

## Concept note

### Community Level Peacebuilding in Kosovo

#### *Regional Roundtable to strengthen women's participation in local peacebuilding in Kosovo and beyond*

Prishtina, 21 September 2019

#### 1. Background and Rationale

The role of local women remains undervalued and they remain sidelined from peacebuilding processes and decision-making about the future of communities and our country. Deep gender inequality continues to shape the public life while civil society organizations suffer from insufficient support. Local leadership positions in municipalities continue to be dominated by men as well as local public administration, where women's representation do not go beyond 20%. In municipal assemblies, women represent 30%, only because of the quota, which shows that traditional barriers to women's participation in decision-making still persist. Currently, there are no women mayors and, the only one who held this position at one term lost it to men. The current peace and security context with its fragility threatens to have disproportionately negative effects on women and other marginalized groups including minorities, the disabled and migrants.

Peace and security in Kosovo and the region of Western Balkans continues to be fragile due to weak democratic institutions and rule of law, corruption, low economic growth, ethnic division and distrust, lack of progress in normalization of relations with dialogue stalled for 2 years between Serbia and Kosovo and, delays in European and Euro-Atlantic integration of Western Balkans countries.

Another factor that affects the low participation of local women is the 'missing link' between local peacebuilding and national peacebuilding. There seems to be a disconnect between national peace and decision-making processes and the community, because the central government and political actors are less interested in contributing to local level peace. Consequently, the space is so limited for women working for peace in their communities to have dialogue with decision makers at national level.

Although, these key factors are causing a feeling of injustice and tension in local communities, the women have found strength in each other and through women's organizations to strive and raise their voice for prosperity, justice and inclusion for themselves and entire community.



To respond to the persistent challenges of local women's empowerment and being aware of the key importance of local peacebuilding for the overall sustainable peace at national level, Regional Women's Lobby for Peace, Justice and Security in South East Europe (RWLSEE) together with the UN Women have been continuously supporting women and gender inclusive local peacebuilding in Kosovo and beyond.

Since its creation in twelve years ago, the RWL SEE has been bringing together women in leadership positions, in government and civil society, from across the Western Balkans to advocate and lobby for gender equality, women empowerment in decision -making, and women's meaningful participation in addressing security challenges at local, national and regional levels. This mission remains as relevant today as it was at the time of the Lobby's creation. Today, the RWLSEE is a most reliable regional actor in promoting and implementing the Women, Peace and Security agenda in the Western Balkans. Our approach from the ground up speaks of our vision that local peacebuilding efforts are crucial for achieving overall sustainable peacebuilding at higher levels. Hence, peacebuilding needs to focus on all levels, national, local and regional, for peace to be sustainable.

A special opportunity to accelerate the WPS agenda and meaningful participation of women in peacebuilding and democratic state building in Kosovo and Western Balkan countries comes from the upcoming historic anniversaries; the 20th anniversaries of the Resolutions 1325 and the 25th anniversary of the Beijing Platform. Hence, we anticipate an increased readiness of governments and international organizations and political will to put in action the commitments taken for significant advancement of gender equality and comprehensive empowerment of women.

## 2. Activity

While acknowledging the established national and international mechanisms for inclusion, and the various attempts of addressing the concerns of local women in Kosovo, at this phase there is a need to support the process of joint strategizing and prioritizing key recommendations that will help the change we need for women's meaningful participation. The need and relevance for such support was also expressed by the local women who participated in the two previous phases of this project (2017, 2018), supported by the generous grant from the Swedish Government.

