



**Women at the Center of Peacebuilding
in the Western Balkans**

Annual Report 2019



Foreword by RWLSEE Chair

This has been a very successful year for our organization as we succeeded to advance our peacebuilding and women's empowerment mission and influenced regionally and internationally for a better future.

I am happy that our Lobby's activities offered crucial contribution in empowering women in politics and decision-making and advanced processes of peacebuilding, trust-building, reconciliation, justice/transitional justice and security all through the region of Western Balkans.

Considering the relevance of women as peace drivers and good governance drivers, RWLSEE worked with dedication to give voice, agency and leadership to women in our common engagement for a better future.

Our unique regional approach allowed us to help strengthening regional cooperation and European and Euro-Atlantic values. We continued to provide peacebuilding platform and mediation services for dialogue among women from different communities and across the borders.

We continued to organize dialogue between women politicians and parliamentarians from Kosovo and Serbia with regional approach, where I am happy to notice reconciliatory ideas for neighborly relations between two states. We supported peace processes in the region and lobbied for meaningful participation of women in formal peace talks, including the Brussels dialogue on normalization of neighborly relations between Kosovo and Serbia and the North Macedonia and Greece peace agreement on name dispute.

Lobby also continued its work in local peacebuilding in Kosovo, through mobilizing local women to work together for making difference in their communities and municipalities.

With our voice raised as regional lobby and, with amplifying the women's voices we influenced and helped shape policies to build a more peaceful, secure, prosperous and Euro-Atlantic future in the post-conflict region of Western Balkans.

Motivated by upcoming historic anniversaries of the Beijing +25 and UNSCR 1325 + 20, RWLSEE dedicated the annual international conference to addressing progress and challenges for women empowerment in post-conflict region of Western Balkans in past 25 years and, came up with relevant recommendations, calling for more support for women in post-conflict settings.

We focused and accomplished our institutional strengthening, developed the four year's Strategic Plan 2019 -2022 and, designed the Project of Academia for Women in Leadership and Mediation as a new component of our mission towards capacity building for young women and generation equality. We also enlarged our organization by admitting new members.

In international engagements, the RWLSEE was highly successful in lobbying and participation in number of UN high-level meetings and international conferences organized by UN Women including events in New York, Geneva, Tunis, etc.

I believe this has been a historic year for RWLSEE because we succeeded to lobby at highest UN levels for international justice for women raped during the wars in the Balkans. In March this year, I as the Chair had a meeting in UN with Pamela Patten, Deputy UNSG in charge of issues of war rape of women, together with the Head of UN Women ECA Alia El-Yassir. In this meeting I requested support and presented the Letter of RWLSEE to UNSG Antonio Guterres seeking international justice for women raped in wars in Kosovo, Bosnia and Croatia and, the Petition of Kosovo Citizens seeking international justice for women raped during the war in Kosovo.

I was honored to take part at the high-level panel of UN Women at CSW63 at UN Headquarters in New York, together with UN Women Head Phumzile Mlambo-Ngcuka and Jean-Pierre Lacroix, the UN Head of the Department of Peace Operations. In my speech, I called for more support for Balkans and women of Balkans as a post-conflict region and, particularly for international justice for survivors of rape during the wars in Balkans, which is being kept forgotten while perpetrators remain unpunished together with recent tragic wars in Balkans.

RWLSEE continued to share its experiences with women in conflict and post conflict settings with particular focus in the Middle East and North Africa

This Annual Report presents RWLSEE accomplishments for the period of January-December 2019, progress and challenges as well as RWLSEE role in advancing WPS Agenda in the region of South-east Europe.

RWLSEE's outstanding work was possible thanks to all members of RWLSEE, Steering Committee, Coordinator, Secretariat, all dedicated women leaders from politics and civil society, from seven countries in Western Balkans.

