

FROM FRAGILITY TO EMPOWERMENT



Twenty years of implementing UNSCR 1325 and the Women, Peace, and Security Agenda in post-conflict settings of the Western Balkans

RWLSEE's Regional Review and Country Reports
from seven focus countries: ALBANIA, BOSNIA AND HERZEGOVINA,
CROATIA, KOSOVO, MONTENEGRO, NORTH MACEDONIA, SERBIA

Edited by: Dr. Edita Tahiri

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Eglantina Gjermeni, Nada Drobnjak, Irina Pockova, Luljeta Vuniqi
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Foreword by the Chair

The United Nations Security Council Resolution 1325 was one of the landmark achievements in the global efforts towards promoting gender equality and women's empowerment in peace and security processes. It has brought a new perspective to the importance of women's equal participation and leadership in democratic governance, peacemaking, and peacebuilding, while recognizing that sustainable peace and strong democracy are interrelated with gender equality. Ever since, changes have been taking place in conceptual and practical terms with the growing understanding that gender inclusivity can lead to more sustainable peace, security, and development.

Today, twenty years after the adoption of Resolution 1325 on women, peace, and security, we are heartened by the achievements in implementation, but we are aware that a lot remains to be done in the future. Changes on gender equality are coming but the pace is slow.

We must speed up these changes. Gender equality and women's leadership must be a strategic direction to a better future. We must be able to recognize the power of change that women bring into global efforts for sustainable peace and development in the world. As half of the world's population, empowerment of women means doubling the human capital at service of nations and the world. Changes are always possible when political will and resources are in place. The huge gap between commitments and practical implementation of WPS Agenda that we have seen during the past twenty years shows the need for reinventing strategies on gender equality.

Achievements on WPS agenda and gender equality vary in levels and areas. However, the decision-making levels continue to remain strongholds of men, where women are largely denied of access. Women are significantly underrepresented in governments and formal peace processes throughout the world, with few exceptions. The need for gender equality in decision-making is immanent, as the only way of bringing gender equality at the forefront of national and international agendas, with the aim to speed up the overall gender equality and prevent discrimination of women while creating a better world.

I believe that a real challenge is how to empower women in politics because that is a key condition which ensures empowerment of women in decision-making. Time has come to openly define the struggle which women face – that is the struggle of equal power-sharing between women and men, beginning from political parties and ending with the governments, including public and private organizations in all spheres of life. Science say that gender-equal participation is crucial to the consolidation of strong democracies and successful peacebuilding. Therefore, we must bring the issue of gender power-sharing to the forefront of the public agenda and discourse.

Our experiences from the Western Balkans, as a post-conflict region, show that our journey to women's empowerment and peacebuilding has gone through uncertainty, fragility, and unsustainability, during the past twenty years. This unusual times of pandemics COVID-19 have once more shown how fragile can be the WPS agenda, given it has worsened women's status in the region and the world.

We have progressed in diverse aspects and levels, yet there is a long way to go until our ideals and goals on gender equality and peacebuilding are achieved. We aim to shorten this road by multiplying our efforts in all possible ways.

As a regional women peacebuilding organization, the Regional Women's Lobby in South East Europe (RWLSEE) has been pursuing the implementation of Resolution 1325 on women, peace, and security processes at regional level. In a highly challenging post-conflict context of the Western Balkans, we strive to promote gender equality, peacebuilding and democratic transformations in all countries and the entire region. Our primary focus is on equal participation of women in politics, decision-making and formal peace processes - areas where women remain largely underrepresented. In over fifteen years of our work, we have been working towards gender inclusive peace and post-conflict governance, while helping to heal wounds of wars and encourage reconciliation, always seeking international justice for women victims of war rapes in the Balkans.

Today, the RWLSEE is recognized as a model of regional cooperation on WPS Agenda in post-conflict context, with focus in regional and local peacebuilding. With its membership consisting of experienced women leaders from politics and civil society in war and peace times, RWLSEE is acting as a leader, mediator and lobbyist in gender inclusive peace, security, justice, and other processes, with the aim of having women at the heart of leadership. Our vision is building a just, peaceful, prosperous, and Euro-Atlantic future for all countries and the entire region.

In our efforts to advance further the goals of gender equality, WPS Agenda, and peacebuilding and, on marking the historic anniversaries, including twenty years of the UNSCR 1325, twenty-five years of the Beijing Declaration and Platform for Action, and five years of SDG 5, the RWLSEE has come with this Publication on achievements and challenges, and the way forward on achieving gender equality and empowering all women and girls in the Western Balkans.

The publication **“From Fragility to Empowerment: Twenty years of implementing UNSCR 1325 and the Women, Peace, and Security Agenda in post-conflict settings of the Western Balkans”** provides a regional review and country reports of seven focus

countries of the RWLSEE, including Albania, Bosnia and Herzegovina, Croatia, Kosovo, Montenegro, North Macedonia, and Serbia, on the achievements and challenges in gender equality and peacebuilding for twenty years. It also provides a roadmap on the way forward on women, peace, security, and justice agenda through recommendations at the regional and country levels.

We hope that this publication contributes to the ongoing discussion on WPS Agenda, particularly because it presents a perspective from a post-conflict region such as the Western Balkans. It also aims to contribute to the ongoing discussions including the Beijing Platform+25, Generation Equality Platform, CEDAW, 2030 Sustainable Development Goals and other gender equality instruments as well as to our ambitious goal of achieving gender equality and empowerment of all women and girls by 2030.

We are grateful to all the authors of this publication who are members of the RWLSEE leadership, dedicated women leaders from politics and civil society, and at the same time prominent change-makers and peacebuilders in the region and beyond.

We also thank all participants, politicians, parliamentarians, government officials, CSOs, experts and representatives of international organizations, who contributed to the debate on this topic at the International Conference on the regional review of UNSCR 1325/WPS+25 for the Western Balkans, held on 15 December 2020 and, International Conference on the regional review of Beijing Declaration and Platform for Action +25 for the Western Balkans, held on 26 November 2019 organized by the RWLSEE and UN Women and supported by the Swedish Government.

In this challenging journey we are together with our strategic partners and supporters, UN Women, UN Women ECA and UN Women Kosovo and the Swedish Government, the Swedish Ministry for Foreign Affairs, and the Swedish Embassy in Kosovo. We are especially grateful to them. We would not have been able to come this far without their valuable support.

RWLSEE strongly believes that time is now for power to women. Time has come for gender equality in power sharing, thus ensuring equal participation of women in decision-making levels and paving the way towards a just, peaceful, and prosperous future.



Dr. Edita Tahiri

RWLSEE Chair and Former Deputy Prime Minister of Kosovo

Appreciations on the RWLSEE's work

Alia El-Yassir, Regional Director, UN Women for Europe, and Central Asia



The RWLSEE offers us an excellent example of regional cooperation among women who have demonstrated commitments and collaboration at the highest level. The experience of RWLSEE during the last fourteen years, is really at the heart of WPS Agenda. UN Women and I remain proud supporters of these initiatives.

Vlora Tuzi Nushi, Director, UN Women Kosovo

As we celebrate 20 years of the Women, Peace, and Security Agenda, we also highlight its transformative potential and look back to some of the most significant achievements. Throughout these years we have witnessed the transformative power of this agenda in delivering sustainable and feminist peace, and the RWLSEE is a true example of this. UN Women has been a proud supporter of the RWLSEE since its establishment. It is inspirational to see this kind regional collaboration in the pursuit of gender-sensitive and sustainable peace.



Christofer Orre, Desk Officer, Ministry of Foreign Affairs, Sweden



We support RWLSEE and highly appreciate impressive persistence of the RWLSEE in its work. The agenda of Women, Peace and Security is a top priority for Sweden and for our feminist foreign policy and the partnership between the RWLSEE, UN Women and Swedish Foreign Ministry serves the goal of advancing WPS regionally.



**Karin Hernmarck Ahliny, Ambassador,
Embassy of Sweden in Kosovo**

I am very pleased and proud that we are such strong partners with the RWLSEE, that I think is a very powerful instrument to WPS Agenda. There will not be a sustainable peace without women's equal participation. Women are not the icing on the cake. They are fundamental ingredient in the cake.

**Flora Macula, Head of UN Women,
Cox's Bazar, Bangladesh, a founder of RWLSEE**

RWLSEE is a unique forum of well-known and prominent women in politics and women's human rights activists with a national, regional, and global background and networking which have left their mark last 15 years on the WPS agenda in SEE region. I feel proud of initiating the establishment of RWLSEE and I am privileged to be part of this movement in the region.



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Abbreviations

CEDAW	Convention on the Elimination of All Forms of Discrimination against Women
CSO	Civil Society Organization
CSW	Commission on Status of Women
CRSV	Conflict Related Sexual Violence
ECA	Europe and Central Asia
EU	European Union
HQ	headquarters
MFA	Ministry of Foreign Affairs
MP	Member of Parliament
NGO	Non-Governmental Organization
SC	Steering Committee
SCRSV	Survivors of Conflict-Related Sexual Violence
SDG	Sustainable Development Goals
RAWLM	Regional Academy for Women, Leadership, and Mediation
RO	Regional Office
RWLSEE	Regional Women's Lobby for Peace, Security and Justice in South East Europe
UN	United Nations
UNSC	United Nations Security Council
UNSCR 1325	United Nations Security Council Resolution 1325
UNSG	United Nations Secretary General
UN Women	United Nations Entity Dedicated to Gender Equality and Empowerment of Women
US	United States
WB	Western Balkans
WPS	Women, Peace and Security



REGIONAL REVIEW

**Western Balkans | Regional Review |
20 years of WPS Agenda**

WESTERN BALKANS | Regional Review | 20 years of WPS Agenda



Author: **Dr. Edita Tahiri**

1.1 From Fragility to Empowerment: Twenty years of the WPS Agenda in post-conflict region of the Western Balkans

1. INTRODUCTION

The landmark United Nations Security Resolution 1325 in 2000 proclaimed the essential role of women in politics and decision-making, as well as in prevention and resolution of conflicts and emphasized their equal participation in the promotion of peace and security. The twenty-year journey towards empowering women in peace and security since the adoption of this groundbreaking Resolution has brought some important achievements in the WPS Agenda and the overall gender equality. We have been heartened by those achievements although we are still far from reaching our ideals and goals of gender equality and an equal, just and peaceful world.

As we mark the historic 20th anniversary of Resolution 1325, this is the right moment to reflect on the achievements and challenges of the past, but more importantly, to think of finding more strategic ways of empowering women and peacebuilding for a better future. The global COVID-19 pandemics today has worsened gender equality in our societies in many terms, while revealing how fragile this process is.

The adoption of the UNSCR 1325 in 2000 coincided with the end of wars in the Western Balkans, following the disintegration of former Yugoslavia and establishment of new states.

The impact of wars was highly devastating to all people and, especially to women and girls in many aspects including the conflict related sexual violence (CRSV).

The post-conflict context of our region has posed even more complex challenges to the agenda of gender equality and women's empowerment. This because of multiplex transitions that have been taking place at the same time, including transition from war to peace, from occupation to liberation, and from communism to democracy

Despite difficulties, women in the entire region of the Western Balkans worked hard on gender equality agenda and have played a crucial role in peacebuilding and democratization processes, including here post-conflict reconstruction, healing wounds of tragic wars, transitional justice, and reconciliation. Both women in politics and civil society have been active and committed to peacebuilding while regional cooperation has strengthened our joint efforts for a better future. Besides, women hold a prominent legacy in conflict resolution and peacemaking processes, playing vital roles in movements for liberation and independence and in overall achievements to this date.

Yet, our contributions remain largely unrecognized and did not translate into real empowerment of women. The post-conflict era taught us that women go from severe exclusions to gradual inclusion to power structures, because men consider power as a means solely belonging to them. This paradoxical situation requires women to stand up and stay resilient in the struggle to gender equality, which is exactly what we women of the Western Balkans have been doing.

We adopted “WPS and Justice” Agenda based on the specific post-conflict context of our region, to pursue our goals of gender equality and peacebuilding and to also seek transitional justice and reparation for war consequences on women. We constantly seek international justice for women who were raped during the wars in Balkans, which remain a hidden issue while perpetrators go unpunished.

Challenges and barriers that we faced were traditional and specific to the post-conflict context. Traditional cultural barriers coupled with fragility in democratic and peaceful transformations in post-conflict settings have largely constrained the implementation of WPS and Justice Agenda in the Western Balkans. Weak democratic governance hinders women to assume equal responsibilities and power in leadership and decision-making. Widespread corruption in the region severely limits women's empowerment in politics and their access to political influence and governance. Unfinished peace generates insecurity to people including here the aspects related to WPS Agenda. Delayed justice for women war victims of sexual violence harms reconciliation processes. Patriarchal socio-cultural norms deprive women of space for agency in society. Whereas delays in European and Euro-Atlantic integration have created space for geopolitical tensions, nationalism, and autocracy, thus constraining the WPS Agenda implementation.

Twenty years later, women's empowerment and gender equality remain fragile, impacted directly by fragility in peacebuilding processes in the Western Balkans. Large absence of women in political leadership, decision making, and formal peace processes shape our current political landscape, while gender discrimination continues severely in socio-

economic context as well. Women in politics and civil society organizations suffer from insufficient support. The overall situation looks discouraging because the gender equality is far from being real. This despite the proven capacities and contribution of women in helping make changes from war to peace and being committed to peacebuilding at national, local and regional levels.

Today, women are mostly given space in parliaments, local assemblies, and public administration, mainly thanks to the quota which is their own achievement. Government and decision-making spaces are still occupied mostly by men, leaving women outside the power structures at national and local levels. The danger is that empowerment of women often translates only into women in parliaments while governments continue to be dominated by men. This is not a real empowerment, even impacts negatively because it serves as appeasing to public conscious about gender balance.

Our struggle should and will continue until women are equal with men at table of decision making on the future. We define it as 'power struggle' and we consider that time has come for 'gender power-sharing', which implies gender equality in decision making at governments of all levels, international, national and local levels. Our struggle for empowerment is based on women's comparative advantages as peace-drivers and good governance drivers, and, as a potential to empower human capital double as much because women make up half of the world population. In this unusual time, when pandemics revealed fragilities and uncertainties of today's world, more than ever, women's factor comes as a strategic asset to be invested on peace, security, and sustainable development.

2. ACHIEVEMENTS ARE ENCOURAGING BUT LIMITED

Over the last 20 years, there has been a mixed progress in the Western Balkans with regards to the efforts of implementing Women, Peace and Security Agenda and overall gender equality. The progress varies in different areas and levels throughout all the countries in the region. I would say that trends are positive but rather slow and with many barriers standing in the way of women towards reaching full gender equality. The current situation is characterized by controversies because increasing participation of women in politics does not translate into increasing participation of women in decision-making and leadership. Better representation of women is evidenced in parliaments, but on the other hand, there is a drastic underrepresentation of women in governments. Similarly, women remain underrepresented in decision-making processes related to peace and security, in justice, economy, social affairs and other aspects of public and private life.

The overall struggle for gender equality and women's empowerment, carried out mainly by the women themselves, from politics and civil society, has shown that changes in favor of women have not come naturally or democratically, but, rather through affirmative legal and policy measures including 'quota mechanisms.'

An essential positive change is reflected in the picture of political and public life landscape, which is not dominated by men any longer, because women are increasingly becoming part of the picture, though not at all levels. An important achievement is also the change of discourse on gender equality - one that promotes women as agents of change, and not as victims. Such approach has somehow brought a better level of understanding and support to the WPS Agenda.

However, the real challenge is how to empower women in politics because that is a key condition which ensures empowerment of women in decision-making. In concrete terms, time has come to publicly define the struggle that women face – that is the struggle of equal power sharing between women and men, which starts from political parties and ends with the governments, including public and private organizations in all spheres of life. It is widely recognized that gender-equal participation is essential to the consolidation of strong democracies and successful peacebuilding. Therefore, we must bring the issue of gender power sharing to the forefront of the public agenda and discourse.

2.1. Empowerment of women in politics – a key condition for having women in decision making

Unequal opportunities and conditions for political participation and representation between men and women persist not only in the region of the Western Balkans, but worldwide. The weak democracy followed by the growing autocracy and corruption have contributed to unfavorable conditions for women's empowerment in politics and decision-making.

During the past 20 years, women's interest in political life has increased significantly. They have shown capacities and leadership for changes in democratic governance and peacebuilding thus elevating their credibility of assuming political and governing responsibilities. Despite this, women continue to be underrepresented in decision-making bodies because political parties remain bastions of traditionalism and patriarchal mentality and structures.

Throughout the region, political party leaderships are still dominated by men and there are only few and small women-led political parties. It is obvious that power structures are still seen as reserved spaces for men, who use different means, formal and informal, to keep themselves in power.

Access to power structures remains difficult for women, not only because of the traditional/cultural barriers but also from corrupted systems of governance that work in favor of men. In addition, gender equality is not a policy priority as it should be, mostly being mentioned as a cross-cutting issue. The political parties have not taken proper gender equality reforms in their programs and policies, while political will, funds and electoral campaign support are insufficient. In the electoral lists, women are nominated up to 30% as required by law, though real political support has been lacking. Women's

economic under-empowerment impacts their chances to get involved in politics. Women's alliances in politics are weak and too easily divided based on the pressures to follow the party line. Gender equality machineries are rather weak and insufficiently supported. Women's right organizations and gender equality advocates are less and less supported. Gender based violence against women and girls continues including women politicians. The Istanbul Convention adoption in all countries in the region has brought some progress, but it still remains incremental. Media support to gender equality is also insignificant. Despite new media laws, enforcement against anti-gender and anti-feminist messaging remains difficult, and impunity prevails.

2.2. A good progress in women's participation in parliaments

A good progress has been made in women's representation in national parliaments. Legislation for gender equality affirmative measures, such as quota in women representation in the parliament, has been shown as essential for ensuring gender inclusive parliaments to some extent. As a result, today national parliaments in the region consist of 30% to 40% of women, as well as in local assemblies. (This is an advancement when comparing to the world data, which shows that women currently hold 23.6 % of the seats in the world's parliaments, according to per Inter-Parliamentary Union). This was a major achievement which women should be given credit for, both for those in politics as well as in civil society. Women also contributed to “quota and quality” policies by promoting 'open lists' electoral systems, to allow for competition among candidates and for multiple choices for voters, while strengthening democracy. However, the leadership positions are being held mostly by men, whereas women are being given more power in leading parliamentary committees where most of the hard work is concentrated. It seems that men are understanding better and better the assertion “if you want something said, ask a man; if you want something done, ask a woman.” Lessons have shown that 30% quotas are often not a sufficient mechanism, not only because they are in disparity with legal frameworks of countries stipulating gender parity of 50% to 50%, but they can also hinder the implementation of legal frameworks.

2.3. Women still largely underrepresented in decision-making and governments

The decision making is the area where real progress has not been made because of the male dominated political mindset, thus leaving women largely outside the decision-making tables. Findings in the region show that women's participation in national governments does not go beyond 20%, with some exceptions in certain countries and during certain periods. For example, a snapshot done by the RWLSEE regional review in 2019 shows the following data: there is a representation of around 20% of women in governments of four countries (Croatia, Montenegro, Serbia and North Macedonia), over 10% in one country (Kosovo), less than 3% in one country (Bosnia and Herzegovina) and, 50% for the first time in one country (Albania). For 20 years there were no positive trends in general. On the contrary, there was inconsistency and unsustainability with regards to

women's empowerment in decision-making. Likewise, the countries in the region have seen few women presidents, prime ministers, and deputy prime ministers to date. Regarding women mayors, evidence shows not more than 10% governing in municipalities, varying from country to country. The similar unfavorable situation is also present in economy, social affairs and all the other sectors of public and private life.

Practice has shown that affirmative measures, in particular quotas, are needed to ensure gender equality in decision-making levels. With the current level of democratization of society and ongoing male dominated political mindsets, it seems necessary to move with the adoption of quota mechanism for equal participation of women in governments. Though a backlash to this idea is likely to emerge, as seen in the general backlashes to gender equality agenda, women should not be discouraged.

Thanks to quota, there is a good progress in participation of women in public administration both at the national as well as local level. Findings show that there is over 30% of women as civil servants in public administration, though the same does not apply in security sectors (police and military sectors). Despite this, the decision-making and leading positions are still dominated by men.

Ensuring equal participation of women in politics, decision-making and government, both at the national as well as local level, is an imperative. This because it leads to a good governance free of corruption and in the interest of the citizens. Addressing properly the issues related to gender equality and the political empowerment of women leads to the consolidation of democracy and peacebuilding. This has become more evident with the adoption of the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development, particularly with the strong commitment that the global community has made on the advancement of Sustainable Development Goal (SDG) 5, to 'achieve gender equality and empower all women and girls'.

Women must play a key role within the process of decision-making for the future built on gender inclusive democratic governance and peacebuilding for the benefit of citizens. Ensuring gender equality in decision-making requires a political will and legal guarantees for implementation but also effective mechanisms for monitoring and evaluation as well as proper financial support.

The contribution of women in making changes from war to peace in our countries and the entire Balkans has to fully be recognized. These women, as leaders and activists, demonstrated leadership for change with their work. They were and are agents of change for a better future.

2.4. Women are almost absent in formal peace processes - though at the forefront of peacebuilding

The UN Security Council Resolution 1325 on Women, Peace and Security reaffirms the importance of women in preventing and resolving conflicts, peace negotiations,

peacebuilding, peacekeeping, humanitarian response and more. Twenty years after the adoption of this Resolution, women's equal participation in formal peace processes remains far from being real, not only in the Western Balkans, but worldwide. Little progress has been made indeed, with only few women participating in leadership roles as negotiators, mediators, guarantors, or witnesses. This indicates that decision-making tables are still dominated by men when it comes to peacemaking.

The overall trend is evidently increasing towards gender inclusive formal peace processes and gender responsive peace agreements, though this trend is slow. Globally, evidence shows that between 1992 and 2019 women constituted, on average, 13 percent of negotiators, 6 percent of mediators, and 6 percent of signatories in major peace processes around the world. Whereas, out of 98 peace agreements across 55 countries between 2000 and 2016, the peace agreements were significantly more likely to have gender provisions when women participated in negotiating tables. It also shows that the probability for achieving a peace agreement with gender provisions increases when women's representation in national parliaments and government increases and when their participation in civil society is notable.

Differently, in the Western Balkans, a region which has gone through war and peace during the past 30 years, women's participation in formal peace processes was and remains minimal to date. The evidence shows that out of numerous formal peace processes (ten peace processes)¹, there was only one woman who participated in the formal international peace processes to end wars (Edita Tahiri from Kosovo) at the Rambouillet Peace Conference on Kosovo, in 1999. She was also chief negotiator and signatory of the first ever reached peace agreement in peace times (Brussels dialogue on normalization of non-neighborly relations between warring parties, Kosovo and Serbia 2011-2017). There was also only one woman participating in intra-state peace process as chief negotiator, the Erdut Peace Agreement in Croatia, on reintegration of certain parts of the country, in 1995 (Vesna Skare Ozbolt from Croatia).

Not only the participation of women was minimal in the formal peace processes, but also peace agreements reached to date hardly reflect gender inclusive provisions, except for the general provisions on human rights and fundamental freedoms.

Women remained largely invisible and unrecognized in international studies and reports regarding their participation in formal peace negotiations. At least this is the case of women in Western Balkans who contributed to conflict resolution and peacemaking in times of wars during the disintegration of former Yugoslavia, both at formal and other levels.

¹ There have been ten peace processes in the region, during war and peace times, between 1991 to 2020. These include: The Hague Conference on disintegration of Former Yugoslavia 1991, the London Conference on disintegration of Former Yugoslavia 1992, Dayton Summit on Peace in Bosnia and Herzegovina in 1995, Rambouillet Peace Conference on Kosovo in 1999, Erdut Agreement on the Region of Eastern Slavonia, Baranja, and Western Sirmium in Croatia in 1995, Ohrid Agreement between Macedonian government and Albanian representatives, in Macedonia in 2001, Koncul Agreement between Serbian Government and Albanian representatives in Serbia in 2001, Vienna Status Talks on Kosovo in 2006-2007, Brussels Dialogue 2011-2018 to continue in 2019 after two years stalemate, Prespa Agreement on Resolution of Name Dispute between Macedonia and Greece in 2018

Despite the drastic exclusion from formal peace processes, women in the Western Balkans contributed to conflict resolution through track two and track three peace processes and they also constantly lobbied in diplomacy for gender inclusive peace negotiations and peace agreements.

On the other hand, women have been at the forefront of peacebuilding, consistently working to break ethnic barriers of mistrust, trust-building, and reconciliation among and within the communities, while healing the wounds of war and dealing with the socioeconomic needs of citizens. Women in the Balkans have been working on regional and local peacebuilding, as an effective platform for region that was shattered by wars, genocides, and other tragedies. In the regional context, the RWLSEE has excelled with its unique regional cooperation platform, providing ideas and solutions on gender equality and peacebuilding.

The constant failure to include women in formal peace processes belittles their demonstrated contribution in conflict prevention and conflict resolution and disregards a potential strategy to respond more effectively to peace and security threats around the world. The lack of gender provisions in peace agreements affects women's participation in peacebuilding as well as hinders the chances for post-conflict societies to move towards gender inclusive and sustainable peacebuilding.

2.5. Low participation of women in the security sector

There have been some improvements in WPS Agenda with regards to the security sector, though not much of a real progress. In the Western Balkans, the evidence shows that participation of women in the security sector, military and police structures, is not beyond 10% with few exceptions in some countries, and even less in decision-making positions. Evidence shows as follows: in five countries, participation is less than 10% (Montenegro, North Macedonia, Croatia, Bosnia and Herzegovina and Kosovo) and in two countries there is about 20% of women participation (Serbia and Albania). Regarding the police sector the data shows that women's participation as police officers is at an average 30% whereas as managers up to 15%. The progress has been limited despite the security reforms being undertaken in all seven focus countries, regardless of women's activism to grow their influence and participation.

2.6. Gender-inclusive justice and transitional justice - far from being real

Ensuring equal access to justice and transitional justice for women leads to the sustainable peace and reconciliation which is much needed in the post-conflict settings.

Women in the Western Balkans, including the RWLSEE, have promoted gender-inclusive and accountable justice systems and transitional justice with special focus on establishing international justice for women who were raped during the wars in Bosnia and Herzegovina, Kosovo, and Croatia.

Twenty years after the end of wars and the adoption of the WPS agenda, the gender-inclusive justice and transitional justice are far from being real. Women continue to be discriminated in justice systems and do not enjoy proper protection as a vulnerable group suffering from gender-based and domestic violence.

The RWLSEE has been working with all national, regional and international actors to push forward the gender equality in justice as one of the main pillars towards achieving sustainable peace in the Balkans. Access to justice is a basic human right stipulated in numerous UN human rights instruments, as well as in the chapter of the European Convention on Human Rights, hence, states have the responsibility to ensure equal access to justice for women as their fundamental right. Everyone should have access to court institutions and protection from any sort of violence or harm.

Transitional Justice is interrelated with peace and reconciliation, and its main goal is to heal the wounds of tragic past of wars and conflicts and build a just and peaceful future in mutual understanding and cooperation, while addressing war reparations to women and all people. We women have been addressing these issues for over 20 years. Little progress has been achieved and more support is needed as part of WPS Agenda.

3. RWLSEE's contribution in promoting WPS Agenda and peacebuilding regionally


The Regional Women's Lobby in South East Europe (RWLSEE) is a unique regional peacebuilding organization which has been working for gender equality and peacebuilding in a region shattered by wars and tragedies that were devastating to all people and to women specifically.

The RWLSEE's goals are to empower women for full and equal participation in politics, decision-making and peacebuilding and, to shape policies that will build a just, peaceful, prosperous, and Euro-Atlantic future in the post-conflict region of Western Balkans.

Established by women leaders of politics and civil society with huge experience in conflict resolution and peacemaking, the RWLSEE chose a regional cooperation as a best model of working to help overcome the wounds of wars in the region and, to promote gender equality, peacebuilding, reconciliation, and democratic post-conflict governance to the benefit of all citizens.

The significant work of the RWLSEE in post-conflict situations is even more extraordinary because it has addressed gender discrimination and failures of inclusion of women in formal conflict resolution processes and, came up with ideas and strategies in support of gender inclusive post-conflict peacebuilding systems, including the implementation of peace accords and post-war reconstruction planning processes.

Recognizing the relevance of women as peace drivers and good governance drivers, RWLSEE works with dedication to give voice, agency, and leadership to women to work together in improving lives of women, communities, countries and region.



