Republika e Kosovës
Republika Kosova-Republic of Kosovo
Qeveria-Vlada-Government

Speech by the Minister for Dialogue of the Republic of Kosova and the Chairperson of the RWLSEE, Dr. Edita Tahiri, delivered at the IWPG/WARP Summit in Seoul, South Korea, 17- 19 September 2016

Dear participants,

Ideals for freedom and peace are most mobilizing forces that someone can experience. These ideals mobilized me to fight for independence of my country Kosova and victory came ten years after, in 1999. The struggle for independence is one of the best things you can do for your nation. I feel proud of it, because my people is now living in peace and working for prosperity and Euro-Atlantic future. No doubt, peace and freedom are vital for any individual and country in the world. But, for those like us who never again want to see war and genocide against their people, the peace has a very special meaning. This why I am here to call for peace and cessation of wars in the world and strongly support the Declaration of IWPG. We need to move fast and far. All women in the world should unify today in voicing peace and advocating the IWPG declaration.

We should be courageous, visionary and proactive. Our journey will be difficult and long, but the big ideals are never easy to come true. I tested myself. As a women leader in war times, I resisted and persisted. I never stopped fighting to defeat the occupier and liberate our people. I never felt any fear, was ready to die for freedom of my people. Each single day for ten years of war, my soul and mind was in constant contradiction, suppressing my emotions for tragedy of Albanians being killed and ethnically cleansed while myself lobbying in the world for seeking support for self-determination and independence.

But, before I move on to share my testimony of struggle, victory and pain, I want to express my gratitude to IWPG and Ms. Kim for having me here in this important summit on realizing peace and cessation of war globally. I am happy to be in South Korea to meet you all coming from different parts of world, and to meet the friendly Korean nation. Korea was among first countries that recognized Kosovo.

Dear participants,

I was not politician prior to occupation of my country. I joint the movement for freedom, democracy and independence of Kosovo because my nation was in need. I still remember a triggering moment that made me move, it was the moment when forces of occupier killed three Albanian children in the courtyard of an elementary school. I recalled my father's struggle for the rights of Albanians who never agreed with injustice of a divided and oppressed nation. In my mind and heart I felt a defining moment, the one of taking responsibility for helping survival of my people at any cost. I moved thousands of women in my city to join the movement of independence and soon was elected in the leadership of the movement, known as Democratic League of Kosova. I believed in what I was doing. I believed that there cannot be peace without justice for my people. The justice which builds on the right of people for self-determination of Kosovo people, and ending the oppression and genocide against my people. My goal was to make sure that genocide will never again happen against Albanians. I believed that women should fight hand by hand with men to achieve the historical goal of being free nation. Our strategy was based on using our power of mind, because we did not have arms. We used the force of argument to explain to the world the root cause of the Kosovo and Albanian question. The enemy, Serbia, was using military forces against us. Thousand and thousand Albanians were killed, women and children among them. But, we never gave up. We succeeded to make international community understand the question of Kosovo and meantime organized our state institutions that helped keep up the resistance. Our diaspora became our right hand. The resistance and persistence we performed, through peaceful means, brought the United States support as our key ally in reaching the freedom. When the enemy escalated the genocidal war and ethnic cleansing, the

armed resistance emerged as a response. The war at one hand and peace negotiations at the other hand were taking place for about two years. Finally, when the enemy failed to sign peace accord in the Rambouillet Conference in 1999, the US and key NATO partners decided to use force to end war and bring peace to Kosova and its people. I was part of peace negotiations and Foreign Minister of Kosova during all ten years of war.

And, even nowadays in peace times, I am still working for peace. I am negotiating normalization of neighborly relations and mutual recognition between my state and our former enemy Serbia. For five years, these peace talks mediated by the European Union and supported by the United States have produced tangible results though more remains to be done.

Dear friends,

The road to peace is possible, the case of Kosova is one example. History tells there are many other examples. What we want is no more wars in the world. We want to close the history of wars and open the history of peace in all world. This is what declaration of IWPG aims for, realizing peace and cessation of wars in the world, hence we should support. This declaration grasps the essence of humanity and humanitarian approach, although not all seem to be human in the world we live. The political and legal ground of the declaration conducive to the international law and UN charter provides a valid ground for supporting a saint goal of peace. This declaration reflects a philosophy of peace and culture of peace that we all need.

In our joint efforts for peace I would like to further the debate today. My experience and academic studies on conflict resolution and peacebuilding helped me understand the relevance of two more concepts that ensure sustainable peace. First, is the doctrine of responsibility to protect which provides for states to exercise sovereignty for protecting their people and, not for oppressing them. States should not be allowed to misuse sovereignty to oppress their people. Once a state harms its people, oppress or exert genocide against them, an international intervention becomes a necessity. In such cases people's value should rank higher than state value. That is how my nation was saved, thanks to US and NATO humanitarian intervention against Serbia/ Yugoslavia.

Second, is the concept of the postwar peacebuilding and statebuilding where the international involvement is critical. This implies that international involvement should not end when war ends, but it should rather continue until the state institutions becomes democratically functional and capable of providing public services to all people and until transitional justice and in particular justice for women raped in wars, reconciliation and reintegration of minorities are established. This is the only way to make sure that the root cause of conflict are removed, otherwise runs the risk of revisiting.

Finally let me say that women' role in peacebuilding processes is necessary. Not only women should be included in peace negotiations, but also women should be empowered in politics for to play a crucial role in post-conflict reconstruction processes. The UN resolutions support the peace and security agenda for women, we are the ones who can make it happen. It is also very important the regional cooperation of women for peace and security process. Here I want to highlight the RWLSEE, a unique and inspiring organization which brought together women leaders of seven countries dedicated to work for peace and empowerment of women. As the Chairperson of this organization, I can say that during ten years of our work we succeeded to make women voice be heard for critical issues and solutions for better future of our countries, better peace and prosperity and Euroatlantic future. I strongly encourage women from post-conflict societies to pursue regional cooperation while we stand ready to share our experience with you.

Commitment for peace is a holy mission. We should never stop working for it. The women are half of the world, we are emerging power in this century. Let us be a game changers. Let us be a leading force for better world.

Thank you for your attention!

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