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REGIONAL WOMEN'S LOBBY for PEACE SECURITY and JUSTICE in SOUTH-EAST EUROPE (WWW.RWLSEE.ORG)

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*By Dr. Edita Tahiri,  
Chair of RWLSEE and former Deputy Primeminister and Minister for dialogue,  
Republic of Kosovo  
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### **“Doors must be open to women in peace processes”**

It is a real concern that women remain dramatically under-represented in peace processes and negotiation tables. The fact that legally there is a support for women empowerment and gender equality in this important area for peace and peaceful future, in practice not much progress has been achieved. Seventeen years passed since the UN Security Council adopted the Resolution 1325 calling for empowerment of women in decision making in peace and security processes. Many more following resolution adopted. National action plans adopted in many countries. Global Campaigns and national campaigns were and are all around. However from papers and words to practical implementation remained a hug gap.

The implementation is crucial challenge. It is obvious that lack of political will and lack of sufficient financial support leaves women outside the official tables where peace and conflict resolutions are being decided. This because of yet male dominated politics in national and international level.

Empowering women in peace processes, conflict prevention, conflict resolution and peacebuilding is in interest of humanity for more peace in the world. Particularly at this time when conflicts and wars are becoming a growing phenomenon.

Contemporary security challenges are more complex. They include traditional and new ambitions of states and other actors, starting from neo-geopolitical ambitions to the extremist violence, from neo-nationalism to the growing populism, from fragility of states to rise of corruption and organized crime. Hence peace is being threated from external factors but also internal ones.

It is known fact, that women and girls are more vulnerable group at war and conflict times; however their voices are not heard when decisions are being made neither when causing them or when settling them.

Debate is ongoing on this matter. Discussions, ideas and experience sharing among relevant actors are encouraging and can lead towards joint vision for peace and prosperity where women can play a central role. This paper contributes to this debate.

• CONTACT: +377 44 505 123 • +377 44 124 466  
• E-MAIL: [chair@rwlsee.org](mailto:chair@rwlsee.org) • [steering@rwlsee.org](mailto:steering@rwlsee.org) • [coordinator@rwlsee.org](mailto:coordinator@rwlsee.org)



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The recent peace and security reviews undertaken at the United Nations in 2015, including the Global Study on the Implementation of Security Council resolution 1325 (2000) on women, peace and security, highlighted the need to bring the UN's core prevention and peacemaking mandates back to the fore, and acknowledged the critical role women play in these efforts. The new UN Secretary General António Guterres has expressed strong commitment to women's leadership and gender equality as a vital element in peace processes and in advancing women, peace and security agenda conducive to the resolution 1325 and other resolutions. Increasing women's role in peace processes, international and regional organizations, including the UN, still need to enlarge their pool of high level envoys and senior mediators, and focus on adding women mediators and deploying them at all levels, said Gueteres.

### **Doors closed to women yet**

Despite this fact and although women is most affected category in conflicts and wars, doors for women are not fully open to participation in peace processes. Or more precisely women continue to be shut out of peace talks. Statistics tell that today's women comprised 9 percent of negotiators, 4 percent of witnesses and signatories to accords, and 2 percent of peace mediators. Those are astonishingly small percentages given the evidence, numerous international declarations, and the fact that women make up more than 50 percent of the world's population.

Since 1999, when I was part of the International Peace Conference that ended war in Kosovo, I have not seen any significant progress in increasing women's participation in peace processes and negotiating tables worldwide. We were all happy and hopeful when UNSC passed the Resolution 1325 in 2001. It was really a landmark achievement for women inclusion in peace and security decision making process, however in practical results have not been encouraging.

But what are the real obstacles to women's access and participation in peace processes and negotiating tables? Patriarchal and socio-cultural stereotypes of women are one among many obstacles that prevent women from entering official peace processes. Another obstacle being mentioned includes a high level of insecurity and personal threat for women participating in official peace negotiations. But this insecurity or personal threat is not an obstacle for women to quest for participation and taking responsibility in war times in joint efforts with men to achieve freedom, independence and peace for their countries and their people. In many cases in all parts of the world, we have seen women in frontlines of struggles for freedom. Kosovo is only one example of extraordinary contribution of women in the struggle for independence of the Republic of Kosovo. There are many other remarkable examples worldwide. Many prominent women wrote the history of liberation of their free nations together with men, but history has not much written about them rather about men.



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This debate is surrounded with paradoxes all around. However, the arguments that justify women non-participation in peace process gets eroded in front of arguments that prove how women have shown to be capable and courageous of taking most difficult and dangerous responsibilities in conflict and war situations.