In over fifteen years, the RWLSEE struggles in multiple pathways to make progress in gender equality and peace, security and justice processes, in line with the UNSCR 1325 and WPS agenda. Our work include the following areas: empowering women for full and equal participation in politics, decision making and peacebuilding; fostering peace and security through regional cooperation; promoting gender inclusive peace processes and outcomes; ensuring women's equal participation in formal peace processes while mediating second track peace processes in support of ongoing formal international peace processes related to our region; promoting gender inclusive justice and transitional justice for the sake of peace and reconciliation and, constantly seeking and lobbying for international justice for women raped in wars in Bosnia and Herzegovina, Kosovo and Croatia; promoting local peacebuilding, empowering local women, and initiating and supporting regional cooperation of women's mayors as a key contribution to overall sustainable peacebuilding; capacitating young women for leading change and to closing the intergenerational gap through our Regional Academy for Women, Leadership and Mediation, which we launched this year.

Entering unusual times of pandemics COVID-19, which worsened inequalities and affected women in many ways thus affecting WPS agenda, the RWLSEE has contextualized its work to address impacts of pandemics and promoted gender inclusive response and recovery programs at national and international levels.

Our unique regional approach allowed us to mobilize women from all walks of life and diverse ethnic backgrounds to jointly struggle for gender equality and peacebuilding in all countries and entire region. Our regional platforms, international conferences, regional roundtables, and workshops provided opportunities of inter-ethnic and peace dialogues so to make peace processes more gender responsive and provide alternative channels for political influence.

We provided dialogues between women in politics and civil society to create a synergy and greater influence of women in shaping gender inclusive post-conflict governance and policies. More important we provide dialogue between women and government representatives of national and local levels making it possible for women's voices and needs to be heard by governments in quest for gender inclusive peacebuilding, democracy and sustainable development.

The RWLSEE supports peace processes in the region and lobbies for equal and meaningful participation of women in formal peace talks, including the Brussels dialogue on normalization of neighborly relations between Kosovo and Serbia. In over ten years, the RWLSEE has organized and mediated the dialogue between women politicians and parliamentarians from Kosovo and Serbia with regional approach, in support of the Brussels dialogue and peace processes as a key contribution for lasting peace in the region.

With our voice raised as Regional Women's Lobby and, with amplifying the women's voices we influenced and helped shape policies to build a better future in the post-conflict region of Western Balkans and beyond. RWLSEE have and will continue to address gaps in state building and peacebuilding in the region, including gender inequality, unfinished peace, fragile democratic governance, fragile security and justice, incomplete transitional justice, incomplete normalization of neighborly relations, autocracy, corruption, unemployment and, other socio-economic issues and slow pace of EU and Euro-Atlantic reforms.

Motivated by historic anniversaries of the Beijing Platform+25 and the UNSCR1325/WPS agenda+20, the RWLSEE dedicated two annual international conference to addressing progress and challenges for women empowerment in post-conflict region of Western Balkans (in 2019 and 2020). These conferences resulted in adoption of relevant set of recommendations, including this publication, calling for more support for women in post-conflict settings.

Today, the RWLSEE can be considered as a most reliable regional actor in promoting and implementing the WPS agenda in the Western Balkans.

It is a model to be followed and, we are already sharing our experiences with women in conflict and post-conflict settings in other parts of the world, supported by the UN Women and Swedish Government as our strategic partner.

4. TRADITIONAL CHALLENGES

The lessons learned show that good progress in the normative area does not necessarily translate into practice. Laws and policies remain slightly effective due to the lack of gender responsive and accountable institutions to implement these legal and policy reforms. The monitoring and evaluation mechanisms have also been missing in lots of cases or if they exist then are mostly ineffective in implementation.

The traditional barriers come from patriarchal mentality, gender stereotypes, discrimination, misogyny and sexism against women and girls, gender-based violence and other forms hindrances which are an attack against women's rights.

At the same time, violence against women in politics has increased in the region. Ministers and parliamentarians are publicly insulted by men, while media is not as gender inclusive as it should be. Gender-responsive budgeting lags and it is limited in implementation.

Women rights' organizations and national gender equality mechanisms are not sufficiently consulted during processes of drafting laws and policies and neither sufficiently supported financially.

Traditional challenges in the Western Balkans are like those in other parts of the world. However, our region faces some specific challenges which are a result of the post-conflict context, and which will be addressed below.

5. SPECIFIC POST-CONFLICT CHALLENGES

Traditional barriers coupled with fragility in democratic and peaceful transformations in post conflict settings have largely constrained the implementation of the WPS and Justice Agenda in the Western Balkans. Weak democratic governance impedes women to assume equal responsibilities and power in leadership and decision-making. Widespread corruption in the region severely limits women's empowerment in politics, their access to political influence and government. Unfinished peace generates insecurity to people, including the WPS Agenda. Delayed justice for women war victims of sexual violence hinders reconciliation processes. Patriarchal socio-cultural norms deprive women of space for agency in society. Whereas delays in European and Euro-Atlantic integration have created space for geopolitical tensions, nationalism, and autocracy, thus constraining the WPS Agenda implementation.

It is obvious that the complex nature of conflict and post-conflict settings poses even more complex challenges to WPS Agenda and overall gender equality. Some of the main challenges that characterize the post-conflict settings of the Western Balkans and make our struggle for gender equality and for having women at the heart of the leadership of peacebuilding, are as follows:

5.1. Fragility of WPS Agenda is linked to fragility in peacebuilding and democracy

The fragility of women's empowerment and implementation of WPS Agenda is causally linked to the fragility in peacebuilding, democracy, and incomplete peace in the Western Balkans.

Approaches like 'peace without sustainability' have led to unfinished peace and reconciliation in the Balkans even twenty years after the end of wars. Looking at peace only as ending violence while disregarding socio-economic needs of citizens has led to a rather irresponsible post-conflict governance. Such approach disregarded women's views on a broader definition of peace, the one that includes security for daily needs of citizens and not only global/state security. In addition, the introduction of a 'stability over democracy' approach in post-conflict state building has promoted stability providers and harmed democratic reformers. As a result, illiberal values prevailed over democratic values, hence, the region ended up in autocratic governances in most parts of the countries. Consequently, weak democracy, weak rule of law, widespread corruption and weak economy in the region severely limits women's empowerment in politics, access to political influence, equality in decision-making and governance. In the given conditions of a threatened democracy, the WPS Agenda is at risk of being further pushed aside.

5.2. Gender-inclusive peacemaking in support of the WPS Agenda and peacebuilding

There is a growing understanding about a linkage between women's participation in formal peace processes, more durable peace agreements and more gender inclusive peacebuilding. The UNSC Resolution 1325 also reaffirms the importance of women in prevention and resolution of conflicts, peace negotiations, peacebuilding, peacekeeping and more. However, twenty years after women remain largely absent from formal peace processes and are prevented to decide on peace and future equally with men. Likewise, gender inclusive provisions are largely missing from peace agreements. Women's contribution to peacemaking continues mostly through track two and three peace processes, showing that women stay resilient in their efforts of peacemaking while continue their struggle on gender equality in decision making.

In war times, in the peace processes to end the Balkans wars, taking place prior to this resolution, women's participation was minimal. These include Dayton peace process on Bosnia, the Rambouillet peace process on Kosovo, Erdut peace process in Croatia and several international conferences on disintegration of former Yugoslavia. Out of all these peace processes there was only one woman in formal international peace processes to end wars who was also chief negotiator in peace time on normalization of relations between warring parties (from Kosovo) and, one women chief negotiator in intra-state peace negotiations on reintegration of certain parts of country (from Croatia).

In peace times, coinciding with the adoption of the Resolution 12325, women continued to be largely missing from formal peace processes, such were Ohrid peace process in Macedonia, Koncul peace process in Serbia, Vienna Status talks on Kosovo, the ongoing Brussels dialogue on normalization of neighborly relations between Kosovo and Serbia, Prespa agreement between Macedonia and Greece and, Washington Agreement on economic relations between Kosovo and Serbia. Out of all these peace processes, only one woman was a Chief Negotiator in the Brussels dialogue with equal participation in decision making (from Kosovo).

Women also largely remains invisible and, are not tracked down in international studies and reports on women's participation at formal peace negotiations, at least this is a case of women in Western Balkans, who has contributed to peacemaking in difficult times of wars during the disintegration of former Yugoslavia and in peace times, at both formal levels and all other levels.

For this situation to change, there is a need for changes in conceptual and policy levels. In conceptual level, there is a need to consolidate the understanding that meaningful participation of women in peace processes contributes to durable peace and gender inclusive peacebuilding. In policy level, there is a need to empower women in politics and decision making as a key condition that can ensure women's equal participation in formal peace processes.

5.3. Insecurity and geopolitics as constraining factors to the WPS Agenda

An insecure region of Western Balkans, with growing security challenges coming from unfinished- peace, geopolitics, pandemics, and delayed European and Euro-Atlantic integration hampers further the meaningful empowerment of women in decision-making and their participation in peace and political negotiating tables and the overall implementation of the WPS Agenda in the region.

The slowness of peace processes in resolving open bilateral issues including the Brussels dialogue between Kosovo-Serbia has brought shortcomings and often has been followed by dangerous ideas or developments. Such was the idea of border changes between Kosovo and Serbia, few years ago, that could lead to new destabilizations in the region. Finalizing the peace processes in the Balkans is a strategic issue that must be resolved to avoid the threats of becoming a geopolitical battlefield of non-western actors who seek to restore lost domination after the Cold War. Geopolitics has not only threatened peace achievements in our region during the past twenty years but might also constrain the implementation of the WPS Agenda in the future.

5.4. Delayed transitional justice affects WPS Agenda

In post-conflict settings, justice is one of the key issues of peacebuilding and reconciliation. There is no sustainable peace without justice. That is why we have expanded the WPS agenda to include justice, seeking just solutions for the remaining open issues of peacebuilding and seeking transitional justice and war reparations for women victims of wars in the Western Balkans. We consider that the 'WPS plus Justice' Agenda is a more responsive platform to address specific needs of women and peacebuilding in a post-conflict setting. We, who have suffered tragedies of wars, look forward to a future that rests in a just society and transitional justice and remain committed to promoting post-war reparations and reconciliation.

At the center of our efforts is seeking international justice to women victims of rape during wars in the Balkans. Establishing international justice for women victims of war rape during the wars in the Western Balkans, namely in Bosnia and Herzegovina, Kosovo, and Croatia, paves the way to sustainable peace and reconciliation. We, the RWLSEE have addressed letters to the UNSG seeking international justice for women victims of war rape in all three countries, Bosnia and Herzegovina, Kosovo, and Croatia (in 2018 and 2019), and submitted a petition signed by Kosovo citizens seeking international justice for women victims of war rape in Kosovo. However, the UN has not addressed this issue yet. This tragic issue cannot be kept hidden anymore and perpetrators cannot go unpunished.

We also lobby with national governments to assume a leading role in taking measures to provide justice to women victims of war in their countries. National Governments should ensure that crimes of sexual violence committed during the conflict are thoroughly investigated and prosecuted with adequate provisions for the support and protection of

witnesses before, during and after the proceedings. Governments should ensure that national laws on war victims apply equally to women victims of sexual violence in wars. Although their status is recognized, they must enjoy the same benefits as other war victims. Compensation to the families of war victims should not be delayed.

Delays in transitional justice and war reparations affect the progress in implementation of the WPS Agenda, and this should be taken into consideration in future strategies for speeding up gender equality.

Likewise, gender-inclusive and gender-sensitive justice systems at the national, regional, and international levels must be put in place sooner. The current field of legal practice is so heavily male-dominated, so time has come for changes in the favor of gender equality in justice, thus leading to a just society.

5.5. Regional cooperation in support of the WPS Agenda

Regional cooperation has been a powerful platform for empowering women and peacebuilding in the Western Balkans. The mutual challenges that women face in the post-conflict setting of our region has encouraged us to engage in regional networking, finding a mutual reinforcement by exchanging experiences and ideas to achieve the goals of gender equality and peacebuilding. This is how our organization, the RWLSEE, was established. The RWLSEE, as a regional cooperation platform, made it possible to identify common challenges of post-conflict nature, to search for common policy solutions, promote inter-ethnic dialogues on trust-building, peace, and reconciliation, and better understand the importance of looking towards the future than dealing with the past. Many of the issues related to gender equality and peacebuilding go beyond national borders, hence, through regional cooperation and networking we could promote and lobby effectively for the implementation of the WPS agenda regionally. The regional approach also helped us develop mutual encouragement for peacebuilding, as we were not feeling lonely after devastations and tragedies of wars. However, the powerful role of regional cooperation in empowering women and peacebuilding, especially in post-conflict settings, remains insufficiently recognized and supported. This needs to be taken into consideration in the future strategy designs on speeding up the implementation of the WPS.

6. THE WAY FORWARD

We, the women of the Western Balkans, and specifically the RWLSEE and other actors and advocates of gender equality and women's empowerment have been looking forward to 2020 as a significant year. This year does not only mark the historic 20th anniversary of the ground-breaking UN Security Council Resolution 1325 on Women, Peace and Security (2000), but also marks other important anniversaries. These include: the 25th anniversary of the Fourth World Conference on Women and the Adoption of the Beijing Declaration and Platform for Action; a five-year milestone towards achieving the Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs), among which SDG 5 specifically addresses the ambitious

goal of achieving gender equality and empowerment of all women and girls by 2030. These anniversaries should give a new impetus in our efforts to achieve the dream of gender equality and full implementation of the WPS Agenda.

The way forward should be based on new ideas and strategies. Some of the recommendations in this direction are as follows:

- **Adopting gender equality in decision-making as a strategic priority for a better world.** In the 20th anniversary of the WPS Agenda, it is time to strategically focus on ensuring equal and meaningful participation of women in decision-making and in governance, as well as in formal peace processes, thus ensuring gender-inclusive peacebuilding. This is because of the documented fact that women can contribute to achieving long-lasting peace, sound democratic governance, and sustainable development. This strategy will be beneficial to all, considering the strategic relevance of women as peace drivers and good governance drivers.

- **Investing in women's empowerment in politics and leadership should be a top priority.** This is a key condition to ensure gender equality in decision-making and in governments and formal peace processes, which would lead to sustainable and gender-inclusive peace, development, and stability. Political empowerment of women also ensures empowerment in other spheres of life. Reforms should be undertaken by political parties to ensure gender equality in their decision-making bodies and equal political and financial support for women candidates in elections.

- **Reinventing the peacemaking framework by broadening the understanding peace** beyond ending violence and beyond peace negotiations led by men only. The new peacemaking framework should include women's perspective to peace focused on human security and socio-economic needs of citizens and should be organized under the equal participation of women in formal peace processes. This would lead towards sustainable peace, because peace limited to ending violence and peace made without women's participation threatens the peacebuilding and results in prolongation of conflict resolutions, as it has been shown in the Balkans.

Recognizing that gender equality and the political empowerment of women is key to the consolidation of strong democracies and sustainable peacebuilding and development and acting systematically to empower women for equal participation in politics and decision making and for equal power-sharing between women and men.

- **Adopting a regional strategic framework 'from fragility to empowerment' to identify gaps and adopt proper policies** that will move the region of Western Balkans from current fragile situation into sustainability. This requires a shift from gender-blind policies into gender-inclusive policies in the areas of peacebuilding, democratic state building, economic development, and European and Euro-Atlantic integrations. This shift

would empower women, as half of the human capital, to work jointly and equally with men and decide in addressing and resolving the ongoing issues of incomplete peace, fragile democracy, autocracy, weak justice and rule of law, corruption, weak economy, delayed transitional justice and reconciliation, and the geopolitical tensions in the post-conflict region of the Western Balkans. This would bring hope for the future to the entire society, especially to youth who would rather stay and develop their countries than search for their future in foreign countries.

- **Ensuring equal participation of women in formal peace processes and gender-inclusive peace agreements**, by significantly increasing the representation of women within peace negotiating teams, building capacity of women negotiators and mediators, ensuring women involvement in subjects other than “women issues” during peace negotiations. Ensuring that agreements for peace and conflict resolution are gender responsive, as a way that leads to sustainable peace and gender-inclusive peacebuilding.


- **Establishing international justice for women raped during the wars in Bosnia and Herzegovina, Kosovo and Croatia.** This is an essential part of transitional justice that must be resolved to support peace and reconciliation processes in the post-conflict region of the Western Balkans shattered by wars and tragedies of disintegration of former Yugoslavia.

- **Supporting the European and Euro-Atlantic integration of all six Western Balkan countries**, as the only way leading to lasting peace and stability and to preventing security threats of geopolitical and other natures that are growing in our region. Speeding up European integration with women at the heart of leadership of European reforms in each country would ensure democratic governance and durable peacebuilding, free of corruption, autocracy and other negative phenomena which is hampering the economy and the hopes of youth for employment opportunities. The Western Balkans must be helped to get out from the crossroad as it risks to be emptied by youth. Supporting regional cooperation between women peacebuilders, from politics and civil society, as a mutually reinforcing platform in support of the WPS Agenda, particularly in conflict and post-conflict settings. Supporting the RWLSEE as a unique model of regional cooperation of women on WPS in post-conflict settings.

- **Supporting capacity building projects for youth, particularly those that have a regional scope**, such as the RWLSEE's Regional Academy on Women, Leadership, and Mediation, to help prepare young leaders for change and to close intergenerational gap.

- **Promoting women role models who inspire** with their successful work in making changes during latest historic transitions from war to peace, and from communism to democracy in the Western Balkans.

- **Increased resources and political will in support of the WPS Agenda in post-conflict settings.** Women in conflict and post-conflict settings must be given more



support to be able to overcome traditional and specific challenges in the path to achieving gender equality, peacebuilding and full implementation of the WPS Agenda at the regional, national and local levels.

It is time to move beyond commitments. Time for power to women is now. We cannot imagine waiting another century for our goals to be achieved.

2

COUNTRY REPORTS

20 years of WPS Agenda

ALBANIA | Country Report | 20 years of WPS Agenda



Author: **Dr. Eglantina Gjermeni**

2.1. Twenty years of the UNSCR 1325 and WPS Agenda in Albania

Introduction

Although Albania is not a post-conflict country, several components of UN Resolution 1325 are of high relevance. Albania is a country that contributes to peacebuilding processes in the region and peacebuilding is important part of its foreign policy. It is committed to achieving peace and stability in the region and implementing United Nations and other regional organizations obligations related to peace and stability, by actively participating in international or regional commitments, as well as by integrating such commitments into the country's domestic policies.

These last years, Albania has made significant progress in empowering women and achieving gender equality, including in the security sector. Albania, as a NATO and OSCE member, needs to take measures to fulfill commitments required under its membership. Additionally, as Albania considers EU integration as one of the most important processes, EU stances and engagements represent important reference for the country.

In 2018, Albanian Government drafted the National Action Plan (NAP) for the implementation of Resolution 1325.^{1 2} The vision of the Plan was “to have an Albanian society where women have a reinforced role and are actively involved in the maintenance of peace, conflict prevention and resolution, as well as a sustainable internationally

¹ Adopted by DCM No. 524, dated 11.09.2018

² The Association “Women, Peace, Security” has played an important role by strongly lobbying in adopting the National Action Plan. Support, expertise and technical assistance were provided by the Embassy of the Netherlands and Sweden in Albania, as well as the United Nations through UN WOMEN “Gender Equality Fund” in Tirana, the Presence of the Organization for Security and Cooperation in Europe (OSCE) in Albania and the Delegation of the European Union to Albania. The most essential support was provided through the Project “Resolution 1325”, which was funded by the Embassy of the Kingdom of the Netherlands and the UN Women Fund for Gender Equality.

contributing society in guaranteeing the rights of women involved in conflicting situations.” During the three years of work for the preparation of NAP, 32 civil society organizations established a National Coalition “Women Peace Security”, which was involved in implementation and monitoring of the action plan. The Ministry of Health and Social Protection plays a coordinating function on the WPS NAP, in terms of adoption, monitoring and reporting. Around 83 per cent of NAP measures were identified as supported from the state budget.

Different activities have been organized in the frame of the action plan, such as: raising awareness about Resolution 1325 and its implementation; training on gender and security, justice, and gender-based violence; promoting and empowering Police and Armed Forces employees in various leadership roles or tasks; increasing the number of women in the security sector career system, etc.

In 2019, 1st monitoring report prepared by the Ministry of Health and Social Protection in cooperation with the civil society, indicated that 63 per cent of measures of NAP were fulfilled, while in the end of the second year, there were 82 per cent of measures are implemented.

1. Achievements in women's participation and gender equality in 20 years

a. Politics, decision-making and peacebuilding

Albania is one of the countries that has made a significant progress on increasing women participation at decision making at all levels. During the years 1997- 2005 women participation at the Albanian Parliament has been less than 10 percent. A significant increase of women participation in Parliament, was made possible upon approval of gender quota on the Gender Equality Law, and to the Electoral Code in 2008. In parliamentary elections of 2009, women participation of in parliament was 16 percent. This increasing trend is also noticed in the 2013 parliamentary elections, in which women participation in Parliament was 18 percent. In 2019, the participation of women in Parliament was 29.5 percent, which is the highest achieved during 30 years. Among the eight parliamentary committees, four of them are headed from women parliamentarians, (one of them is security committee). The vice chair of the parliament is a woman as well³. Currently, the Government Cabinet has 8 women ministers out of 14 or 57 per cent of the Government, while the 2013 Cabinet had 8 women Ministers, out of 18 ministers or 42 per cent of it.⁴ Women participation at the local level is increased as well. In April 2015, legal amendments to the Electoral Code were adopted, by setting the quota 50 per cent men and 50 per cent women, in the local elections lists of candidates for counselors. Actually, the percentage of women among municipal councilors is 36.9%.⁵

³ INSTAT “Men and women in Albania, 2020”, p. 113.

⁴ Data from the Monitoring Report of the National Strategy on Gender Equality and its Action Plan 2016-2020, for January - December 2018, prepared by the MSES

⁵ INSTAT “Men and women in Albania, 2018”, p. 93.

The increase of women participation at decision making levels in Albania, has had an important impact on improvements that are made to legal framework, making them more gender sensitive. Improvements in the law on prevention of domestic violence (2018, 2020), the adoption of the law on social housing (2018), the adoption of the law on legal aid guaranteed by the state (2017), are good initiatives on addressing gender inequalities and supporting vulnerable groups. However, there are more challenges regarding adequate implementation of the laws, and gender budgeting should be given more attention by Parliament.⁶

b. Women safety and security

Preventing and combating domestic violence and violence against women and is a precondition for equitable and inclusive development. Actions undertaken by the Albanian state to address these domestic violence and violence against women, are guided by international legal instruments, the domestic legal framework, and national policy framework. Violence by intimate partner/ domestic violence remains one of the main forms of violence against women and girls which is addressed in priority, though not in all its dimensions. Overall, 1 out of 2 or 52.9% of women 18-74 years 'ever' experienced one or more of the five different types of violence (intimate partner violence, dating violence, non-partner violence, sexual harassment and/or stalking) during their lifetime. The survey also found that 3.1% of women age 18-74 had been sexually abused during childhood (had been touched sexually when they did not want or was made to do something sexual that they did not want)⁷.

Starting from 2006 with the approval of the Law on Domestic Violence, significant progress has been made. During these years, several international conventions and directives have been ratified; national legislation is harmonized; data-collection improved; and improved specialized support services for women and girls who are victims / survivors of violence, and are prepared or updated standards for these services.⁸ Upon approval of the Law no. 47/2018 "On some additions and amendments to Law no. 9669, dated 18.12.2006 "On measures against violence in family relations", amended", measures have been added to provide immediate protection for women and girls and other members of the family who experience violence. In addition, new changes provide better services not only to victims of domestic violence, but also to the perpetrators by providing them with rehabilitation services. These legal changes have made possible the harmonization of Albanian legal framework with the Council of Europe Convention "On preventing and combating violence against women and domestic violence"⁹, (Istanbul Convention).

In December 2017, the Albanian Parliament adopted Resolution no. 1 dated 04.12.2017 "On punishing violence against women and girls and increasing the effectiveness of legal

⁶Kuvendi Revista Nr.8. 2017. Pp 11-20<https://www.parlament.al/Files/Informacione/Revista%20nr%208.pdf>

⁷INSTAT (2019). National Population Survey. Violence against women and girls in Albania.

⁸MHSP, (2019). National review for implementation of the Beijing platform for action Beijing+25

⁹Ratified by the Law No.104, dated 8.11.2012 "On Preventing and Combating Violence against Women and Domestic Violence "by the Assembly of Albania

mechanisms for its prevention”, which among other things enabled the establishment of a Subcommittee “On gender equality and the prevention of violence against woman” as part of the Commission responsible for Labor, Social Affairs and Health.¹⁰

Reducing gender-based violence and domestic violence is one of the strategic goals highlighted in the National Strategy on Gender Equality and its Action Plan 2016-2020 was formulated in accordance with the pillars of the Istanbul Convention.

On the March 2018, the Albanian Parliament adopted a Resolution on recognizing and supporting the activity of human rights defenders in promoting, encouraging and protecting human rights and fundamental freedoms, strengthening the rule of law and consolidating democracy.

Handling cases of domestic violence and violence against women in practice continues to be done through the application of a well-coordinated multi sectorial response, reflected in the establishment of Coordinated Referral Mechanism (CRM) at the local level. Coordinated Referral Mechanisms at the local level have been set up in 56 out of 61 municipalities¹¹ in the country and work is underway in 5 other municipalities to set up CRM by 2020. Their biggest challenge is to improve and strengthen inter-institutional co-operation within the referral mechanisms already in place, which operate to varying degrees of effectiveness.¹² Adoption of the Law no. 111/2017 “On state-guaranteed legal aid” constitutes an important development for the improvement of the legal framework regarding the provision of legal assistance to victims of domestic violence.

Albania prevails to be a country of origin for victims of trafficking, mainly for the purposes of sexual exploitation and forced labor. Government and non-profit organizations identify 502 potential victims of human trafficking over the past five years. Trafficking of women and girls is one of the forms of violence against women that has continued to be addressed in priority in the last five years.¹³ The Anti-Trafficking Strategy and the action plan for the socio-economic reintegration human trafficking victims, focus on the aspect of protection, including timely identification of possible trafficking victims, for all types of exploitation, both domestic and international, whether the activity is linked to organized crime or not. During 2016, the Interior Ministry drafted an Action Plan for the social-economic reintegration of women and girls who have been victims of trafficking. Moreover, during 2018, it was adopted the 2018-2020 National Action Plan for Combating Trafficking in Persons.¹⁴

Sexual harassment and sexual violence in public spaces, educational settings and in employment have also been given a great importance in the last e years. Studies carried

¹⁰ Decision 117/2017 of the Assembly. For more see: www.parlament.al/Strukture?kategor=6&strukture=1021

¹¹ Data form the MHSP> With the support of UNDP, UN Women, SCPA, SIDA and other international NGOs

¹² Council of Europe (2017). GREVIO baseline evaluation report.

¹³ United States Department of State. (2020). Trafficking in persons report.

¹⁴ CM 770, dated 26.12.2018 “On the adoption of the National Action Plan to Combat Trafficking in Human Beings 2018-2020”, published in the Official Journal no. 191, dated 31.12.2018. It is available at: <https://qbz.gov.al/eli/fz/2018/191/e6e379ce-879f-4b47-8a7e-ba652700574d;q=vendim%20770%20date%2026.12.2018>

out¹⁵ in several neighborhoods of Tirana Municipality, have found out several factors that affect the lack of security in public spaces, and they recommend a series of actions that can be undertaken by relevant institutions to improve security, and create safe urban spaces for women and girls.

Meanwhile, sexual harassment and sexual violence in educational settings and employment have been taken into consideration several times by the responsible institutions during this period, mainly by denouncing the cases which have experienced these forms of violence on television investigative programs.

c. Women participation at the security sector

Since the landmark adoption of the UNSC Resolution 1325, the normative frameworks in the field of women, peace and security have been extensively developed, affirming the importance of women's equal participation and full involvement as active agents in the security sector. Participation of women in peace/security structures/mechanisms is increased. Progress is made on women's representation in the state police, as well as in the armed force. However, the progress is slow and not a significant one.

The number of women employees in police structures is very low, and there have been no significant changes during these last five years. In 2019, out of 10,434 police employees, classified according to grades and gender, 14.5 % are women. No woman has held the job position Major Leader in the senior management levels. In 2019, only one woman was holding Senior Leader position and one at the level of First Manager. The number of women employed in police structures is gradually increasing for the lower-grade employees, thus reaching the highest levels, which are Inspector and Deputy Commissioner.¹⁶

Achievements have also been noted in the representation of women in the Armed Forces. Thus: in 2016 a woman became the first Brigadier General; in 2014 a woman Colonel was for the first time appointed ATASHE in Turkey; 6 Military women have held positions as directors, 2 military women as vice directors, and one as deputy ATASHE in the Republic of Turkey. From 2018 to 31 March 2019 a total of 9 civilian women and 4 military women performed or still perform important duties in several structures on military forces.

