



## The Regional Women's Lobby for Peace, Security and Justice in South East Europe

### Complementary 1325 Global Open Day Events in Bosnia and Herzegovina and Serbia

#### **Introduction:**

In support of the UN-led Global Open Day for 1325 events, the Regional Women's Lobby decided to organize a set of complementary meetings in two of the countries where the Lobby is active: **Serbia** and **Bosnia and Herzegovina**. As neither of these countries has a DPKO mission the UN team leading the Global Open Day initiative was not planning on promoting the event in these locations. RWL decided to use this space to organize its own meetings, *complementary* to the Global Open Day, with the UN RC and other stakeholders to brief them and discuss 1325 implementation issues. Both of these countries has a specific set of contextual factors influencing UNSCR 1325 implementation and this background will be discussed below.

It should be mentioned that the RWL also planned to meet with the President of Croatia, however due to scheduling factors beyond their control the meeting was cancelled. As an alternative, the RWL members will meet with the President of Croatia and the UN RC in Croatia at the end of June after the RWL Regional 1325 +10 conference to brief them on the state of 1325 implementation in Croatia and the region.

#### **Context: Bosnia and Herzegovina**

Bosnia and Herzegovina is a post-conflict country that endured years of bloody conflict in the 1990s in which rape was used a method of warfare and women were victims of shockingly brutal gender based violence. The conflict led to the militarization of these societies and women were pushed out of public spaces and lost many of the social and economic rights they had under the socialist regime.

In terms of Protection Laws and Mechanisms, Bosnia has a good legal framework. There is a Law on Gender Equality; a legislated electoral quota; a Law on Domestic Violence; a NAP on Gender Equality; a NAP for Domestic Violence; and a NAP on implementation 1325 is in the process of being adopted by Parliament. Mechanisms for implementation of these laws include a government Agency for Gender Equality, Gender Centers at the "entity" level of Bosnia's structure and a municipal/regional gender focal point network. In terms of political participation of women there is 14% women in parliament and only 2-3 women in executive decision-making positions at any point in time. In the security sector there are 2% women in the military at higher ranks, 5% at lower ranks and 5% at enlisted level. In the police there are 8% women.

Civil society is very active in Bosnia on monitoring and advocating for 1325, with the strong support of UNIFEM. For example, the NGO Zene zenama has been active in raising awareness of 1325. They have translated the resolution into the local language and dispersed it and united with national and international security sector organizations in a program entitled "Participation of the public in security: UNSCR 1325 in BiH". Examples of goals of the 1325 program are the creation of a women's police network at the national level and the establishment of cooperation between women's NGOs and EUFOR local observation teams on women's human rights and security. Civil society in Bosnia has also been involved in the NAP drafting process and will take on promotion of the NAP in local communities along with representatives of ministries, entities and cantons.

**Date:** June 7, 2010, 14:00

**Location:** UNDP Conference Room

**Present:**

UN RC Mr. Yuri Afanasiev

Ms. Ankica Tomic, Head of International Cooperation Department in Ministry of Security

Ms. Vesna Pavicic, Expert Associate for International Cooperation in Ministry of Security

Ms. Memnuna Zvizdic, RWL Member, Executive Director of Zene zenama

Ms. Meliha Alić, RWL member, Minister of Education and Science

Ms. Samra Filipović Hadžiabdić, Director of Agency for Gender Equality

Ms. Kljelija Balta UNDP Gender Advisor

Ms. Azra Hasanbegović - Žena BH iz Mostara (NGO)

Ms. Mima Dahić- Viva žene Tuzla (NGO)

Ms. Edita Pršić- Foundation of Liberal Democracy Sarajevo (NGO)

Ms. Helena Mandić- Head of Bosnian Regulatory Agency (media regulator)

Representative of European Commission Office in Bosnia

Ms. Aleksandra Miletić Šantić EU Police Mission

**Summary:**

The meeting brought together two senior representatives of the Ministry for Security, the Minister of Education and the Director of the AGE, with the UN RC and women's NGOs.

The meeting was a success in terms of reaffirming the partnership of UN agencies and women peace advocates and set a strong basis for future cooperation based on mutual objectives of all actors interested in peace and security and 1325 advocacy.

**Below are the key highlights of what the participants presented:**

Samra Filipović Hadžiabdić talked about the process of drafting the 1325 NAP in Bosnia and Herzegovina, which is currently in the process of parliamentary approval. The working group was made up of representatives of the line ministries at the federal level and at the entity level. Civil society was also closely involved in the drafting and will be

actors in monitoring its implementation. She also praised the work that UNIFEM, UNDP and AGE are doing together on involving civil society in implementation of the Gender Action Plan.