Hence it's not about that women cannot make it. It's more about lack of political will in international, regional and national levels to promote and include women in peace and security processes, despite the fact that UNSC resolution 1325 and national laws on gender equality are obligatory to states and decision makers. Consequently ignoring women perspective in peacemaking and peacebuilding, while women issue remains unaddressed or inadequately addressed in peace agreements.

### **More women in peace processes, higher chances for peace**

Relevant research findings suggest that women's participation in peace processes can improve outcomes of peace efforts.

Women bring fresh vision and new additional values to peace negotiating tables, because our philosophy is more drawn to peace and our approach is principled but softer. Women must make more visible their potentials and values in helping build more peaceful future. Analyses have shown that women honest in governance, less corrupted and more sincere in implementation of agreements.

Increasing the women's participation in peace process requires for women to define more clearly the goals and pursue more innovative strategies in accomplishing those goals. It is important to define how we secure their access peace negotiations, the roles they can play in, how women can influence dynamic and content of peace negotiations and peace agreements.

Women must insist on their rights to be part of negotiating tables where decisions are being made, because those decisions affect them. This is a fundamental principal of democracy. Equality between women and men, as well.

Women must be there when peace agreements are negotiated and reached so to ensure gender-specific provisions of peace agreements or demands for gender equality in the post-settlement phase.

It is imperative that women potentials regarding peace and security issues should be unleashed, for better outcomes and broader support, given they present half of vision and half of capacities of humanity.



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### **Models that inspire**

Despite the minimal participation in peace negotiations and peace processes in general, women peace negotiators succeeded to show they can play remarkable role in making difference for the greater good. They not only pushed for peace agreement to happen but also helped in building cohesion among their delegations and mitigate tensions and divide as well as men's ego that could prevent peaceful outcome.

At international peace negotiations there are inspiring models of women peace negotiators. The role UN Secretary of State Madeleine Albright in the Rambouillet Peace Conference is exemplifying in terms firmness in making the peace deal. Although the Serbia and Miloshevic regime failed to sign the agreement, Kosovo delegations signed it and open the doors for end of war, freedom and independence, highly influenced personally and officially by Madam Albright. I personally witnessed it, being a member of Kosovo delegation in the Rambouillet Conference.

Other prominent women include Tzipi Livni of Israel, Hannan Ashrawi of Palestinian authority, Monica Williams, of Northern Ireland peace process, Miriam Coronel Ferrer of the Philippines, who served as peace negotiators and some others, but few in general.

I can speak of myself as an only women peace negotiator in Balkans in times of wars of disintegration of former and creation of new states, among which my country Kosovo. I have been in all of phases of peace negotiations until the war ended in Kosovo in 1999. I not only pushed hard for peace agreement to be reached in the Rambouillet Peace Conference but was constantly involved in building cohesion in our delegation, between peaceful and armed resistance representatives. I believe as being a woman, I was helpful in building unity in our delegation because I prevented men's ego fight. I also participated other peace processes pre-Rambouillet negotiations in 1998 and London Conference on disintegration of former Yugoslavia in 1992. I ended up being only women peace negotiator out of the three Balkans peace processes to end wars in Croatia, Kosovo and Bosnia and Herzegovina and I believe should be credited for that.

Even in peace times, for many years I have been a peace negotiator in the Brussels dialogue for peace and neighborly relations with former enemy Serbia, facilitated by EU and strong support of US. Am proud of results which brought empowerment of state sovereignty of Kosovo and helped advanced its euro-atlantic agenda. For about seven years, there was a substantial progress made out of this dialogue, which provided for Kosovo to consolidate its sovereignty in northern part of country, reintegrating Kosovo Serbs of that part back to Kosovo system, while Serbian meddling has drastically dropped. The endgame of the Brussels dialogue should be the mutual recognition between two states which would end chapter of hostilities and open chapter of peace between two states.

• CONTACT: +377 44 505 123 • +377 44 124 466

• E-MAIL: [chair@rwlsee.org](mailto:chair@rwlsee.org) • [steering@rwlsee.org](mailto:steering@rwlsee.org) • [coordinator@rwlsee.org](mailto:coordinator@rwlsee.org)



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The models of peacemaking involvements are found in many women peace activists and organizations at national, regional and international levels.

One of the unique model in the region is the Regional Women's Lobby for peace, justice and Security in the South Eastern Europe (RWLSEE) as the only regional women organization that works for women and peace agenda. Such model should be followed by regions which are currently under different conflicts and wars.