Based on Law 173/2014 “On the discipline in the Armed Forces of the Republic of Albania” there have been taken measures to prevent acts of sexual harassment, including the definition of sexual harassment committed by the military during or outside working hours, as a serious disciplinary offense. In order to create a safer and more secure working environment, in February 2015, the General Director of the State Police approved a document against harassment and sexual harassment in the State Police, which was followed by several capacity building activities.¹⁷

¹⁵In partnership with Local Self-Government Units and in cooperation with the Observatory on Children and Youth Rights (2016) and IDRA (2018 and 2019), supported by UN Women and Swedish Government Funds.

¹⁶INSTAT (2020). Women and men in Albania 2020

¹⁷ MHSP, (2019). National review for implementation of the Beijing platform for action.

3. Recommendations

- Support the development of the new action plan for UNSCR 1325 based on open, transparent, and inclusive participatory process, including women organizations, academia and all other stakeholders.
- Provide sufficient funding by governments for implementation of the new action plan for Resolution 1325, as well as financial support for gender budgeting initiatives.
- Promote men's positive and meaningful involvement in the implementation of the WPS agenda and develop events and structures dedicated to foster positive contributions by women and men.
- Empower and support women and women's organisations to participate in security sector processes through the provision of security and logistical support, capacity building, mentoring and support to coalition-building, as necessary and develop and implement strategies to promote leadership of women within armed forces, police services, defence institutions and the judiciary.
- Ensure that women's access to peacekeeping missions and, especially, in conflict-prevention and conflict-resolution negotiations becomes more structured and systematic. Women should have not only increased representation, but clear content input in these processes.
- Build capacity and enhance advocacy for women's inclusion in peace agreement negotiations and ensure better publicity for the achievements of women in the security sector and promote positive examples and achievements
- Raise the awareness and capacities of journalist and media actors to develop media programs that promote and give visibility to women participation and contribution in peace and security issues.
- Support academic research and publications on implementation of SCR 1325, by collecting and analyzing information about the differential impacts of conflicts on the lives of women, men, girls and boys and propose practical solutions to respond to their specific needs

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BOSNIA AND HERZEGOVINA | Country report | 20 years of the WPS Agenda



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2.2 . Twenty years of the UNSCR 1325 and WPS Agenda in Bosnia and Herzegovina

1. Achievements in women's participation and gender equality in 20 years

a. Politics, decision-making and peacebuilding

Peacebuilding in BIH is at the core of women's identity. The number of women in peace initiatives was significantly higher than the number of men and somehow inversely proportional to their participation in the official political public. Empowered in the practice of addressing the root causes of inequality and exclusion, women have built trust and strengthened “local capacities” that enabled responding to the challenges of difficult transition processes from war to peace.

Although women's rights and gender issues have been on the margins of political interest, women have never given up on their inclusion within the political agenda of peace and security debates in Bosnia and Herzegovina (BIH) since 1996 to date.

Under the pressure of women's demands and with the support of international organizations, the state has committed itself to providing political support, financial assistance, and cooperation to the full and equal participation of women in all transitional processes, to build a democratic society. It was an act for official recognition of women's rights and gender equality.

Bosnia and Herzegovina have achieved the required conditions in the field of gender equality as established by international standards¹ that were a criterion for credible

¹ In the field of gender equality, Bosnia and Herzegovina is implementing the Convention on the Elimination of All Forms of Discrimination against Women (CEDAW), and has also accepted the Beijing Declaration with an Action Platform and UN Resolution SCR 1325.

progress of domestic legislation and general implementation capacity for all levels of government², in to increase the representation of women in decision-making.

Successful public policies³ that address the main problems of women and encourage the inclusion of gender in state and entity strategies are a direct result of the changes that have occurred during the long-term cooperation and activism of women, institutional and non-institutional actors in Bosnia and Herzegovina.

Increased representation of women is visible in the legislative and executive branches at all levels of government in BiH, in the diplomatic and consular network, judicial and security institutions and peacekeeping missions⁴.

The Action Plan for the implementation of UN Resolution SCR 1325 in BiH is a model of good practice for the implementation of a public policy that promotes gender equality and as such is recognized at the regional and international level. This public-political document is successful for several reasons. First, it is drafted in a way that connects the goals and activities with the existing mandates of the relevant institutions in charge of security policy. Second, the structure of the Action Plan is accompanied by three pillars: **equal participation** (increased participation of women in decision-making positions, in the army, police and peacekeeping missions), **protection and prevention** (increased human security) and coordination and partnership.

²Two Gender Centers were established in 2000 in the Federation of BiH entity, and in 2001 in the Republika Srpska entity. The Law on Gender Equality was adopted in 2003 and was the first law in Bosnia and Herzegovina to regulate the issue. The key institutional mechanisms for gender equality are the Agency and the Gender Centers in charge of directing efforts in the fight against discrimination and achieving gender equality through the development of strategic documents and action plans. Increased representation of women in the army, police and peacekeeping missions, including participation in decision-making positions as a result of applying existing legal provisions such as a quota of 40% (Article 4.19 of the BiH Election Law and Article 20 of the Law on Amendments), adoption of amendments and amendments to the Law on Prohibition of Discrimination in 2016, which prohibit discrimination based on sexual orientation and gender identity and affirmative action in the Ministry of Security of BiH and the Ministry of Defense of BiH (reduced number of required years of work experience for women in peacekeeping missions and regular five-day training).

³Gender Action Plan (GAP) for Bosnia and Herzegovina for the period 2006-2011, Action Plan for the implementation of UN Resolution SCR 1325 in BiH (2010-2013), Action Plan for Gender Equality in Natural Disasters and Disasters in the Federation of BiH, Action Plan SCR1325 in BiH 2014-2017, the third GAP for the period 2018-2022 and the third Action Plan for the implementation of UN Resolution SCR 1325 in BiH (2018-2022).

⁴The percentage of women's participation in the legislature ranges from 20 to 23.8%. When it comes to the executive branch, the BiH Council of Ministers consists of two women ministers. In the entity governments, the representation of women in ministerial positions is about 25%. We have the women as President of RS and the Vice President of the Federation. There are currently six women, mayors. The representation of women in senior management positions ranges from 30% to 43% at all levels of public administration. The number of women in senior positions within judicial institutions has increased. There are seven women ambassadors in the diplomatic-consular network. The number of women civil servants with diplomatic status is higher than the number of men. In the negotiating delegations of BiH within the competence of the Ministry of Security of BiH for the purpose of concluding international documents on police cooperation, readmission, protection of classified information, protection and rescue, women are represented at a percentage of 34%. There is at least one woman in each negotiating delegation, while in readmission agreements/protocols there is parity, i.e. equal representation of women and men. Increased participation of women in the army and police has been noticed. The BiH Ministry of Defense is successfully implementing the measure when admitting candidates to the Armed Forces, with 10% of the total number of accepted candidates being women. There is a trend of increasing the participation of women in management positions in the defense and security sectors. The participation of women in the police force at all levels of government shows a representation of 7.5%, mainly in the positions of police officers and senior police officers, inspectors, junior and senior inspectors;

The dynamic and operability of this document were the reason for the selection of BIH and the Agency for Gender Equality as a partner (AGE BIH) of the European Union (EU) to participate in the Joint Action Roadmap entitled “G7 Partnership Initiative for Women, Peace and Security” at the Summit of Foreign Ministers' affairs of the G7 countries, 2019.

b. Security

In order to address human security needs, and in line with the principles of UN Resolution SCR 1325, women in BIH called for the protection and assistance of survivors of violence or threats to include victim empowerment measures and take into account their needs, desires and expectations. The emphasis was on the requirement that a social response which would include interventions by various actors in the community pay attention to the well-being of various “vulnerable” groups and particularly women.

The progress in the field of human security during the implementation of Resolution 1325 was manifested through:

- Adoption of amendments to the Criminal Code of BIH in 2015, which brought the definition of sexual violence as a war crime and a crime against humanity in line with the standards of international criminal law and the case law of international courts and tribunals. This law applies to all war crimes cases, regardless of the judicial body before which the proceedings are conducted.
- Establishment of a Witness Support Unit in courts and prosecutors' offices at all levels.
- Adoption of information from the Study on the Position of Serbian Women Victims of War prepared by the RS Gender Center in the NARS;
- Ensuring material compensation for survivors of war rapes in the Federation of BIH, in accordance with the provisions of the Law on Fundamentals of Social Protection, Protection of Civilian Victims of War and Protection of Families with Children in FBiH.
- Improving the legal and institutional framework, and mechanisms for exercise of the rights and protection of surviving victims and witnesses, including compensation and benefits to them.
- Revision of the criminal framework for certain forms of the criminal offense of trafficking in human beings.
- Adoption of the Strategy for Prevention and Combating Terrorism and the Action Plan for its implementation (2015-2020.)⁵, and
- Adoption of the Program for Development of Protection and Rescue System at the Level of Institutions and Bodies of BIH (2018-2022), taking into account the different needs and interests of men and women, but also different influences on them.

⁵ Involving women and their experience in violent extremism prevention activities helps to expose gender stereotypes. Inclusive women's engagement will provide a better understanding of their role at all stages from working directly in communities with vulnerable girls and women at risk of radicalization and extremism in BIH or returning from conflict areas of Syria and Iraq, through education programs to decision-making (policy making, laws and measures). Introducing gender equality into a comprehensive approach to security challenges and the participation of women as policy makers, political leaders, mothers, educators, activists and community members has already been recognized as an effective and positive impact in peace processes. Gender perspective indicates the roles of men and women but also how violent extremism affects them in different ways

c. Justice /Transitional justice and Reconciliation

Judicial justice and judicial truth were the first step in the process of capacity building for transitional justice, with the establishment of key institutions in BiH in 2005 - such as the Court of BiH, the BiH Prosecutor's Office and BiH Ministry of Justice⁶. Over time, in addition to the notion of transitional justice, the notion of dealing with the past has been increasingly used. These two concepts differ in terms of responsibilities and goals of the process. Transitional justice focuses on individual accountability for wrongdoing with the aim of establishing the rule of law through specific judicial and extrajudicial instruments. Dealing with the past is based on political, social, cultural, economic or legal relations and accordingly focuses on both individual and collective responsibility and the mandate is not limited to a transition period but is an ongoing process of debating the right to justice, truth, satisfaction, peace and other, in order to achieve reconciliation and sustainable peace.

The activities of civil society organizations in the field of transitional justice can be listed as follows:

- Contributing to war crimes trials (providing psychological supporting to the potential witnesses, linking prosecutors with potential witnesses, testifying as expert witnesses, disseminating information on the work of courts in BiH, the region and the ICTY).
- Contributing to establishing the facts about the crimes committed (documenting human rights violations and war crimes).
- Contributing in the field of reparations (providing psychological support to victims, returnees, veterans and others for their resocialization, providing legal assistance and representing victims before the courts, drawing public attention to the growing problem of post-traumatic stress disorder (PTSD) and gender in transitional justice, precisely because of the large number of women victims of sexual abuse and rape).
- Contributing in the field of institutional reforms (organizing various trainings for representatives of institutions, primarily those that are judicial, with the aim that institutions will serve citizens and become institutions with integrity, thus preventing human rights violations in the future).
- Contributing to reconciliation processes (education on non-violent communication, stereotypes, human rights, peace activism, interethnic and interreligious dialogue for all categories of population, especially for young people who can create an atmosphere of reconciliation and a different future).

At the end of this section, I would like to mention the adoption of the Strategy for the Promotion of Gender Equality in the Judiciary in October 2020. The strategy will implement a gender mainstreaming approach in the adoption of policies, laws and programs that take into account the different needs and interests of women and men.

⁶ UNDP opinion poll entitled "Justice and Truth in BiH: Public Perspectives (2005)" provided compelling evidence that most BiH citizens would be interested in engaging in a dialogue on how to best address the past if the BiH authorities would launch such a dialogue.

d. European and Euro-Atlantic Integration

Bosnia and Herzegovina's strategic commitment to integration into the European Union (EU) and NATO in the long run ensures self-sustainability as a political organization and sustainable peace for all its citizens. The foundations of these integrations were laid by the Dayton Peace Agreement.

In February 2016, BiH applied for EU membership, and in September 2016, the European Council invited the Commission to give its opinion on the country's application. In May 2019, the Commission adopted the Opinion (Avis) and the accompanying analytical report. The Opinion identifies 14 key priorities in the areas of democracy/functionality, including the rule of law, protection of fundamental rights and public administration reform, which Bosnia and Herzegovina must meet in order to receive a recommendation to open EU accession negotiations.

The European Union continues to guide the country's authorities with regards to reform priorities on the country's path to membership, but progress has been slow, especially on the areas of rule of law, the protection of the rights of all citizens and the fight against corruption.

In October 2019 and January 2020, the Entity governments and the Council of Ministers adopted a document setting out a program of socio-economic reforms for the period 2019-2022, in order to enable young people and women to reach their full potential.

Bosnia and Herzegovina has met the conditions set by the North Atlantic Council as a criterion for a credible candidacy for the Partnership for Peace (PfP). With the adoption of the Law on Defense and the establishment of a joint armed forces, Bosnia and Herzegovina has entered the Euro-Atlantic security system. Currently, the country is a participant in the Membership Action Plan (MAP).

Although ethno-national policies in general verbally support integration and structural reforms, they are not always willing to make some kind of consensus and give up their own egoism in order to make real progress.

2. Challenges of the past and challenges of the future

The biggest challenges of post-Dayton BiH include lack of the rule of law, ethnic divisions, a dysfunctional constitutional order, and a stalemate in democratic reform processes, weak administrative and judicial capacity, corruption, crime and discrimination. Today, leaving the country is a generally accepted habit, especially for young people. Legal provisions that allow for gender equality largely exist, but still are not applied effectively. Gender impact assessments in the drafting of regulations and policies are not carried out, although they are provided for in the legislation. In Bosnia and Herzegovina, there are structural barriers to women's participation in politics. Trafficking in women for the

purpose of sexual exploitation remains a problem. Peacebuilding in BiH is accompanied by delays and is conditioned by the ethno-nationalist policies of the ruling parties. There are different interpretations of the truth and manipulation with the number of victims.

3. Recommendations

1. Ensuring better institutionalized coordination of legislative programs between all levels of the government through the rule of law and good governance of the state and society.

2. Implementing court decisions (European Court of Human Rights and the Constitutional Court of BiH)

3. Replacing the symbolic representation of women that maintains the existing dynamics of power in the socio-cultural context with the proper involvement of women in the development, decision-making and implementation of policies in all structures.

4. Harmonizing laws, bylaws, strategies, policies and programs, within the scope of work of competent institutions, based on the Law on Gender Equality of BiH (LGE BiH).

Context

In December this year, the Dayton implementation phase marks twenty-five years as being present in the everyday and practical life of BiH. The Dayton Peace Agreement stopped the war between the former neighbors, erased the space for living together in the two entities and “abolished” citizens' society in BiH as it was until 1992. The constituent people, set as a constitutional category, prevented any progress of the country in the direction of democratic reintegration and reconstruction, such as its transition to the phase of active Euro-Atlantic integration in the so-called Brussels phase. The limited progress of the reform processes achieved in the first years of peace in the areas of human rights, justice, security and gender equality has been stalled for years. Interethnic distance, ethno-nationalist rhetoric of politicians, poverty, unemployment, emigration of young people, distrust in public institutions, corruption and (non) rule of law are the main features of life in post-Dayton BiH. The COVID-19 pandemic has exposed all the weaknesses of a system based only on ethnic principles.

The stagnation in the development of a democratic society in BiH, but also in the surroundings, has a great impact on the position of women in both public and private life. Therefore, women cannot give up on revitalizing “frozen” women's participation, as evidenced by numerous initiatives and activities. The Regional Women's Lobby (RZL) is an inspiring model of a unique regional initiative for women, peace and security at local, national and regional context. Based on the dignity and freedom of action of activists and politicians, members of the Lobby, the legitimacy of women's efforts to build a democratic and Euro-Atlantic future in the region is being built.

CROATIA | Country Report | 20 years of WPS Agenda



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2.3. Twenty years of the UNSCR 1325 and WPS Agenda in Croatia

The **UN Security Council Resolution 1325** from year 2000 (UNSCR 1325) is the first official document on the position and the role of women in armed conflicts and has significantly contributed to strengthening the comprehensive approach to security. Extending its mandate to address the complex interrelationships of women, peace and security, the Security Council also responded to the changing nature of war and the growing exposure of civilians, especially women and children, to war suffering in the 1990s. For this purpose, the Security Council set a political and normative framework for practical action, protection and empowerment of women and the achievement of gender equality as key elements in preserving international peace and security. The Resolution has 18 points, and one of the key areas is protection against sexual and gender-based violence, especially in conflict situations where female bodies have become a battlefield and where rape and/or sexual slavery have become brutal tactics of aggression.

Croatia, as a country that suffered armed aggression and fought a defensive Homeland War in the period 1991-1995, also has significant direct experience in the field of Women, Peace and Security.

A total of 23,081 women with the status of veterans took part in the Homeland War in various ways, of which 14,194 in the combat sector, 127 were killed and 1,103 gained the status of Croatian war invalids, while 5,334 widows were left behind. Women were also among the biggest civilian victims of war and were exposed to persecution, threats and abuse, and often to war crimes, including rape and other forms of sexual violence.

Women also played a significant role in post-war reconstruction, confidence-building and reconciliation, especially during the process of peaceful reintegration of the Croatian Danube region under the auspices of the UN Interim Administration for Eastern Slavonia,

Baranja and Western Srijem (UNTAES), which was considered one of the most successful UN peacekeeping missions and as a historical example of how conflicts can be resolved peacefully. One woman, Vesna Škare Ožbolt, then the President of the National Committee for the Establishment of Confidence and the Normalization of Relations in War-Affected Areas, participated in the peace process as the main negotiator from the Croatian side.

The experiences of women in the Homeland War, followed by even more horrific experiences of women from the wars in Bosnia and Herzegovina and Kosovo, as well as the facts of rape and other forms of sexual violence used as weapons and tactics of war in "civilized" Europe in the late 20th century, contributed to increased interest of the international community in issues of women, peace and security and to some extent encouraged the adoption of UNSCR 1325. Croatia strongly supported the adoption of the Resolution and immediately joined a group of its friends within the Security Council, as well as within the EU, NATO, OSCE and other regional organizations which it is a member of.

The most effective tool for the implementation of this and other Security Council Resolutions on Women, Peace and Security is considered to be the so-called National Action Plans (NAPs), which is the official implementation framework for the implementation of standards and for achieving the objectives of these Resolutions at the national level. In 2007, NATO adopted a Decision on the adoption and implementation of UNSCR 1325 and its related resolutions, followed by the establishment and compilation of National Action Plans for each member state. NATO has also established the NATO CSAP (Civil Society Advisory Panel), an autonomous civil society body, of which the CEE Network for Gender Issues is a member, with a regional office in Croatia. The Panel advises NATO structures on the implementation of UNSCR 1325. Croatia became a member of NATO in 2009, and adopted its first NAP in 2011, for the period 2011-2014, and in August 2019 the Government of the Republic of Croatia adopted the second NAP for the period 2019-2023.

However, even before the adoption of the NAP, changes began to take place in Croatia, primarily through the legislative framework, in the first decade of 20th century. During 2002, through the changes to the package of the so-called military laws, for the first time a Committee for Gender Equality was established at the Personnel Council of the Ministry of Defense with the task of achieving equal treatment and status and enabling equal access and equal opportunities for members of both genders. In 2003, Croatia passed the first Law on Gender Equality and the first Law on Protection from Domestic Violence. In addition to the National Policy for Gender Equality from 2001 (the first dates from 1997), the Law on Gender Equality becomes the basis for amendments to a number of other laws in various fields and national mechanisms for gender equality are established - the Parliamentary Committee for Gender Equality, the Office for Gender Equality of the Government of the Republic of Croatia and the Office of the Gender Equality Public Advocate. National gender equality policies were also adopted on a regular basis, until 2011, when the last one was adopted by the Croatian Parliament, and since 2015 Croatia has had no national policy or gender equality strategy, although a Working Group has been established, which is obviously still pending confirmations during several past governments from 2015 to the present.

The first NAP from 2011, among other things, emphasized the following: “In the past period, Croatia has strengthened its national mechanisms and legal framework for gender equality in order to prevent gender-based discrimination. The Gender Equality Law (2008) is in line with international standards in the field of gender equality and equal opportunities as well as with the *acquis communautaire*. A basic strategic document - National Policy for the Promotion of Gender Equality has been adopted with the aim of eliminating discrimination against women as well as establishing real gender equality. The space for the implementation of Resolution VS 1325 in Croatia was created by the National Policy for the Promotion of Gender Equality 2006-2010, which contained concrete measures for its implementation and referred to the inclusion of a gender perspective in security policy and the participation of gender experts in political activities, peacebuilding, regional cooperation and security. Furthermore, measures are envisaged to include a gender perspective in the training for members of the security services involved in the implementation of security policies.”

The first NAP included a series of long-term measures, which over the years have nevertheless contributed to raising awareness regarding the need to adopt a comprehensive, gender-sensitive approach to peace and security, including strengthening the role of women in peace policy and defense and the gender perspective in all activities in these areas. In that sense, another step was taken with the ratification and entry into force (01-10-2018) of **Council of Europe Convention on Preventing and Combating Violence against Women and Domestic Violence (Istanbul Convention)**. The Convention is the first international legally binding instrument that contains a series of measures to prevent violence against women and defines violence as a violation of human rights and a form of discrimination. Its adoption created the preconditions for upgrading the existing national system for combating violence against women and domestic violence with new and comprehensive solutions, in order to prevent and eliminate all forms of violence that endanger the rights and lives of women and hinder their progress.

However, it should be emphasized that Croatia, on the eve of the adoption of the Convention, faced an extremely strong populist movement, supported by conservative political parties and the Church. They organized numerous activities throughout Croatia against its ratification, so it took several years for ratification to take place. However, it was the strong opposition to the adoption of the Convention that completely exposed the Croatian reality when it came to the attitudes of a significant part of the public in relation to the position and role of women in our society. And not only from “ordinary” citizens, but also a good part of the political, scientific, cultural and entertainment public, especially when it came to people in the highest state positions at the time. After strong resistance, the convention was adopted by the Croatian Parliament and entered into force, but it happened what we feared and what many warned about: that no plan or strategy for its implementation has been drafted to date.

Certainly, a clear indicator for this is the insufficient number of women in political decision-making positions. Namely, during the last 20 years, no more than about 20% of women have been elected as members of the Parliament. This is a consequence of the fact that in the past 20 years we have not been able to bring legally binding quotas on the electoral lists in Croatia. The fact that there are legally prescribed penalties has not changed

anything, given that no political party in Croatia has ever been fined for non-compliance with the provisions of the Gender Equality Law. How to enforce a fine if quotas are not binding?

The Ministry of Foreign and European Affairs certainly has one of the leading roles in the implementation of the NAP. At all levels of decision-making within the service, the number of women in managerial positions has been continuously increasing, and today women predominate both as heads of sectors and heads of services, especially in diplomatic titles except the highest - ambassadorial ones. Nevertheless, progress has been made in this aspect (in 2011 there were 6 women as the heads of Republic of Croatia diplomatic missions, and at the beginning of 2019 there were 19 of them).

One of the interesting things that happened in Croatia last year, when it comes to women in prominent positions, is that several women from Croatia were elected/appointed to prominent positions at the international level - former Deputy Prime Minister and Minister of Foreign and European Affairs Marija Pejčinović Burić was elected Secretary General of the Council of Europe; Euro Parliamentarian Dubravka Šuica became Vice President of the European Commission for Democracy and Demography, former Secretary of State Maja Markovčić Kostelac became Executive Director of the European Maritime Safety Agency in Portugal, and former Euro Parliamentarian Ivana Maletić is a member of the European Court of Auditors in Luxembourg.

When we talk about the participation of women in the defense system and security forces, for years (and still) perceived as exclusively male, progress has been made and Croatia is, in this respect, at the top among NATO and EU members - for example, if we look at the share of women in active military composition. In the observed period, we finally got the first woman with the rank of general (Gordana Garašić). Also, the number of women deployed in peace support missions and operations is increasing year after year. The Ministry of Defense is working to increase the number of women in peacekeeping missions through two of its documents - Gender Awareness Policy in the MoD and CAF and the Action Plan for Promoting and Establishing Gender Equality in the MoD and CAF. Thus, based on the document of the UN Secretariat (August 9, 2017), two additional criteria are applied in the competitions for participation in UN peacekeeping missions - one is related to the personal rank (officers can also apply with the rank of lieutenant), and officers whose children are under the age of 7 are allowed to be sent to the mission area for reduced rotations of 6 months (instead of the regular rotation of 12 months).

During these 20 years or so, progress has been made in the Ministry of the Interior, especially in the field of education of police officers with regards to domestic violence and partnerships. The total number of police officers is around 18%, still too few, and progress is particularly slow when it comes to women in leadership positions in the police (currently around 10%).

Visible progress has been made through the security intelligence system, while today 25% of women are in the top positions in the Security Intelligence Agency, and 40% of women are in leading positions in the Office of the National Security Council, which is headed by women.

One of the goals from NAP 1 was also the **implementation of the protection of rights of women and girls - victims of war in the Republic of Croatia with the aim of their post-conflict recovery**. One of the most significant achievements in the implementation of measures from this goal was the drafting and adoption of the **Law on the Rights of Victims of Sexual Violence during the Armed Aggression against the Republic of Croatia during the Homeland War (2015)**.

Civil society organizations and international organizations (UNDP) actively participated in the drafting of the law, and an international conference was held before the adoption of the final proposal. Despite certain controversies, oppositions, misunderstandings and shortcomings (the law does not sufficiently define the victim of sexual violence as well as the conditions for recognition of rights), it has, at least in part, remedied the injustices inflicted on victims of sexual crimes committed during the Homeland War. Until the enactment of this law, victims could exercise their right to compensation only after a final court found perpetrators guilty of war crimes.

The implementation of the law, as well as the work of the Commission for Sexual Violence at the Ministry of Veterans, is monitored by the Gender Equality Public Advocate, which is based, among other things, on the recommendations of Resolution 1325 and other related resolutions (1820 and 1889). Since the adoption of the law until the end of 2019, a total of 264 claims for compensation were submitted (195 women and 69 men), of which 171 claims were resolved positively.

UNSCR 1325 has set two primary objectives: 1) equal participation of women at all levels of decision-making in national, regional and international bodies and mechanisms for conflict prevention, management and resolution, as well as in peace processes, and 2) prevention of violence against women and girls during and after conflicts and their comprehensive protection not only from violence but also in terms of the exercise of their human rights within the constitution, the electoral system, the police and the judiciary.

That we are still far from achieving the set goals all over the world, but also in our own countries, is proven by the fact that the Security Council has adopted nine more related resolutions on women, peace and security aimed at improving the implementation of the initial UNSCR 1325. The resolution expresses heightened concern at the still neglected role of women in the field of peace and security and the increase in gender-based and sexual violence in armed conflicts and crises around the world.

In mid-2019, Croatia adopted the National Action Plan 2 (NAP 2), with the aim to continue the implementation of the Program for Women, Peace and Security at the national level and at the foreign policy level, taking over from NAP 1 most of the goals and measures in the field of prevention, participation and protection and post-conflict recovery.

At the instigation of the Gender Equality Public Advocate, and bearing in mind other related resolutions, in particular UNSCR 2242 (2015), NAP 2 also contains a new chapter on "Security Risk Management". Namely, UNSCR 2242 was adopted on the occasion of the 15th anniversary of the high-level review of UNSCR 1325, in which the program for women, peace and security was highlighted as a key component in tackling the

challenges arising from the new global context of peace and security, including violent extremism, increased numbers of refugees and internally displaced persons, and the global impacts of climate change and pandemics. It is also the only Security Council resolution addressing these dramatic changes.

Croatia is a signatory state to all relevant international legal instruments related to sexual and gender-based violence (SGBV). National laws are in line with United Nations and European Union documents. At the national level, the following protocols also exist: the Protocol on the Procedure in Cases of Sexual Violence; the Protocol on the treatment of unaccompanied children; the National Plan for Combating Trafficking in Human Beings 2018-2021; and the Protocol on the handling of cases of domestic violence. However, not all of the mentioned national protocols explicitly mention SGBV victims among migrants and refugees.

