yan, Adviser, Chakma Chief Circle and Indigenous Peoples’ Human Rights Defender,
Bangladesh

Vlada Galan, Partner, Altum International Strategies, Ukraine

Ambika Vishwanath, Founder and Director, Kubernein Initiative, India (Moderator)

Ambika Vishwanath, “Good evening everyone, my name is Ambika Vishwanath and I’m from India. I know we've had a long day, but this is going to be a very interesting conversation not only because it's of the title but because of the subject and more importantly because we have three very different speakers on our stage. Today and so we've had a little bit of a discussion beforehand and we're going to have a conversation but I also want to include all of you in that conversation; so after one round of questions to the panel I'm going to come to you and then come back to the panel as well so hopefully that will keep all of you awake as well. I think there's nuts and all on your table so I'm going to say I don't know if I'm allowed to say this but I'm going to say this feel free to eat okay if you need to. I'm a big fan of eating when you're hungry otherwise hungry is no good for anyone, right. So “the women's empowerment movement of the Indo-Pacific”- what does this mean? What can this look like? Is feminism the way to go forward we've got a lot going on in the Indo-Pacific? We've got a lot going on in the world as of this afternoon there is likely to be war in the middle east again. Is there room for feminism in modern diplomacy? Is this a way to prevent conflict in the future, right? And so we have with us starting from my extreme left is, Peter Grk, who's the secretary general of the bled strategic forum, then there's Rani Yan Yan, who's adviser of the Chakma chief circle and Vlada Galan, partner of Altum international strategies, Ukraine. I'm going to start with Vlada and ask you about: one- do we see a gap when it look when we when we think about women's empowerment? When we see gender, okay? Do we see a gap is not the question, right, we see a gap- what does this gap look like? When we think about women's empowerment- when we think about gender when we think about the future of women's empowerment and gender globally but more specifically in the Indo-Pacific? What does that look like and what can we learn from what it looks like today so that we can make that better going forward. And if you wanted to bring in a little bit of your experience of being a political consultant into- how this change can happen more women in politics is that the way to go is that not the only way to go then I think that' be great. I'm going to give you know like 3-4 minutes and then move on to our next speaker.”

Vlada Galan, “wonderful, thank you for having me it's a pleasure to be here. I would first like to point something out the first question that was asked- is there a gap? Yes of course, there is a gap. Looking there

are many challenges, over the past few decades countries in Asia and the Pacific have made significant progress to empower women and girls and particularly key areas of access to education and women's health. However despite these incredible advancements it certainly doesn't go far enough and we cannot deny that women and girls still face discriminatory policies, they regularly face cultural barriers and there's a restriction to their economic and civic participation that often impedes their rights and hinders their potential. What's really interesting is in the region is that the growing disparities and income are an income and wealth. And there is this increasing risk that women and girls are being left behind. These challenges are particularly pronounced in the economic sphere. Asia and the Pacific is the only region globally where the gender gap in labor force participation is actually increasing according to the United Nations. I was very curious to what these numbers looked like and according to the United nation only about 43% of women in the working-age population are economically active that is compared to 73% of men. Furthermore, 64% of women in the labor force are employed in informal and vulnerable type jobs limiting their access to decent work and fair wages and social protection. So it's really women also carry a disproportionate responsibility for unpaid domestic work that really limits their potential and the share of women-owned enterprises is much lower than the percentage of men. So what I think in this sector what is really lacking is also data. Data is really paramount to people like us that look at this issue and especially policy makers that make these decision and lawmakers. In the Asia-Pacific region almost all the countries lack data on over 50% of the indicators necessary to monitor SDGs from a gender perspective. So you know this includes gaps in curious like violence against women unpaid care for domestic workers key labor market indicators so that is a huge issue here. But now shifting gears just a little bit to kind of a feminist approach and policy you know I know that some of my co-panelists are going to talk about it further. But I think that while there is incredible benefit we have to understand and define exactly- what feminism means? And what feminism foreign policy means. Because there can all there's also dangers that lurk in some of these areas but I'll let my I'll kind of stop it there I don't have a clock but I will let some of my co-panelists talk a little bit further on feminism.”

Ambika Vishwanath, “Thank you. And if any of you go way over time I will you know don't worry yeah so we don't need a clock. Since Vlada brought up the question of feminist foreign policy, Peter I'm going to come to you then. Yes we have all of these barriers it's in the Asia in the Asia Pacific region it's globally as well, we now know that for global gender parity the numbers we were looking at earlier were about 90 to 110 years this was about a decade ago. As of now it's even worse to achieve global gender parity we're likely to take another 140 years, right. None of us are going to look at that time frame none of us are going to be around. So what is it that we can do? There is gaps in labor, there is gaps in data, there's gaps in economics, in the health sector, in every single sector in politics so to you Peter, to a country that is now considering and has announced its intention to create a feminist foreign policy is that the way forward? Is that one part of the way forward? Because the German foreign minister earlier this year very clearly said feminist foreign policy is not a magic wand, it's not like we can bring it and wave it and then everything will be okay and instead of 140 years we'll have gender parity in 10, right. But is that the framework that we need to get there faster? Over to you Peter.”

