



REGIONAL CONFERENCE

“Women in decision-making at local level/ Role of women mayors as potential agents of change”

Convened by

***The Regional Women's Lobby for
Peace, Security and Justice in South East Europe (RWL SEE)***
November 7, 2016, Tetovo, Macedonia

TETOVO DECLARATION

(Tetovo, 7 November 2016): The Regional Women's Lobby for Peace, Security and Justice in South East Europe (RWL SEE) organized the regional conference “Women in decision-making at local level/Role of women mayors as potential agents of change” on 7 November 2016 in Tetovo, Macedonia. This regional conference was supported by UN Women and the Royal Norwegian Embassy in Pristina, Kosovo.

Approximately 70 prominent women mayors, politicians and leaders from civil society from the Western Balkan countries gathered in the city of Tetovo to discuss and agree on a set of recommendations on how to increase the role of women in peace and security processes in the region and in political decision-making. Key issues raised during the conference were: the role and challenges of women mayors in modernizing cities; integrating the vision of women into local affairs; increasing gender quotas; and the promotion of women in management and leadership positions. Special emphasis was also given to discussion of women's role in countering terrorism, preventing violent extremism and radicalization and stronger regional cooperation among the women mayors.

Among the high-level participants were Ms. Edita Tahiri, Minister for Dialogue of Kosovo, Chair of the RWLSEE; H.E. Ambassador Per Strand Sjaastad, Norwegian Embassy, Kosovo; H.E. Ambassador Henrik Nilsson, Swedish Embassy, Kosovo; Ms. Teuta Arifi, Mayor of Tetovo, Macedonia; Ms. Siret Elezi, Minister of Local Self Government, Macedonia; Ms. Flora Macula, Head of UN Women Office, Kosovo; Ms. Louisa Vinton, UN resident Coordinator and UNDP representative, Macedonia; Ms. Anastasija Olumčeva, Mayor of Bogdanci, Macedonia; Ms. Mimoza Kusari-Lila, Mayor of Gjakova, Kosovo; Ms. Amra Babic, Mayor of Visoko, Bosnia & Herzegovina; Ms. Florjana Koka, Mayor of Saranda, Albania; and Ms. Sonja Nikčević, Mayor of Niksić, Montenegro.



After a dynamic and constructive debate during the conference, the participants jointly adopted a Conference Declaration outlining and calling for the following key recommendations:

1. We share a common understanding that the position of women has improved compared to the past; however we call for additional support for reaching the goal of full equality between women and men in decision-making processes in the Western Balkan countries. We support the increasing number of women mayors in the region and we also reiterate our commitment to continue to work for the empowerment of women in all the countries of the region.
2. We urge for all participating country representatives to continue networking and strengthening regional cooperation among mayors and other relevant stakeholders and to dare to operate outside of political borders.
3. We agree to launch an initiative for a regional network of women mayors in the Western Balkans, based on the RWL SEE model. This regional network will serve as a platform for the exchange of experiences, mutual reinforcement and inspiration amongst women mayors, which can contribute to increasing the participation of women in politics at local and national levels.
4. We continue our support of the RWL SEE and women mayors to address concerns regarding issues of violent extremism in the region. We believe that women can play a crucial role in preventing and countering violent extremism. We agree that the definition of violent extremism must be widened to include not only religious extremism. We urge institutional strategies and action plans to increase the role of women with the aim of reaching a safer society.
5. We fully support the IWPG declaration of peace and continuous collaboration towards sustainable peace in the world.
6. We urge the RWL SEE to continue to be productive in addressing critical issues in the region revolving around women and to strive for peace, security and justice in political, economic and interethnic terms.