At the end of 2018, the international NGO Medecins du Monde-Belgique (MdM-BE) conducted a snapshot of the situation on prevention and assistance to applicants for international protection who are exposed to gender-based violence, and based on this snapshot, guidelines were developed for dealing with victims of gender-based violence against those applying for international protection in the Republic of Croatia. It is therefore important for the new National Action Plan (NAP 2) to set two goals within the chapter "Security Risk Management": 1. Gender-sensitive approach to security risk management from natural and technological disasters and terrorism, and 2. Promoting the protection of women and girls rights as refugees, asylum seekers and migrants.

Recommendations

Recommendations that can accelerate the achievement of the set NAP 2 goals are as follows: developing long-term strategic approaches aimed at attracting more women to, until yesterday exclusively, the male profession; increasing the representation of women in vocational training and education and improving measures to reconcile private and professional life, in order to enable more women to participate in international and peacekeeping missions; and, education opportunities, but also the opportunity to reach levels where they have the chance to make decisions and participate equally in decision-making that affects not only their lives but also the lives of their families and the communities where they live.

KOSOVO | Country Report | 20 years of WPS Agenda



Author: **Luljeta Vuniqui**

2.4. Twenty years of the UNSCR 1325 and WPS Agenda in Kosovo: Never again without women

I. INTRODUCTION

This report is part of the Regional Women's Lobby for Peace, Justice and Security in South East Europe (RWLSEE)¹ initiative to mark the 20th anniversary of the adoption of United Nation Security Council Resolution 1325 (2000). Therefore, the report aims to assess both national and regional level of the achievements, trends, gaps and challenges of the implementation of the Women Peace and Security Agenda.

The 20th anniversary gives the Kosovo institutions and the women's NGOS an invaluable opportunity to reflect on what is achieved over 20 years, but more importantly to examine what remains to be done in the future.

The world's historic events of war and peace tell us that women have been historically missing from the negotiating tables for peace, and that there were always few men from political and military elites who did the negotiations. Similar unfortunate situation was in the Western Balkans in last wars of disintegration of former Yugoslavia where women remained largely unrepresented in formal peace processes. It was the women's movement of both global and local level who did not comply with the situation of women being excluded from peace processes and negotiation tables who together with many allies within and out of UN pushed forward the adoption of the UN Security Council Resolution 1325. It is considered by many women activist and scholars that the UN Resolution 1325 is the most significant international document since the Declaration of Human Rights, emphasizing that if fully implemented in it intends, it would and could drastically change the politics of peace and politics of security in the world.

¹ The Regional Women's Lobby for Peace, Justice and Security in South East Europe (RWLSEE) was founded in 2006 by a group of dedicated women leaders in politics and civil society from Albania, Bosnia and Herzegovina Croatia, Kosovo, Montenegro, FYR of Macedonia (now North Macedonia) and Serbia, with the support of the UN Women (then UNIFEM).

The adoption of the Resolution 1325 coincided with the end of the devastating war in Kosovo (June 1999), which gave the great opportunity to address the disproportionate and unique impact that armed conflict has had on women and girls. As it is purposely oriented towards women (and girls), it was a clear signal to United Nation Interim Mission in Kosovo (UNMIK) that was governing Kosovo at that time including international actors, national political leadership, international and national women's right organizations, for urgent and proactive approach to putting women's needs on the peace and security agenda as a must. It continued after the independence of Kosovo in 2008, where national government was constantly lobbied and pressured to implement the UNSC Resolution 1325 on women, peace and security agenda and overall gender equality agenda.

The report will focus on bringing both information and analyses on actions and the role of national and international institutions, policies, gender equality mechanisms and initiatives at governmental level and the particular role of local and international women's rights organizations, local networks and regional network initiatives such as Regional Women's Lobby for Peace, Justice and Security for South East Europe (RWL SEE) in putting the resolution in practice in a very fragile and devastated post war Kosovo society.

The purpose of the report is to present a clear picture on how and to what extend the issues concerning gender/women are mainstreamed in policies, projects, programs contributed to the implementation of the UN Resolution 13 25 in Kosovo, and at the same time to examine the evidence of challenges and obstacles that hindered women in their efforts in conflict prevention, conflict resolution, peacebuilding and peace negotiations. Evidencing the commitment, measures and steps taken in enhancing political participation of women in decision making, peacemaking and peacebuilding, including internationally mediated peace negotiations between Kosovo and Serbia, gender mainstreaming, security issues and threats such as gender-based violence, domestic violence, rape and other forms sexual violence during the war in Kosovo are examined.

II Women in politics, decision making and peacebuilding

The national normative framework that supports WPS agenda

The body of legislative framework, policy documents and mechanisms concerning women's rights and protection against all forms of discrimination promoting gender equality, participation in politics, decision making and peacebuilding, that developed the last 20 years in Kosovo, is an achievement to be recognized.

Although Kosovo is not signatory to major international treaties on human rights, the Constitution of Kosovo states that all international human rights instruments are directly applicable. More specifically, the Convention on the Elimination of All Forms of Discrimination against Women (CEDAW) is also enshrined in Article 22 of Kosovo's Constitution. The promotion and enforcement of fundamental rights and freedoms and equal treatment of all citizens of Kosovo is regulated through different civil and criminal legislations including the package of human rights legislation.

The Government of the Republic of Kosovo in 2014 adopted the first National Action Plan (NAP) for the implementation of the UN Security Council Resolution 1325. The NAP was

developed by Kosovo Agency for Gender Equality in close cooperation with institutional, civil society and international partners to be followed by two monitoring reports on the implementation of the resolution. The plan includes the main following objectives: increased participation of women in decision-making, peace-building and preservation; an integrated gender perspective and increased participation of women in security structures; access to functional protection mechanisms for women subjected to sexual violence and other forms of violence relating to conflict and war, and access to justice, rehabilitation and reintegration.

The Law on Gender Equality (No. 05 / L-020) and recently adopted The Kosovo Program for Gender Equality (2020-20240) are documents that protect and promote gender equality and women's empowerment in all sectors, as a pre-condition for just and democratic society.

Women from politics and civil society and human rights activists fostering WPC agenda

The Kosovo women organizations and networks developed a solid body of knowledge consisting of studies, monitoring reports, resolutions on implementation of the Resolution 1325 in Kosovo, accompanied with continuous advocacy and the awareness raising campaigns to push forward the WPS agenda.

In aftermath of war in Kosovo in 1999, women found themselves in sidelines of politics and decision making, despite the fact that women played a vital role in the movement for liberation and independence during ten years of this process. It was amazing how women rejected to be in sidelines, in response they organized different initiatives and actions to bring themselves in the frontline.

Even before the Resolution 1325 was adopted, Kosovo women from politics and civil society jointly succeeded to adopt the quota mechanism on representation of women in parliament and local assemblies. The quota of 30% of women was adopted in the year 2000 and it continues to nowadays. Kosovo became a model of inspiration for entire region of Western Balkans which also adopted quota. However, women representation in government is low and unsustainable and, we could not yet establish quota due to male dominated mentality of politics.

Kosovo different from other countries in the region was also having women in formal peace processes in war and peace times, in the Rambouillet Peace Conference in 1999 that paved the way to freedom, peace and independence and, the Chief Negotiator was women in the EU facilitated Brussels Dialogue.

However, the overall implementation of the resolutions requirements remains slow and largely unfulfilled. Women role in politics, democracy and peace building and their contribution in lasting security is often overlooked by political leaders and society as whole. Women are still largely excluded from both the negotiations that make peace and institutions that maintain it. When the dialogue for Kosovo's political status was conducted between 2005 and 2008, followed with Kosovo Declaration of Independence, Kosovo

women's rights activists were the first to demand the meaningful inclusion of women in peace negotiations calling on resolution 1325, unfortunately, women were not part of the negotiating team.

Referring to the statistical data regarding the women political participation and elected in the parliament and municipality assemblies since the first free elections held in Kosovo in 2000, gives a good base to argument that women in Kosovo have made a progress in taking a political and public space that historically was “reserved” for men only. This cultural and factual reality started to bring the change after the introduction of legislative quotas. Kosovo's electoral law regulates the application of a 30 percent gender quota for municipal and national assembly seats, which require at least 30 percent of women candidates on party lists. This was met with great support by Kosovar women in politics and civil society.

The quotas are respected in each election held so far, although not without complaints from time to time from men politicians, claiming their 'rights violations' due to quota system. According to the Kosovo Central Election Commission data, in four elections held since the Declaration of Independence of Kosovo, women are represented with slight variations of 32% to 33% of the seats at the National Parliament and 35% to 39% at the Municipal Assemblies.

Challenges

With a closer look at the overall women's representation in decision making positions we see only a few women in government and other high-ranking positions in public institutions. In the last elections held in October 2019, a positive step is to be marked in this direction. A woman was elected for the first time as the speaker of the Parliament. However, the current government consisting of sixteen ministries, only three women are appointed as ministers and out of four deputy prime ministers only one woman holds this position. At the local level, women also hold 35% of councilors positions but there is no woman elected as mayor in any of 38 municipalities.

Although the legislative norms do bring results to a certain extent as above data shows regarding women political participation and representation in national parliament and municipal assemblies, the patriarchal, misogynist and sexist attitudes towards women are cultural norms that are still deeply rooted in our society mentality which brings about barriers and exclusion of women from being equal actors in shaping their own and country's future. By no means there is no intention to undermine the crucial importance of legislation and mechanisms in place for building democratic institutions and society with gender equality as its impartial part, still one should be aware that it is only one part of the solution.

Lack of implementation of the laws, in particular the main Law on Gender Equality (No. 05 / L-020) lack of political will of the party and political leadership dominated by men, sets the gray tone of the overall picture on the ground concerning women position in our society. As a consequence, women remain sidelined from the important decision making in democratic governance, peacebuilding, and peace negotiations.

Women at the peace negotiation tables

Twenty years after the adoption of this landmark resolution, we note with concern that women remain largely excluded from decision making and formal peace processes where decisions are made on peace and future. Evidence shows that between 1992 and 2019 women constituted, on average, 13 percent of negotiators, 6 percent of mediators, and 6 percent of signatories in major peace processes around the world. While there has been some progress in women's participation, only few women participated in leadership roles as negotiators, mediators, guarantors, or witnesses.

In the region of Western Balkans, the situation has not been different than in other parts of the world. Evidence shows low participation of women in formal peace processes, even though women played significant role in liberation processes and peace efforts of ending wars and conflicts following the disintegration of former Yugoslavia and born of new states. There have been ten peace processes in the region, in war and peace times, between 1991 to 2020 including major processes such as Dayton Summit on Bosnia and Herzegovina and Rambouillet Peace Conference on Kosovo. There has been only one women in formal international peace processes to end wars who was also chief negotiator in peace time on normalization of relations between warring parties (from Kosovo) and, one women chief negotiator in intra-state peace negotiations on reintegration of certain parts of country (from Croatia).

Kosova has given a positive example by appointing women in the Kosovo negotiating team in in Rambouillet Conference and later in peace times appointed women Chief Negotiator at the Brussels dialogue. Whereas in Vienna status talks women were missing in the negotiating team. Following the advisory opinion of the International Court of Justice (ICJ) on the act of declaration of Kosovo's independence, the United Nations General Assembly, on 9 September 2010 adopted Resolution 64/29, which opened the way for launching the Kosovo-Serbia dialogue, facilitated by the EU². According to the Resolution, "the process of dialogue in itself would be a factor for peace, security and stability in the region" and its aim would be "to promote co-operation, achieve progress on the path to the European Union and improve the lives of the people³." On 10 March 2011, the Kosovo Assembly adopted a Resolution that mandated the Government of the Republic of Kosovo to commence negotiations with Serbia⁴ and Edita Tahiri at that time, deputy prime minister of the Republic of Kosovo Government, a well-known, experienced politician and negotiator was appointed as the head of the Kosovo negotiation team, to become one of the few women leading peace negotiations in the world. Under her leadership or during the first phase of so called "technical" negotiations, the parties signed several agreements on free movement of persons, customs stamps, recognition of university diplomas, cadaster records, civil registries, and Integrated Border Management (IBM).

Due to the tensions either internal or even between the two countries, the dialogue with Serbia has been characterized by intermittent terminations and suspensions. After the

² United Nations General Assembly, Resolution A / RES / 64/298, 13.10.2010, paragraphs 1-2, available at: <https://www.securitycouncilreport.org/atf/cf/%7B65BFCF9B-6D27-4E9C-8CD3-CF6E4FF96FF9%7D/ROL%20A%20RES64%20298.pdf>

⁴ Republic of Kosovo, Assembly, Resolution for Dialogue between the Republic of Kosovo and the Republic of Serbia, 10 March 2011, available at: http://www.kuvendikosoves.org/common/docs/Resolution_for_dialogue_between_R.Kosovo_and_R.Serbia.pdf

international pressure on both parties, after two years of stagnation, the dialogue on normalization of relations between Kosovo and Serbia, in 3 July 2020, is resumed with facilitation of EU and USA. The Kosovo Government, has adopted a programme that prioritises the resumption of the Kosovo-Serbia dialogue and the post-COVID-19 economic recovery. The program pays a marginal attention to women position in society but there is no reference on women inclusion in the dialogue.⁵

Calling on the Resolution 1325, women's organisations have requested that the process to be transparent, and based on consultations with diverse women and men regarding their needs and expectations from the dialogue. They have offered to provide information and expertise to support the organisation of public consultations, to ensure a democratic and participatory process. Women's groups have demanded a meaningful role of women in the Kosovo delegation and participate in the Kosovo-Serbia dialogue for normalization of relations, as well as in the working groups established to inform the Dialogue⁶.

In line with its mission and highlighting the importance of women participation and women's needs inclusion in the dialogue process, RWLSEE sent an open Letter to the Brussels Dialogue facilitator and parties, EU, Kosovo and Serbia stating that: "we have not been satisfied with women's under-representation in the formal peace dialogue held in Brussels in the past years and neither with the gender sensitive quality of agreements. We consider that this practice must change in order to ensure equal participation and representation of women in delegations of both parties as well as of facilitators, and gender sensitive outcomes as well"⁷. Including women in the negotiation process is crucial for lasting peace and security in the region.

II. Security and Justice

Access to transitional justice and reconciliation

In the aftermath of the conflict in Kosovo, credible national and international human rights organizations raised the issue of lack of access to justice for victims of rape and other forms of violence during the war. Human Rights Watch in their early report (March 2000), "Kosovo: Rape as a Weapon of 'Ethnic Cleansing'" stressed: "the research found that rape and other forms of sexual violence were used in Kosovo in 1999 as weapons of war and instruments of systematic 'ethnic cleansing'. Rapes were not rare and isolated acts committed by individual Serbian or Yugoslav forces, but rather were used deliberately as an instrument to terrorize the civilian population, extort money from their families, and push people to flee their homes. Rape furthered the goal of forcing ethnic Albanians from Kosovo".

⁵ Republic of Kosovo, Government, Government Plan 2020-2023, point. 4.8, available at: <https://kryeministri-ks.net/wp-content/uploads/2020/06/Programi-Qeverises-2020-2023-final-05062020.pdf>

⁶ Security and Gender Group Calls for Meaningful Participation of Women in Pristina-Belgrade Dialogue, 19.06.2020, available at: <https://unmik.unmissions.org/security-and-gender-group-calls-meaningful-participation-women-pristina-belgrade-dialogue>

⁷ <https://rwlsee.org/category/open-letters-and-memos/>

United Nation Interim Mission in Kosovo and later EULEX mission⁸ in Kosovo failed to provide meaningful access to justice for survivors of rape, torture and other forms of violence against women. Amnesty International in its report titled “Time for EULEX to prioritize war crimes”, calls on EULEX to prioritize the investigation and prosecution of crimes under international law, including war crimes and crimes against humanity, as a matter of urgency. Amnesty International urged EULEX to ensure that crimes of sexual violence committed during the conflict are properly investigated and prosecuted with adequate provisions for the support and protection of witnesses before, during and after proceedings. The EU's rule-of-law mission (EULEX) handed over hundreds of unprosecuted war crime case files to the Kosovo judiciary at the end of 2018. The Kosovo women survivors of war rape and other forms of violence are still waiting for the first convictions.

Local Women's rights activist and organizations role was crucial in demanding justice for survivors of war rape and all forms of violence against women, urging UNMIK and later EULEX and Kosovo institutions for prosecution of war criminals, condemning the impunity. Despite all the barriers and the stigma that characterized any attempt to raise the issues of rape and other forms of violence against women during the war in Kosovo, local women's NGOs and organizations like RWLSEE with the support of UN Women (UNIFEM) and other international organizations, managed to bring to the public attention the immediate need for actions of the governmental institutions, politicians, media and that of the wider public.

Namely, after so many years of silence, a form of reparations for survivors of rape and other forms of violence during the war is addressed by the Government of Kosovo. Referring to the Program for Gender Equality, in 2014 the Kosovo Government adopted the amendments to the Law (no. 04/I-172) on Amending and Supplementing the Law (no.04/I-054) on the Status and the Rights of the Martyrs, Invalids, Veterans, Members of Kosovo Liberation Army, Sexual Violence Victims of the War, Civilian Victims and Their Families, including the status of persons raped during the war.

In February 2018, the Government Commission for recognition and verification of persons raped during the war, officially commenced its work. Access to justice for victims of sexual violence during the war remains a challenge. In this period, 29 cases were opened, most of these cases being in preliminary investigation, a number of cases are under investigation, other cases have either been sent to court or the criminal report has been dismissed.⁹

According to the Humanitarian Law Foundation Center (HLC) Kosovo, during the war in Kosovo, 13.535 persons are killed amongst them 1.124 children, of which 109 children missing.¹⁰ Over 1600 persons still missing and estimated 20 000 women raped, after 20 years, have yet to wait for justice for crimes committed against them. The main perpetrators of the most horrific crimes committed in Kosovo are still moving freely in

⁸ The European Union Rule of Law Mission in Kosovo (EULEX) was launched in 2008 as the largest civilian mission under the Common Security and Defense Policy of European Union. EULEX's overall mission is to support relevant rule of law institutions in Kosovo on their path towards increased effectiveness, sustainability, multi-ethnicity and accountability, free from political interference and in full compliance with the international human rights standards and best European practices. <https://www.eulex-kosovo.eu/?page=2,60>

⁹ <https://abgj.rksgov.net/assets/cms/uploads/files/Programi%20i%20Kosov%C3%ABs%20p%C3%ABr%20Barazi%20Gjinore%202020-2024%20-%20ANGLISHT.pdf>

¹⁰ HLC “Once upon a time and never again” exhibition, <https://www.hlc-kosovo.org/en/what-we-do>

Serbia and elsewhere. Without conviction of the war criminals and perpetrators, the peace and reconciliation processes are partial and doomed to fail.

Violence against women

Last two years the Kosovo legal framework regarding combating gender based and violence against women marked important positive steps. Referring to Kosovo Gender Studies Center research “The pressure through public protests, combined with evidence-based advocacy has led to several legal changes, including the criminalization of Domestic Violence through the new criminal Code of Kosovo.”¹¹ In addition, On September 25, 2020, the Kosovo Assembly adopted an amendment to the Constitution of the Republic of Kosovo, based on which the Council of Europe Convention on preventing and combating violence against women and domestic violence (Istanbul Convention) will be included in the Constitution. The Istanbul Convention is the first instrument in Europe to set legally binding standards specifically to prevent gender-based violence, protect victims of violence and punish perpetrators.¹² The Convention also establishes a specific monitoring mechanism (“GREVIO”) in order to ensure effective implementation of its provisions by the Parties.¹³

Regarding the national policy level, in 2016, Kosovo adopted its second National Strategy on Protection from Domestic Violence and Action Plan 2016 – 2020 (NSPDV). According to the monitoring research reports findings on the implementation of the NSPDV conducted by the Kosovo Gender Studies Center¹⁴, Kosovo Women's Network (KWN) and the Balkan Investigative Reporting Network (BIRN)¹⁵, analyzing the attitudes, incidence and institutional response, conclude: high level of violence against women remain wide spread phenomena; women are the most victims of domestic violence cases and they are underreported; shelters lack sustainable and sufficient financing; inadequate institutional response to the reported cases of domestic violence and the inadequate budget allocated towards the implementation of the NAP by relevant institutions.

The continuous impunity for perpetrators by the criminal justice system has made the effective delivery of rights guaranteed through laws inequitable for victims of gender-based violence.¹⁶ The lack of up-to date risk assessment for systemic abuses in domestic violence cases have led to tragic consequences¹⁷. According to data from the Office for Information and Public Relations of the Kosovo Police, since the beginning of 2020, 17 women have been killed, while 56 of them have faced attempted murder. Providing effective and timely access to justice for women victims of violence is a must and the only way to protect women's life and ensure their security.

¹¹ Assembly of Kosovo, Code No.06/L-074, Criminal Code of Kosovo, Chapter XX, 2019, at: <https://gzk.rksgov.net/ActDetail.aspx?ActID=18413>

¹² [https://www.europarl.europa.eu/RegData/etudes/ATAG/2019/644183/EPRS_ATA\(2019\)644183_EN.pdf](https://www.europarl.europa.eu/RegData/etudes/ATAG/2019/644183/EPRS_ATA(2019)644183_EN.pdf)

¹³ Ibid

¹⁴ http://kgscenter.net/site/assets/files/1742/gender_base_violence_alb-1.pdf

¹⁵ <https://womensnetwork.org/wp-content/uploads/2018/10/20180312142859762.pdf>

¹⁶ http://www.kipred.org/repository/docs/Accessing_Justice_for_Victims_of_Gender-Based_Violence_in_Kosovo_Ending_Impunity_for_Perpetrators_820425.pdf

¹⁷

IV. European and Euro-Atlantic Integration

Kosovo aspirations for full membership in the EU, United Nations and NATO remains the most important strategic objectives of Kosovo foreign policy. Women of Kosovo have made substantial contribution on reaching the countries aspirations, both women in politics and civil society.

Over the past years, Kosovo has made headways in its efforts to advance the EU integration process. The European Commission's 2012 Feasibility study commends Kosovo's considerable progress. As a measure of its progress, Kosovo signed a Stabilization and Association Agreement (SAA) with the EU in 2015¹⁸.

Heading forward, Kosovo has gained membership in several regional and international organizations, such as The World Bank, International Monetary Fund (IMF), Venice Commission, European Bank for Reconstruction and Development (EBRD), Council of Europe Development Bank (CEB), and Regional Cooperation Council (RCC) in recent years¹⁹.

Despite these achievements and its commitment to the EU integration, Kosovo's path to the EU over the years seems to become more and more a complicated process with many unknowns and challenges. Kosovo is still the last in line for EU membership among the (potential) candidate countries from the Western Balkan. The five EU non- recognizing countries-Cyprus, Greece, Romania, Slovakia, and Spain, adds another obstacle to Kosovo's integration efforts in the European Union.

Although, in 2018, the European Commission declared that Kosovo had met the requirements for its citizens to qualify for visa-free travel within the Schengen zone, however to date the prolonged visa liberalization process leaves Kosovo citizens without the right to travel visa-free in the European Union, thus becoming the most isolated country in the Western Balkans.

Gender mainstreaming in the EU accession process

Gender equality, (same opportunities, rights and obligations for women and men in all spheres of life) is a core value and objective (recognized in Articles 2 and 3(3) of the Treaty on European Union and in the EU's Charter of Fundamental Rights), which the EU is committed to integrating in all of its activities (Article 8 of the Treaty on the Functioning of the EU)²⁰

Being part of the EU Treaties, gender equality forms part of the accession conditions for the aspiring countries to EU. The process of approximation of legislation is greater and more comprehensive work in the membership process. This represents one of the Copenhagen criteria for membership in the European Union: before membership, Kosovo like any other

¹⁸ Venera Kusari "Kosovo's place in Europe: Integration as a means in mitigating security threats"
http://www.kipred.org/repository/docs/ThreatsAndChallenges_Vers-FIN_60835.pdf

¹⁹ Ibidem

²⁰ [https://www.europarl.europa.eu/RegData/etudes/BRIE/2018/625139/EPRS_BRI\(2018\)625139_EN.pdf](https://www.europarl.europa.eu/RegData/etudes/BRIE/2018/625139/EPRS_BRI(2018)625139_EN.pdf)

country aspiring to join the EU, will have to approximate its own legislation with that of the EU. As part of the preparation for an EU future, Kosovo institutions have taken steps to advance women's rights throughout years, harmonizing its legislation and policies with *the acquis communautaire* of the EU²¹. These include adopting or amending relevant legislation, developing national strategies and action plans, and establishing institutional mechanisms to carry out and monitor relevant policies. Kosovo's progress in the field of gender equality and human rights is monitored by the European Commission. In its 2020 report, acknowledges progress in the field of human rights. The legal framework guarantees broadly the protection of fundamental rights and is in line with European standards²². Legislation and institutional mechanisms for equality between women and men are in line with international and EU standards²³. However, the report also emphasizes challenges that women face in many areas: "Despite institutional efforts, women continue to face discrimination in the labor market, access to finance, ownership of property and access to justice. Women are underrepresented, especially in decision-making positions, both in private and public institutions"²⁴.

The implementation of the laws and policies in place regarding gender equality, are to be further addressed first of all by executive, legislative, security institutions and policy makers as part of the Kosovo's efforts in advancing towards EU integrations.

Recommendations

The 20th anniversary of the of UNSCR1325 has created the momentum to recommit and ensure that the words are translated into actions:


- In Line with the Law on Gender Equality and the Resolution 1325, the Kosovo Government should ensure equal inclusion of women at all levels of decision-making in democratic governance, peacebuilding and in formal peace processes including internationally mediated peace process of the Kosovo- Serbia dialogue on normalization of neighbourly relations
- The Kosovo Government has so far failed to assume a leading role in taking measures to provide justice to the many victims of war In Kosovo. Kosovo Government needs to ensure that crimes of sexual violence committed during the conflict are properly investigated and prosecuted with adequate provisions for the support and protection of witnesses before, during and after proceedings.
- The Kosovo government need to revise the Law on the Status and the Rights of the Martyrs, Invalids, Veterans, Members of Kosovo Liberation Army, Sexual Violence Victims of the War, Civilian Victims and Their Families in order for persons raped during the war, although their status is recognized, to enjoy the same benefits as other war victims.
- Substantial financial support should be provided for the implementation of the women, peace and security agenda and the Kosovo Program for Gender Equality.

²¹ http://www.kryeministri-ks.net/repository/docs/Udhezime_praktike_per_perafrimin_ligjor.pdf

²² https://ec.europa.eu/neighbourhood-enlargement/sites/near/files/kosovo_report_2020.pdf

²³ https://ec.europa.eu/neighbourhood-enlargement/sites/near/files/kosovo_report_2020.pdf

²⁴ https://ec.europa.eu/neighbourhood-enlargement/sites/near/files/kosovo_report_2020.pdf



- Kosovo institutions and international organizations should provide sufficient proper and sincere long-term support to women's civil society organizations who are doing incredible work in peacebuilding and reconciliation.

- A new push for much more quantitative research, qualitative analyses and data collection are important in elevating public understanding and help activist and leadership to direct their efforts towards implementation of the Resolution 1325. This way we will ensure that we are heading in the right direction and that the strategies to be used are effective, sustainable and measurable.

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Author: **Nada Drobnjak**

2.5. Twenty challenging gender (in)sensitive years in Montenegro: Implementing 1325 and WPS Agenda

Introduction

We live in the 21st century, the age of knowledge and competencies, and I guess the conditions should be created for people to enjoy human rights at the same level, regardless of their specifics, to be equal. It would be logical, but, unfortunately, this is also a century of great challenges and equality has not yet been achieved. So, just because we are women we do not have the same chances in life whether we live in America, Europe or Montenegro.

When we want to see real achievements in the field of gender equality, we must understand what the Montenegrin environment has been and is during the last 20 years.

Montenegro entered the new millennium as a smaller and unequal member of the Federal Republic of Yugoslavia, which did not accept and support the politics created in Belgrade. The most important political goal of the majority in Montenegro was to restore its independence. Every day new freedoms were won, which were confirmed by the Belgrade Agreement (March 2002) and the establishment of the State Union of Serbia and Montenegro. The state union is constituted as an alliance of two independent states, which equally participate in the management of common affairs. Montenegro then achieved important success in ensuring that member states were given the right to decide on their statehood status in a referendum after the period of three years. Montenegro has resolutely embarked on the restoration of independence, reminding the international community that Montenegro has been an independent state for centuries, and that its aspiration for independence is not an expression of hostility towards anyone, but an expression of the maturity of Montenegrin society to manage its own destiny.