Peter Grk, “Thank you very much, I'm not going to go over my time since for me things are quite simple. I would say look first of all we don't have 140 years to reach the parity. Why don't we have that? Simply because the world is changing so fast and the issues that we have on our table are so global that if we don't tackle them globally and here I don't mean only regions and countries but globally meaning the whole global population, we are going to lose everybody. It doesn't matter if you live in Bangladesh if you live in Slovenia if you live wherever you know. Because some of the issues like- climate change, like food security, like energy, security you know all these issues are interlinked and basically are in its nature global. So here I come to the feministic foreign policy I think let me give you an analogy, in my home city in Ljubljana 20 years ago the mayor decided to close the streets of the center of the city for traffic. No cars and there was this was 20 years ago. You know imagine that in Dhaka right now somebody would decide that half of the center would be without cars. So it was a big upheaval you know people were saying that they're going to lose the jobs that the stores are going to be closed and so on and so on. After 20 years nobody remembers how it was with cars nobody you know. And I think more or less this is the same with feministic foreign

policy what I hope is that in the 20 years nobody nobody's going to ask about these things that we are not going to have round tables about feministic foreign policy gender equality and so on and so on because if we are going to have them this means that we are not succeeding and we are going to really need 140 years to go somewhere. What does it mean feministic foreign policy? Because you know basically when you say the word feminism a lot of people get afraid what is now this you know women running around the world taking care of things men starting cooking and so on and so on. Although I'm cooking myself that is the goal yeah this is the goal so you know I am adopting. But feministic foreign policy for me means the policy of inclusivity it means not just gender equality but it means taking care of the vulnerable groups of the minority groups which are somehow left behind and who are also you know the ones who are most targeted by the new global problems. So for me feminism or feministic foreign policy and this is how we also tackle it in Slovenia means inclusivity that we bring whole populations of regions of countries of whatever you want in trying to together find, as secretary general of the UN would say common good. You know nobody's talking about common good. And I think you see so much division in this world that common good is an issue which needs much more attention. So just to finish I think it's very stupid and I said this many times that in this time and age you don't utilize half of the world's population to actually find answers which are eluding us. You know some answers are eluding us and we don't use the potential which we have meaning 50% of the world population to actually bring about the necessary change in how we are going to live in the future. Because believe me, if we are not going to change then I think our future is very bleak, thank you."

Ambika Vishwanath, "Thank you peter. I'm going to ask you a follow-up question on something you mentioned and that you talked about on inclusivity. Now most of the feminist foreign policy countries currently are situated in the transatlantic space, right. They are in Europe they are in North America and in South America. But all of their almost all of their foreign policies have something to do with this part of the world, with the Indo-Pacific- with South Asia and so how do you then answer the question of is that inclusivity also mean geographic inclusivity is that foreign policy going to be more understanding of the needs of this region when you are going forward? Or is it just a new version of a foreign policy that says

it's ours and we're going to implement it everywhere else? So it's on it's on the looking at the rights and the representation which you've talked about but it's also on implementation and application.”

Peter Grk, “I think the best way to do things today is lead by example. At least this is something that the European Union wants to do. You know I think it's stupid and contra productive to try to give or try to implement the same things that we are having back at home to other countries with other specificity and so on so on. But you can show and lead by example by showing why this is important why do we think that something like this is actually bringing the world to a better place. So in this sense, definitely I think we shouldn't impose but we should lead by example.”

Ambika Vishwanath, “Okay, thank you, that was I think the way to hopefully that's how Slovenia will implement then. Going forward Raani I'm going to come to you and sort of merge my question a little bit on what Vlada and Peter had said, right, about impact there is disproportionate impact on women and other vulnerable populations and there is what we are likely to experience going forward if we don't cross-correct on this gap, right. Now feminist foreign policy and more inclusive foreign policy a change in how we do foreign and security policy might be one way of cost correcting but for all of those of you who are present in my in the panel that I was in earlier, you all know that I'm a big advocate also of a ground up approach it cannot just be a top- down approach, right. And so I wanted you to comment a little bit about your work but also how some of these you know local groups can actually contribute to making that potential inclusive foreign policy even better, right. So how do we meet them ground up halfway?”

Rani Yan Yan, “Okay, thank you for asking me the question. And thank you for having me this in this panel. So anything that happens within our country in a bigger scale people at the ground level they get to know about it a bit later, right. Because most of the time if I am going to be very specific about the region if that happens in the South Asia that is the thing that happens. That we come to know about what is going to happen in foreign policy that's way above our head. We get to know about it later but at the same time do we understand when we talk about how geopolitics is played and how gender plays a role in this geopolitics. And if we do understand how gender plays a role in geopolitics how we can try to influence it that's the second question we need to ask. So I think one of the questions for this session is that, how we

