

Ilona Graenitz (15 03 1943 – 17 07 2022) - a role model for women in politics, a strong advocate of human rights, transparency and civil society participation at all levels of policy and decision-making processes.



Ilona Graenitz was born in Vienna, where she studied economics. She started her professional career as an export manager in the chemical industry in Linz (1966 – 1968); from 1968 – 1971 she taught languages at a polytechnic school in Linz. From 1972 – 1994 she worked freelance as a trainer in industry-related management and lectured at the university level. From 1999 - 2006 she was Director of GLOBE Europe, the Global Legal Organisation for a Balanced Environment in Brussels.

From 1979 – 1986, Ilona Graenitz worked as a town councillor in Linz representing the Socialist Party of Austria (SPÖ). A member of the Federal Board of the SPÖ women, she was a member of the National Council from 1986 - 1995 and a member of the Parliamentary Assembly of the Council of Europe from 1991 - 1995. As a member of the European Parliament from 1995 - 1999, Ilona Graenitz worked on numerous committees where her profound knowledge of environmental matters and legislation in particular was held in high esteem by all political parties¹. Closer to home and over a protracted period (1985 -1998), she was a founding member and first chair of BILY, a family and youth counselling centre in Linz.

Ilona Graenitz promoted and encouraged social cohesion in local politics and at the federal level, as well as in the European Parliament. At the United Nations in Vienna she served as an NGO representative. For her achievements she was awarded, inter alia, the Grand Decoration of Honour in Gold for services to the Republic of Austria in 1997.

¹ All her interventions and reports are documented in

https://www.parlament.gv.at/WWER/PAD_00445/index.shtml and

https://www.europarl.europa.eu/meps/en/2088/ILONA_GRAENITZ/history/4

From 2008 onwards she represented Austria on the board of the Association of Former Parliamentarians of Parliaments of the Council of European Member States (FP-AP) and served as Vice-President of the FP-AP from 2014 - 2018.

From 2008 - 2014 she was President of the Vienna Chapter of the Austrian Federation of University Women (VAÖ) and from 2012 - 2016 served on the European Women's Lobby (EWL) on behalf of Austria.

In 2008 she joined the United Nations NGO community in Vienna as representative of the International Federation of University Women. She also served a three-year term as one of the Vice-Presidents of the Conference of NGOs in consultative Status with the United Nations (CoNGO) representing the NGO community in Vienna. In 2017 the Austrian Federation of University Women made her an honorary member.

From 2011 - 2015 Ilona Graenitz chaired the Vienna NGO Committee on the Status of Women; for four years thereafter, she chaired the Vienna NGO Committee on Sustainable Development. Her subsequent term as Vice-Chair ended abruptly in July of this year.

Ilona Graenitz played a key role as the author of the first drafts of numerous statements presented to the Commission on the Status of Women (CSW), Conference of the Parties (COP) and Commission on Crime Prevention and Criminal Justice (CCPCJ). The breadth of her skills came to the fore in her treatment of specific issues related to the concerns of women, girls and civil society in general over the status of human rights, as well as the essentiality of securing citizens' participation in policy and decision-making processes at all levels.

She organized high-level conferences and set up jointly with other NGOs 'side events' at multilateral meetings in Vienna, in which attention was drawn to the multifarious forms of gender-based violence such as female genital mutilation (FGM), torture by non-state actors (NST), human trafficking and environmental crime. It thus followed that one of her areas of focus was the Istanbul Convention on preventing and combating violence against women and domestic violence. She also put to good use her knowledge of specific United Nations procedures and linguistic conventions as evidenced by her promotion of the Aarhus Convention where emphasis lay on promoting public settlement of disputes and access to justice in environmental

matters. She was tireless in her search for solutions ranging from gender-based medical issues to the hazards associated with legacy contamination that threaten communities the world over.

Ilona Graenitz was a mainstay in the Vienna NGO community. Her strategic, international and articulate thinking, as well as her relentless and profound commitment to women's affairs and environmental justice, inspired and encouraged many members of the NGO community. We will long remember her sincerity and resolve. We shall sorely miss working with her.

Vienna NGO community

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