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Press Release

## Women should have a greater role in peacebuilding and European integration

**(Budva, 14 June 2018):** In a regional conference on women's participation in peace and European integration, women politicians, parliamentarians and civil society from countries in region, and UN Women representatives called for a greater role of women in peace processes and European integration in the region of Western Balkans.

The conference was organized by The United Nations Entity for Gender Equality and the Empowerment of Women (UN Women) and The Regional Women's Lobby for Peace, Security and Justice in Southeastern Europe (RWLSEE), held in Budva, Montenegro, on 14 June 2018.

This peacebuilding conference brought together high level women representatives from politics, parliaments and civil society, who are actively involved in promoting the Women, Peace and Security Agenda. They came from seven member countries of the RWLSEE, Albania, Bosnia Herzegovina, Croatia, FYR Macedonia, Kosovo, Montenegro and Serbia.

Participants focused on finding ways for forging sustainable peacebuilding, regional cooperation and European integration of the Western Balkan countries, while ensuring that women must play a central role in these important peace for a peaceful future of the region, of a troubled past. Women values and contribution in peace processes has been acknowledged academically and practically, therefore they should not be left in margins, but instead women must take up equal roles with men in building peaceful and European future in their countries, they stressed. Edita Tahiri, Chair of RWLSEE from Kosovo said that "Empowerment of women in peace processes and decision-making can result in better peace and stability and would speed up European integration of all countries in our region. We women must take our responsibilities for the future, equally with men. We must be part of the peace negotiating tables where future is decided and not let others decide for us"

A particular importance was attached to peace dialogues and implementation of peace agreements, specifically to the Brussels Dialogue on normalization of relations and they called **on parties** to reach a final agreement that would ensure sustainable peace and peaceful neighborly relations, opening new era of peace and ending hostilities. Maria Obradović, parliamentarian from Serbia said "Sustainable peace is needed in the region, hence, initiatives and dialogues that promote peace agreements should be supported, however, there should be greater participation of women in peace talks, which was an ongoing gap in the past." On the importance of peace and stability and good regional cooperation, Xhevahire Izmaku, parliamentarian from Kosovo said " We should speed up the peace processes and come up with final peace agreements that would end the history of hostilities and open a new chapter of peaceful neighborly relations, despite the tragic losses which cannot be forgotten."



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LOBI RAJONAL i GRAVE për PAQE, SIGURI dhe DREJTËSI në EJK (<http://rwlsee.org/>)

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Participants praised the historic agreement reached between Macedonia and Greece resolving name dispute, while called for other open issues to be closed in the region for the sake of peace, stability and European integration.

They also stressed the importance of women engagement in local peacebuilding process, because overall peacebuilding should take place in the multilevel process as well as an inclusive one. Similarly, increased cooperation between women in politics and civil society was required, increased participation of women in political parties as way forward to decision making and more financial support for women empowerment in peacebuilding. Flora Macula, UN Women Director in Kosovo stressed that “The UN legal instruments including numerous resolutions and renewed commitments by UN leadership in support of women equality in peace processes presents a new momentum which should be used to make progress in women empowerment. That’s why women must be pro-active in advancing women agenda for peace and security”

The conference was generously funded by the Swedish Government and its Embassy in Kosovo, and implemented in close cooperation with the Council for Inclusive Governance (CIG). Ambassador of Sweden in Kosovo, Henrik Nilsson, addressed the regional conference (through Skype), stating full support for women’s empowerment in peace and decision making processes in the Western Balkan countries. “More women represented in dialogue and decision-making means better and more sustainable results” said Ambassador Nilsson.

This regional conference was a follow up to the dialogues, building on earlier achievements, while aiming to strengthen further women’s role in regional dialogue, peacebuilding negotiating tables, and through direct cooperation and communication between women political leaders from broader political spectrum of the abovementioned RWLSEE focus countries. The empowerment of women in democratic governance and peace building throughout the region as well as in local peace building, both essential for inclusive peace and security, were addressed throughout all panels at this conference.

Participants of the meeting included: Edita Tahiri, RWLSEE Chair/ Former Minister for Dialogue and Chief Negotiator, Kosovo; Nada Drobnjak, RWL SEE Steering Committee Member / MP and Head of the Parliamentary Commission for Gender Equality, Montenegro; Gordana Sobol, RWL SEE Steering Committee Member/ Former MP and Chairwoman of the Mandate and Immunity Committee, Croatia; Irina Pockova, RWL SEE Steering Committee Member/ Chairperson of Women's Chapter of SDA political party, Macedonia; Nataša Mičić, RWLSEE Member/ MP and leader of LDP, Serbia; Ismeta Dervoz, RWLSEE Member; Former MP and member of Committee on Equality and Non-Discrimination of the Council of Europe, Bosnia and Herzegovina ; Members of Parliament from Serbia: Marija Obradović (SNS), Stefana Miladinović (SPS), Gordana Čomić (DP); Members of Parliament from Kosovo: Xhevahire Izmaku (PDK), Hykmete Bajrami (LDK); Time Kadrijaj (AAK), Flora Macula, Head of UN Women Kosovo office and Diana Çekaj-Berisha, UN Women/RWLSEE Coordinator, Henrik Nilsson, Ambassador of Sweden Embassy in Kosovo (video conference presentation).