can try to analyze you know geopolitics within this Indo-Pacific region from the perspective of gender? And that's a very tough question but it is not a new question. Because it has been done it has been done in I don't know 30-40 years if I'm not mistaken. But do we understand the local people do we understand local communities who are marginalized who are oppressed in different ways based on their sex, based on their gender, based on their ethnicity and race do we understand what this geopolitics encompass, right? Some of the things that geopolitical agendas that constitute is national security. National security and defense and of course economic agenda, economic interest of that particular country. And I actually noted down that I may forget that other interests have come into place right now within the current global situation the climate change issue but of course climate change issue is related to security issue, related to the economic progress and economic interest of any countries within this Indo-Pacific region. And I believe that a gender conscious I will come back to that later, why we need to take feminist approach rather than gender approach to geopolitics? Because gender approach is necessary for the time being if we think about the movement that's going on within at least in South Asia. We never call it a feminist movement we call it woman movement. Women's right movement, so women's right movement that is driven by feminist principles. Because if we talk about feminism nobody would understand as Peter mentioned that feminism means something out of the world is a Western concept. But feminism is something bigger it constitutes more than you know women's rights, women's empowerment, women's emancipation it encompasses a lot more than that it includes everyone that's been oppressed or marginalized based on all the variations sex-gender-religion cast and ethnicity. But if we stick to gender perspective of foreign policy and analyzing geopolitics we need to think about the statistics we have that is at our disposal. And we need to think it and why we need to take that at least for the time being gender perspective from which we can move into more feminist perspective. And I really need to share it can I have three more minutes thank you. One of the things that comes up when I read through the researches and the studies that's been done is that- you know societies with greater gender parity- gender equality is less prone to conflict internal conflict. And societies that have greater number of women who are in the labor force they are less prone to have international conflict I don't have the numbers right now but you can look it up in internet you know we all have internet access, thanks to digital

Bangladesh since you are all in Bangladesh I can tell you that it is in the websites. And also women if we engage women in peacemaking process then peace is more likely to sustain in those communities wherever that peacemaking process is taking place. So I'm talking about the security agenda but if I'm talking about if I look into the economic interests of the countries then there's an ILO report that was published five or six years ago that estimates that, if we can close the gender gap in labor force then it could add somewhere around three trillion us dollar to this entire Asia Pacific region. So we need to think about security terms, we need to think about economic terms, the interests that our governments have. We cannot impose like I am an rights activist I can tell our government or the right activists from our you know respective countries we can tell our governments you need to take the moral high ground, you need to ensure rights of our people. It doesn't work like that everything boils down to national interest everything boils down to security interest, economic interests but these facts are there. If governments want to listen to the statistics that this is going to serve national interest the facts are there and we need to point out to the government to our respective governments that yes. If we think about analyze our analyze geopolitics in gender terms it's not only going to benefit the citizens of our respective countries, but it is also going to benefit the entire region because we're so interconnected if something happens in India it's going to affect us, if something happens to Myanmar or China or anywhere within this region it's going to affect us."

Ambika Vishwanath, "Okay thank you. I think that's very important the point you made about the connect the in the interconnectedness right. Of how we live today and a lot of the countries that are seeing change was set up at a time where this kind of interconnectedness didn't exist to this extent. But this is the reality." I'm going to come back to you Peter with this point about whether if countries actually had an idea or were willing to admit that greater gender parity will in fact create better economic benefit and at the end of the day we can say anything but till everybody sees it in a dollar figure countries are unlikely to act because that's where the national interest is right it's that bottom line. But before we come to that I want to ask you picking up on something that Ranni had said right about whether the security aspect will also be then better if we had more women or we had a more inclusive more feminist perspective and I'm asking you this question you understand very specifically- because you are from Ukraine but also because you live in

America that's a country that is very advanced in many ways but also very backward in many ways. Right and so is there some sort of is there some sort of value to having greater feminist perspectives in the security agenda and would things have then been different and if you can connect that a little bit back to this region of the Indo-Pacific what is it that we can learn perhaps from the experiences of what is happening in Ukraine for potential conflict that might happen here?"

Vlada Galan, "Well first I'll start by saying that I am not against feminist foreign policy but I will caution and certainly wave the red flag on some issues. I just came out of Ukraine two days ago to make my way here to Bangladesh. I think I will start with the fact that these things contradict themselves. Most people aren't familiar with the deep core tenants of feminist foreign policy, it sounds sexy we like it, it sounds good a lot of governments like to put it out there. But some tenants of for feminist foreign policy we have to be careful with and that's why I say that. I'm not against feminist foreign policy but there's tenants of it that we have to be very careful with one of those tenants is an that it advocates for spending less on defense I just came out of Ukraine what would happen if Ukraine spent less on defense that's a problem. So I think there's a huge issue here that I like to start with. When touching on the subject and it's the fact that advocates of feminist foreign policy can't necessarily find a consensus on what it exactly means feminism in Dhaka, Delhi, Jakarta means something very different than it does in San Francisco. Where it's gone a little bit off the deep end and that's a real problem because that is not something that version definition of feminism and feminist foreign policy is absolutely not what many of the countries in the Indo-Pacific want to implement once they understand exactly what that means. That's implementing a very Western norm that just doesn't necessarily apply and fill into society in here. So are people who support feminist foreign policy promoters of peace at any cost? While throwing national security out the window one of the tenants of feminist for policies I mentioned is less on defense budget and more on human rights and social projects. I categorically disagree with that aspect of feminist foreign policy what does that mean for a country like Israel, I mean I don't know that a country like Israel would exist today and look at what's happening in Israel right now. I that's a very dangerous tenant that I just personally can't get on board with so I'm not against feminist foreign policy these are things we have to think about. It's very important to understand at the basis how

