

**Press release:**

**Women's Empowerment ensures a Peaceful Balkan's and European Future**

**(Tirana, 26 October 2019)** – Today, on the eve of the 19<sup>th</sup> anniversary of the UN SCRC1325 and WPS (Women Peace and Security Agenda), the RWLSEE along with UN Women and support of Swedish Government holds “Regional Conference on Women Empowerment for a Peaceful Balkan's and European Future, aiming to strengthen women participation in decision making, peace building and European Integration.

Through intensive and forward-looking discussion in the conference, women expressed concerns about fragile peace and security in the Western Balkans, which continues to be threatened by weak democratic institutions, rule of law, corruption, low economic growth, ethnic division and distrust. Recent geopolitical challenges, non-resolution of normalization of relations between Kosovo and Serbia and delays in European and Euro Atlantic integration of countries in the region, where also emphasized as major challenges of region. Women called for gender equality and greater women's empowerment to ensure Peaceful Balkan and European Future.

Women called for peace processes to integrate gender inclusive agreements and necessary participation of women in negotiating tables, with specific focus on the Brussels dialogue on the normalization of relation between Kosovo and Serbia. Considering strategic human capital that women brings to society, empowering women is a strategic response to addressing the current challenges, accelerating development, democracy, stability and preventing the phenomena of youth migrating away to find a future in the third countries. Participants also discussed the ways of increasing access to justice for women for the sake of inclusive society, transitional justice and international justice for women raped during the conflicts.

The conference continues its work with focus on role of women in European integrations and how this process can serve gender equality by using obligative euro standards and other affirmative measures for women's empowerment. The conference will also address meaningful participation of women's in decision-making and peace building with the goal of coming up with fresh ideas related to gender equality.

The regional conference includes women representatives from state level, women MPs from the region, the RWLSEE Steering Committee members, representatives from CSO's and international organizations, UN Women, EU and other UN agencies.

Regional Women's Lobby in Southeast Europe (RWLSEE) continuously advocates for enhanced collaboration among women from the Western Balkans and increased empowerment of women in democratic governance and peace-building processes.

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