I express my thanks to UN Women, UN Women ECA and UN Women Kosovo for the strategic partnership with RWLSEE. My special thanks go to Swedish Government and Swedish Embassy in Kosovo for the financial support for RWLSEE and, for being with us in this challenging journey for many years. I express my thanks to international expert for designing the RWLSEE's capacity building project on Academia for Women in Leadership and Mediation. I highly appreciate support and cooperation we had with national and local governments and experts, other UN agencies and international experts.

Sincerely,



Dr. Edita Tahiri

Former Deputy Primeminister and Chief Negotiator
RWLSEE Chair

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About RWLSEE

The Regional Women's Lobby in South East Europe (RWLSEE) is working to empower women in politics, decision-making and peacebuilding and, to shape policies that will build a more peaceful, secure, prosperous and Euro-Atlantic future in the post-conflict region of Western Balkans.

RWLSEE sounds the relevance of women as peace drivers and good governance drivers and, we are working to give voice, agency and leadership to women in our common engagement for a better future.

In response to peculiarities of post-conflict challenges for gender equality and for peacebuilding in the region, RWLSEE chose the regional cooperation as a best model to overcome the challenges. It made it possible to mobilize and bring together women leaders from politics and civil society, across borders and ethnic lines, to work together for peacebuilding, trust-building, reconciliation, justice and security in the region, despite the tragic past.

RWLSEE is recognized as an effective model of regional cooperation among women in post-conflict setting, which strives for gender equality and equal participation of women in decision-making and peacebuilding and all other spheres of life. We believe and foster women's role and vision as a strategic intervention in addressing gaps in state building and peacebuilding in the region, including gender inequality, unfinished peace, fragile democratic governance, fragile security and justice, incomplete transitional justice, incomplete normalization of neighborly relations, autocracy, corruption, unemployment and, other socio economic issues and slow pace of EU and Euro-Atlantic reforms.

RWLSEE is a unique regional peacebuilding and mediation organization in the Western Balkans, working for implementation of Women, Peace and Security resolutions, at regional national and local level.

Today, the RWLSEE can be considered as a most reliable regional actor in promoting and implementing the WPS agenda in the Western Balkans. It is a model to be followed and, we are ready to share our experiences with women in conflict and post-conflict settings in other parts of the world.

RWLSEE is founded in 2006. It operates in seven focus countries, Kosovo, Croatia, Bosnia and Herzegovina, Serbia, Montenegro, Albania and North Macedonia, from where its membership comes from.

RWLSEE is supported by the UN Women as a strategic partner. The Swedish Government acts as a major donator, along with Finish and Norwegian governments occasionally.

MAKING A DIFFERENCE IN WOMEN'S LIVES

In over 13 years of its work, RWLSEE have positively impacted women's lives in the Western Balkans in many aspects, as follows:

- considering the relevance of women as peace drivers and good governance drivers, RWLSEE worked with dedication to give voice, agency and leadership to women in our common engagement for a better future

- influenced significant changes in favor of women political empowerment in decision making and peacebuilding throughout the region
- engaged, encouraged, consolidated self-confidence and supported inclusion of women in politics and democratic governance as well as in gender responsive policies and actions in our focus countries
- we supported peace, trust-building and reconciliation through our ideas and actions, through providing platforms for inter-ethnic dialogues on reconciliation and ways of breaking the war legacy of inter-ethnic mistrust
- significantly contributed to the long-term development of peace-oriented societies by promoting culture of peace and peaceful resolution of conflicts and, arguing legitimacy of gender equality for achieving sustainable peace and development as a best way for effective conflict management
- supported peace processes in the region and lobbied for meaningful participation of women in formal peace talks, including Vienna status talks on Kosovo, Brussels Dialogue between Kosovo and Serbia, Prespa Agreement on name dispute between Macedonia and Greece
- with our bottom-up approach through regional cooperation, we worked for localization of peacebuilding including mediation, as a foundation for sustainable and gender inclusive peacebuilding
- promoted gender responsive rule of law, justice, security and economy as relevant pillars of democratic state building
- advocated and fostered transitional justice and, sought international justice from UN for conflict related victims of sexual violence in Kosovo, Bosnia and Herzegovina and Croatia.
- promoted and shared experiences internationally of the RWLSEE, as a model of regional networking and cooperation in empowering women and peacebuilding