one defines universal feminism having women in the armed forces and women in military leadership is absolutely supported by feminist foreign policy. But then increasing spending in defense budget goes against feminist foreign policy this is the paradox. How do you marry these two things it's a problem. One country's domestic policies on feminism do not necessarily fit in with feminist foreign policy but that's because no one can actually define the full parameters of feminist foreign policy. Since it means so much to so many different people. So I think the dangers when it comes to the Indopacific region is not saying that we should turn our back on feminist foreign policy but it's saying that the versions that we implement here have to take into account security issues. And that means that we're going against one of kind of the tenants of it and we have to think about if how that's applicable for our individual countries in in the sense you know of a security lens, this is very very very important. But I like to talk also about solutions and the I mentioned the numbers and the gap in the Indopacific region when it comes to economic issues facing women. And that's where one of the biggest gaps is I like to talk about what the solution what the answer is and what we can look at. I really believe that the answer is in women's entrepreneurship and this is an engine for you know an employment creation and poverty reduction this is what we should focus on. While we're slowly making the strides towards some aspects of feminist forest policy while we're figuring out exactly what on earth that means there's a lot that we can be doing in the process . You know women's entrepreneurship using that as an engine for employment creation and poverty reduction means focusing on things like ensuring the formulation and implementation of gender responsive policies in small and medium enterprise development and promotion. It means engaging financial institutions to increase women's access to credit and financial services and it means enhancing women's access to market information, networks services and including harnessing information and communication technologies. That's where we can start. And then I think we need to have a very serious conversation about the broader tenants to feminist foreign policy and understanding how we apply some of those things without endangering national security for some of our countries. And let's not forget we have China in the region that continues to create a lot of problems, thank you.”

Ambika Vishwanath, “I’m glad you were very clear that not all feminist foreign policy is good in the way that it is defined right now. It is something that we that my organization back in India has also been talking to a lot of the governments about your feminism is not my feminism the stage at which we are at in India that I see Bangladesh is at is very different. There’s a lot I think a lot of countries can learn from us and vice versa but it has to be a much more collaborative process, right. But Peter I wonder if you would like to respond a little bit to what Vlada was touching upon and what Slovenia might do differently going forward. I mean we have now almost 10 years of experience since Sweden began and if there are things that Slovenia is going to do differently then what is it that countries in this region might be able to learn then from your experience, as well. And then I’m going to come to the audience, so if you have questions please keep them ready. I think there’s a mic so you can already line up with them in front of the mic. So I know you know we can go in order and if you want to have questions for the panel we’ll take a few and then come back to all of them.”

Peter Grk, “Yeah thank you, I think feministic foreign policy is just that it’s a policy which is based on some things on some values we are talking about values. You know I think there is nobody in this room and we are coming all over the world, who doesn’t believe in upholding the human rights. All the nations of the United Nations they signed the Universal Treaty or declaration on human rights. So we know what human rights is and probably there is nobody here in this room who says or who would deny that world would be a much better place if all the groups minorities whoever regions would uphold this declaration. It’s quite simple, you know. And so I look at feministic foreign policy from this perspective, the perspective also of human rights that everybody also the vulnerable groups and the ones who didn’t have this perspective in the past would have it right now. Because it’s better I mean, Rani previously showed you factually why it’s better, economically, socially whatever you know. And if it means a policy it doesn’t mean that you put a woman in charge of the foreign ministry and you are implementing the feministic foreign this is not feministic foreign policy. For all I care there could be a man for 20 years is a foreign minister but if he upholds the values of this kind of policy then everything is all right, you know. We just need to have a common playing field an equal playing field which we don’t have right now. And if you have this then you

know the one who shows more activities, more brains more whatever comes on top it's okay. But the values of this policy are something that should be I think uphold and it's true. I agree with Vlada that you know different regions different perspectives you know sometimes we in the Western world are not very subtle or humble in understanding how the rest of the world is thinking, what the rest of the world is doing and this is something that needs to change. I think we need to listen more to other regions to their perspectives on how they're tackling various issues, but on the other hand I think we shouldn't you know be afraid to promote things that we believe in. And we believe in the equality and we believe in inclusivity. Thank you.”

Ambika Vishwanath, “Thank you, I’m going to open this up a little bit now to questions from the audience. Do not believe anybody is so shy here that there are no questions. You've all had a drink so that should make you a little less shy I would imagine. Yes, there's a mic here please come. Okay the mic will come to you so you don't have to get up, yes. Yeah okay no go ahead.”