Three years after the adoption of the Constitutional Charter of the State Union, Montenegro has exercised its right to organize a referendum. The international community then imposed a new "referendum standard", i.e. for independence to be recognized it required 55% votes pro independence from overall number of voters turn out. According to the official results, in the referendum on May 21, 2006, in total 419,240 citizens voted or 86.5% of the total number of people registered to vote. Montenegrin independence was supported by 230,661 citizens or 55.5%. The date of this referendum will remain in Balkan history as a day of reminders that the state and legal status can be changed without a bullet being fired.

Montenegro signed the Stabilization and Association Agreement (SAA) on 15 October 2007, which entered into force on 1 May 2010, after being ratified by the Member States of the European Union (EU). In December 2010, Montenegro became a candidate for EU membership, and negotiations with the EU officially began on June 29, 2012. Then a new approach to negotiations began, Montenegro was among the first to open negotiating chapters 23 - Justice and Fundamental Rights and 24 - Justice, Freedom and Security and it will remain open until the end of the negotiation process. To date, Montenegro has opened all negotiating chapters, of which three negotiating chapters have been temporarily closed: Chapter 25 - Science and Research, Chapter 26 and Chapter 30 - Foreign Relations. Chapter 8 - Competition was opened last on June 30, 2020.

Wanting to show that it is part of the peace policy and believing that Montenegro's membership in NATO will help calm tensions not only in the region but also beyond, Montenegrin official policy has worked intensively since the restoration of independence to meet the conditions for NATO membership. At the December ministerial meeting of NATO members in 2015, Montenegro received an invitation for full membership. The epilogue of a long and demanding period in which Montenegro worked hard, but also showed determination, commitment and political maturity, was on June 5, 2017, when Montenegro, by handing over the instruments of ratification of the Washington Treaty, became the 29th member of NATO. This fulfills one of the most important foreign policy priorities of Montenegro.

1. Achievements in women's participation and gender equality

a. Politics, decision making and peace building

Institutional efforts in the field of achieving gender equality in Montenegro began in 2001. Until then, this issue was dealt with by representatives of non-governmental organizations. That year, the Gender Equality Committee was established in the Montenegro Parliament as a permanent working body. The competencies of the Committee are prescribed by the Rules of Procedure of the Montenegro Parliament, as the main competence is the introduction of a gender perspective, according to international standards, in all documents reviewed in the Parliament. However, in practice, the conditions have not been created for that to happen. In almost twenty years of the Committee's work, it has been

recognized only ones by the authorities in the Assembly as the leading Committee for review of a draft law. Committee had to devise an innovative way of working and, in addition to recognizing himself as an interested Committee for a large number of laws, also organized a large number of round tables, conferences and workshops on women's empowerment and achieving gender equality. The Board prepared and implemented an Action Plan for a Gender Responsible Assembly. The sessions of the Women's Parliament, which are organized twice a year by the Committee, have already become traditional and promote women as actors on the political scene.

The Office for Gender Equality was established in 2003, while after the adoption of the Law on Gender Equality became the Department for Gender Equality within the Ministry of Human and Minority Rights. This Office prepared the text of the Law on Gender Equality, and some of the responsibilities prescribed by the Law are to coordinate activities aimed at establishing gender equality and participate in the preparation and adoption of action plans for the establishment of gender equality at all levels; monitors the implementation of international documents and conventions, as well as adopted international standards in the field of gender equality, takes measures for their implementation in the legal system of Montenegro and creates quality monitoring of compliance with these documents.

And when we look back and see what has been done, we must state that there are good results, but also that there is still a lot of work to be done. Institutional mechanisms need to be strengthened to make their work and impact more significant.

The adoption of the Constitution of Montenegro in 2007 provided a good basis for the introduction and regulation of gender equality, as well as mechanisms for achieving gender equality, because it was determined that the state guarantees equality between women and men and develops a policy of equal opportunities. The introduction of gender equality as a constitutional principle provides a stronger guarantee for the realization of human rights and freedoms without discrimination, respectively without the influence of social expectations related to gender roles.

The obligation of the state to establish gender equality implies, among other things, the improvement of its legal system. That is why the Montenegrin Parliament adopts laws that are largely gender-sensitive and provide guarantees for equality of women with men in the protection and enjoyment of human rights, while gender discrimination is specifically prohibited and sanctioned.

One of the results achieved in the field of political empowerment of women is the introduction of quotas on electoral lists for the underrepresented gender through the Law on the Election of Local Assemblies and Parliament (2011). The introduction of quotas has increased the number of women in the legislature, both at the state and local levels. However, in addition to the adoption of the Law, for the sustainability of the increase in the number of women in parliament, it is necessary to reform political parties so that they truly accept and live the concept of gender equality. The fact is that at the end of the 26th

Convocation of the Parliament of Montenegro, in August 2020, women made up almost 30% of the total number of MPs, while at the beginning of the new 27th Convocation (September 2020) there are again fewer women in the parliamentary seats (about 22%).

So far, there have been a maximum of 25% women in the Government of Montenegro, and there are no indications that their participation in ministerial positions will increase in the coming days when the new Government is formed (after the elections held on August 30, 2020). There are a small number of mayors and chairpersons of municipal assemblies. Also, a small number of women are presidents of political parties.

The position of women in decision-making in political, economic and social life in Montenegro is clearly shown by the data on the value of the domain of power from the first calculated Gender Equality Index (2019). The value of the Montenegrin index is 55 points out of 100, and power is rated with 35.1 points, which is the lowest rating for one of the six domains, and the second lowest domain compared to the average value of EU member states (the domain money was rated with 20.7 points less than the European average, and the domain of power with 16.8 points less, while the EU average gender equality index is 67.4 points).

Montenegro in the period 2012-2016 for the first time had a women minister in Ministry of Defense. One seemingly unimportant event speaks of the way in which this department is managed and the sincere intention to establish civilian control over the armed forces. In front of the building where the Ministry of Defense is, and which used to be the headquarters of the JNA General Staff, two cannons stood for decades. They were a clear message of supremacy, admiration and the power of weapons. The minister sent them to the museum on her first working day. In this way, she symbolically showed that the times of arming and rattling with weapons are over, and she created an environment free of fear. During her tenure, the development of the first state plan for the implementation of UNSCR 1325 began.

In order for Montenegro to be a society of gender equality, it is necessary to apply the legislation more honestly, to face personal stereotypes and to overcome them, to sanction those who apply stereotypes in doing business, to learn more, to respect the other and different ones.

b.Security

During the past 20 years, there have been significant changes in the understanding of security and respect for human rights in the security services.

Respect and protection of the human rights of members of the Army, police and services dealing with national security, and respect and protection of the rights of those over whom certain powers are exercised in the performance of these services, are the basic premise of building a democratic society. Knowing that human rights and gender equality in the

security and defense sector are high on the list of priorities on the European and Euro-Atlantic path, Montenegro has invested and is making efforts to achieve greater results in this area and establish standards of modern and developed countries, with which wants to share common values. Human rights and gender equality have been key aspects at the normative and operational level in the reform processes in all segments of the security and defense sector in the past period in Montenegro.

Greater representation of women also contributes to the good functioning of institutions and the establishment of greater trust in the security sector. Greater presence of women in security sector institutions is also a proof of the existence of an inclusive society, respect for basic aspects of human security, as well as changing conditions and awareness in the defense and security system regarding gender equality. The training and developed networks of women instructors in the Army and police contributed to increased number of women in this sector.

However, is that enough when we talk about security, and above all the safety of women? Women played a significant role in pacifying opportunities in the region during the conflict and post-conflict period during the first decade of this century, although they did not have real power. Moreover, women are victims of domestic violence and human trafficking. Women are the poorer part of the population. At the time of the pandemic, women bear the greatest burden and suffer the consequences of the health and social crisis, which affects their safety. According to the analysis on contribution of women to the Montenegrin economy¹, the number of unemployed women in the period from the end of February to the end of June 2020 in Montenegro is increased by 3,560, which represents 56% of the total number of newly unemployed, so it can be seen that employers in the crisis due to COVID-19 faired more women than men. The analysis also shows that for 4 months (February - June), the total decline in net earnings of women in Montenegro amounted to a cumulative amount of 2,347,600 euros.

Therefore, we need to work much harder on establishing gender equality, implementing CEDAW and the Istanbul Convention, UNSCR 1325 and other international documents in order to contribute to creating a safer environment for lives of women.

c. Justice/transitional justice and reconciliation

Montenegro is the only state that emerged in the former Yugoslavia in which there were no war events, but causally and consequently felt all these events. It took part in some decisions and events because of which she had to apologize to her neighbors, people from Montenegro took part in those conflicts, died and were wounded, a large number of refugees came to Montenegro, a lot of weapons remained among the population, the ethnic demography has changed in certain municipalities. All this had and still has an impact on life in Montenegro.

¹The contribution of women to the economy of Montenegro - Unpaid wpmen's work and care during the COVID-19 pandemic, author Miloš Vukovic, commissioned by UNDP, 2020,

Access to justice is a precondition for the enjoyment of all civil, political, social, economic, cultural and other rights. It can only be effective if citizens know their rights. That is why it is more important for members of vulnerable groups because they are at higher risk. The possibility of obtaining legal protection within judicial and other bodies is an effective approach to justice.

The number of women employed in the judiciary in decision-making positions in Montenegro is significantly higher than the number of men. At first glance, based on this information, one might think that the conditions have been created for women to have access to justice without discrimination. But practice shows a different picture. An illustration for this statement can be the statement: “Traditional values and patriarchy of the family, as well as the importance of the family for modern life obviously determine the colors and work of the representatives of the judiciary”, from the research on Perceptions of Judicial Representatives on Violence against Women and Domestic Violence². In addition, the level of sentences imposed in proceedings against perpetrators of criminal offenses against gender freedoms is inappropriately low, which indicates a lack of understanding on position of the victim.

This suggests that we still have to work in the field of access to justice, both in educating the population about their rights and with officials in the judiciary and institutions.

d. European integrations

In the process of accession to the EU, issues related to gender equality are predominantly monitored through Chapters 23 - Judiciary and Fundamental Rights and 19 - Social Policy and Employment. The accession process gives strength to the establishment of a gender-responsive society, although the EU is not consistent in its requirements, nor in setting an example to the countries that inspire accession to EU.

Nevertheless, each annual report provides an assessment of work in the field of gender equality, which encourages the state to work more effectively in this field. Thus, mostly due to the calculated Gender Equality Index, it was stated for 2020: “Regarding the equality of women and men, some progress has been made in the reporting period.”

It is not without significance that there is a large number of women in the Montenegrin negotiating structure, and that the institutional framework of European integration was created and led by women (period 2004-2010).

2. Challenges in past and in future

The challenges facing society are often the result of forgetting that the present needs should be analyzed in order to create the future, and are mostly reflected in the need to strengthen institutions and trust in them; fight against corruption; decentralization;

²Implemented by IPSOS in cooperation with UNDP Montenegro, November 2015;

creating equal opportunities for access to justice; providing an independent and professional judiciary; developing knowledge and human capacities in institutions for the introduction of the principle of gender equality in public policies; the penetration of women into topics that are not considered as “female”. An important challenge is the modernization of parties and strengthening the influence of women's groups in them.

It is necessary to include a women's perspective in the answers to all challenges, but also to use our knowledge and experience, and not to rely only on global ones, because our region needs regional answers. Or as stated by prof. dr Marina Blagojević, what is good for women is good for the whole society and that our problems are specific because we are not in the center of events, but we are not on the periphery either, since we belong to the semi-periphery.

3. Recommendations

In order to develop a democratic, inclusive, gender-equal society, among other things, it is necessary to:

- Implement the process of reconciliation with the past/realistically consider the position and role of Montenegro in the events in the period 1990-2000
- Nurture and develop a culture of respect for human rights
- Preserve and develop multiculturalism and multinational coexistence
- Develop rule of law
- Create a truly inclusive society (involve representatives of all vulnerable groups in the decision-making process)
- Observe security through the concept of human security, including the right to live in a healthy environment
- Create an economy that will aim at human well-being, not just increasing GDP
- Introduce the concept of gender responsive budgeting as an important development tool
- Respect and use domestic knowledge and skills
- Continuously maintaining cooperation among women on topics such as security, political participation, economy, fight against violence and education of young women

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20 years of WPS Agenda



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2.6 Twenty years of the UNSCR 1325 and WPS Agenda in North Macedonia

Introduction

Year 2020 marks the twentieth anniversary of the UN Security Council Resolution 1325 “Women, Peace, Security” (Resolution 1325), the twenty-fifth anniversary of the Beijing Declaration and Platform for Action, and the fifth anniversary of the global commitment to the UN Goals for Sustainable Development.

The adoption of the UN Security Council Resolution 1325 in 2000, from the perspective of equal opportunities for women and men, is one of the most important UN resolutions in the field of peace and security policy, a broad policy framework for advancing the status of women, the impact of military conflicts on women, but at the same time the contribution of women in peacebuilding.

For the past 20 years, the Resolution 1325 at the national level has been predominantly implemented through National Action Plans and other national strategies which led to some progress, especially in the normative part, but implementation remains slow, particularly regarding the desired level of representation of women in decision-making, the representation of women in peacekeeping missions, but also their representation and role in negotiating and making important decisions, gender-based peace and democratic governance.

Republic of Northern Macedonia has made positive progress in a number of areas, but progress related to the position of women remains unsatisfactory. There has been significant progress in electoral legislation and the positioning of women in electoral positions, but not in the executive branch, or equal participation of women in important processes of the country's European and Euro-Atlantic future.

The country still faces fragile democracy, fragile security, corruption, high unemployment, weak judicial institutions, and a roadblock to the European Union. This year, it is also dealing with the Covid-19 pandemic, which caused a health, economic and social crisis. A state of emergency was declared in conditions of a dissolved Assembly, due to the early parliamentary elections, in the period from March 18 to June 23, 2020, and from November 20, 2020, a state of crisis was declared on the entire territory.

Today, the Regional Women's Lobby in Southeast Europe (RWLSEE), as the only regional organization for peacebuilding, can be considered as a regional actor in promoting and implementing the agenda of women, peace and security in the Western Balkans. Over the years, there have been solid achievements in peace efforts, organized international conferences and participation in interethnic dialogues, as well as lobbying through organized meetings with senior officials at the national and international level. RWLSEE remains committed to supporting the process towards the European future of Northern Macedonia and the entire region and emphasizes that the role of women should be the key to achieving this goal.

1. Achievements in women's participation and gender equality during the last 20 years, in:

a. Politics, decision-making and peacebuilding

Political decision-making is one of the areas where gender equality is the most pronounced. Equal opportunities for women and men in the Republic of Northern Macedonia are regulated by the Constitution, as the highest legal act. Furthermore, in a number of laws there are provisions that prohibit gender-based discrimination and provisions that incorporate the gender concept in domestic legislation. The Law on Equal Opportunities for Women and Men¹ sets out issues of interest to equal opportunities, including defense and security. Contrary to legal solutions in implementation, men and women do not have equal chances to the position of political power, nor do they have equal access to the processes of important political decisions.

According to the laws and strategic documents, RNM has established a national mechanism for equal opportunities for women and men at central and local level. Within the structure of the national mechanisms for gender equality, an important role is that of the Commission for Equal Opportunities for Women and Men in the Assembly of the Republic of Northern Macedonia² together with the Club of MPs; these bodies represent mechanisms for implementation of the gender perspective in the highest policies and decision-making.

¹

²The EOC was established in 2006 and is composed of Members of the Republic of Macedonia Parliament. According to LEO, the EOC monitors the implementation of laws in the field of equal opportunities for women and men and non-discrimination, and in that sense, it also monitors the implementation of strategic documents within this policy.

According to the Law on Equal Opportunities in all ministries within the RNM Government, a coordinator and deputy coordinator for equal opportunities for women and men have been appointed.

Gender mechanisms at the local level within the institutions are composed of the following structures: commissions for equal opportunities for women and men in the Municipal Assemblies and coordinators for equal opportunities for women and men within the municipal administration.

Despite the progress made in certain areas as a direct result of the engagement and commitment of the mechanisms for gender equality, it was concluded that the capacities of the institutional mechanisms are still not at a satisfactory level, so as to be able to meet the obligations arising from the Law on Equal Opportunities for Women and Men.

The key achievements of the women's activism in RNM from that period were the first legally regulated special measures, such as the introduction of the mandatory 30% representation of both genders on the electoral lists within the Law on Election of Members of the Republic of Macedonia Parliament. It tripled the presence of women parliamentarians from 6.7% in 2000 to 18% in 2002. The constant efforts and joint action of activists and women from political parties have resulted in further changes and improvements in the election legislation. In 2006, they enabled better positioning of women on the electoral lists, and thus a 28.33% increase to representation.

In the Republic of Northern Macedonia, the development of electoral legislation with the introduction of 40% representation, i.e. the positioning of the underrepresented gender on every third place on the candidate lists, as well as the mandatory replacement of elected women with women candidates, significantly increased women's access to elected positions. However, this process took place simultaneously with the continuous multi-year pressure of civil activists in cooperation with women from political parties to establish firm rules for party leaders to run with women in favorable positions. Such demands have been imposed as a necessity due to the formal approach of the parties to the quotas, i.e. the positioning of women at the bottom of the candidate lists or in the upper positions in constituencies where they have poor electoral chances. In the current composition of the RNM Parliament, 43 out of 120 MPs (35.8%) are women, while their representation in the local councils after the elections in 2017 is 415 women councilors out of 1,388 elected councilors in the local self-government units (29.8%). This is a huge step compared to the 8.4% in year 2000, before the introduction of legal changes. However, this progress is on the verge of achieving the legal minimum. To what extent these positive developments are a result of the current readiness of the party leaderships to share power is also shown by the data on the trends in the representation of women in positions for which quotas have not been legally introduced. The number of mayors varies from 2.4% in 2005, over 0% in 2009, to the current "peak" representation of 7.4% after the 2017 local elections. Progress has been slow at both legislative and executive level, as RNM has not yet had a woman as Prime Minister. The participation of women as one of the strategic priorities in the

Government Program 2017-2021 is not reflected in the current total representation of only 19 women (11.18%) in the appointed functions and bodies of decision-making, management and governance in the competence of the current government. Namely, except for the ministerial positions with four women ministers (15.38%) and one woman (6.67%) in the deputy ministerial position, the gap of other functions to the detriment of women is also high. Thus, there are 4 women (25%) in the positions of Secretary General and State Secretaries, while in the positions of directors, deputies, spokespersons, and coordinators appointed by the Government, the representation of women is only 8.85%, or only 10 women. After the early parliamentary elections in 2020, the appointment of candidates for managerial positions in various institutions is underway. Research data show that there is inequality in the involvement of women in decision-making processes. Namely, only 5% of the directors of institutions are women and 29% in management structures are women, which is contrary to the policies for promotion of gender equality. In addition to the legal obligation, the participation of both genders in commissions and boards (decision-making bodies), at national and local level, should not be less than 40%, but the factual situation shows that women do not participate enough in the work of boards and that the legislation is not respected. Political parties that have a key role in promoting women's political participation have established unions, women's forums, women's clubs, and so forth. There was a positive shift in the last early parliamentary elections when a coalition implemented equality when 50% of women ran on the lists and promoted them equally during the election campaign. We can say that there is a strong political will and support in this country regarding this topic. The Republic of Northern Macedonia is the second candidate country for EU membership, after Serbia, to develop a Gender Equality Index in 2019, which is an opportunity to reaffirm the country's commitment to promoting gender equality and equal opportunities.

b. Security

Referring to United Nations Resolution 1325, adopted in 2000, which affirms the role of women in the field of defense and security, and a major role in how the international community approaches conflict prevention and resolution and promotes gender equality, and empowerment of women as a factor for international peace and security, the Republic of Northern Macedonia has a strategic approach in implementing the Resolution. Aware that National Plans are very important for the implementation of the Resolution, RNM implemented the first National Action Plan for UNSC Resolution 1325 with a time frame of 2013 -2015 aimed at strengthening the gender perspective in the formulation and implementation of peace, security and defense policy, strengthening the participation and contribution of women in international, civilian and military missions in which RNM participates, prevention of violence and women's rights in conditions of peace, conflicts and humanitarian catastrophes. Now we are facing the challenge of implementing the second National Action Plan (2021-2025) adopted in July 2020. The development of the second NAP took into account certain shortcomings that the first NAP had, such as: greater inclusiveness, integration and integrity, intersectional approach, establishment of a monitoring and evaluation body with its own competencies and the timeframe for

fulfilling the obligations. The NAP should serve as a guide to achieving a national vision for a society that sees gender equality, inclusiveness and transparency, as something that is a model for the successful implementation of the vision and values of the Women, Peace and Security Agenda. The security of the citizens/women in RNM is a precondition for the development of the society and we cannot talk about development if women live in fear of various forms of violence and are not safe in their environment. That is why the implementation of UNSCR 1325 and the action and operational plans deriving from it are very important. Joining the NATO family is an additional motivation to achieve the ambition for more effective, affirmative gender equality and gender balance.

In order to implement the UNSCR 1325, among other things, the Ministry of Defense implemented the policy of gender equality through training and inclusion of women in peacekeeping missions, increased the number of women employed as civil servants and in professional military personnel. Representation of women in peacekeeping missions, but also their representation and role in negotiating and making important decisions has grown significantly since the adoption of the Resolution. The representation of women in the Army of the Republic of Macedonia is about 8%, while in the Ministry of Defense it is 34.6%. Compared to 2018, there is an increase in the total number of women in the Ministry of Defense. Expressed in percentage there is an increase of 2.43%. Regarding the categories of staff, there is a slight increase in the number of women in category B (managerial positions) and expressed in percentage, the increase is 1.16%. Gender divided data on military personnel in the Ministry and the Army in 2019 was as follows: - Officers - 14.40% women and 85.60% men; - NCOs - 11.00% women and 89.00% men; - Professional soldiers - 4.70% women and 95.30% men; - Civilians - 40.20% women and 59.80% men; - Of the total number of personnel in the Army - 9.45% are women and 90.55% are men. Compared to 2018, there is an increase in the number of women officers, which expressed in percentage is 1.40%. Increasing the number of women in senior positions is the focus of the Ministry and the Army. Namely, in 2019, the number of women in the rank of colonel has increased three times. Gender divided data on military personnel - participants in peacekeeping and humanitarian missions is as follows: Women - 8.25% and Men - 91.75%. b) Database related to the program part (coverage on officers: 14% female and 86% male, non-commissioned officers: 11% female and 89% men, professional soldiers: 5% women and 95% men, and civilians: 40% women and 60% men³.

Although there are no jobs in the systematization and formation of the Ministry and the Army that are gender-restricted, in the coming period more attention should be paid to the number of women in managerial and command duties. This would pave the way for stronger inclusion of women in all institutional and other structures, in the processes of policy making and decision-making, so that would statistically and substantially change the situation in favor of the inclusion of women and having women as equal actors in all social areas.

³ Annual report of the state administration bodies on the progress of ensuring equal opportunities for women and men (Ministry of Defense of RNM);

The representation of women in the Ministry of Interior is 20.11% compared with the 79.89% of men⁴. According to equitable and gender representation, 13.6% are Macedonian women and 62.8% Macedonian men; 1.61% Albanian women and 18.49% Albanian men; 0.2% Turkish women and 0.91% Turkish men; 0.22% Serb women and 1.17% Serb men; 0.06% Vlach women and 0.08% Vlach men; 0.15% Bosnian women and 0.27% Bosnian men; 0.12% Roma women and 0.41% Roma men and others. In 2019, several trainings were conducted, attended by 12.20% women and 87.80% men. The realization of the program requires constant cross-sectoral cooperation, and collaboration with social partners, international and non-governmental organizations.

The inclusion of women in the security system is a step towards its modernization and adaptation to new standards. It is especially important to continue increasing the number of women in the security sector and to introduce continuous training on gender equality issues.

b. Justice/Transitional Justice and Reconciliation

Institutional capacity building is essential for achieving post-conflict justice and sustainable peace in the region. The countries in the region have gone through two historic transitions with much effort and sacrifice: one after the break-up of Yugoslavia and the other after the tragic wars and conflicts. To prevent human rights violations, to complete transitional justice, and to create social cohesion and peace, judicial reform is needed, and to achieve this through substantive legal reform, it is necessary to strengthen the independence and efficiency of the judiciary, harmonized with international human rights standards, and of course the increased participation of women in those processes. Institutional reforms comprise a difficult and long-term process, which will contribute to gender awareness, in line with international and regional human rights instruments, which ensures effective judicial protection for women.

Judicial reforms are especially important in the process of Republic of Northern Macedonia's accession to the EU, and the adopted Laws, adopted in accordance with the recommendations of the Venice Commission and GRECO, ensure the independence of the courts but also building transparency and trust.

The problems that still exist in the judicial system in RNM make the fight against impunity, corruption and crime especially difficult, and thus create distrust in the judiciary. Corruption and organized crime are widespread in the Western Balkans, as noted in the latest EU document⁵ and countries are mired in problems that have far-reaching consequences for society as a whole and are detrimental to the development of democracy, especially with regards to equal access to justice and building trust on them. Systemic corruption involving political elites and high levels of government remains a problem which should be addressed by the countries of the region in the coming period.

⁴ Annual report of the state administration bodies on the situation related to equal opportunities for women and men in MoD of RNM;

⁵ Communication on EU Enlargement Policy 2020;

Regional Women's Lobby (RWL) is a very important factor in the region by organizing conferences, round tables, which seeks to raise awareness and emphasize the contribution of women of the region in the processes of change and the opportunities provided by Resolution 1325, as a very important but still unused mechanism.

d. European and Euro-Atlantic integration

The accession of RNM to the EU proved to be a very long process that requires harmonization of the domestic legislation with the European one and fulfillment of the negotiation conditions under which the country will become an EU member. Since gaining independence in 1991, it has been committed to European and Euro-Atlantic integration with an enhanced contribution not only to regional but also to global security, peace, and stability. The Republic of Northern Macedonia, after the great political and democratic crisis, has shown significant progress in the last two years. The good-neighborly agreement with Bulgaria, the resolution of the name dispute with Greece and the closure of the last issue of the Ohrid Agreement related to the official use of the Albanian language are gigantic steps forward for a country that until recently was on the brink of civil unrest and deep democracy crisis.

The Prespa Agreement, signed after more than 26 years with the mediation of the UN, resolved the name dispute with Greece and paved the way for cooperation between the two nations, but also paved the way for the country to join NATO and we hope to open accession negotiations with the EU. In 2018, Macedonia became 30th NATO member state, thus increasing the sense of security during the pandemic. NATO membership will strengthen the territorial integrity and sovereignty of our country, taking into account what the country has gone through the years since its independence in 1991 until today, including here the 2001 conflict, the refugee crisis, and Kumanovo events. Furthermore, this will also motivate the economic development that mostly depends on the security and stability of the country.

Another obstacle to the opening of accession talks at the meeting of ministers for Macedonia and Albania occurred at the last ministerial meeting due to remarks by Bulgaria on the negotiating framework for Macedonia, which obliges Macedonia to meet requirements that affect identity and language, in order to support the European path of RNM. Prime Minister Zoran Zaev's interview with BGNES provoked an avalanche of sharp reactions in the domestic public, but we must be clearheaded that our identity, language, and statehood are recognized and should not be an obstacle on the road to the EU as a union that respects cultural and linguistic differences as a fundamental value.

The most important thing is to find a solution to the dispute with the eastern neighbor in order to unblock membership in the European Union, while finding a model that should allow members of the Joint History Commission to find a module under the signed 2017 Friendship Agreement.

2. Challenges of the past and the future

Eliminating the social causes of gender inequality in public and private decision-making, providing equal opportunities and resources and mechanisms for dealing with violence against women, can further strengthen the desire and motivation for women and girls to participate in the areas of security and peace and therefore increase their numbers. The empowerment of women and their participation in the political, economic and social spheres remains a challenge to be overcome, therefore the Republic of Northern Macedonia should contribute to bridging the gap between men and women.

Full implementation of the legal framework aimed at promoting gender equality remains a challenge. It is also necessary to find a model for successful coordination of the already established mechanisms.

In the forthcoming period we will be facing the challenge on how to increase the participation of women as mayors ahead of local elections to be held in 2021 (in the last elections, out of 81 elected mayors, only 5 were women).

The second NAP for the implementation of UNSCR 1325 in Macedonia should serve as a guide to achieving the national vision for a society that sees gender equality, inclusiveness and transparency as a model for successful implementation of the vision and values of the Women, Peace and Security Agenda.

In recent years, RNM has gone through a period of political crisis. The Prespa Agreement opened the doors of the Republic of Northern Macedonia to aspire to become a normal European member state of the Euro-Atlantic Alliances, at peace with its neighbors. RNM needs to put an end to its historical issues with another NATO and EU member, Bulgaria, to secure its future as part of these alliances. A possible blockade by Bulgaria would delay the start of negotiations, thus increasing the frustration of the population and dissatisfaction with our eastern neighbor, which could lead to political instability in the country and the region.