In attempt to contribute to peace building and reconciliation in entire region, conducive to the Resolution 1325, we women leaders in politics and civil society from seven countries in the Western Balkans, by self-initiative and support of UN Women/UNIFEM, established the Regional Women's Lobby (RWLSEE). For over ten years it is working hard to help build sustainable peace and stability through empowering women's participation, conducive to Resolutions 1325 and in the frame of speeding up of Euro-Atlantic integration for all countries in Western Balkans. RWLSEE even succeeded to find ways to impact peace process of Vienna status talks on Kosovo (2005-2006), by handing over a memo in support of independence of Kosovo signed by all its members to the Chief UN mediator Marti Ahtisaari, with whom they met in Vienna for this purpose. They also met with US, EU and Russian mediators in Vienna, thanks to UNWomen arrangement, to exert women impact in this peace process. In addition they also lobbied with UN Security Council members that visited Kosovo at that period. I think that this model of peacebuilding regional women's organization is a good example for your region, which is undergoing security challenges.

### **Women must work together to open doors**

Women must work together to open those doors, to remove whatever roadblocks because they are known to be devoted to peace and work for greater purpose. In this struggle all should be involved women intellectuals, politicians, peace negotiators, civil society, journalists and media.

Women should stay encouraged and firm in the struggle for gender equality in peace processes and peace building, because they can make it. We should take encouragement from the progressing changes we made in the empowerment of women in politics in past twenty years not only at our countries but also at global levels. The gender equality maps are improving worldwide, though far for being satisfactory.

Women are emerging force of this century. We are coming to the stage strong and mighty. We have shown that women can bring difference, because we bring a strategic value of the other half of

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population. The analyses show that more women in peace processes, the higher are chances for conflict resolution and peace agreements.

Women participation at peace process in different cases, although yet minimal, show valuable experience as how women can play important roles in peace and security processes, which than translates to credibility for women and further women empowerment.

What counts is to be strong, take up responsibilities, understand the needs and be visionary in addressing them.

At this time, when challenges on international peace and security are growing, we women should be more firm in seeking greater role in strategic decisions and peace processes in national, regional, international.

Our struggle is struggles for power or rather say for balance of power between women and man. We should focus in gaining more power in political decision making in our countries to be able to able to influence gender sensitive peacemaking and peace building policies.

I believe that gender balance comes from the balance of power between both genders. While political decision making rests more with man, not much can be achieved for women, as empirics is telling. This struggle should be pursued in partnership between man and women, because democracy and development cannot be achieved if women remain marginalized, and because it's a strategic interest to empower women as half of human capital for the better future. And for women to be victorious in gaining power, it is highly important to take charge in important issues of high concern for country and people.

Today, we need to help keep our countries and world more stable and peaceful. The security challenges that stem from destructiveness of geopolitical agendas of non-western actors, particularly in Balkans from the new Russian dangerous political games and Serbia siding with it, require from countries of Western Balkans more work on Euro-Atlantic integration, as a peace project that ensures lasting peace and stability. It also requires more presence of US and EU partners in the region. There are also other challenges mentioned in this paper.

This requires full involvement of women in peace and stability processes, engage in peace international processes and internal dialogues with population to bridge divide. Women are known as bridge builders, hence they must use this strategic capacity of our gender, to help conflict resolution and help different minority groups to understand and integrate into their countries systems. Organize inclusive networks in



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national and regional level. Create grand coalition of women peace organizations and women's rights and, build partnerships between women in politics and civil society for the common goals.

Lobby with your government and international organizations for more support in women's peacemaking and peace building efforts.

Find the ways to be part of peace negotiations and to have influence in peace negotiations. Target all three levels, first, second and third track diplomacy for conflict management, and bring the women's vision and say for peaceful outcomes.

Through direct contribution for helping peace and resolve the ongoing conflicts, women will be not only proud of its share in making the world of their dreams, but women will gain more political legitimacy and power, hence becoming inevitable part of equal decision making for better future in their countries and worldwide.

Beyond that, women empowerment is a reinforcement process. The more countries with empowered women, the more empowered women in the world.

Doors are not yet fully open to us, but we will open them. That is why women should mobilize more and more in taking responsibilities for higher goals. Women must be central part in building peace and better future, regardless different barriers that stand in our way. Higher goals make as fearless in spirit and help remove barriers to deliver what is right and what is needed and what belong to us.

We should be dreamers and doers. We can be leaders of change for better world and inspire other women to join the journey.

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