Question one, “Okay, good evening everyone. And my best wishes to the wonderful panel I am hearing you and so many new things of course. I am Mahmud Habib, I’m from Bangladesh by profession I am a business entrepreneur and I’m a politician. So the title is gender geopolitics the women's empowerment movement of the Indopacific. Gender equality or feminist policy whatever you say whenever we live in the country like in the specific countries like Bangladesh India and others we actually from my experience what I can say Bangladesh is growing fast and this growth is not coming only by the 50% of the male citizens of the country. In Bangladesh we actually have so many wonderful thing like NGOs operating very well here and the readymade garments sector is also doing great. My question is- from grassroot since I’m a politician I work with grassroot I often what I noticed behind this gender equality or whatever you say the mindset the very mindset of the people from the birth to upbringing and that creates the society even top to the of the country or top of the government, you know we are very blessed to have a female prime minister prior also for last 30 years we have female prime ministers in our country. Currently we have the female speaker but that didn't improve the situation a lot. What is required to be there to influence the geopolitics. The way you spoke like participant participation in decision making or influencing or peacekeeping or whatever we say this is a long way. This is a very long way from grass to top you know to there to be there or to stand

there or to nominate there as a female to be influence on those roles. So my question is what will be like not as a Bangladesh only you are from India and the other participants also they are also from the countries where they are always facing this sort of scenario very often my question is- how we can minimize this whole process and how we actually elevate the competent people no matter female or male to be there to influence this whole activity? You know the a successful person is not really always very what I say progressive about these ideas like just Peter said now it doesn't matter whether a male or female is on the top the matter the mindset matters here. So my question is what will be the short course or short way to be there? Thank you very.”

Arjan De Han, “Thank you so much what a wonderful panel. I work for a Canadian organization so it's nice to talk about the part of Canadian politics that I actually you believe is good. We have a Canadian feminist foreign policy and I don't at all mean to defend that and that would not be the point. But I really am going to make a plea to not dismiss nobody dismissing not the right word but to see the positive in it because I think it is positive I think you first of all when you talk about in the West a country like Canada the diversity that you see here exist in Canada and I think there's actually a lot of progressive movements that struggles with that. This is like you know you under Canadian law the different cultures come into that and that can be very complicated but you have to resolve that and I think that's what a feminist approach tries to do is. There's a lot of work to be done in terms of you know the Canada settler community visa the indigenous community and gender cuts right across that and that's important to have. That dialogue and the feminism that exists in Canada like I said I'm not even a Canadian but and I don't want to defend it at all but it is a dialogue about that diversity. And so in terms of the foreign policy I think okay maybe the way it's implemented isn't perfect and I'm not and I'm not here to defend that at all but to see that as a mechanism of accountability it's a statement of Canadian or Swedish you know foreign engagement that said that's under built by the feminist principle which is intersectional which is about the dialogue which is about listening which is based on the evidence that actually when women are in power things actually happen for the better right. And for male right I mean I hope you not always but on average we know that right so for you know diplomats to come out and say that as like that's not you know to excuse them for the mistakes

they make but to see that as a commitment. But it's a value it's a statement of value so I really think that it's it's really important to you know I think it's a progressive movement. I think it's really important and not to and not to forgive the mistakes that are being made but really to see it as a mechanism of accountability and have that dialogue about you know how you integrate you know sometimes contradictory ideas of course because they will be there. But like I said I think it's very important still see that as a statement of intent.”

Question 3, “So I follow him I would like to also say a few words by sitting, it's okay? Yeah. Okay I would like to share my sister Mahmuda who was the first gave little bit statement and then question as well and my brother, he has given the statement but in brief he has also explain a lot of things. My opinion as Mahamuda said that how to overcome situation explaining our country and the subcontinent as well. I should say rather as a human right activist I am basically I'm Dr. Shajahan practicing in Bangladesh supreme court as well as also human right activist I'm the secretary general of Bangladesh human rights bureau as well as federation chairman of Bangladesh human rights federation. So my opinion my seeing and believing that you know the movement of for here democratic movement, movement for human rights then rule of law vis of versa is rule of justice and gender and peace gender and equity and all those things is for quite a long time. But as my opinion that women are enjoying much better shape than you know any other part of the world. And even in Bangladesh also there is no discrimination, but sometimes it happens we follow the discriminations comes from the same gender. You see in a family the brother-in-law having a very good relation with the sister-in-law but or the my wife is having much better relation with my father than that of my mother. So the discrimination also mother did more attention to the son than that of the daughter, so discrimination started from the family. And the same way I think here no one have the struggle for the or any sort of discrimination for the girls or for the female, but when you go in the different institutions say if you she's in politics but if you ask thousand or 100 of the students who wants to come to the politics you will find maybe one or two hands and maybe sometimes no. But to making the policy level you see the politics is the most important index which gives all those or dominates all those dominates as I said human rights, good governance, social justice, rule of law democracy, etc. Those index keep a better

state better policy making better everything. So I believe that politics dominates all those things. My question is that we are talking about Indo-Pacific you have noticed that during the election of during Hillary Clinton and then Trump Mr Trump, so you see the most civilized country they had the behavior pattern is not that they have behaved in most of the classes like that they don't vote for the women. They don't want to see a women president in their country. Though they are very much civilized and you know developed country. My sharing with my sister that she was asking that how to overcome this situation especially in the subcontinent Indo-Pacific and the developing world. But I just wanted to share this part that we the Indopacific or the subcontinent is still in better shape than that of the developing area do you think that discrimination is as far you all have discussed discrimination- main discrimination parts belongs where? And why the reason of discrimination of is if it is at all okay, thank you."

