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REGIONAL WOMEN'S LOBBY for PEACE SECURITY and JUSTICE in SOUTH-EASTERN EUROPE (RWLSEE)

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**REGIONAL ROUNDTABLE**  
**“WOMEN, REGIONAL COOPERATION AND EUROPEAN INTEGRATION”**

*Convened by*

*United Nations Entity for Gender Equality and the Empowerment of Women (UN Women)*  
*Regional Women's Lobby for Peace, Security and Justice in Southeastern Europe (RWLSEE)*

**BUDVA DECLARATION**  
**ON A GREATER ROLE FOR WOMEN IN PEACEBUILDING AND EUROPEAN INTEGRATION**

(Budva, June 14, 2018): In a regional conference on women's participation in peace processes and European integration, held in Budva on 14 June 2018, women politicians, parliamentarians, civil society from countries in region, and UN Women representatives called for a greater role of women in peace processes and European integration in the region of Western Balkans. The conference was organized by The United Nations Entity for Gender Equality and the Empowerment of Women (UN Women) and The Regional Women's Lobby for Peace, Security and Justice in Southeastern Europe (RWLSEE).

This peacebuilding conference brought together high-level women representatives from politics, parliaments and civil society who are actively involved in promoting the Women, Peace and Security Agenda. They came from seven-members of the RWLSEE: Albania, Bosnia Herzegovina, Croatia, FYR Macedonia, Kosovo, Montenegro and Serbia. Participants focused on finding ways for forging sustainable peacebuilding, regional cooperation and European integration of the Western Balkan countries, while ensuring that women must play a central role in these important processes for a peaceful future of the region. They raised concerns over dramatic underrepresentation of women in peace processes and negotiating tables and called for a meaningful participation of women in building a peaceful and European future in their countries. A common viewpoint of the participants was that the empowerment of women in peace processes and decision-making has strategic importance because it can result in better peace and stability and would speed up European integration of all countries in our region.

A particular importance was attached to peace dialogues and implementation of peace agreements, specifically to the Brussels Dialogue on normalization of relations between Belgrade and Pristina. They called for a final agreement that would ensure sustainable peace and peaceful neighborly relations, opening new era of peace and ending hostilities. Participants praised the historic agreement reached between Macedonia and Greece resolving name dispute, while called for other open issues to be closed in the region for the sake of peace, stability and European integration.

They also stressed the importance of women's engagement in local peace building processes, increased cooperation between women in politics and civil society, increased participation of women in political parties as way forward to decision making and more financial support for women's empowerment in peace building. This is because overall peacebuilding requires multilevel and inclusive processes.

The conference was generously funded by the Swedish Government and its Embassy in Kosovo and implemented in close cooperation with the Council for Inclusive Governance (CIG).

Following creative and constructive discussions throughout the day on the importance of empowerment of women in peace, regional cooperation and European integration, participants of the regional conference agreed to a joint declaration, stating as follows:

1. Women express their resolve to continue to work together regionally for peace and stability and European future of all region, having in mind that peace and progress can sustain when both women and men equally decide for the future, and when women is given equal participation in decision making and peace processes
2. Participants, while raising concerns over dramatic underrepresentation of women in peace processes and negotiating tables, called for a greater role for women in peacebuilding and European integration, for inclusive and gender responsive processes serve greater good for all
3. They highlighted that empowerment of women in peace processes and decision-making has strategic importance because of recognized peacemaking values and capacities of women which can contribute to better and more sustainable results
4. Having mild discrepancies between realities and commitments, particularly eighteen years after the UNSC Resolution 1325 and numerous following resolutions, a momentum

must be created through a bold commitment, political will and sufficient resources, by leaderships of UN and member countries to move forward with the substantial implementation of commitments on meaningful empowerment of women in decision making and peace processes

5. Considering that the European Union integration is a peace project that has transformational power on the relations amongst the aspirant countries, participants consider that the EU enlargement towards Western Balkans is a key to sustainable peace and stability in the region. Speeding up the euro-integration for Western Balkan countries would serve not only peace in region but also in Europe because those will be able to cope with democratic governance challenges as well as contemporary security challenges which are rather complex.
6. They expressed commitments to consistently lobby for the process of EU enlargement and explain to the society that European integration of the Western Balkans countries is both opportunity and responsibility to reform, while such reforms also mean the gender equality and empowerment of women in decision making levels and in all sectors of public life.
7. Participants attached a particular importance to peace dialogues and implementation of peace agreements and specifically to the EU facilitated Dialogue (Brussels Dialogue) on normalization of relations between Belgrade and Pristina. They called for a final agreement to be reached sooner rather later, while expressed support for a legally binding agreement that would ensure sustainable peace and stability in the region, opening new era of peace and ending hostilities.
8. Noting with concern the dramatic underrepresentation of women in the Brussels Dialogue and earlier peace processes that ended wars in the Balkans, participants called on national governments for a meaningful inclusion of women in the peace negotiating tables. They underlined the need for increased lobbying towards this goal, while called on the EU to support gender equality in peace processes including in the final phase of the Brussels dialogue.
9. Participants praised the historic agreement reached between Macedonia and Greece resolving the name dispute, while called for other open bilateral issues to be closed in the region for the sake of peace, stability and European integration.
10. In support of peace building, regional cooperation and good neighborly relations,

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participants underlined the importance of constructive narratives, promoting culture of peace and ending discourses of animosity, while peace negotiations should be considered an opportunity rather than being misused for generating nationalism and mistrust.

11. The role of regional cooperation among women in building and promoting peace, in constructive discourse and narratives is very much needed at this time, hence, participants gave support to regional cooperation initiatives and platforms that offer these kinds of opportunities such as the Regional Women's Lobby for Peace, Security and Justice in South Eastern Europe should be supported.
12. Participants stressed the importance of women engagement in local peace building processes, increased cooperation between women in politics and civil society, increased participation of women in political parties as way forward to decision making and more financial support for women empowerment in peace building. This because overall peace building requires for multilevel and inclusive processes.
13. Participants agreed on follow up meetings for the above stated goals, while stressed the relevance of expanding the participation to include dialogue among artists, peace activist and ethnic minorities.

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*RWLSEE is a unique regional women peacebuilding organization founded in 2006. Its mission is to empower women in peace processes and decision making in efforts of promoting peace, stability and European and Euro-Atlantic integration of the all countries of Western Balkans. It holds that more women represented in the relevant peace and political processes brings better and more sustainable results. Its membership are high level women from politics, parliaments, governments and civil society from seven-member countries Albania, Bosnia Herzegovina, Croatia, FYR Macedonia, Kosovo, Montenegro and Serbia.*

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



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