WORKING IN A CHALLENGING POST-CONFLICT CONTEXT

RWLSEE considers there is a real threat that growing insecurity, fragile peace and stability, weak democracy, governance, rule of law and weak economy in the region threatens to further increase vulnerability of communities and particularly women empowerment agenda on peace, security and justice.

Fragile peace, weak governance and growing security challenges

Recent years have also seen an increasingly complex interplay between some new security challenges such as geopolitical, extremist violence, increasing nationalism and migration, dangerous ideas of border change and land swamp and serious delays in European and Euro-Atlantic integration of all six countries Western Balkan countries. It threatens setting back any developmental progress achieved in peace and stability in the region, with a disproportionate impact on people who are marginalized and suffer economic poverty and freedom of movement. The unfinished peace in Balkans is a controversy between conflict drivers and peace drivers that make a current paradigm in the region. While the conflict drivers come from fragility of states in democratic, rule of law, economic terms run by corrupted and autocratic political elites, the peace drivers include human capital that are prone to integrity, idealism and good governance, however nowadays marginalized due to autocratic systems. This controversy makes it even more difficult for women to take up its deserved role in society and public life, despite the

fact that women have shown to be peace drivers and their inclusion in public decision making is proved to help more peace and more effective governance.

The European and Euro-Atlantic integration of all six Western Balkan states is seen as peace project, while the reforms towards this goal as a transformational factor that will make states accepted to the Western family of Euro-Atlantic community. However, delays in integration and enlargement fatigue of EU have weakened peace and stability prospects while allowing space for nationalisms and extremisms to revisit in the region.

Some good developments include the Peace agreement between Macedonia and Greece on the name dispute, which is a significant step forward for peace and stability in the region and the European future.

After seven years of progress in the EU facilitated Dialogue on normalization between Kosovo and Serbia (2011-2017), we note with concern that this process has been stalled in last two years. This due to the fact that its concept of normalization of neighborly relations based on European principles has been challenged by dangerous geopolitical games of border change and land swamp harmful to peace and stability in the region. Such ideas were categorically refused by Kosovo people and institutions and, Serbia's open-minded forces from politics and civil society. Strangely enough, the EU facilitator has opened space for such discussions, thus violating the EU principles of good neighborly relations and regional cooperation. RWLSEE and women parliamentarians from Kosovo and Serbia in the Durres Regional Roundtable (September 2018) discussed and opposed such dangerous ideas through a joint public statement, whereas it supports the finalizing of the Peace Agreement between Kosovo and Serbia under the EU facilitation and US support, in a way that it must contribute for peace and stability in Balkans and Europe.

An insecure region – a serious barrier for women's meaningful empowerment

An insecure region of Western Balkans poses serious barriers for meaningful empowerment of women in decision-making and participation in peace and political negotiating tables in the region. Instead of having progressive empowerment of women, serious drawbacks particularly in decision making and governance have been recorded in all countries in the region, while women representation in parliament of local assemblies have been kept intact due to the mechanism of quota. It indicates that women empowerment has undergone unstable development, including the fact that in five peace processes to end wars in the region women were dramatically marginalized where only one woman was part of peace negotiating tables, that is the Chair of the RWLSEE. This, despite the fact that women were affected by wars in most brutal ways, gave their contribution for conflict resolution and peacemaking and, and in aftermath of wars continue to invest their capacities on peacebuilding, trust-building and reconciliation.