Question 3,"Thank you my name is Rumki Farana and I work for Article 19 it's an international NGO that works for freedom of expression right to information and so many things under this umbrella. So our experience I work for the regional South Asia regional office which is based in Dhaka and from our experience of working we get to know that if being if I express about who I am apart from being men and women something else according to my gender identity I won't be able to avail my citizen rights. So what Peter said I will address that when we are saying that half of the population are being unheard or being discriminated it's not actually half of the population there are very systematically with a systematic mechanism. There are a lot of people of different terminologies under different phrases are being hurt very systematically with the legal system and I can refer you like in Bangladesh if you have heard about I know it's it does exist in the subcontinent the 377 penal code according to that declaring men are other than men and women if you express yourself about your different sexualize entity that will become I mean it will it's the criminal offense. So I'd like to hear from you actually since it is gender geopolitics like mainstreaming feminist approach is highly appreciative initiative. We have been, article 19, have been working globally in south Asia and south America with the funding of global affairs Canada to work on this and we have reproduced this approach as intersectional gender approach to make it more inclusive and I'd like to hear from you whether you have any thoughts ideas experience knowledge or anything about you know

addressing this systematic mechanism that is prohibiting people's right. There are people like in our countries in Bangladesh in Sri Lanka in Nepal and India you will Pakistan, Afghanistan you will find that there are huge number of forced displaced people whose voice are also being unheard and there is no reflection. There is reaction but no reflection in the political mechanism. So I'd like to really hear from you.”

Question 4, “Thanks a lot for giving me this floor. I’m Muhammad Rashid U Zaman limon from Jagannath University I’m a running graduate of Institute of Education and Research. So our Peter sir has said that inclusivity is a must. So my question is that I’m too much young I’m too much little as a citizen though so what can I do how can I contribute as a student to make inclusive geopolitics.

Ambika Vishwanath, “We should all learn from the younger little bit as a young people, thank you. I think we should all learn from the young people as to how to ask a very succinct and direct question, right, to the panel. All right so there was a lot of issues here do we have, I’m just going to go through some of the key highlights and I’m going to start rani with you. I feel like I know a little bit of what Vlada is going to say so I will come to you Vlada don't worry and unleash yourself right. Is what I have to say but Rani there were so there was questions about mindset and social change right just to be clear the subcontinent is not the Indo-Pacific region what happening in India Bangladesh pakistan and the rest of this region is very different also from what's happening in southeast Asia, it's very different what from what's happening now depending on how you define the Indo pacific from eastern Africa and from the rest of this region right. So let's keep that in mind but mindset and social change that's important it's not perfect anywhere in the world but mindset and social change is an important question. What do we need for real change to happen? Right what are those tools yes great feminist foreign policy at the top bottom up is mindset and social change what else do we need for real change to actually happen? I think that's a question to answer Canada has a measure of accountability yes Canada actually began with the feminist trade policy which I think was a very unique way of moving and it answers a lot of what Vlada was bringing up right. If we target the empowerment the entrepreneurs the women in that space then you can perhaps make this change work. The question about other genders yes it's not just about men and women that inclusivity that feminism lens is

much broader but in reality is that even happening right. So these are some of the points that were touched upon. I do not believe that Bangladesh as I can definitely say India is not perfect at all neither is America we all have our problems but perhaps we learn from each other's positives and our mistakes right. But I'm going to let Vlada take that one I know cuz she's been scribbling away. But rani do you want to take any of these or touch upon all of them a little bit. I'll give you maybe like 3 or 4 minutes and then peter I'm coming to you, so feel free to answer whatever you want from this list."

Rani Yan Yan, "I think one of the things that we are missing out right now in terms of understanding what this panel is about we're talking about geopolitics and whether feminist geopolitics should work? Whether we should be analyzing geopolitics in you know gender perspective perspective from gender perspective? But at the same time I would like to answer some of the questions even though I have to be very honest I didn't get clear understanding of some of the questions posed to me but if I come to sorry Mahmuda. So what we can done from the bottom up to change the mindset. Okay so I would like I would try to connect it with the discussion we are having for this panel right because that would make sense yeah. Okay so we are talking about feminist foreign policy and you are asking me about how you can change the perception of rural women or community women who are living in the community right so if we understand what feminist foreign policy how it works. There are three rules that sort of like an a principle that guides feminist foreign policy so first thing is that we need to ask- whether the foreign policies our government is taking elsewhere? Is our government implementing it within our borders in our country, right? There are three ask we always talk about we need to ask whether the rights of the people women person with disability indigenous persons those any section of the population who have been oppressed or marginalized whether their rights are insured? That's one of the question we need to ask first rights. And then second is representation- whether we have proper representation of all these marginalized groups of course? Including women and all the other variants I have just mentioned, right. And you know what how you actually mentioned that yes we have our prime minister we have our speaker we have women in power positions but we also need to understand whether those power positions actually speak about women empowerment gender, does it close the gender disparity gap or whether that's just a token that yes we have everyone at the