Regarding the integration process, it is more than clear that the reform of the judiciary will be on the agenda. Moreover, this time, escaping from justice will not be tolerated. The political stabilization of the country is being followed by setting the judiciary free from the constraints of politics. Exercising justice and the validity of justice for all, without exception, must occur for true rule of law.

3. Recommendations

- The 20th anniversary of UNSCR 1325 should be an incentive and boost the readiness of the Government of RNM and the Ministries to fully implement the second NAP. The political will should be put forth for significant progress of gender equality.
- The participation of women in the parliament in RNM is over 35%, but not

satisfactory at the level of the Government and elected mayors. Greater motivation and participation of women in political parties and organs and their engagement in the struggle for power to achieve gender equality is needed.

- Access to justice is a basic human right enshrined in many international instruments. However, it must be implemented at the state level, guaranteeing access to justice for every individual woman and protection from violence and other forms of abuse.

- We call for an inclusive and gender sensitive justice system at national, regional and international level. So far, there is a male dominance in the judiciary, so the time has come to implement gender equality policies within the justice system.

- The members of RWLSEE are committed to empowering women so that they can play a key role in sustainable peace, development, reconciliation, justice, security processes, and in the path to the European and Euro-Atlantic future of all Western Balkans countries. Gone are the days when a majority from only one gender made decisions about the future of the society as a whole, for both genders.

- There is a need to accelerate the process of European integration for RNM and to respect the Good Neighbor Agreement, because good neighborly relations will lead to sustainable peace and security and will ensure a European future for all countries of the region.

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2.7. Twenty years of the UNSCR 1325 and WPS Agenda in Serbia

1. Achievements in women's participation and gender equality in 20 years, in: **a. Politics, decision making and peacebuilding**

Soon after Resolution 1325 was adopted, Serbia began to create the necessary conditions (primarily the legal framework) for greater participation of women in all spheres of social and political life in Serbia. A new constitution was adopted (2006), first generation of reforms was finished by 2009. Majority of 'security' and 'gender' laws were adopted, such as Gender Equality Law, Anti-Discrimination Law.

Serbia has a history of having a patriarchal culture, of women being second-class citizens. Patriarchal stereotypes concerning the respective roles of women and men in Serbian society are deeply rooted, leading to inequalities between the two sexes, particularly in the field of employment and public participation. Violence against women (mobbing, discrimination, labour rights), including domestic violence remains a persisting problem. After 2000 changes Serbian Orthodox Church got the prominent role in promoting conservative and patriarchal values.

CSOs were one of the main drivers for NAP 1325 adoption. UNSCR 1325 became known in Serbia thanks to efforts of women's organization 'Women in Black'. They were the first to start advocating the implementation of the Resolution in 2002. Also, they launched numerous campaigns related to UNSCR 1325 and submitted the draft resolution 'Women, Peace, and Security' to the Parliament in 2005.

The process of NAP development was untransparent and only 3 CSO participated in the process of creating a final draft - BCSP (at the time Centre for Civil- Military Relations), European Movement in Serbia and Atlantic Initiative. Members of the group were representatives of security sector institutions (MoD, MoI, Security- Intelligence Agency, Customs Administrations, Ministry of Justice, MFA), Ministry of Labour, Ministry of Education, Ministry for Human Rights, etc.

Certain institutional bodies and mechanisms for implementing the plan have been established. The visibility of women's representation in the security system and their role in maintaining peace has been achieved. The total representation of women in the security system increased by 4.13% (from 27.40%) in 2010 to 31.53 in 2015; the representation of women in decision-making in the security system also increased from 5.21 from 14.47% in 2010 to 19.68% in 2015; mthe participation of women in the activities of international cooperation has increased, all forms of education in the army and police have been opened for the participation of women. Campaigns were conducted for the employment of women in the operational composition of the army and police and for the admission of girls to the Military Academy, the Military Gymnasium and the Criminal Police Academy. As part of international activities from 2010 to 2012, women were mainly engaged within medical teams (doctors and medical technicians).

The second national plan refer to the period (2017–2020). In preparation of this plan, **the Law on Prevention of Domestic Violence and amendments to the National Strategy for Prevention and Suppression of Violence against Women in the Family and Partnerships were adopted.** ("Official Gazette R, No. 27/11). The report of the Commissioner for the Protection of Equality (2015) specifically points to the problem of security risks of multiple discriminated women such as women with disabilities, Roma women, women over 50, refugee and internally displaced women, rural women, women with disabilities, single mothers, minority women group, women victims of violence, women of different sexual orientation or gender identity and women from underdeveloped rural areas. Similar assessments were made in all subsequent annual reports.

The process was criticized by women's organizations, led by 'Women in Black' arguing that NAP 1325 was adopted due to pragmatic and formal reasons. Their main concern was that the group did not take into account concept of human security and women's perspective to matters of peace and security. The document primarily focused on the women working in the security institutions and improving their position, and tackles much less problems of women (IDPs, refugees) in post- conflict environment¹.

Some non-governmental organizations (Women in Black) believe that the motive for adopting the NAP was in the function of approaching the EU and that there are no concrete results in terms of education and the formation of institutional mechanisms. They advocate

¹Report by Women in Black,, "Independent Monitoring of the Implementation of the Resolution 1325 in Serbia", Belgrade, December 2017

that the NAP's priority be to include women in peace negotiations and prevent impunity for gender-based war crimes².

Dialogue between CSOs and the government, the cooperation between the security sector and civil society in Serbia is unsatisfactory and without clearly defined rules and criteria for exchange of information, consultation and dialogue.

b. Security

Growing clericalisation and radicalization of Serbian society are the most important generators of the insecurity of women, especially of human right defenders and LGBT activists.

The Constitution of the Republic of Serbia guarantees the equality of women and men and obliges the state to develop a policy of equal opportunities. The Law on Prohibition of Discrimination and the Law on Gender Equality are especially important. The Law on Prohibition of Discrimination is a general law which established a comprehensive system of protection against discrimination, regulated the general prohibition of discrimination, forms and cases of discrimination and procedures for protection against discrimination. Serbia is the first country outside the European Union to introduce the Gender Equality Index in 2016, a measuring instrument that measures equality through six domains: knowledge, work, money, health, time and power, as well as two subdomains: violence and cross-inequalities. In 2013, Serbia ratified the Council of Europe Convention on Preventing and Combating Violence against Women and Domestic Violence (Istanbul Convention)³.

There is an increasing share of women in government, among MPs and ministerial positions. This year, Serbia increased the minimum required number of women on the electoral lists from one third to 40 percent. There are 93 deputies in the current Assembly, which puts Serbia in 25th place out of 190 countries in terms of the number of women in parliament. In the current government, ten women are at the head of the ministries.

However, despite increasingly progressive laws, women in Serbia remain on the margins of political decision-making. Despite the fact that the share of women in government is increasing, among MPs and in ministerial positions (Serbia has values above the European Union average, it is evident that the real influence that women exert from positions of political power is still, to say the least, questionable. In that sense, Serbia ranks last in Europe. That is why it is important to promote gender equality in various areas, especially in the sphere of social power.

Despite some efforts to ensure adequate protection for women, violence against women in Serbia remains widespread. The OSCE survey on violence against women (covering the

² Ibidem

³ <https://www.pravniportal.com/efekti-primene-zakona-o-spreccavanju-nasilja-u-porodici/>.

whole of Southeast Europe) shows that as many as 70% of women have experienced some form of sexual harassment, persecution, psychological, physical or sexual violence since the age of 15. The data suggest that beliefs in female obedience, spouse obedience, and environmental silence continue to persist in the region, and that those women who have such beliefs are more likely to say they have experienced violence⁴.

Regarding the violence against women, the CEDAW Committee made a number of recommendations to the Republic of Serbia, inter alia, to conduct an analysis of the prevalence and causes of gender-based violence against women, including women from multiple discriminated groups; to develop a comprehensive strategy and action plan to eliminate all forms of gender-based violence against women; to ensure that cases of all forms of violence against women, including rape, are properly investigated, that perpetrators are prosecuted and punished with sanctions commensurate with the gravity of the act, that multisectoral cooperation is strengthened to prevent and combat all forms of gender-based violence and provide services to victims, to ensure that all women victims of gender-based violence have unhindered access to effective protection from violence, and to improve the system for collecting and monitoring cases of all forms of gender-based violence, while ensuring the classification of data by type of violence and perpetrator-victim relationship⁵.

c. In Justice /Transitional justice and Reconciliation

Transitional justice deals with the challenges faced by societies burdened by the legacy of mass human rights violations in the past - whether those transitioning from an autocratic to a democratic system of government or post-conflict societies. This concept implies a series of mechanisms that should ensure overcoming the past, with the establishment of primarily a legal framework that would ensure the transformation into a new value system.

However, when it comes to Serbia, there is no political will to accept the new reality as well as Serbia's responsibility for the wars of the 1990s. In that sense, the NAP does not fulfill the obligations of the Resolution 1325. The NAP presents Serbia as a "peacetime" country without war and recognition of war crimes. For the government, as Women in Black point out, Resolution 1325 is a tool that creates the illusion of false integration and respect for international standards and conventions. Further, Serbia uses R1325 and NAP for creating its own image of "leader in the region" in the implementation of R1325, without recognizing rape as a war crime: both the old and the new NAP aim at scoring foreign policy points, and not not achieving a human, let alone gender dimension of security, to which it is bound by the above mention item 11 of resolution 1325⁶.

Although the ICTY has filed 161 indictments against 161 people for grave breaches of the Geneva Conventions (1949), violations of the laws or laws of war, crimes against humanity

⁴ <https://www.slobodnaevropa.org/a/oebs-istrazivanje-nasilje/29806894.html>

⁵ https://tbinternet.ohchr.org/_layouts/15/treatybodyexternal/Download.aspx?symbolno=CEDAW/C/SRB/CO/4

⁶ Report by Women in Black, "Independent Monitoring of the Implementation of the Resolution 1325 in Serbia", Beograd, December 2017

and genocide, the work of that court is completely marginalized and meaningless. Serbia has done everything to relativize its responsibility and to prevent dialogue in society following the verdicts passed by the ICTY. Upon their return from serving their sentences, the defendants were glorified as national heroes who sacrificed themselves for the national interest, gained public and media space, and thus became desirable public figures who greatly influenced the attitudes of young people. The National War Crimes Court has a very selective approach and since the SNS came to power, the court's activity has been almost negligible.

The Humanitarian Law Center is the only non-governmental organization that systematically monitors the implementation of the National Strategy. According to their latest report, "no progress has been made in the area of war crimes prosecution in the 40 months since the adoption of the National Strategy." Of the 21 indictments filed since the adoption of the National Strategy, at least 18 were transferred from BiH. War crimes trials continue to be unreasonably long, no progress has been made in the area of procedural rights of victims, the number of missing persons is not decreasing as expected, while the cooperation with the International Residual Mechanism for Criminal Courts (IRMCC) has been marked by its decision Vjerica Radeta and Petar Jojic (members of Radical Party), who are accused of contempt of court, are to be tried in The Hague, not in Serbia, due to the fact that witnesses are concerned about your safety".⁷

Starting from the assumption that the process of dealing with the past take place in the circles of leading elites, the unwillingness of the Serbian elite to be intellectually and practically a public bearer of a culture of memory is indicative, which implies critical reflection of the recent past and thus prevents the creation of a modern Serbian nation. The post-war intellectual discourse in Serbia is still focused on the unification and liberation of all Serbs, which is a real obstacle to its future as a state, as well as to the normalization of relations in the region.

Political elites, with the wholehearted support of academics, try to control the narratives of memory and manipulate them, monopolizing and filtering both history and memory. Political memory strives for unification, homogenization. y and its proliferation.

d. European and Euro-Atlantic Integration

Serbia is officially a candidate for EU membership. Although it claims to aspire to EU membership and closer relations with NATO, Serbia seeks to balance the four main powers - Russia, China, the United States and the EU. However, the implementation of reforms necessary for EU accession indicates that Belgrade is still hesitant when it comes to European orientation.

⁷<http://www.hlc-rdc.org/?p=36814>

The lack of a clearly defined strategy is a problem, both for Serbia's European path and in its relations with its neighbors. Such a situation reflects not only the lack of vision of the state, but also its conditionality by certain external circumstances and actors.

At the domestic level, Serbia does not have a clear orientation and development plan, nor is it ready to make a balance of devastating policies during the last 40 years.

Serbia's pro-European orientation has never been formally questioned since 2000. In the first years of the transition, the vast majority of citizens also supported this orientation. However, in recent years, the mood of citizens to join the EU has been gradually declining; According to the latest research, 90% of Serbian citizens believe that Russia is the protector of Serbian interests (primarily in Kosovo) and that it is the largest donor, although it is not in the first ten.

In the Defense Strategy of the Republic of Serbia and the National Security Strategy, military neutrality is one of the "key elements of the strategy" and as Minister Aleksandar Vulin pointed out, "the determination to keep Serbia militarily neutral is strengthened", membership in any alliance is excluded, but cooperation is promoted equally with the West and with the East. The strategies are aimed at protecting the preservation of sovereignty and territorial integrity, military neutrality, care for the Serbian **people outside the borders of Serbia**, European integration and an efficient rule of law. The documents highlight **only one foreign policy priority - Republika Srpska and its preservation**. The document also states that **"Kosovo's independence is absolutely unacceptable"**.

Regardless of the fact that Serbia has more developed cooperation with NATO, Russian-Serbian cooperation is growing and more significant than ever before in the last 30 years. Serbia is modernizing its armed forces faster than other countries in the region (even than Croatia). However, the current format of military-technical cooperation with Russia is the maximum, unless other political decisions are made, ie that Serbia eventually becomes a member of the Collective Security Treaty Organization (ODBK).

2. Challenges in past and ahead

The regional context is important for Serbia, because that is the only way for the entire region to gain relevance, especially in the field of security. Serbia's security is inseparable from the EU's security. The fact is that it is surrounded by countries that are already members of NATO or are on their way to becoming so. Thus, NATO membership is imposed as an imperative, which Serbia rejects and thus goes to the advantage of Russian interests.

Unwillingness to fundamentally reform and distance itself from its imagined hegemonic position in the region are the main obstruction to the modernization of Serbia and its profiling as a European country.

Almost every country in the Western Balkans has an internal "crisis" potential, stemming primarily from the absence of a democratic tradition and an unfinished transition process. The regional context is characterized by an unsurpassed war heritage and still existing territorial and ethnic aspirations. They have become louder since the Western Balkans were increasingly treated as "unfinished business". Belgrade still has a subversive role towards the former Yugoslav republics.

3. Recommendations

The implementation of Resolution 1325 requires the effort of everyone, every individual, state and society. That is why national plans are so important.

Sustainable mechanism for greater inclusion of CSOs in the implementation of the NAP, both at national and local level, have to be established. As a result, the process of implementation of the NAP is not sufficiently inclusive and open to all interested members of civil society.

Effective implementation of the Family Law, sanctioning violence against women and eradicating a warrior culture that legitimizes violence against women and other persons with less social and economic power.

Compensation to the families of war victims;


Establishing civilian and democratic control over the armed forces (army, security services and police). Only the National Assembly determines what the national interests of the country are, only it decides on the security situation in the country, and not the army and the police.

Preventing the tendency to privatize the armed forces and security services, which is reflected in the uncontrolled proliferation of protection agencies and their efforts to abolish the state monopoly on the lawful use of force.

At the level of civil society, regional cooperation has always been dynamic and essential during and after the war. It can be said that the number of women in civil initiatives is far higher than the number of men, this mostly refers to Serbia, where all important anti-war initiatives, actions were initiated and organized by women (not only from women's groups but generally from civil society)

Context

Serbia has been a conflict zone since the early 1990s - from participation in the wars related to the breakup of Yugoslavia, the Kosovo war and NATO intervention, internal conflicts at the political and national level, to transition process with all following phenomena.



Regardless of some progress, primarily in establishing the legal framework, human rights in Serbia have not significantly advanced from the progress made ten years ago. The rule of the Serbian Progressive Party (SNS) is characterized by the collapse of realized rights, the absence of public dialogue, tolerance, freedom of expression and ignoring critical thinking.

Dialogue with Pristina was stalled due to differing interpretations of the Brussels agreement, primarily on the status of four municipalities in northern Kosovo. The attempt to divide was thwarted. The continuation of the Belgrade-Pristina is delayed due to the fragile situation in Kosovo and the US elections.

Resistance to reforms has been further fueled by developments in the region and, in particular, in the world. The world crisis has significantly reduced the influence of the European Union (EU) and the United States of America (USA) in the region, which is reflected in the stalemate in reforms. Thus it created room for other influences that favor illiberal practice. This greatly encouraged the tendency of authoritarianism.

3

REGIONAL CONCLUSIONS AND RECOMMENDATIONS

REGIONAL CONCLUSIONS AND RECOMMENDATIONS

on advancing gender equality and peacebuilding in the Western Balkans after twenty of the adoption of UNSCR 1325 and WPS Agenda

The Regional Conclusions and Recommendations below are developed based on a regional review, country reports on seven focus countries of the RWLSEE, discussions and open inclusive debates in the RWLSEE events marking the historic 20th anniversary of the adoption of the UNSCR 1325 on Women, Peace and Security Agenda, including the International Conference “From Fragility to Empowerment: 20 years of Women, Peace and Security Agenda in post-conflict settings of the Western Balkans” (15 December 2020, online) and, the International Conference on “the Regional Review of the Beijing Platform+25 in the Western Balkans region” (on 26 November 2019), organized by RWLSEE and UN Women with the support of Swedish Government and, the overall expertise of RWLSEE during the past 15 years of its highly committed work. They present a roadmap on the future work by all relevant stakeholders at all levels in shortening the road towards gender equality, equal participation of women in politics, decision-making and peacebuilding as the only way leading to a just, peaceful and prosperous future for all.

The recommendations, we present below call for a strategic focus on the WPS Agenda, are as follows:

1. ADOPTING GENDER EQUALITY AS A STRATEGIC PRIORITY FOR A BETTER WORLD

- Regional Women's Lobby in South East Europe (RWLSEE) considers that 20 years after the adoption of WPS Agenda, it is time to strategically focus on ensuring equal and meaningful participation of women in decision-making, in governments, formal peace processes as well as in ensuring gender-inclusive peacebuilding. This because of the fact that it has been documented that women can contribute to achieving more lasting peace, sound democratic governance, and sustainable development.

- Recognizing the linkage between gender equality and peacebuilding and democratic governance as mutually constraining and mutually reinforcing processes and,

acting systematically to empower women for equal participation in decision-making, governance, peacebuilding, and sustainable development for a better future.

- Adopting a strategic framework 'from fragility to empowerment' to identify gaps and adopt proper policies that will help the region of Western Balkans move from current fragile situation into sustainability. This requires a shift from gender-blind to gender-inclusive policies in the areas of peacebuilding, democratic state building, economic development, and European and Euro-Atlantic integration. This would also enable empowering women, as the half of human capital, to work jointly and equally with men and decide in addressing and resolving the ongoing issues related to unfinished peace, threatened democracy, autocracy, weak justice and rule of law, corruption, weak economy, delayed transitional justice and reconciliation, and geopolitical tensions in the post-conflict region of Western Balkans. This would bring hope for the future to the youth and the entire society and would convince them to stay and develop their countries rather than search for a better future in foreign countries.

- Replacing the symbolic representation of women that maintains the existing dynamics of power in the socio-cultural context by involving women in the process of drafting, decision-making and implementation of policies in all structures.

- Ensuring sincere political will by national and international authorities and policy makers to support the goals of empowering women and gender equality politically and financially in order to achieve a just, peaceful, and prosperous future.

2. ENSURING WOMEN'S EQUAL AND MEANINGFUL PARTICIPATION IN POLITICS, DECISION-MAKING, AND PEACEBUILDING

- Investing in the empowerment of women in politics and public life as a top priority, because the women's voice and presence in positions of political power is a crucial condition for achieving gender equality in decision-making, governance and peacebuilding. This investment would be beneficial to all.

- Ensuring equal participation of women at all levels of decision-making in democratic governance, peacemaking, peacebuilding, and sustainable development, in line with the UNSCR 1235, national legal frameworks on gender equality and considering the strategic relevance of women as peace drivers and good governance drivers.

- Supporting equal representation of women in governments at national and local levels, by adopting gender parity quotas if necessary. 20 years after the end of wars in the region and the adoption of UNSCR 1325, women are mostly given space in parliaments or local assemblies, thanks to the 30% quota, which is not a real empowerment since it serves as an appeasing policy about gender balance to the public conscience.

- Promoting participation of women in political parties, decision-making bodies and leadership and encouraging their engagement in the struggle for power to achieve gender equality.

- Inspiring and encouraging women's involvement in helping resolve difficult issues in society and, maintaining cooperation among women on topics such as peace, security, political participation, economy, fight against violence and education of young women. Promoting women role models who inspire with their successful work in making changes during the latest historical transitions from war to peace, and from communism to democracy in the Western Balkans.

3. SUPPORTING THE MAINSTREAMING OF THE WPS AGENDA

- Speeding up full implementation of UNSCR 1325 and WPS Agenda is essential. We acknowledge achievements but the reality of gender equality remains far. We have built structures, legislation, policies, action plans and listened to strongly outspoken commitments; however, what we need is action. Hence, it is time to move from commitments to implementation, particularly in conflict and post-conflict settings, and governments should be accountable for these commitments.

- Support the mainstreaming of the WPS Agenda into national policies and planning frameworks in line with gender equality principles, which requires advocacy and dialogue with national governments and international organizations to raise the commitment towards the importance of this process.

- Supporting inclusive implementation and monitoring process. The implementation of Resolution 1325 requires joint efforts by individuals, the state, the society, and international organizations such UN, EU, OSCE, and in particular the UN Women. That is why national plans are so important.

- Harmonizing laws, bylaws, strategies, policies and programs, within the scope of work of competent institutions, where the Law on Gender Equality and UNSCR 1325 and subsequent resolutions are necessary.

- Supporting the development of the new action plan for UNSCR 1325 based on an open, transparent and inclusive participatory process, including women organizations, academia, media and all the other stakeholders.

- Establishing a sustainable mechanism for greater inclusion of CSOs in the implementation of the NAP, both at national and local level. The current process of implementation of the NAP is not sufficiently inclusive and open to all interested members of civil society.

- Supporting capacity-building at all levels of national and local government and CSOs for effective implementation of the WPS Agenda and NAPs, responsive to context-specific conditions.

- Supporting the establishment of accountability mechanisms as well as mechanisms to monitor, measure and evaluate the progress of implementation of the 1325 NAPs. In this regard, parliaments and local assemblies can play a crucial role to oversee proper implementation.

- Ensuring that women's movements and CSOs are included in monitoring processes. They are an important source of information and play an important role in increasing the transparency and accountability of the monitoring process.

- Providing sufficient funding by governments for implementation of the new action plan for Resolution 1325, as well as financial support for gender-responsive budgeting initiatives.

4. BUILDING INCLUSIVE PEACE

- Broadening the definition of peace to include women's perspectives on peace that resolves and secures socio-economic needs of citizens and not just ending violence. Gendering peace is essential and leads to sustainable peace.

- Ensuring gender inclusive peace as a strategic investment to sustainable peace. Science shows valuable evidence that supports this fact.

- Ensuring equal inclusion of women in formal peace processes where decisions are made on peace and the future, including ongoing international peace processes in the Balkans, and in particular the EU mediated Kosovo-Serbia dialogue on normalization of neighborly relations. Women cannot remain at track 2 or 3 of peace processes forever. Women's courage and capacities in response to conflict resolution should be translated into women's rights being equal with men in taking decisions on peacemaking.

- Ensuring gender equality provisions in peace agreements by adopting the legal obligations of peacemaking frameworks, as a way of guaranteeing women a central role in peacebuilding.

- Consolidating the understanding of relationship between women's presence in peacemaking processes, women's rights and gender provisions in peace agreements that would enable women's meaningful participation in post-conflict governance and peacebuilding.

- Promoting a culture of inclusive peace and institutional thinking within the society to consolidate an understanding that including all groups, particularly women and youth, leads to lasting peacemaking and peacebuilding.

- Supporting local peacebuilding, local movements and actors, as a key to overall peacebuilding.

- Building capacities and enhancing advocacy for women's inclusion in peace agreement negotiations and increasing the visibility of the achievements of women in peace and security sectors and promoting positive examples and models to be followed.

- Ensuring that women's access to peacekeeping missions, especially in conflict-prevention and conflict-resolution negotiations becomes more structured and systematic.

5. ENSURING SECURITY FOR ALL

- Observing security through the concept of human security, including the right to live in a healthy environment.

- Empowering and supporting women and women's organizations to participate in security sector processes through the provision of security and logistical support, capacity building, mentoring and support to coalition-building, and developing and implementing strategies to promote leadership of women within armed forces, police services, defense institutions and the judiciary.

- Establishing civilian and democratic control over the armed forces (the army, the security services and the police). Only the National Assembly determines what the national interests of the country are and decides on the security situation in the country, and not the army and the police.

- Preventing the tendency to privatize the armed forces and security services, which is reflected in the uncontrolled proliferation of protection agencies and their efforts to abolish the state monopoly on the lawful use of force.

6. NO PEACE WITHOUT JUSTICE

- RWLSEE adopted “WPS and Justice” Agenda to ensure the justice serves two goals: first, to build a just society and, second, to address post-war reparations and reconciliation with special focus on redressing and seeking international justice to women victims of rape during wars in Balkan, and for perpetrators not to go unpunished.

- We call for an inclusive and gender sensitive justice system at national, regional and international level. So far, we have male dominance in the judiciary, so the time has come to implement gender equality policies within the justice system.

- Access to justice is a basic human right enshrined in many international instruments. However, it must be implemented at the state level, guaranteeing access to justice for every individual/ women and protection from violence and other forms of injury.

- Implementing court decisions (International Court of Justice, European Court of Human Rights and the Constitutional Court of BiH)

- Promoting women mediation in justice to improve women's access to justice.

7. TRANSITIONAL JUSTICE FOR PEACE AND RECONCILIATION

- Establishing international justice for women victims of war rape during the wars in the Western Balkans, namely in Bosnia and Herzegovina, Kosovo and Croatia, paves the way to peace and reconciliation. This tragic issue cannot be kept hidden anymore and perpetrators cannot go unpunished.
- National Governments should assume a leading role in taking measures to provide justice to the many victims of war in their countries.
- National Governments should ensure that crimes of sexual violence committed during the conflict are thoroughly investigated and prosecuted with adequate provisions for the support and protection of witnesses before, during and after proceedings.
- Ensuring that national laws on war victim apply equally to women victims of sexual violence in wars. Although their status is recognized, they must enjoy the same benefits as other war victims.
- Compensation to the families of war victims should not be delayed.
- Implementing the process of reconciliation with the past - the wars and tragedies of genocidal level in Balkans (1990-1999); there cannot be peace without justice; consider apology for genocide as a means of reconciliation.
- Supporting reconciliation processes through expanding dialogue among women who come from different backgrounds including art, culture, academia, media and other relevant sectors, allowing to consider peacebuilding from different perspectives.

8. SUPPORTING ECONOMIC EMPOWERMENT OF WOMEN

- Creating economic conditions that will aim at human well-being, not just increasing GDP.
- Fostering women's economic empowerment: strengthening women's economic decision-making power and developing a more supportive environment to ensure greater employment opportunities for women.
- Supporting women's economic initiatives at urban and rural areas.
- Enhancing women's entrepreneurship by creating a gender-responsive entrepreneurial ecosystem.
- Ensuring that women have a job that provides adequate wages and safe working conditions, free of workplace harassments.

9. PROTECTING WOMEN'S RIGHTS

- Women's rights are human rights. They must be respected and safeguarded legally and practically.
- Greater support for ending discrimination and inequalities against women is critical, and full implementation of national and international charters, including CEDAW and other instruments is necessary.
- Introducing more effective measures and institutional mechanisms that address gender-based violence and domestic violence as concerning phenomena which have been exacerbated further during these times of global pandemics COVID-19. A multidimensional approach should be implemented and well-coordinated efforts to address gender based violence should be made.
- Effective implementation of the Family Law, sanctioning violence against women and eradicating and abusive culture that legitimizes violence against women and other persons with less social and economic power.
- Media should be an ally to promote and protect women rights as human rights. Strong partnership with media would contribute to raising awareness and inciting action to achieve gender equality.