HAVING WOMEN LEAD THE WAY - RWLSEE's highlights in 2019

Empowering women for political decision making and peacebuilding in the Western Balkans

The RWLSEE during 2019 continued its mission to empowering women in decision-making and peacebuilding and, with the goal of achieving the gender equality in the Western Balkans, peacebuilding, democracy consolidation and Euro-Atlantic integration of all seven focus countries. Based on its mission, vision, Strategic Plan 2019-2022 and Action Plan 2019 and having in mind that the current situation in women's status in the Western Balkans continued to be discouraging because

the gender equality is far from being real, RWLSEE made maximal efforts to respond to persistent severe gender inequality. The role of women remains undervalued and marginalized, which is intolerable. RWLSEE considers that women's empowerment and gender equality help create a foundation for long-term growth and peaceful, just and inclusive societies.

Major achievements of RWLSEE in this year include series of trust-building and interethnic dialogues, topical international conferences addressing issues of WPS agenda, including unfinished peace, fragile democracy, security, rule of law security, unemployment, political crisis, in 7 focus countries. Localization of UNSC 1325 in Kosovo including different communities with women from across the region contributing to enhance the localization of peace building efforts to be continued in other focus countries. Strategic dialogues between different communities and political dialogue between women politicians and parliamentarians from Kosovo and Serbia was part of the agenda that were successfully accomplished. Access to justice and transitional justice have been under focus for the sake of justice for women, reconciliation and a just inclusive societies, including efforts to gain UN support for international justice for women survivors of sexual violence during the last wars in Western Balkans.

In efforts of political empowerment of women, we also provide different platforms of discussion on various topics / problems in our countries and regional common problems. This include high level regional roundtables and international conferences to address problems in good governance, security, justice, economy and social aspects, corruption and organized crime that stand in the way of progress and European integration of countries in the region. These platforms are specifically designed to address issues affecting women and aims at enhancing women's role in peacebuilding and political leadership. Likewise, we mobilize women to be active in helping overcome certain crisis in the region, by bringing to the table women politicians from both position and opposition, such were the cases in Kosovo, Macedonia, Serbia, Albania, etc.

Results and recommendations produced through inclusive multi-stakeholder dialogue meetings and international conferences, are disseminated to relevant institutions of national, local and international levels for influencing more effective laws, policies and other peacebuilding and state building initiatives at the national and regional levels. Our efforts in partnership with national and regional peacebuilding institutions have contributed significantly to the long-term development of peace-oriented societies by introducing legitimate process and institutions for effective conflict management.

At the forefront of the RWLSEE Agenda remains the empowerment of women in decision-making and peacebuilding processes, in line with UNSC Resolution 1325 and other resolutions on women, peace and security.

Since its creation thirteen years ago, the RWL SEE has been bringing together women in leadership positions, in government, parliament 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 peace, security and justice 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 can be considered as a most reliable regional actor in promoting and implementing the WPS agenda in the Western Balkans.

This Annual Report presents RWLSEE accomplishments for the period of January -December 2019, progress and challenges as well as RWLSEE role in advancing WPS Agenda in the region of South-east Europe.

In partnership with UN Women and support from Swedish Government, the RWLSEE has strengthened the crucial role that women play and emphasized the importance of women being engaged as active agents of change to achieve durable peace.

Fostering peace through track two peace processes in region

RWLSEE stands that more women in decision-making, peacebuilding and negotiating tables can result in more peace, stability and prosperity. Our engagement in this mission integrated the ‘multiple paths to peace and democracy.’ We fostered and mediated inclusive political and peacebuilding processes by ensuring the meaningful participation of women and other relevant stakeholders in inter-ethnic dialogues, roundtables and international conferences. Our specific characteristic is that mediation we offer is of regional character, thus providing regional experience sharing (from our membership) in searching for solutions.

We believe that peacebuilding is a complex and long-term engagement, thus we invest in long-term relationships of trust between women politicians and civil society activists across border lines and ethnic lines. We complement it with bottom-up approach, namely, through local peacebuilding and community building projects focused on municipalities of multi-ethnic composition, in Kosovo and other focus countries.