Meliha Alic talked about including gender in the education system and the problem of division in the curricula between Serbian, Croatian and Bosnian schools. She stressed the importance of including a gender analysis in the preparation of school programs and working with NGOs in the Federation of BiH. In many local communities children are segregated in the school system based on ethnicity and thus they have limited contact across ethnic lines from the earliest age. All actors in the meeting agreed that this segregation is harmful to peace and security. Also, since school curricula can vary between the two entities what children are learning regarding the war may also vary based on school and entity.

Aleksandra Miletic-Santic spoke of the status of women in the police and army. EUPM has just finished a report on this issue as it sets a baseline for BiH. The report collected sex-disaggregated statistics on numbers, ranks, position and authorities in police and it shows that the number of women at all levels is still quite low. She noted the success of a project cooperating with UN agencies, NGOs and government security ministries to train a network of local level officers on gender based violence. The good cooperation established with the government in this project will be critical for future advocacy.

Azra Hasanbegović, Mima Dahić and Edita Pršić, representatives of women's civil society, spoke of the problem of gender based violence in Bosnia and the work they have been doing in integrating prevention and protection models in local communities. They highlighted the advancements in cooperating with police who now have focal points for domestic violence at the local community level who were trained in the joint program by UNIFEM, EUPM and government. Currently, the main problem in dealing with GBV is related to the transfer of information between the police, the prosecutor's office, the courts and the media, who are not sensitive to the issue.

On the topic of the media Helena Mandić continued the discussion of its lack of gender sensitivity. The media does not promote issues of women, peace and security and she gave concrete proposals of how this could be done, especially through PR campaigns. The UN RC was interested in learning more on this issue as UNDP is involved various PR campaigns and there is room for cooperation on media campaigns related to security and human rights and small arms that he would like to explore.

All participants highlighted the work of the NGO network Zene zenama, a long standing UNIFEM partner, to promote and implement UNSCR 1325 in Bosnia. Zene zenama has succeeded in changing public perceptions related to 1325 and the representatives of the Ministry of Security described Zene zenama's advocacy as a trigger of sorts in getting implementation kick started. They have now started to work more on GBV, including women in peace mission contingents abroad and promoting women to decision-making ranks and positions. Operative plans exist now within the Ministry for increasing the number of women in all positions and progress is being made. The ministry

representatives are satisfied that women have finally moved from being an object of peace and security to a subject in decision making of peace and security.

Several participants highlighted that in fact the international community in Bosnia actually did not have a lot of information about UNSCR 1325 or the other resolutions on Women Peace and Security - 1820, 1888 or 1889. The work that NGOs have done together has helped to make the international actors in Bosnia more accountable on their work and actions and now gender is included in all the programs of international actors - civil society building, education, employment, Roma, GBV, women in politics, etc.

In conclusion, RWL member Memnuna Zvizdiz spoke about the Regional Women's Lobby and its work and the importance of these Global Days in bringing actors working on 1325 together to one table. She spoke of the areas where progress has been made since 2004 when work began. Within the institutions of BiH, especially security institutions there is recognition now that women peace and security issues are no longer on the margins of policymaking. There are now mechanisms in place to ensure results can be achieved. Civil society has a wealth of information and knowledge and what is needed in the future is stronger political will by government to use this knowledge to the fullest.

### **Context: Serbia**

Serbia is a post-conflict society with a high degree of militarization. Serbia experienced the effects of the wars in the region first indirectly, and then directly with the NATO bombing in 1999. As in Bosnia, women in Serbia were also pushed out of public spaces and decision-making during the conflicts of the 1990s as public attitudes reinforced the view that women were not the decisive politicians or strong leaders needed during the wars and conflicts that Serbia was involved in Croatia, Bosnia and Kosovo.

Serbia, like Bosnia, also has an extensive legal framework related to gender equality. There is a Law on Gender Equality; a legislated electoral quota; an Anti-discrimination Law; a NAP on Gender Equality; and a NAP on implementation 1325 is currently being drafted by a working group of stakeholders. The gender mechanisms include a Department for Gender Equality within the Ministry of Labour and Social Affairs and a network of gender focal points at the regional level of government.

Women's participation in parliament is about 21% and at the executive level 5 of 27 ministers are currently women. In the military 0.5% of officer are women and 5% of enlisted soldiers are women.