10. SUPPORTING EUROPEAN AND EURO-ATLANTIC INTEGRATION

- RWLSEE adamantly supports the European and Euro-Atlantic future of the Western Balkan's countries.
- Building the European and Euro-Atlantic future requires a gender-inclusive process with women having a central role in democratic transformations and European reforms, because this is a two-way road: one is integrating our countries there, and the other is establishing Euro-Atlantic values internally.
- It is necessary to accelerate the process of European integration of all six countries, as a key project in bringing peace in the Western Balkans, because the incomplete peace that continues even 20 years after the ending of wars threatens to destabilize the already acquired achievements.
- Respect for the good neighborly relations, closing the open bilateral relations and ending of meddling with the neighbors will ensure a European future for all in the region.
- The Western Balkans should not be allowed to transform to a battlefield of geopolitical ambitions of non-western actors; the western partners, specifically the US and the EU, should not allow this.

11. ADOPTING THE GENDER-RESPONSIVE APPROACH TO COVID-19

- COVID-19 has had a disproportionate impact on women and girls and the WPS Agenda. It has deepened social inequalities, including gender inequality, across the region as well as worldwide. It aggravated violence against women, restricted access of women and girls to quality education and healthcare services, caused loss of jobs and worsened poverty and discrimination.
- Adopting a gender-responsive approach to COVID-19 response and recovery to protect women and other marginalized groups from negative effects caused by this unusual pandemic and preventing further marginalization of the WPS Agenda.
- Women have been at the center of response to pandemics, particularly in health and education sectors, therefore they should not be excluded from COVID-19 policy planning and decision-making.

12. SUPPORTING THE WOMEN'S MOVEMENTS AND CIVIL SOCIETY

- Recognizing the substantial contribution of the women's movements and civil society in peacebuilding and implementation of the WPS Agenda.
- Greater support for women's movements and civil society organizations that are an essential part of peacebuilding and democratization of agendas, thus achieving policy changes that benefit women as a group.
- National institutions and international organizations should provide sufficient and sincere long-term support to women's civil society organizations that are doing an incredible work in peacebuilding and reconciliation.
- Ensuring that women's organizations and broader CSOs are included in monitoring processes. They are an important source of information and their presence will increase the transparency and accountability of the monitoring process.
- Stimulating cooperation between politics and civil society to create a system of synergy, power and influence for women to implement the WPS Agenda and advance peacebuilding.

13. SUPPORTING REGIONAL COOPERATION OF WOMEN

- Supporting regional cooperation and coordination among women to ensure real regional progress in gender-inclusive peacebuilding and democratic governance and speeding up the European and Euro-Atlantic integration of all countries, which is the key to lasting peace, stability and sustainable development.

- Supporting regional dialogue between women from diverse political, civil society and ethnic backgrounds to build trust, mutual respect and work jointly towards a multicultural and multiethnic society, as a key to sustainable peacebuilding in post-conflict settings of the Western Balkans.

- RWLSEE represents a unique model of regional cooperation among women from politics and civil society to achieve the goals of gender equality and peacebuilding in the post-conflict setting of Western Balkans, which should be followed by women in other parts of the world.

- At the level of civil society, regional cooperation has always been dynamic and essential during and after the war. It can be said that the number of women in civil initiatives is far higher than the number of men, where all important anti-war initiatives and actions were initiated and organized by women (not only from women's groups but generally from civil society).

- Supporting financially the platforms of regional cooperation among women, a phenomenon which is becoming scarcer and scarcer.

14. ENGAGING NON-TRADITIONAL GENDER EQUALITY ACTORS

- Engaging non-traditional gender equality actors, such as the male allies, media, academia, religious and traditional leaders, business leaders to ensure broad-base support for gender equality and the WPS Agenda.

- Addressing cultural/patriarchal social norms, including misogyny and sexism, as barriers to the full implementation of the WPS Agenda with non-traditional actors of gender equality at the local, national, regional and international levels.

- Promoting men's positive and meaningful involvement in the implementation of the WPS Agenda and developing events and structures dedicated to foster positive contributions by women and men.

- Raising awareness and building capacities of journalist and media actors to develop media programs that promote and ensure visibility for women's participation and contribution in peace and security issues.

- Supporting capacity building projects to build the gender sensitivity of journalists and editors to report on the WPS Agenda and women's roles in democratic governance and peacebuilding and non-stereotypical portrayal of women and women's perspectives in the media, in particular of those in conflict and post-conflict settings.

15. SUPPORTING CAPACITY BUILDING

- Supporting the development of long-term strategic approaches aimed at attracting more women to the so-labeled male professions; increasing education of women in universities, in vocational training and improving measures to reconcile private and professional life - in order to provide more education opportunities to women, but also to reach levels where they have the opportunity to make decisions and participate equally in decision-making that affects not only their lives but also the lives of their families and communities where they live.
- Developing and strengthening women capacities to engage in politics, decision-making and peacebuilding. Encouraging them to grow in leadership and to take on the roles of peacebuilders, democracy builders, mediators, and negotiators.
- Supporting capacity building projects for youth, particularly those that have a regional scope, such as the RWLSEE's Regional Academy on Women, Leadership, and Mediation to help prepare young leaders for change and to close intergenerational gap.
- Respecting and using domestic knowledge and skills that are important for specific domestic challenges.

16. SUPPORTING RESEARCH

- Women largely remain invisible and unidentified in international studies and reports on women's participation in conflict resolution, formal peace negotiations, and peacebuilding. At least this is the case with women in Western Balkans who have contributed to peacemaking in times of wars during the disintegration of the former Yugoslavia, both at formal and other levels, and who are at the center of peacebuilding.
- Supporting academic research and publications on implementation of UNSCR 1325, by collecting and analyzing information about the different impacts of conflicts on the lives of women, men, girls and boys and proposing practical solutions to respond to their specific needs.
- A new push for more quantitative research, qualitative analyses and data collection is important in elevating the public understanding and in helping activists and leaders to direct their efforts towards the implementation of the Resolution 1325. This way, we will ensure that we are heading towards the right direction and that the strategies to be used are effective, sustainable and measurable.

17. SUPPORTING INCREASED BUDGETING

- Investments in gender equality and WPS Agenda are vastly insufficient and only a small proportion of national and international budgets are allocated to support projects on women's empowerment and even less for regional cooperation on the WPS Agenda.

- The larger the budgets, the sooner we can change this reality and reach the goal of gender equality and of a future that rests in a just, peaceful and prosperous world.

- We call on international donors and national governments to increase their budgeting to supporting gender equality and the WPS Agenda projects, with special support to regional cooperation and networking organizations, such as our organization, the Regional Women's Lobby in South East Europe, as a leading regional actor on the WPS Agenda.



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FROM FRAGILITY TO EMPOWERMENT: 20 years of UNSCR 1325
and WPS agenda in post-conflict region of the Western Balkans



About RWLSEE

About RWLSEE

The Regional Women's Lobby for Peace, Security and Justice in South East Europe (RWLSEE) is a regional peacebuilding organization dedicated to empowering women in politics, decision-making and peacebuilding and to building a peaceful, just, prosperous, and Euro-Atlantic future for our countries and the region of the Western Balkans.

RWLSEE was established in 2006 by women leaders from politics and civil society from seven countries of the Western Balkans with the support of UN Women (then UNIFEM). It presents a unique regional organization of women committed to work together towards advancing peace and gender equality in a highly challenging post-conflict settings of the Western Balkans. It operates in seven focus countries: Kosovo, Croatia, Serbia, Bosnia and Herzegovina, Albania, Montenegro, and North Macedonia.

Our goal is to empower women's leadership and equal participation in politics and decision-making in peace, security, and justice processes. We believe that gender equality and equal power sharing between women and men is the only way that leads towards sustainable peacemaking, peacebuilding, democratic governance, and sustainable development, much needed for creating a better world. Women represent a strategic potential as peace drivers and good governance drivers; hence, we work to place women at the heart of leadership and equal decision-making with men for a gender inclusive future.

The RWLSEE considers that underrepresentation of women in peacebuilding and democratic governance in the Western Balkans and beyond is not only unjust but also wrong, because women represent half of the human capacity. The striking absence of women from decision-making and formal peace negotiations reveals a troubling gap between the aspirations and the reality we live today. We remain firm in changing this reality in favor of women.

RWLSEE is dedicated to gender inclusive peace, justice and security and European and Euro-Atlantic integration of our countries through equal participation of women. We support the peace processes in the region with focus on open bilateral issues, inter-ethnic tensions and political crisis, by promoting equal participation of women in peace processes at all levels and, particularly in formal peace negotiations in order to ensure sustainable peace. We are specifically focused on trust-building, reconciliation and transitional justice. We remain committed to establishing international justice for women victims of war rape in the Western Balkans.

We aim at having countries live side by side in equality and good neighborhood, in democracy, justice and reconciliation, while leaving the tragic history behind but not forgetting it.

We advocate and lobby with the international community, primarily the UN, to address the question of international justice to conflict related survivors of violence (CRSV) in Bosnia Herzegovina, Kosovo and Croatia in times of war between 1991-1999, because this crime against humanity must not remain hidden but on contrary must be put to light for the victims to feel justice while the criminals to not remain unpunished. RWLSEE demanded the UN Secretary General take up on this issue in a letters sent and in the meeting of the RWLSEE Chair with the UN Deputy Secretary General in charge of this issues in 2019, demanding international justice to be established to women survivors of sexual violence during war times in our region. It will continue this mission until justices is established.

RWLSEE considers that a greater number of women in decision-making, democratic governance and peacebuilding can result in greater peace, stability and prosperity. Our engagement in this mission integrates the multiple paths to peace and democracy. We promote and mediate inclusive political and peacebuilding processes by ensuring meaningful participation of women and other relevant stakeholders in inter-ethnic dialogues, roundtables and international conferences. We are also focused in capacity building for young women, thus training them in leadership and mediation and closing the intergenerational gap. Our specific characteristic is that we offer a regional platform, with our members sharing regional experiences to search for solutions.

The agenda of RWLSEE includes gaps that stand in the way of regional progress. These gaps are in fragile state building and peacebuilding in the region, gender discrimination, unfinished peace, fragile democratic governance, justice and security, weak economy, incomplete transitional justice, incomplete normalization of neighborly relations, autocracy, corruption, unemployment, migration and other socio-economic issues and slow pace of EU and Euro-Atlantic reforms.

In this unprecedented times of pandemics COVID-19, RWLSEE has contextualized its agenda to include gender issues, peacebuilding and pandemics as well as launched online capacity building services to young women for leadership and mediation through its platform – The Regional Academy for Women in Leadership and Mediation (RAWLM).

Today, the RWLSEE is recognized as an effective model of regional cooperation between women in post-conflict setting, seasoned peacebuilders and activists which strive to strengthen gender equality and equal participation of women in decision-making, peacebuilding, and other spheres of life. The RWLSEE demonstrates how, even in the difficult post-war context in which challenges are even more complex, women leaders across borders and across ethnic lines can succeed in building and working together towards a common agenda for the future.

We are inspired and work to achieve the objectives of Women, Peace and Security Agenda. We aim at accelerating the implementation of UNSCR 1325 and other deriving resolutions at the national and local level, as well as other UN instruments and international

platforms for empowerment of women, gender equality and women's rights, including the UN Beijing Platform (1995), CEDAW, the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development, the European Policies on Gender Equality, and the National Action Plans.

In this challenging journey, we are together with our strategic partners and supporters including the UN Women, the UN Women ECA and the UN Women Kosovo, the Swedish Government, and the Swedish Embassy in Kosovo. Other supporters include the Finish Embassy in Kosovo, the Norwegian Embassy in Kosovo, UNDP and other UN and international organizations. We could not have come this far without their valuable support.

Today, 20 years after the adoption of the UNSC 1325 and 25 years after the Beijing Platform, regrettably, there is lack of sufficient political will and financing to support the implementation of legal frameworks on gender equality at international and national levels. This unfortunate reality must change. Now, it is the time for women to have the power they deserve, for our dream of gender equality to come true. The paradigm of the 21st century cannot neglect the emerging force of women for a better future.

4.2. Steering Committee, Members, and Advisory Board

Steering Committee:

1. **Edita Tahiri, Chair of RWLSEE**, Former Deputy Primeminister, Minister of Foreign Affairs and Chief Negotiator, Kosovo
2. **Gordana Sobol, RWLSEE Steering Committee Member**; Former Member of Parliament, Minister without Portfolio, Chairwoman of the Parliamentarian Committee on Mandate and Immunity, Croatia
3. **Sonja Biserko, RWLSEE Steering Committee Member**; Founder and President of the Helsinki Committee for Human Rights, Serbia
4. **Memnuna Zvizdić, RWLSEE Steering Committee Member**; Director of NGO Žene Ženama, Bosnia and Hercegovina
5. **Eglantina Gjermeni, RWLSEE Steering Committee Member**; Member of Parliament; Former Minister of Urban Development and Tourism, Albania
6. **Nada Drobnjak, RWLSEE Steering Committee Member**; Member of Parliament, Chairwoman of the Parliamentarian Committee on Gender Equality, Montenegro
7. **Irina Pockova, RWLSEE Steering Committee Member**; President of Women's Citizens Initiative and Director of Public Revenue at Sveti Nikola Municipality, Former Chairwomen of Women's Chapter of SDA political party, North Macedonia

Members:

Kosovo

1. **Edita Tahiri, Chair of RWLSEE**, Former Deputy Primeminister, Minister of Foreign Affairs and Chief Negotiator, Kosovo
2. **Luljeta Vuniqi, RWLSEE Member**, Former Ambassador and Executive Director of Kosovar Gender Studies Center, Kosovo
3. **Teuta Sahatqija, RWLSEE Member**, Deputy Minister of Foreign Affairs and Diaspora, Former Member of Parliament, Ambassador and President of Women Parliamentarian Caucus in Kosovo Parliament, Kosovo
4. **Hykmete Bajrami, RWLSEE Member**, Minister of Finance, Former Minister of Trade and Industry, Member of Parliament, Kosovo
5. **Xhevahire Izmaku, RWLSEE Member**, Former Member of Parliament, Kosovo
6. **Time Kadrijaj, RWLSEE Member**, Member of Parliament, Kosovo
7. **Arjeta Rexha, RWLSEE Member**, Executive Directress, Gender Training and Research Center (GTRC) RWLSEE Member, Executive Directress, Gender Training and Research Center (GTRC), Former Government Official, Kosovo

Croatia

8. **Gordana Sobol, RWLSEE Steering Committee Member;** Former Member of Parliament, Minister without Portfolio, Chairwoman of the Parliamentarian Committee on Mandate and Immunity, Croatia
9. **Morana Paliković-Gruden;** RWLSEE Member; Vice president of City Assembly of city of Zagreb, Member of the Committee for social services, Vice-President of the Croatian Olympic Committee, Croatia
10. **Lovorka Marinović,** RWLSEE Member; President of Center for New Initiatives, International Consultant for gender equality and migration, Croatia
11. **Melita Mulić,** RWLSEE Member, Expert on Strategic Communication – European Commission TAIEX Project in Western Balkans; Professional Diplomat; Former Member of Parliament, Croatia

Serbia

12. **Sonja Biserko, RWLSEE Steering Committee Member;** Founder and President of the Helsinki Committee for Human Rights, Serbia
13. **Nataša Mičić,** RWLSEE Member, Member of Parliament, Vice-president of the Liberal Democratic Party, Serbia
14. **Gordana Čomić,** RWLSEE Member, Former deputy Speaker of Parliament, Member of Parliament, Serbia
15. **Staša Zajović,** RWLSEE Member, Coordinator of Women in Black Network, Member of Women's Peace Coalition, Serbia
16. **Ljiljana Radovanović,** RWLSEE Member; Member of Women in Black Network, Member of Women's Peace Coalition, Serbia
17. **Izabela Kisić,** RWLSEE Member, Executive Director of the Helsinki Committee for Human Rights in Serbia

Bosnia and Herzegovina

18. **Memnuna Zvizdić, RWLSEE Steering Committee Member;** Director of NGO Žene Ženama, Bosnia and Herzegovina
19. **Nada Tešanović,** RWLSEE Member; Minister of Family, Youth and Sports in Gov't of Rep. Srpska, Bosnia and Herzegovina
20. **Lidija Živanović,** RWLSEE Member; Former Director, Helsinki Citizen's Parliament, Bosnia and Herzegovina
21. **Samra Filipović-Hadžiabdić,** RWLSEE Member; Director, Agency for Gender Equality of Bosnia and Herzegovina (AGE BIH)

Albania

22. **Eglantina Gjermeni, RWLSEE Steering Committee Member;** Member of Parliament; Former Minister of Urban Development and Tourism, Albania
23. **Mesila Doda,** RWLSEE Member, General Secretary of the Party for Justice, Integration and Unity, Former Member of Parliament, Chairwomen of the Alliance of Women Parliamentarians in Albanian parliament, Albania
24. **Eni Çobani,** RWLSEE Member; Lawyer; Mediator; Professor, Television personality, Albania
25. **Marieta Zaçe,** RWLSEE Member; Former Deputy Minister for Social Welfare and Equal Opportunities, Albania
26. **Mirela Arqimandriti,** RWLSEE Member; Director of Gender Alliance for Development Centre, Albania
27. **Eni Vasili,** RWLSEE Member; Albanian journalist, writer, Host of TV talk show 'Open', former news reporter, Albania

Monetengro

28. **Nada Drobnjak, RWLSEE Steering Committee Member;** Member of Parliament, Chairwoman of the Parliamentary Committee on Gender Equality, Montenegro
29. **Ljubomirka Mira Asović,** RWLSEE Member; President of League of Women Voters of Montenegro
30. **Slavica Striković,** RWLSEE Member; Managing Board Member of NGO Women Action, Montenegro

North Macedonia

31. **Irina Pockova, RWLSEE Steering Committee Member;** President of Women's Citizens Initiative and Director of Public Revenue at Sveti Nikola Municipality, Former Chairwomen of Women's Chapter of SDA political party, North Macedonia
32. **Teuta Arifi,** RWLSEE Member; Mayor of Tetovo, Former Deputy Prime Minister, Member of Parliament, North Macedonia
33. **Savka Todorovska,** RWLSEE Member; President of the National Council for Gender Equality, North Macedonia

Advisory board:

1. **Elizabeth Rehn,** Former Minister of Defense, Former UN Under-Secretary-General current: Independent Expert on Peace building, for UN, Finland.
2. **Ursula Plasnik,** Former Austrian Foreign Minister, Austria
3. **Franziska Bratner,** Member of European Parliament, Germany

4. **Flora Macula**, Head of Sub-office UN Women in Cox Bazar, Bangladesh, Former Head of UN Women office in Kosovo (Position on hold)
5. **Osnat Lubrani**, UN System Resident Coordinator and Humanitarian Coordinator in Ukraine, United States (Position on hold)
6. **Mirjana Feric – Vac**, Vice-President of Socialist International and Vice-President of SI Women in CEE and SEE, Croatia
7. **Ana Maria Gomes**, Member of European Parliament, Vice-Chairwoman of Subcommittee on Security Defense, Portugal
8. **Luisa Morgantini**, Former Vice President of the European Parliament, Italy
9. **Doris Pack**, Member of European Parliament, Chairwoman of the Delegation for Relations with the Countries of SEE, GermanyIndustry, Member of Parliament, Kosovo



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Strategic partners: UN WOMEN Swedish Government

UN Women support for RWLSEE

UN Women strategic partnership with the RWLSEE has been crucial towards the goals of reaching gender equality and peacebuilding during all these years since 2006. UN Women in Kosovo, UN Women ECA, UN Women supported the RWLSEE since the beginning and remains key supporter in this journey for a gender inclusive and a better world.

UN Women Kosovo support for RWLSEE and WPS Agenda

Since its establishment in 1999, UNIFEM/now UN WOMEN Kosovo has significantly contributed towards advancing gender equality and advocating for women's human rights. During the immediate post-conflict phase, UN WOMEN Kosovo supported capacity building of Kosovar women in rebuilding their lives, participating in governance, and playing leadership roles towards peaceful and economically secure future. Further it has assisted women victims of violence and contributed towards advancing gender equality and women's human rights. To advance priorities, UN WOMEN has also been instrumental for advocating for increased women's representation, and capacity development of civil servants and civil society.

UN WOMEN Kosovo has been catalyzing partnerships for capacity building of women's organizations and government institutions; fostering women's leadership; and developing institutional capacity, advocacy, and networking. Further, UN WOMEN's role in bridging between government and civil society as well as among government counterparts will continue to be important in enhancing harmonized approach in gender equality and women's empowerment in various sectors.

The first National Action Plan for the Achievement of Gender Equality was developed by the support of UNIFEM with the aim of proposing concrete steps for Kosovo's path toward equality and development. As a document it reflected the concerns of women and men in Kosovo seeking to improve the position of women. The National Action Plan served as a roadmap, promoting as its central goal the equal participation of women and men in the development of Kosovo's future.

National Action Plan for Achievement of Gender Equality was finalized in April 2003 and approved by the office of the Prime minister of Kosova on **14 April 2004**

Some of the main results of the first NAP on Gender Equality were:

- Gender Equality Law - adopted by the Assembly of Kosova on 19 February 2004 and Promulgated 7 June 2004 (Objective 8 action 68d), Under Women Human rights violence against women)
- Protection against Domestic Violence, UNMIK Regulation No. 2003/12, approved on 9 May 2003. (Objective8. action 68f)
- Establishment of the Gender Equality Office within the Prime Minister's Office (Objective 8.1)

- Municipal Gender Officers (Objective 8.1)
- Gender Equality Committees at the municipal level (Objective 8.1)
- Commission for Gender Equality in the Kosova Assembly (Objective 8.1)
- Gender Officers, also known as Gender Focal Points, within the ministries (Objective 8.1) etc.

In 2003 and 2004, UN Women brought together women across all sectors from the Western Balkan countries to introduce them with UNSCR 1325 and to support them in identifying the necessary actions for implementing the resolution. In addition, UN Women supported women's organizations in Kosovo and Bosnia and Herzegovina to monitor the implementation of the UNSCR 1325 and to develop an Action Plan on 1325 in Kosovo and Serbia. UN Women also supported their implementation.

In July 2010, Bosnia and Herzegovina became the first country in the Balkan region to adopt an Action Plan for implementation of UNSCR 1325, followed by Serbia in December 2010 and Croatia in 2011. At the same time, Macedonia and Kosovo started developing action plans, resulting in Macedonia adopting an NAP at the end of 2012, and Kosovo in March 2014. In Kosovo, the plan includes three outcomes: increasing women's participation in decision-making; integrating a gender perspective in the security sector and increasing the number of women in security structures; and providing redress to survivors of conflict related sexual violence.

Bosnia-Herzegovina has adopted three National Action Plans (NAP) to date, in 2010, 2014, and 2018 to be implemented for the period of 2010-2013, 2014-2017, and 2018-2022, respectively.

Albania launched its first National Action Plan (NAP) for the Implementation of UNSCR 1235 and related resolutions on 11 September 2018, for the period between 2018 and 2020. The NAP was developed and will be implemented by the Government of Albania, in close consultation with representatives of local authorities, UN Women and other international stakeholders, and with contributions from civil society organizations (CSOs).

In 2014 in Kosovo the Government adopted the 1325 National Action Plan with the commitment to cover 51% of the Plan's costs. The process supported by UN Women, funded by EU brought together a wide range of partners from the Government (including the security sector), civil society and the UN system to develop the 1325 National Action Plan that heightened commitment and instilled broad ownership. In 2015 UN Women has also supported the development of a monitoring & evaluation framework and drafting of the first monitoring report.

UN Women supported gender-sensitive police reform processes in Kosovo to establish an inclusive and accountable police service capable of ensuring women's rights and security. UN Women financially and technically supported establishment and capacity development of the Association of Women in Kosovo Police (AWKP) in 2012, which in 2014 was affiliated with the International Association of Women Police. The AWKP was considered as a role model in Western Balkans and offered to host roundtables and conferences in order to exchange best practices and learn from the AWKP's experience.

Conflict related Sexual Violence.

Survivor's quest for justice, was supported by UN Women, which since 2006 has been working with civil society organizations and Kosovo authorities, and helped to secure legal recognition and redress for survivors of conflict-related sexual violence. The UN Women programming supported nationally owned and led efforts on criminal justice and reparations, while centering the needs and demands of survivors for holistic support, with the goal to develop an adjusted set of norms that recognizes the crimes that survivors experienced and empower them to access reparations and legal redress.

After the Kosovo Assembly in March 2014 approved a law that gave legal recognition to victims of sexual violence during Kosovo's armed conflict, UN Women provided integral support to the Office of President Atifete Jahjaga, government and victim's associations to establish Kosovo's reparations programme and supported the establishment of the government Commission to Recognize and Verify Survivors of Sexual Violence during the Kosovo War:

Through the Gender-Sensitive Transitional Justice project, funded by the European Union, UN Women Kosovo has facilitated mentoring support from international criminal law experts to prosecutors and investigators in Kosovo on CRSV.

In close cooperation with RWLSEE, addressed the international justice for women victims through organizing meetings in the United Nations Secretariat Building between RWLSEE Chair and Special Representative of the Secretary-General on Sexual Violence in Conflict.

In 2017, in cooperation with Kosovo Women's Network and four organizations specialized in treating survivors of sexual violence, one-hundred-seventy-seven survivors of CRSV benefitted from micro-economic grants, administered through four local victims' associations, linking reparations provided through the Verification Commission to development programmes, to enhance the transformative impact of reparations.

UN Women played a role in encouraging this change, by creating space for survivors to speak to the public, and take on a leadership role, supporting survivors to restore their rights and dignity and destigmatize sexual violence.

With support from the UN Women and EU, in May 2018, the University of Pristina established a Transitional Justice Resource Center, which aims to enhance the role of education in transitional justice processes and peacebuilding, build understanding of human rights, and establish the conditions necessary for reconciliation.

To ensure a comprehensive approach on addressing **the Gender-Based Violence (GBV) in Kosovo through a joint UNKT Domestic Violence** program funded by Finland, UN Women supported the implementation of the National Strategy and Action Plan against Domestic Violence (NSAPGBV) 2010-2013.

UN Women supported the Office of the Deputy Minister of Justice and National Coordinator evaluation of the NSAPGBV 2010-2013 and the development of new National Strategy and Action Plan on Domestic Violence 2011-2014

UN Women has played a key role in supporting the Ministry of Justice in developing the National Strategy for Protection Against DV 2016-2020 as well in implementation of four pillars as part of the Strategy namely prevention, protection, and reintegration of GBV/DV survivors.

Kosovo has made progress in protecting women's rights, especially in the legal framework that addresses domestic violence. The Criminal Code has been revised, adding an accurate definition of domestic violence as a separate criminal offense, precisely defining all acts of domestic violence in accordance with the requirements of the Istanbul Convention.

Furthermore, the unified database – established with the support of UN Women and the European Union, and recently handed over to the Ministry of Justice – enables the monitoring and prosecution of cases of domestic violence in Kosovo. It ensures accountability by obliging the relevant institutions to insert necessary data from central and local levels. This database is considered an essential step towards implementing the standards set out in the Istanbul Convention.

Swedish Government support for RWLSEE

The Swedish Government, the Ministry for Foreign Affairs of Sweden and their Embassy in Kosovo remain strategic partners and long-time supporters of the RWLSEE for almost a decade now. Without their generous support, the RWLSEE could not come this far, in its mission on gender equality and gender inclusive peacebuilding and democracy in Kosovo and entire region of Western Balkans as a post-conflict setting. The Swedish Government and UN Women plays a crucial role in our joint journey to achieving a just, peaceful, and prosperous future in all countries of the region and their Euro-Atlantic integration.

Since 2013, throughout the years, MFA Sweden supported RWLSEE with the project “Women's political empowerment, participation in and contribution to peace and security processes in the Western Balkans” in joint efforts to effectively implement the UNSCR 1325 and Women, Peace and Security Agenda in regional and local level in seven focus countries of the RWLSEE. The project had four phases, as follows:

Phase IV of the regional project “Women's political empowerment, participation in and contribution to peace and security processes in the Western Balkans” were contextualized with pandemics situation. It included a new pillar that is the ‘COVID-19 Response and Recovery’ to ensure women's leadership and contribution on gender inclusive socio-economic recovery processes. It was a 5-months project, starting on August 1st, 2020 and ending on December 31st, 2020. Phase IV is a continuation of the **2019 phase III**, regional project “Women's political empowerment, participation in and contribution to peace and security processes in the Western Balkans”, **2017 phase II**, regional project “Women's political empowerment, participation in and contribution to peace and security processes in the Western Balkans” and **2013 phase I**, regional project “Advancing the Leadership of Women in Promoting the Implementation of the Pristina-Belgrade Agreement: Women's Leadership in Reconciliation, Peace and Security (Western Balkans)”.