For this reason, RWLSEE and UN Women will organize **a regional roundtable meeting** with representatives of local women from 10 multiethnic municipalities in Kosovo, women mayors from the region and the RWLSEE Steering Committee members, CSOs, national authorities and international organizations. This project is carried out within the framework of the UN Women and Swedish Government/SIDA supported project "Women's political empowerment, participation in and contribution to peace and security processes in the Western Balkans, phase

III". The meeting will build on the results of the meetings /dialogues that have happened with past Swedish Government funding in 10 municipalities in Kosovo. The recommendations identified in the previous meetings will be jointly reviewed, updated and prioritized by participants and a strategy to take forward the key recommendations will be adopted. The recommendations will offer concrete policies and actions to be tabled to national, regional and international authorities and other stakeholders, and, also concrete steps that women can take to achieve the identified goals. Discussions on implementation of the recommendations are likely to bring up cultural barriers, lack of security, lack of access to justice, uncertain economic prosperity, continued violence against women, failure to address justice for women survivors of sexual violence during conflict as well as lack of sufficient support mechanisms, which make up major ingredients of local peace, according to women's perspectives. Within this activity, women mayors from the region are invited to Kosovo to hear about local challenges and to share best practices from their own experiences on how to address them. This activity will also serve as an opportunity for women mayors from the region to cooperate and bring forward the Association of Women Mayors in the Western Balkans. The Association was first created as a volunteer initiative of mayors in 2017, with the facilitation of the RWL SEE, however it needs further consolidation following the best practices worldwide. This will help empower the women mayors and their joint work. Local and national government perspectives as well as international perspectives will also be brought in by participation of respective authorities.

This activity is in line with the UN Women, Peace and Security Agenda with emphasis on the localization of the UNSCR 1325 and other resolutions and National Action Plan for gender equality and women empowerment.

### **3. Objective and Expected Outcomes**

The overall objective of the meeting and the RWLSEE is to jointly prioritize recommendations and adopt a strategy to take forward more effectively the key recommendations to Kosovo authorities and the international community on how to improve the local women's empowerment and local peacebuilding in Kosovo. Expected outcomes will be:

1. Jointly prioritized recommendations on how to include women in the peacebuilding and decision-making at local levels – offering concrete policies and actions to be tabled to national, regional and international authorities and other stakeholders, and also concrete steps that women can take to achieve the identified goals

2. Adopted strategy as how to strategically bring the identified recommendations forward, bringing women's perspectives to the ways and possible solutions related to gender equality and women's empowerment at local level and gender inclusive local peacebuilding in Kosovo.
3. Offered platform of dialogue to women from different communities to discuss and realize the common problems that they face, which is likely to strengthen inter-ethnic trust between them and create a space for women to dialogue with local and national authorities
4. Local peacebuilding through regional cooperation will be provided. The dialogue and discussion among local women from different ethnic and political background and outcome will be enriched further by bringing in the regional perspectives from seven focus countries of RWLSEE which includes participation of the RWLSEE Steering Committee Members and Women Mayors from those countries.
5. The Association of Women Mayors in Western Balkans will be further consolidated, following the best practices worldwide, to help empower the women mayors and their joint work.

#### **4. Methodology**

Having mapped the recommendations from the meetings of local women from 10 multiethnic municipalities in Kosovo, from 2 previous phases, this meeting will start by offering a forum to discuss issues at the agenda to be followed by a breakout session in which in the working groups will further develop priority recommendations and propose strategies to take them forward. Working groups will include representatives from municipalities, mayors from region and will be facilitated by RWLSEE SC members. The findings and recommendations will be shared in the plenary session, which will broaden the basis and weight of the recommendations. The same meeting will also serve as a forum for women mayors from the region to follow up with efforts of consolidating the Association of Women Mayors in the Western Balkans, initiated by the RWLSEE in 2016 in the Regional Conference in Tetova, North Macedonia. Other international representatives from UN Women, UNDP, EU, as well as others will also attend the meeting.

#### **5. Participants, Location and Time**

The regional roundtable will include over fifty women representatives from different multiethnic municipalities and political backgrounds in Kosovo and seven focus countries of RWLSEE, both



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with experience from the civil society and official local peace initiatives. Representatives from the Kosovo Government, Sweden Embassy in Kosovo, UN Women and other international representatives will be present. The Regional Roundtable also includes women mayors from the region with central roles in the municipal governance. A team of moderators and facilitators will chair and facilitate the plenary panel discussions and breakout groups during the meeting. The team will consist of representatives from RWLSEE.

This is one day meeting will take place in Prishtina, 21 September 2019.