In past 13 years, RWLSEE supports the peace processes in the region. It primarily focused on the Brussels peace process on neighbourly relations between Kosovo and Serbia as a key contribution to sustainable peace and stability in the region of Western Balkans and the Prespa Agreement on resolution of name dispute between North Macedonia and Greece.

RWLSEE’s mediation of track two peace dialogue between women parliamentarians from Kosovo and Serbia

RWLSEE provided a second track peace process by organizing peace dialogue meetings between women parliamentarians from Kosovo and Serbia with participation of women from region, in support of the first track peace process, the Brussels Dialogue between Kosovo and Serbia facilitated by EU and supporting by US.

The RWLSEE’s second track peace process between women parliamentarians from Kosovo and Serbia, with participation of women from region, takes place for over 9 years. It continues even nowadays despite the fact that official track one peace process of the Brussels Dialogue was stalled in past two years. This joint peace journey of women started with big difficulties and under polarized atmosphere, however in many years of this negotiation exercise it not only has produced greater mutual understanding but also shaped the dialogue approach into one of trust and rapprochement. It narrowed down differences and broadened the views on possible peaceful outcomes. The last roundtable dialogue, in October 2019, showed how women can go beyond party lines to think and discuss more for future than for past. The women showed that breakthrough is possible and called on Kosovo and Serbia to resume dialogue in Brussels for the sake of peace for next generations. They

called for a meaningful inclusion of women in formal peace processes and gender inclusive peace agreements and, relevance of genuine implementation of peace agreements.

RWSEE will continue the dialogues between women parliamentarians of both countries, while is committed to expand it to include women from academia, economy, art and media, dependent on financial support it can receive in the future.

Local peacebuilding

RWLSEE worked to empower women community leaders to contribute towards greater reconciliation and trust-building. The RWL-SEE organized number of outreach meetings with women from municipalities in Kosovo to discuss women's empowerment and participation in trust-building and to enhance their role in promoting inter-community dialogue and supporting peace processes in line with the UN Security Council resolution 1325. We organized workshops on community level peacebuilding in Kosovo with participation of women from ten multiethnic municipalities. Such were Regional Roundtable to strengthen women's participation in local peacebuilding (funded by MFA Sweden) and Community-based Mediation Training, Advancing the Women, Peace and Security Agenda in Kosovo. They helped support of greater inter-communal cooperation and dialogue between women from different ethnic communities.

Calling more support for women in post-conflict settings on the eve of historic anniversaries

Ahead of the 25th anniversary of the Beijing Declaration and Platform for Action (Beijing+25), the Regional Women's Lobby in Southeast Europe (RWLSEE) and UN Women held an International Conference in November 2019, as part of a Swedish Government supported initiative aimed at supporting peace-building efforts in the Western Balkans region. Conference participants discussed achievements and challenges in women's empowerment and gender equality in the Western Balkans during the last 25 years since the adoption of the Beijing Platform. They focused on decision-making, peacebuilding, security and justice, where women face specific challenges given the Region's specific post-conflict context.

Calls for meaningful support for women's empowerment and gender equality in post-conflict regions, such as the Western Balkans, are necessary as women have shown to be peace drivers. Such action is much needed in the Western Balkans as it continues to experience fragile peace, unconsolidated democracy, and new dangerous security challenges that threaten to harm the progress gained over the past 20 years.

Edita Tahiri, the chair of RWLSEE, stated that the Western Balkans region was forgotten and overshadowed by the tragedies and wars it had experienced. She also emphasized that women's role in working for peacebuilding and reconciliation was also insufficiently recognized. "Now is the time to empower women in the Balkans and beyond, as only gender equality can deliver a safe future, development and a gender inclusive and just society," said Ms. Tahiri.