During all phases of the projects, RWLSEE jointly with UN Women continued to promote gender equality and peacebuilding, continued regional mediation platform in support of Brussels Dialogue through discussions between politicians and Members of Parliament (MPs) from Kosovo and Serbia in order to contribute to resuming the Brussels Dialogue, gender inclusive peace processes, implementation of the Brussels Agreement and EU Integration processes. It also continued to ease tensions and improve neighbor relations between Kosovo and Serbia and entire region including promoting local interethnic dialogue.

During this decade of work, RWLSEE with UN Women brought together diverse actors from the region and more, including women leaders in politics and civil society, parliaments, governments, local governments, national and international experts and advocates on gender equality and women's empowerment, RWLSEE Steering Committee and all members from the RWLSEE focus countries (Albania, Bosnia and Herzegovina, Croatia, Kosovo, Montenegro, North Macedonia, Serbia), Representatives of UN Women, Swedish Government and Embassy of Sweden and other embassy representatives in Kosovo, other UN agencies and International Organizations.

In early phases up to today, direct impacts have been achieved with women in politics and CSO activists from across the region who discussed and agreed on a set of recommendations on how to increase the role of women and inclusion of women's perspective in regional peace, security and justice processes, in the political agenda in Western Balkans, within the framework of European Integration processes, thereby also improving neighborly relations and regional cooperation.

Collaboration has been strengthened with women politicians with women's organizations at the national and regional level; supporting women, especially those who have influential positions in their communities, as agents of peace and reconciliation who can as such assist in bringing people together to support dialogues at different levels; and creating a dynamic, interactive and creative forum of women voices to mobilize support and engagement in a regional partnership with women and men political leaders.

Peacebuilding and security issues has been discussed at local level and the role of women mayors as potential agents of change around the topic of women equality, political empowerment and interethnic harmony as well as improving their regional cooperation. Deeply has been looked what can be done to empower women in local decision making and what can be done to empower our cities under leadership of women. How new urban agenda must feminize our cities and empower women in all areas of urban life. Result of these activities was launching an agreed initiative for a regional network of women mayors in the Western Balkans, proposed by RWLSEE based on its model. This regional network / Association of women mayors serve as a platform for exchange of experience and mutual reinforcement and inspiration for them, which can contribute to increasing the participation of women in politics at local and national levels.

Capacity building project which aims to capacitate and encourage young women for leadership and mediation has been launched during last year project. Young women from diverse communities of seven focus countries in Western Balkans, focus countries of RWLSEE, now have new skill set and expanded knowledge which evolved during the Seminar on series of lectures relevant for leadership of women that marked the launching of Regional Academy for Women Leadership and Mediation (RAWLM). The special value of this activity was its regional scope, diversity of topics lectured and, diversity of backgrounds of young women participants and of lectures coming from each of 7 countries, from CSOs, political parties and peacebuilding areas.

Thanks to support of the Swedish MFA, the RWLSEE succeeded to play a crucial role in advancing gender equality and peacebuilding in the Western Balkans, thus becoming one of the most prominent regional actors in implementing WPS agenda.

RWLSEE's major impacts for improving lives of women and peace include as follows:

- influenced significant changes in favor of women political empowerment in decision making and peacebuilding throughout the region.
- engaged, encouraged, consolidated self-confidence and supported inclusion of women in politics and democratic governance as well as in gender responsive policies and actions

in our focus countries.

- we supported peace, trust-building and reconciliation through our ideas and actions, through providing platforms for inter-ethnic dialogues on reconciliation and ways of breaking the war legacy of inter-ethnic mistrust.
- significantly contributed to the long-term development of peace-oriented societies by promoting culture of peace and peaceful resolution of conflicts and, arguing legitimacy of gender equality for achieving sustainable peace and development as a best way for effective conflict management
- supported peace processes in the region and lobbied for meaningful participation of women in formal peace talks, including Vienna status talks on Kosovo, Brussels Dialogue between Kosovo and Serbia, Prespa Agreement on name dispute between Macedonia and Greece.
- with our bottom-up approach through regional cooperation, we worked for localization of peacebuilding including mediation, as a foundation for sustainable and gender inclusive peacebuilding
- promoted gender responsive rule of law, justice, security and economy as relevant pillars of democratic state building.
- advocated and fostered transitional justice and sought international justice from UN for conflict related victims of sexual violence in Kosovo, Bosnia and Herzegovina and Croatia.
- promoted and shared experiences internationally of the RWLSEE, as a model of regional networking and cooperation in empowering women and peacebuilding .

RWLSEE based on decisive request of participants during the last four phases of the project, on the need of action to continue further on related goals as well as in the new context of the COVID-19 crisis response and recover plan to apply for the Phase V of the Project within MFA Sweden. We very much hope to receive a support so to be able to continue making true our mission and vision.

6

CONTRIBUTORS TO PUBLICATION



EDITA TAHIRI

Chair of RWLSEE, Former Deputy Prime Minister, Minister of Foreign Affairs and Chief Negotiator, Kosovo

Edita Tahiri is a leader of the independence of Kosovo. She was Deputy Prime Minister, Minister of Foreign Affairs and Chief Negotiator. She was also Minister of Dialogue, Minister of Public Administration, and Member of Parliament in five terms. She is a founder and leader of the Kosovo movement for independence and Minister of Foreign Affairs in hard times of liberation of her country (1990-2000). She is known as a key protagonist of political changes in her country and the Balkans since the end of Cold War. She is only women peace negotiator in international peace processes ending wars in Balkans, participated She was a negotiator the Rambouillet Peace Conference (1999) and, Chief Negotiator in the Brussels Dialogue on neighborly relations between Kosovo and Serbia (2011-2017), where she was a signatory of first ever reached peace agreement between two states (2011). She is committed to gender equality and WPS agenda and, participated at the Beijing Conference in 1995 and, many other international conferences. She is a member of Women Waging Peace Network and Mediterranean Women Mediators Network. She holds the master's degree from the Harvard University, John F. Kennedy School of Government and a doctoral degree in political sciences from Prishtina University in cooperation with SAIS Johns Hopkins University. She is a Fulbright Scholar and a graduate of George C. Marshall European Center for Security Studies. For her academic achievements, she was awarded the title "Stelar Student of 2002" by the John Kennedy School of Government Public

ORDANA SOBOL

RWLSEE Steering Committee Member,
Former Member of parliament,
Minister without Portfolio, Head of the Parliamentarian
Committee on Mandate and Immunity, Croatia



Gordana Sobol has a long-standing political career and is a prominent leader in her commitments to foster democracy and European integration in her country as well as in supporting women empowerment. She has held positions of minister and Member of Parliament in different terms. From 2000 to 2016 she has held positions of Minister without portfolio and member of parliament in several terms. She also served as the Chairwomen of the Parliament Committee for Gender Equality, Chairwomen of the Credentials and Privileges Commission and member at the Parliamentary Committee of Labor and Social Partnership, and later member of the Committee for Internal Policy and National Security. She was also Secretary General of Social Democratic Party. She graduated Psychology at the Faculty of education, University in Rijeka and is the member of the Croatian Psychological Association. She participated in numerous seminars and international conferences and is as a guest lecturer in different topics related to human rights, particularly women's rights, and cooperated with numerous NGOs.



SONJA BISERKO

RWLSEE Steering Committee Member,
Founder and President of the
Helsinki Committee for Human Rights, Serbia

Sonja Biserko is a prominent leader and reformist well-known for her courageous contribution for democratic changes in her country and region of Southeastern Europe. She is a founder and President of the Helsinki Committee for Human Rights, a founder of the European Movement in Yugoslavia, the Center for Anti-war Action, and Forum for International Relations. She worked with Geoffrey Nice's team on Milosevic's trial, as well as in other cases in The Hague Tribunal. She was a member of the UN Commission on inquiry on the DPR Korea. She has a vast expertise in human rights, peace processes and justice stemming from her visionary political thinking and critical thinking capacities. She was participant in Eric Lane Fellowship, Clare College, Cambridge, UK, Senior Fellow, US Institute for Peace, Washington D.C. She is author of several books and editor and coeditor of number of books, and editorials in the Helsinki Charter. She has a number of international awards for her human rights work. She holds a BA in Economics from the University of Belgrade.

MEMNUNA ZVIZDIC

RWLSEE Steering Committee Member,
Former Director of NGO žene ženama,
Bosnia and Hercegovina



Memnuna Zvizdic is a leader in peace activism and peaceful conflict resolution. She is a feminist and a peace activist, engaged in organizations and societies related to human rights, peace activism and peaceful conflict resolution. She is a founder and was long-standing Director of NGO Žene Ženama, a Bosnian women's center for human rights, peace and security. She is well-known in peace activism through her articulated views on peace and peacebuilding as well as a facilitator of non-violent communication and peaceful conflict resolution. She holds a master's degree in economy from the Sarajevo University. She participated in numerous international conferences and meetings where she gave an important contribution on peacebuilding process using her experience from her country's tragedy and transition from war to peace. She writes on the topic of local peace building from women's perspective, gender and national identity. She is a chief editor of the manual: Women and Women's activism in Bosnia and Herzegovina; To Be Peace, the local concept for peace building; and co-editor of the manual Fasilitacija (Facilitation).



EGLANTINA GJERMENI

RWLSEE Steering Committee Member,
Member of Parliament, Head of Sub commission
on Gender Equality and Prevention of
Violence against Women, Former Minister of
Urban Development, Albania

Eglantina Gjermeni is Member of Parliament, Head of Sub Commission on Gender Equality and Prevention of Violence against Women and Former Minister of Urban Development.

She is a prominent leader in democracy and gender equality with vision and integrity. She served as a member of parliament in several terms, from 2009 and onwards. She holds a doctoral degree in social sciences and, since 1995, and has been teaching at the Faculty of Social Sciences, University of Tirana, as a Associated Professor in Social Work. Dedicated in social issues research, she is author and co - author of numerous articles, studies and publications on gender equality, gender mainstreaming and women empowerment. Prior to enter politics, she was a strong voice and advocate of women rights and gender equality. For a period of ten years, she was executive director of Gender Alliance for Development Center. Her work was very much distinguished by leading to tangible results on raising awareness and bringing the gender issues in the political and social agenda.

NADA DROBNJAK

RWLSEE Steering Committee, Member of
Parliament in several terms, Chairwoman of the
Parliamentarian Committee on Gender Equality,
Head of Gender Equality Government Office,
Montenegro



Nada Drobnjak is a leader in politics and in gender equality. She is the prominent political leader the Democratic Socialists Party (DPS). She is former Member of Parliament serving in several terms and also Chairwoman of the Parliamentarian Committee on Gender Equality. In period 2001/2002, as a member of parliament, she initiated establishment of Assembly Committee on Gender Equality where she was appointed as the first Chairperson of the Committee. She was the Head of Gender Equality Office within Government (2003 to 2009). She also served as a member of the Parliamentary Committee on International Relations and European Integration and on Stabilization and Association of the Assembly of Montenegro and European Parliament. She is Gender Focal Point of the Global Partnership for the Prevention of Armed Conflict in Western Balkans. Bells Coalition Regional Project awarded her price Respected Environment Ambassador. She participated in number of international conferences, seminars and round tables on human rights and gender equality. She graduated at Faculty of Civil Engineering from Montenegro University



IRINA POCKOVA

RWLSEE Steering Committee Member, President of Women's Citizens Initiative, Former Chairwomen of Women's Chapter of SDA political party, Director of Public Revenue at Sveti Nikola Municipality, North Macedonia

Irina Pockova is the President of Women's Citizens Initiative and Director of Public Revenue at Sveti Nikola Municipality, Former Chairwomen of Women's Chapter of SDA political party, and the Head of the Regional Tax Administration in Shtip city and former coordinator of the women's forum in SDSM Sveti Nikole. She has been active in politics and leader in local governance in Macedonia since 1985. She stands for social democratic political views while promoting dialogue and cooperation for the benefit of democracy in her country. Her interests focus is especially in economic gender equality including gender budgeting, and local economic development strategies. She holds a master's degree in economy from the University of Macedonia. Her particular focus is on finances and accounting and she was successful in using her expertise on policies and mainstreaming of gender budgeting. She has written books on investing and business opportunities as well as a textbook on taxes.

LULJETA VUNIQI

RWLSEE Member, Former Ambassador and Executive Director of Kosovar Gender Studies Center, Kosovo



Luljeta Vuniqui is the founder and the long-standing former Executive Director of Kosovar Gender Studies Center (KGSC). She was the Ambassador of Kosovo in Hungary. She is known as a civil society leader for freedom, democracy and gender equality. She has been for the long-time Program Manager of Women's Programs, Minority Program, Youth and Human Rights Program at the KFOS (Kosova Foundation for Open Society), the Network of Soros Foundations. She is a sociologist graduated from the Prishtina University. Her research work focuses on sociological aspects of gender equality and, the projects of KGSC are initiated and conducted under her supervision and leadership. She has played an important role in supporting and being active in women's movements. She is also one of the founders of the Kosova Women's Network and Roma, Ashkali and Egyptian Women's Organizations Network. She is board member of several local and international organizations as well as member of the Regional Women's Lobby. She has participated in many programs, conferences, and trainings on local, regional and global level.



DIANA ÇEKAJ BERISHA

RWLSEE Coordinator, Leadership and Management Specialist, Kosovo

Diana Cekaj Berisha worked in diverse country context and demonstrated excellence during her work. She is a specialist in leadership and management. She is a Project Coordinator for Regional Women's Lobby for Peace Security and Justice in South-eastern Europe (RWLSEE). For over 10 years, she coordinates and manages successfully the RWLSEE projects funded by international entities, while promoting regional cooperation between high-level women politicians, civil society leaders, experts and activists from seven focus countries of the RWLSEE. She has a broad career in Project Coordination, Leadership and Management which has been demonstrated in her work with US and USAID Projects (2007-2011), as a key staff on coordinating a capital improvement Project of ICITAP, US Office and Office manager of CARE International, covering Albania, Macedonia and Kosovo. She holds a master's degree in Business Administration from South East European University (SEEU) and, master's degree in Architecture from Prishtina University. She completed numerous trainings, certifications and attended international and regional conferences and seminars. For her outstanding services and work performance, she was awarded Robert W. Tobin Achievement Award from USAID / NCSC office in Washington.

NITA BAKALLI ISTREFI

RWLSEE Project Assistant and Consultant

Nita Bakalli Istrefi joined the RWLSEE team as Project Assistant and external consultant two years ago. Prior to that she has worked as an external consultant for different projects of the UN Women by providing professional, scientific, and technical services in the field of political and economic empowerment of women, preventing the protection of domestic violence, preparation of narrative reports, drafting strategic and action plans and other consulting services. She was a fellow in the Hope Fellowships Leadership Program in Washington DC. She has also been engaged in lobbying activities for the position and rights of Albanians in the Republic of Macedonia, through the Albanian-American Civic League, an advocacy and lobbying organization registered in Washington DC and founded by former Congressman Joe DioGuardi.

She holds a bachelor's degree in Business Administration from the South East European University, and a master's degree in Diplomacy Studies, with the topic: "Lobbying in Modern Democracies: How to Implement Best Practices Appropriate for the Case of Kosovo".

Nita Bakalli Istrefi aims to contribute for RWLSEE and promote regional cooperation between both senior women leaders in politics and young leaders to overcome the past tragedies and build a peaceful and prosperous future for all countries of Western Balkans.



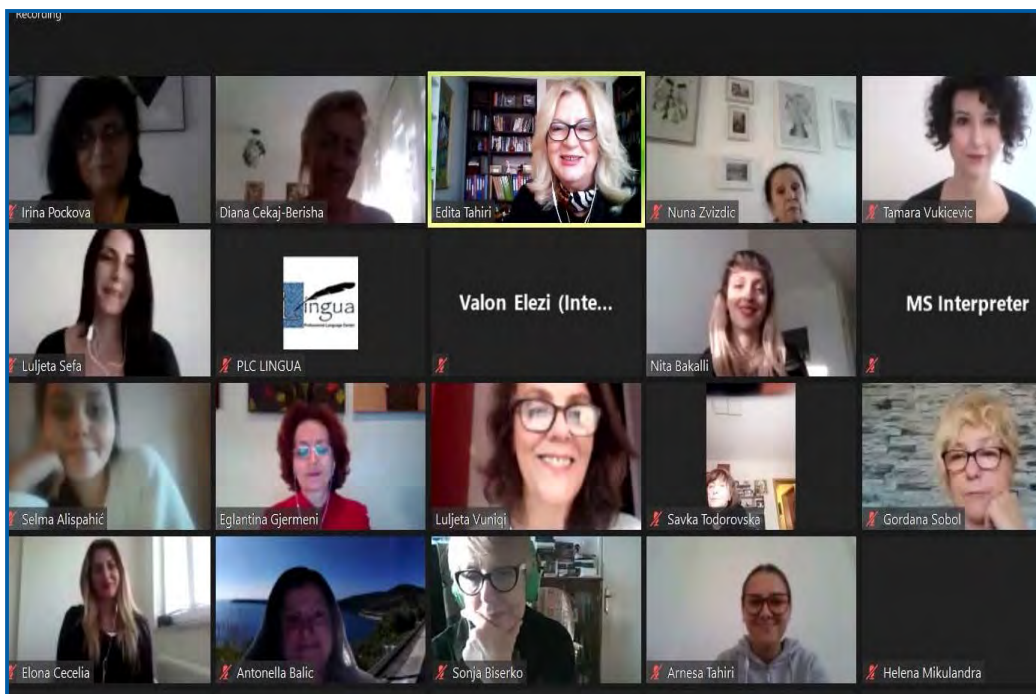
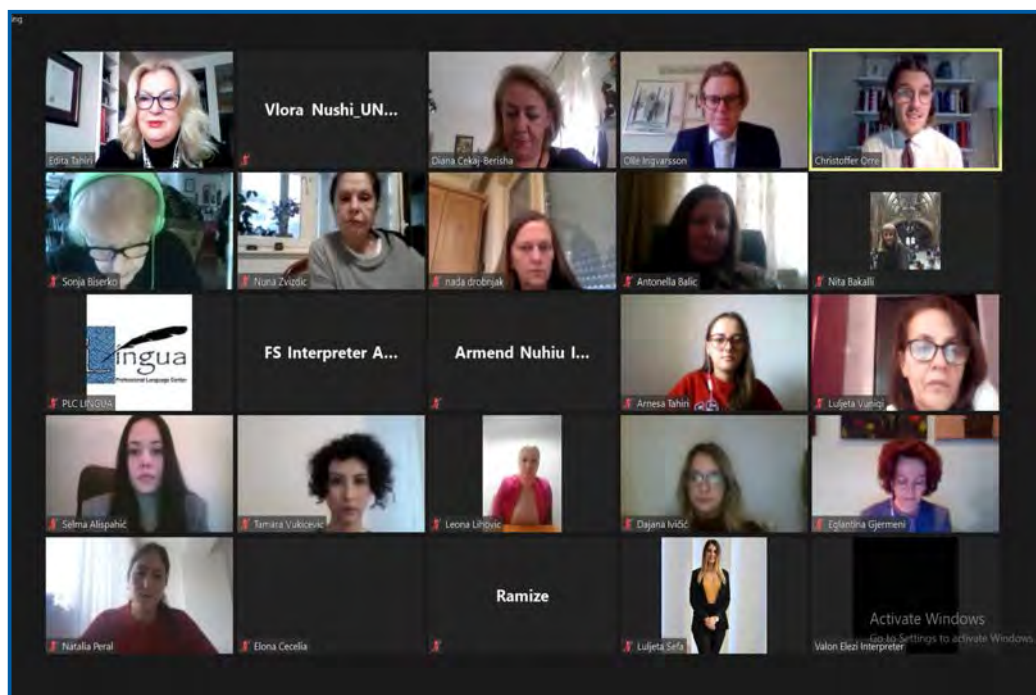
ANNEX

RWLSEE Events marking historic anniversaries: 20 years of UNSCR 1325 and WPS Agenda, and 25 years of Beijing Declaration and Platform for Action & GALLERY OF PHOTOS FROM THE RWLSEE'S WORK

RAWLM-Regional Academy of RWLSEE

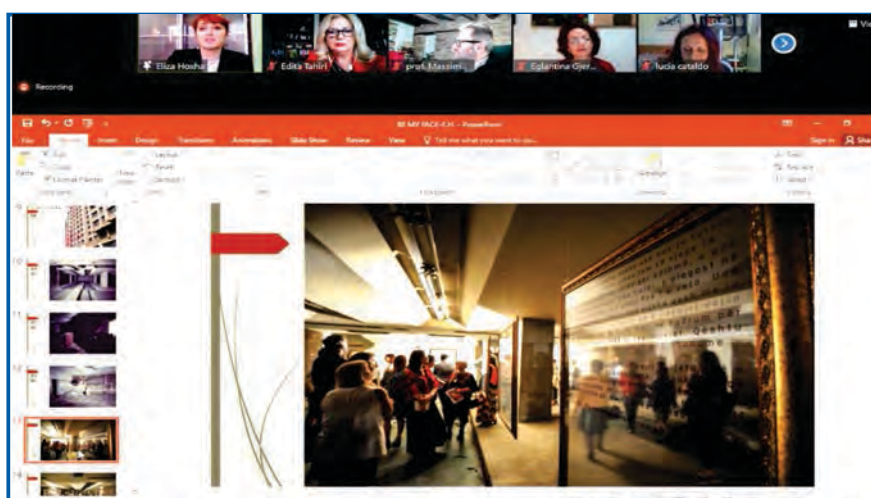
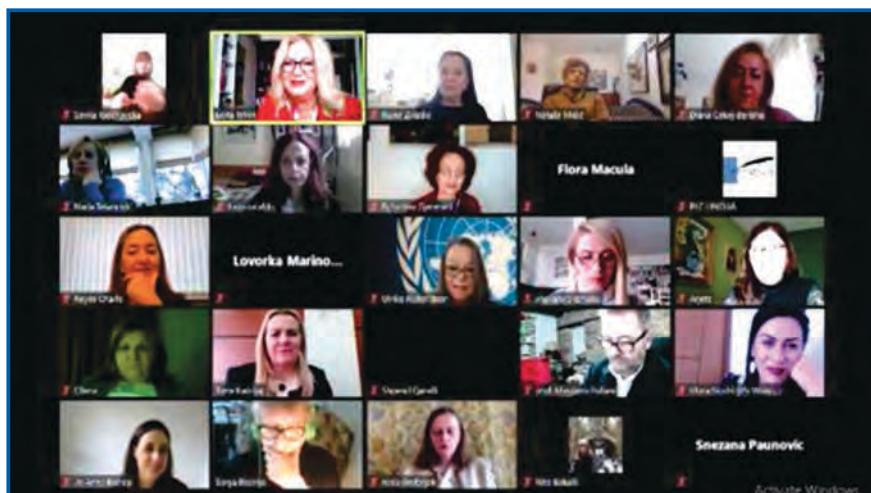


RAWLM-Regional Academy of RWLSEE



Regional Dialogue Conference

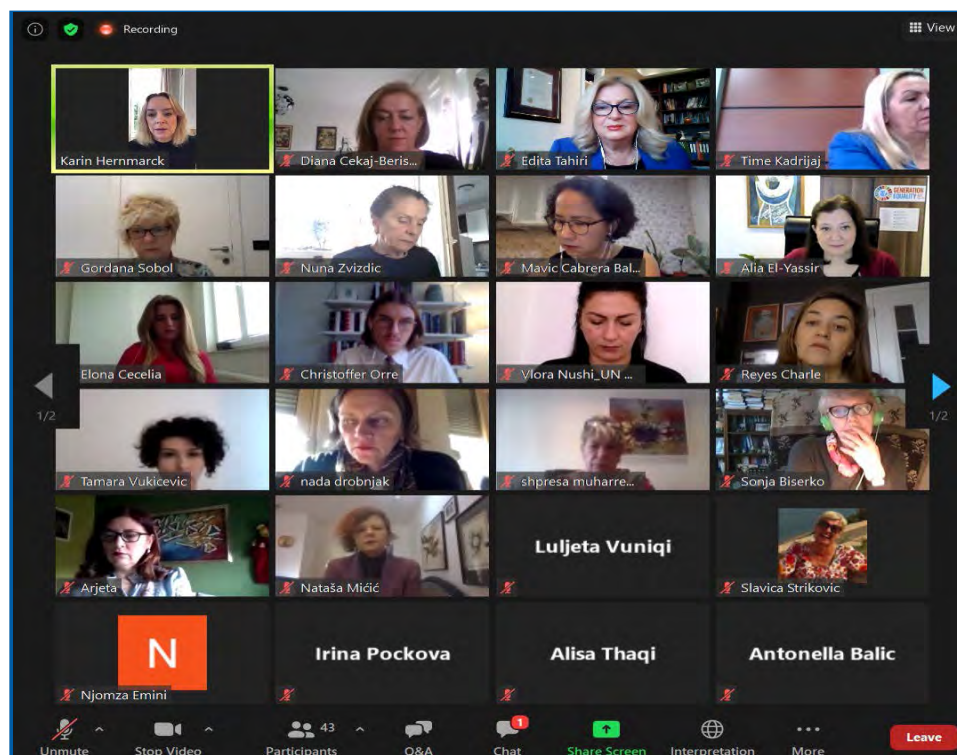


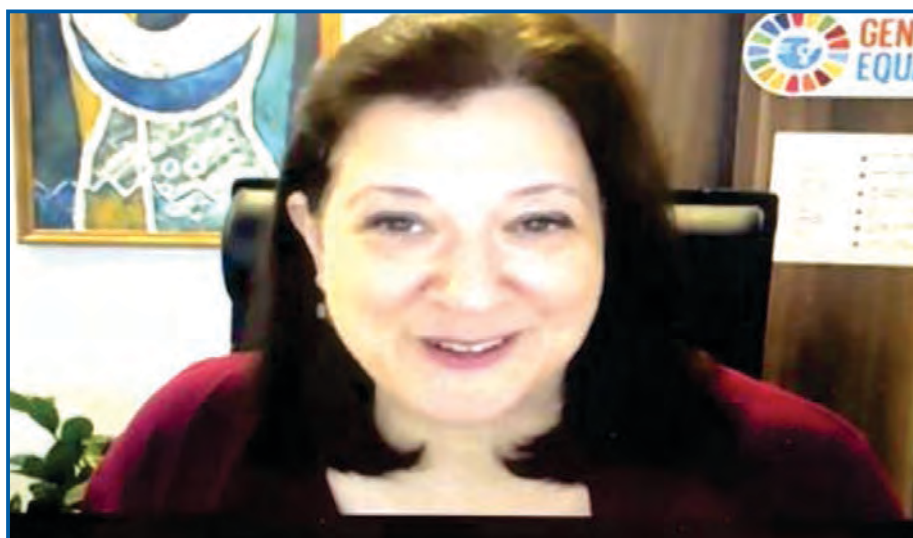
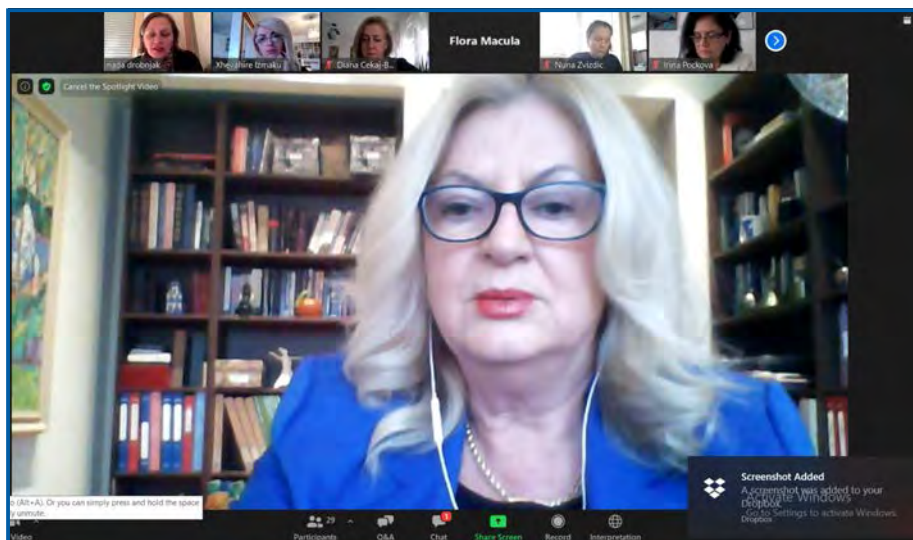


International Conference on 1325+20, 2021



International Conference on 1325+20, 2021





International Conference on Beijing + 25, 2019



Photo Gallery of Events









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RWL REGIONAL
WOMEN'S LOBBY IN
SOUTHEAST EUROPE

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