



“Women's Leadership brings Peace to this Troubled World: A Reflection on International Day of Peace”

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Commemorating International Day of Peace is indeed inspiring and mobilizing our minds and energy to reflect on peace - this universal aspiration, and to think about what we can do more for peace to be sustained. In my life experience, when I had to negotiate for peace to come to my people of Kosovo, peace was not a longing of my people but a must for me. Peace is rarely just an abstract ideal; for those enduring conflict, it is an absolute necessity for survival, safety and human dignity. Making peace is a challenging journey which requires dialogue, compromise, a forward-looking vision and decision-making capacity and power. My belief in true peace as just peace and peace of mind drove me to decide to make peace along with my fellow negotiators (all men), accepting the peace agreement of the Rambouillet Peace Conference in 1999, which ended the war and genocide against my people, leaving the door open to independence as the overarching goal of the independence movement of Kosovo, of which I was a key leader.

As I look back and reflect on today's troubled world, I think of and congratulate all today's unstoppable peacebuilders with women at the frontline. I am proud of my organization (www.rwlsee.org) working hard for peacebuilding in the fragile context of the post-conflict Western Balkans. Our work this year has been marked with many successes in implementing regional peace dialogue projects and intergenerational dialogue. Of course, this has been made possible by generous donations from our donors. Meanwhile, we are moving forward to elevating our work to a new level of strategic peacebuilding, gender equality, and women's empowerment and peace.

Women as recognized peace-drivers, demonstrate that their dedication to peace is about peace for all, about dialogue over division, about reconciliation over retaliation and about equality in peace, security justice, and political power-sharing.

However, the power of women to make peace and build lasting, inclusive peace is not yet sufficiently understood as a strategic power of the half of the world's population. Otherwise, women would not be underrepresented in decision making, formal peace processes, and, moreover, leadership positions.

This situation persists, despite the existing normative framework for women's participation in peace and security, including UN Security Council Resolution 1325, and despite the evidence base, which confirms women's positive impact on the durability of peace agreements.

A recent Secretary-General's report to the Security Council called women's leadership and participation in peacebuilding a "prerequisite for the fulfillment of the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development." In other words, without women's participation, we will not achieve lasting peace; and without the stability of peace, we will not achieve sustainable development.

Anyway, laws, policies, and international commitments continue to leave behind the reality of true gender equality.

Therefore, we must put forward the implementation of Resolution 1325 and other resolutions so that women are given greater access to leadership roles in peace, security and justice, closely aligned with the aim of Sustainable Development Goal (SDG) 5, on gender equality and women's empowerment.

At the same time our focus should continue on women survivors of conflict related sexual violence, who lack true justice while perpetrators go unpunished. So far, our efforts to seek justice have been in vain. In many letters addressed to the UN Secretary-General António Guterres, seeking international justice for women survivors of conflict-related sexual violence in Kosovo, Bosnia and Herzegovina, and Croatia, there have been no replies (see link: <https://rwlsee.org/category/letters-and-memos/>).

Even though justice is the only way of healing the wounds of wars and ensuring reconciliation, the UN has the legal authority to provide justice based on International Law, Conventions, and UNSC Resolutions, particularly the UNSC Resolution 2106 (2013).

The time has come to move from commitments to actions. Both UN Security Council Resolution 1325 and the SDGs represent the world's commitment to evolve towards a future where women lead and participate in peace and security matters, shaping new, peaceful and inclusive societies.

However, that desired future cannot be shaped if the world is led mostly by men—hesitation among men to allow women to take leadership seats means that the world will continue to be in trouble. There should not be a fear of women's leadership; it should be seen as a testing period and based on results; we should together rethink our strategy for global peace. The claim "More women in leadership, more peace in the world," is more valid than ever.

Ultimately, in commemorating this day my call is: let's help ensure that peace becomes a lived reality and strengthens the ideals of peace around the world.

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