Increasing international profile of women's issues in post-conflict setting of Western Balkans and sharing experiences of RWLSEE internationally

RWLSEE have succeeded in increasing international profile of women's issues in post-conflict setting of Western Balkans and shared experiences of RWLSEE internationally, in numerous international meetings and conferences. It lobbied for more attention, recognition and support for women's peacebuilding efforts in Western Balkans, while expressed concerns that Balkan's war history is being forgotten and contribution of women for reaching peace and building peace is being undermined. The RWLSEE Chair Edita Tahiri who represents RWLSEE in international affairs participated and shared peacebuilding experiences in number of UN high level meetings and international conferences on women's empowerment and peaceful conflict resolution organized by UN Women including events in New York, Geneva, Tunis, Argentina, Vienna, etc. Ms. Tahiri was also part of UN Women's Expert Group who produced the report on a meaningful participation of women in peacebuilding processes in 2018.

In terms of international justice for women raped in wars in Western Balkans, RWLSEE has made an historic step in promoting this issue, through lobbying at highest UN levels. In March this year in UN Headquarters, the RWLSEE Chair Edita Tahiri in a meeting with Pamela Patten, Deputy UNSG in charge of issues of war rape of women, accompanied by head of UN Women ECA Alia El-Yassir. In the meeting, she discussed this topic and presented the Letter of RWLSEE to UNSG Antonio Guterres seeking international justice for women raped in wars in Kosovo, Bosnia and Croatia as well as the Petition of Kosovo Citizens seeking international justice for women raped during the war in Kosovo. She also was a speaker at the high-level UN Women panel at CSW63 at UN Headquarters, together with UN Women Head Phumzile Mlambo-Ngcuka and Jean-Pierre Lacroix, the UN Head of the Department of Peace Operations. In her speech, she called for more support for Balkans and women of Balkans as a post-conflict region and particularly for international justice for survivors of rape during the wars in Balkans, which are being hidden and forgotten together with recent tragic wars in Balkans.

Institutional strengthening

In 2018, RWLSEE developed and published its **Strategic Plan for 2019-2022**. The RWLSEE's Strategic Plan for next four years has been formulated considering the context of changing global and regional trends. The process of consultations was extensive inside the organization and with various stakeholders of the RWLSEE, including the UN Women, international experts, politicians, parliamentarians, international partners, donors, other UN Agencies operating in Kosovo. On this purpose, two strategic meetings were held, the Steering Committee and members of RWLSEE (17 November 2018 in Istanbul) and RWLSEE Strategic meeting (10-11 March 2019 in Prishtina). Important inputs came from the 2018 Istanbul Declaration adopted in the International Conference on Peacebuilding (16 November 2018 in Istanbul) organized by RWLSEE and UN Women with participation of the RWLSEE members, politicians and parliamentarians from the region, international representatives and experts, UN Women Kosovo, UN Women ECA, head of UN Team Coordinator Kosovo and Ambassador of Sweden in Kosovo.

The RWLSEE Strategic Plan defines key strategic goals and objectives for the organization for the next four years. The key three strategic goals include: 1. Fostering peace through women's empowerment

in decision making and peacebuilding, 2. Building women capacities to become leaders, mediators and agents of peace, 3. RWLSEE becoming leading regional women voice in peacebuilding

RWLSEE **designed the Project of Academia for Women in Leadership and Mediation** as a new component of our mission towards capacity building for young women and generation equality.

In 2019, RWLSEE **welcomed a new member** fulfilling the aim of enlargement of the organization and responding to growing interest of women from the region to join us. Each of branches in seven countries brought in women with distinguished profile in area of WPS.

RWLSEE also **designed the Action Plan for 2020**. In the Annual meeting with the Steering committee and all members, RWLSEE discussed about achievements and challenges during 2019 and designed the action plan for the next year, in Skopje 27 November 2019.