top? Right. Okay so I've gone through the rights issue I've gone through the representation issue another thing is resources. Whether the people in question right now whether those people have access to and also control of those resources? So you are talking about women, so has Bangladesh government invested a lot for women? Yes. Has Bangladesh achieved extraordinary indicators in social and economic indicators, like right in terms of progress? Yes, but still there are lacking in terms of how resources are distributed. If I think about a woman who's living in Dhaka who highly privileged, yes resources are getting to that person. But if we think about a woman a garments worker 80% of garments worker in Bangladesh they are women. Are resources going to the garments worker who are practically bringing on money for this country to sustain? No, we are not thinking about it, we are not talking about garments workers. The 25,000 taka so that's \$250 a month minimum wage a demand nobody cares. Does government care well it depends on negotiation- how it's going to work out for the elite class and the oligarchs and everyone? But we need to think about what interests serves who? (I'm sorry I need to give you one minute more oh it's because the questions are so deep it's difficult ult to answer understand contend with the organizers for more time yeah. Yeah so and also just okay one minute) so that's one of the things that I have mention a little bit earlier and I will if I can't have my time I will get back to you in my at in my personal time right because I have to because you questions are important and you have made a very direct question. One of the things I have noticed that we are only talking about gender because we're talking about gender geopolitics and that is the thing that comes into our heads but if we talk about if we think about feminist foreign policy. If we think about how you can dismantle discrimination within societies? We need to think about others as well we need to think about indigenous people which our government does not recognize. But we are not concerned about them and we need to think about it if we think that foreign feminist foreign policy is going to work.”

Peter Grk, “Thank you and no but it's nice listening to Ranni when I get to learn something you know. I think every new policy or a concept is controversial at the beginning, it has to be. If it's not controversial then it's not out there it means that basically nobody is taking notice. So that we are talking and discussing about these things that some of the countries have already upheld the concept of feministic foreign policy means that this is something which is not going away, this is not going away why? It's not going away I

think you heard all the reasons all the facts that why this is good for society. I don't see any negative side effect of inclusivity I mean if you see any side effect please let me know because I can't find it now. And the fact is this is a the data statistics, okay statistics can something sometimes be wrong, but the fact is that more inclusive the societies are the more successful they are, that's it you know. So if this is true and if this is factual this means that in the future if countries who are less developed would like to catch up with the developing or developed countries they will have to also nurture this policy of inclusivity. Because if they want they're not going to catch up I think this is something which is evident and it comes back also to Vlada's figures when we are talking to Indopacific. And the potential the enormous potential this region has I think what did you say Vlada 43% only of women are utilized in economic activity, yeah 43, can you imagine this region utilizing 80% or 100% of its population in terms of economic activity? Crazy so these are the questions that we all need to ask ourselves when we are talking about feministic foreign policy or when we are talking basically about inclusivity. Now just to conclude with this question about, how do I contribute as a student as a young person to inclusivity? I mean if you understand inclusivity you know you're halfway already there, the other half comes from transforming this awareness of what inclusivity means in your everyday activities in your everyday life. You know this is the same thing when somebody asked me it was already also a student how can I as a person as an individual help fight against climate change? And I said you know I mean it's the small things it can also be big things and you can I mean this is something that I also support very much young activism I think that young activism is something that is much needed in this world but you know for an individual for a person you just need to stick to your beliefs and do what your heart or your mind tells you to do. In terms of climate change if you see a paper on the ground which shouldn't be there you put it in a trash box. We don't do that you know I have but the world is changing I have like kids one is 6 years old and he is going after me when I take out the trash so that I put them in the right box and said I mean this is going to be crazy. I don't know how he's going to be in the 20 years but this is how it goes this is how the world is going to change. Because you know the global challenges that we are facing are going to be such that we are going to need all facets of society, thank you."

Ambika Vishwanath, “Thank you Peter. do you want to answer the question of what do we need for real change I mean is there something that Slovenia is looking at in its feminist foreign policy or do you not want to answer that question?”

Peter Grk, “I can just one quick example, I can answer I think for the real change to happen is of course needed the realization of political elites that this is something which is good for society and the for population that they are leading you know. How do you come to that point to that realization? Where if you know the population as such thinks this is something which is good then you put in place leaders who are going to uphold that and you do that through elections. And here it comes back to activity being active as a young person as everybody to try to put to the government to the political elites’ people who actually would bring forward this agenda of inclusivity, thank you. (One of you answer was through election what does it mean I think he means you vote for change if you believe that there is change coming that political activist can this is true absolutely true the political activist of the political system is has to be changed or political organ or political parties or political people can change a lot because they are in power or they make the policy. But by the last part you say through election what does it mean. actually it means exactly that you basically vote for change. If you are not or if the majority of population thinks that the country is not going the right way or the country should move somewhere else then you know we should use this power of elections and try to put in power people who are going to follow this agenda of change but if you want to do that you need to go to elections you know. I mean we have a bigger problem probably in Europe regarding the election participation that you have here in Bangladesh or Indo Pacific I don't know I’m just saying I don't know how it is here. But in Europe we had a problem about people not going to elections. And then you know complaining on how bad is this government how bad is this person just go to elections you know the last elections that we had in Slovenia you had an institute young people basically who went from house to house in trying to get people motivated to go to elections. And it showed I think it was like 60 or 70% which is for Slovenia unbelievable number of people especially young people who went to elections for the first time. So you know change is possible if you believe in it.