The NGO Women in Black has been advocating for a women's perspective of security since the very beginning of the conflicts in the region in the 1990s and has been active in promoting peace and security issues from a feminist perspective and from an anti-nationalist and anti-militaristic perspective. Needless to say their consistent opposition to the regime was not without danger to themselves, especially in the charged atmosphere of the 1990s.

**Date:** June 7, 2010, 13:00

**Location:** UNDP Conference Room

**Present:**

UN RC Mr. William Infante

Ms. Bojana Balon, UNDP Gender Advisor

Mr. Ivan Zverzhanovski, Project Officer in SEESAC regional programme

Ms. Jelena Milanovic, UNIFEM Programme Assistant

Ms. Sonja Biserko, RWL Member and Chairperson of Helsinki Committee for Human Rights

Ms. Stasa Zajovic, RWL Member and Coordinator of Women in Black

**Summary:**

Although the RWL members wanted to include representatives of the Ministry of Defense, the RC requested that the meeting be only with civil society to avoid any political consequences.. The women expressed concern with the exclusivity of the NAP drafting process and offered some constructive criticism on how the process needs to be improved. The other main concern was the lack of implementation of the legal framework in Serbia.

**Below are the key highlights of what the RWL participants presented:**

Ms. Stasa Zajovic outlined the long history of Women in Black's work on promoting a feminist perspective of security, from the beginning of the 1990s. She had serious concerns about the 1325 NAP drafting process in Serbia as she perceived it to be non-transparent and non-inclusive as long-time peace activists were not included and the working group report on civil society did not reflect the years of work that women have been doing in the post-conflict context. She felt that the NGOs that were involved are those that are seen as acceptable to the government and that independent civil society was not consulted. Government has divided civil society, there is no autonomy and civil society is not a voice of critique or a check on government. Due to these political reasons, WiB, a group that has years of peace activism and security expertise in its experience, was not invited to join the process in a substantive way, but rather asked for comments at the end with a two week dead-line. WiB sent an analysis of the NAP and their comments and was never contacted further or followed up with.

Stasa Zajovic expressed grave concern that this non-transparent process occurred with the support of the international organizations in Serbia. The failure to take into account the years of experience of WiB on women and security in favor of government sponsored NGOs she sees as a blow to democracy. Especially considering the security risks that these NGOs have continually exposed themselves to over the years by being voices of criticism of the regime's security policies.

Women in Black opposes the position of the Ministry of Defense as the lead agency on the 1325 NAP, as it feels its approach is militaristic and only focuses on increasing participation of women and not on changing attitudes of chauvinistic militarism and ethno-centrism within its ranks. The Ministry has up until now continually refused to include in its military and police academy curricula training on the experiences of women

in the wars of the former Yugoslavia, in order to instill understanding and responsibility of uniformed personnel to the needs of civilians.

Some of the concrete recommendations made by WiB include for the NAP on implementation of 1325 include: that the drafting process be led by the government and parliamentary gender mechanisms; that military personnel being sent overseas on peace missions have passed a background check on any involvement in war crimes; that women peace activists be used in training for military personnel on human security; that a strong parliamentary oversight mechanism be instituted to control spending in the military sector; to regulate the private security sector in Serbia which currently has no regulatory structure and is a source of insecurity for the state and individuals.

Ms. Sonja Biserko focused on the legal framework in Serbia and its lack of implementation. She feels that the Ministry of Defense has a low capacity for project implementation and so 1325 implementation stalls. In terms of implementing the legal framework, the main problem is the lack of political will in government and the limited space for NGOs to advocate and pressure the government. Much of this has to do with the fact that many grants are delivered to NGOs that work in close cooperation with the state and thus are not willing to be overtly critical of government policies in Serbia. Ms. Biserko urged the UN RC to reflect on how the position of international organizations *vis a vis* different NGOs affects civil society and democracy in Serbia. The current atmosphere makes it very difficult for real activists to work and be secure.

## **Conclusion**

The post-conflict countries of Bosnia and Herzegovina have relatively good legal frameworks in place to promote the participation of women in public life, and the protection and prevention of women from violence. There are also mechanisms in place designed to implement these legal frameworks. However, despite the presence of these mechanisms, progress on implementing these laws has been uneven and slow. The Global Open Days on 1325 in these countries gave women a chance to open a dialogue and find space for future cooperation based on mutual goals of women, peace and security.