KEY PROGRESS IN 2019

- a) RWLSEE acted as peacebuilding mediator, in providing platforms for dialogue and engagement on peacebuilding, at regional and local initiatives, through [Regional Roundtables](#) and [International Conference, with participation of](#) women politicians from Kosovo and Serbia, Members of Parliaments, government officials, diplomats and civil society representatives from across the Western Balkans.
- b) Trust building, and inter-ethnic dialogues was held in Kosovo providing a platform for dialogue for women from different communities in different multi-ethnic municipalities. Discussions focused on common problems experienced and local development agenda.
- c) In supporting exchanges between RWLSEE gender equality advocates, three Steering Committee meetings were held jointly with the RWLSEE Secretariat and one [annual meeting](#) of RWLSEE Members
- d) Brussels Dialogue discussions for continuation among women, despite its stalemate for two years, were organized for women Member of Parliaments from Belgrade, Serbia and Prishtina, with participation of women from the region. It fostered greater understanding and regional cooperation among women politicians to advance peace stability and prosperity in the region and European and Euro-Atlantic integration.
- e) Fundraising activities has been held which resulted successfully on fund increase to support RWLSEE.
- f) Activities of lobbying and advocacy included participation in international conferences, meetings with politicians and diplomats and advocating through media communication on equality between women and men and for more support for women in national and local elections in seven-member countries of the RWLSEE.

ACHIEVEMENTS IN 2019

The project is aligned with the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development on strengthening peace and, fostering peaceful, just and inclusive societies free from fear and violence. The project contributed to the achievement of the following long-term results:

1. In seven countries, dialogue platforms provided by RWLSEE empowered women in decision-making with generation of fresh ideas and actions to further a gender inclusive peace building agenda in the region. RWLSEE Members and participants agreed on a set of conclusions and recommendations for accelerating sustainable women's empowerment in decision-making,

peace building and security. The recommendations will contribute to 2020's UNSCR 1325's 20th anniversary, Beijing Platform's 25th anniversary and 5 years of the Sustainable Development Goals.

2. Women politicians/parliamentarians contributed in Kosovo-Serbia and regional dialogue for strengthening peace and stability in the region and raised awareness on importance of women's inclusion at the negotiating table for more gender inclusive and sustainable outcomes.
3. Regional cooperation was further enhanced with exchanges of knowledge and experiences between RWLSEE gender equality advocates and representatives from politics, parliaments, governments and civil society across the seven countries.
4. In strengthening the strategy and position of RWLSEE for the upcoming years, RWLSEE Strategic plan for 2019-2022 was developed and adopted. Members of the Steering Committee of the Lobby evaluated RWLSEE's accomplishments and challenges over the years and identified key strategic direction and priority objectives based on needs and trends - specific to the region.
5. RWLSEE launched the program on training local women in mediation and peacebuilding in Kosovo, in cooperation with UN agencies and experts.
6. Conceptual preparation has taken place in past two years on Project planning to promote peace by providing capacity building education and training to young women in order to have them be agents of peace as well as enhance women participation in peacebuilding and political leadership. This RWLSEE program will be implemented through the Regional Academy for Women in Leadership and Mediation (RAWLM). Pitch for fundraising for RAWLM has been already shared with donors.

The empowerment of women in democratic governance and peace building throughout the region as well as peace building at local level, both essential for inclusive and sustainable peace and security, have been addressed and emphasized in the conferences and dialogues organised. Therefore, the need for continuation of such important dialogues in such forum and their value, which will permit further and more intensive dialogue among women has been decisively requested.

PARTNERSHIP AND FUNDING

International community funding in Kosovo, namely Swedish Government and UN Women's core funding supported the RWLSEE's dialogue platforms and secretariat as crucial to peace processes in Kosovo and the Western Balkans, reinforcing the importance of women's participation in political and peace dialogue processes (in adding women's priority issues related to post conflict, reconstruction, peace and trust building and reconciliation).