Vlada Galan, “So I really really want to answer the question that comes to gender. And I think it was the woman in the back I think she comes from a nonprofit space that brought up that in Bangladesh there's two genders and legally you cannot say anything else well. When I was born in the Soviet Union in the 80s I was born as either a boy or girl and what you identify as and what you feel you certainly have the right to feel. But moving past that this is one of the other criticisms that I personally have a feminist foreign policy because I've seen what's happening in the United States with it now and it's a cautionary tale. So again not against feminist foreign policy as a whole but we need to understand what we open up Pandora's box too. Feminist foreign policy and an inclusive understanding of it embraces further identities LGBTQ I a plus and the rest of it. And that's okay and that's understandable. And what can for countries like Bangladesh what can I tell you change comes with time. And it's a slowly evolving process but it's very important to understand where we have to put limitations in place so we don't erase women. And this is something I feel very passionate about which is why it's something I wanted to talk about. In the United States right now you have trans athletes that are competing in women's sports and winning. They went from being in 30th place 100th place to winning to moving into women's sports based on the way that they identify. And by winning first place that by definition to me is erasing women. So one of the questions the test of this is if a country bans trans athletes from participating in sports not as their birth gender would feminist foreign policy see advocates see that as a violation of feminist foreign policy? So this is where the inherent danger lies of going too far. The world is evolving and Peter is right the world is evolving and change is coming whether you like it or not. And it seems radical at first sure and all about change and all about evolution. But we have to be careful to understand where it goes too far to we get to the point where we start erasing women. And that is a serious problem going on in the United States and maybe to some of you sitting in this room you may be sitting here thinking to yourself that's very far off on the horizon from where we are. But in the reality it was at one point very far off on the horizon from where the United States is and where we are now I think quite frankly is a shocking place. In that in that sense and there's a this is an example I always like to bring there's a very famous tennis player she's both a lesbian and a feminist in the United States Martina Navratilova, she's one of one of the most famous tennis players in the world. And even she

is against trans athletes participating in women's sports. So again you can be inclusive you can see the word through a different lens and there's no need to discriminate against these things. However when it goes to far are we ready to say the buck stops here? Or we think that's, okay? Because it's a very huge problem that's on the horizon. Now to the gentleman that I think said and you were brave to say this in this room that there is no discrimination in Bangladesh, there's discrimination everywhere in the world. So I would like to say that you're quite a brave man to say that in this room but there is certainly discrimination and that's something that we're always going to be faced with. But we can certainly work to bring the change and to be the change that we want to see. Now one of the things I don't know that we touched upon it so much and I don't know how we're doing with time but prioritizing peace over security. A lot of tenants of feminist foreign policy prioritize peace over security. I don't think that is a sustainable solution all the time especially for the Indopacific. So that's maybe one tenant kind of you have to look at separately. And I will close out with with an example we mentioned multiple times the Swedish model it's one of the oldest most comprehensive feminist foreign policy models and concepts Canada France Luxembourg Spain most recently Germany followed this one. Sweden has a lack of horizontal coherence between feminist foreign policy and its arms export policy. And this is something that it's a criticism that some that deal with the subject are certainly familiar with but something that needs to be considered in this region. Sweden continues to supply arms to regimes that violate human rights and women's rights, for example arms sold by Sweden to Saudi Arabia are used in Yemen. So we have to think of the benefits and take those tenants because evolution is coming and we want to be part of it. We want to be part of this evolution. But I'll close out by saying that you've heard some of the dangers and we need to be cautious of those and the issue when it comes to the issues take the case studies and learn from them. Like the ones in the United States that is facing right now. When these things spiral out of control you have to understand where the sentence finishes and where to put the dot. It's very important, yeah thank you."

Peter Grk, "No just to I mean this could be another debate for another day this interesting division between peace and security I think there is nobody you know in this room or in the world who doesn't want peace. The problem is what kind of peace do we want you know if we take the example, of Ukraine, you know

peace as the Russians would like to have it is unsustainable. Because it's not just you know, it's not just so I think peace and security go hand in hand if you arrive to adjust piece where everybody is comfortable with the solution that is on the table then you have a solution which is sustainable and which brings security to a better place. But if you are you know I'm all for feministic foreign policy but I'm also understanding that security only comes from having peace which is just and where all the fact of society have a comfortable position with it. So just to you know I wanted to kind of just expand a little bit on what vlada was talking about when she was comparing peace and security."

Ambika Vishwanath, "Yeah thank you thank you Peter and thank you to all. Three of you we've gone we've gone around the world we've gone around a lot of topics I know we had this topic of gender geopolitics women's empowerment in the Indopacific. And we might not have very specifically touched on these but I think the conversation gave us a lot of experiences-examples that can be then attributed to this question of gendering geopolitics and empowerment in this region. That you Indo Pacific is huge I don't think it was realistic that we would cover all of it so we little bit stuck to the subcontinent which I think makes a lot of sense given where we are. I am aware that it is now me between food and all of you so I'm not going to summarize the discussion but I am going to say thank you very much to our three excellent panelists. I think we heard a lot of great stuff coming from them I invite you all to talk to them after this panel to continue the discussion. Whether they want who are not that is up to them not up to me anymore. They will also all be here tomorrow and the day after so please find them talk about it more, ask them difficult questions that is sometimes wherein we find the solutions, right. And actually having those difficult conversations and this one was one of them. So thank you very much all of you it was a pleasure to be a moderator and thank you all for listening to this excellent conversation thank you, very much."