GAPS

A need for funding and continued support to the RWLSEE' mission and secretariat remains crucial. To fulfil the mission of RWLSEE in advancing the WPS agenda therefore to sustain the goals and effective work of the RWLSEE the crucial factor remains the strategic partnership with UN Women with the main priorities also to fundraise further with International community and donors.

The complexity of RWLSEE as an regional organization is also due to the fragile political and security context related to unfinished peace, incomplete normalization of neighbor relations and insufficient progress in democracy, rule of law, respect for human rights, women rights and ethnic minority rights, and socio-economic issues and slow pace of EU reforms.

MAIN ACTIVITIES FOR 2019

As part of its peace building goals and advocacy campaign to advance peace and stability in the region, Regional Women's Lobby for Peace, Security and Justice in SEE, supported by UN Women, continued to be leading efforts in regional empowerment of women. It offered crucial contribution in empowering women in politics and decision-making and peacebuilding and, advanced processes of peacebuilding, trust-building, reconciliation, justice and transitional justice for survivors for conflict related sexual violence and security, all through the region of Western Balkans. **RWLSEE was recognized as a critical machinery by UN Women for being a unique and effective model of regional cooperation among women in post-conflict setting, seasoned peacemakers and activists.** Due to its tremendous work done, RWLSEE has been also part of SG WB Action plan recommendations, aiming to promote sustainable peace in the Western Balkans.

The policy recommendations produced below have been disseminated to the relevant institutions at the local, national, and international levels for influencing more effective laws, policies, and other peacebuilding and state building initiatives.

1.

The RWLSEE from the Western Balkans region and local level women representatives from 6 different communities in Kosovo now have a practical **set of policy recommendations** for developing advocacy and training methodology to support peacebuilding and mediation efforts in the region. Recommendations will feed into the development and implementation of the new project "Regional Capacity Building for Women in Mediation" which focuses on conflict resolution and peacebuilding efforts in the Western Balkan region. This is a result of a regional workshop held on 11 March 2019 in Pristina, Kosovo with about 55 participants organised by RWLSEE and UN Women and are jointly launching the new project. The UN Mediation Support Unit from New York facilitated the discussions and provided expert advisory input. The workshop was funded by the United Nations Mission in Kosovo.

2.

Local level women representatives in Kosovo now have **5 practical policy recommendations** on overcoming obstacles hindering the peacebuilding and reconciliation process and strengthening inter-ethnic trust in the Western Balkans. The recommendations were a joint product of women from 9 different communities in Kosovo, women mayors from the Western Balkans, RWLSEE Steering Committee members, CSOs, representatives of the Kosovo Ministry of Local Government Administration, Embassy of Sweden in Kosovo, and UN Women. This is a result of a joint declaration coming out of the regional roundtable "Community Level Peacebuilding in Kosovo" held on 21 September 2019 (International Day of Peace) in Pristina, Kosovo. The roundtable included around 45 participants and was organized by UN Women and RWLSEE, with funding support from the Swedish Government and Swedish Embassy in Kosovo.

3.

The national governments of Kosovo and Serbia, and CSOs and NGOs in the Western Balkan region now have a practical **set of policy recommendations** on how best to include women's participation in the formal peace process and enhance women's access to justice. The recommendations were a joint product of women Members of Parliament from Kosovo and Serbia, RWLSEE Steering Committee members, and representatives from CSOs, UN Women Kosovo, UN Women Albania, EU Kosovo, and the UN Women Country Representative of Albania. This is a result of a joint declaration coming out of the regional conference on "Women's Empowerment for a Peaceful Balkan's and European Future" held on 26 October 2019 in Tirana, Albania. The conference included more than 50 participants and was organized by UN Women, with funding support from the Swedish Government.

4.

Policy makers from the Western Balkan region now have a practical **set of policy recommendations** for closing the gap in gender equality, particularly in the areas of decision-making, peacebuilding, security, and justice. The recommendations were a joint product of policy makers from the Western Balkan region. The recommendations were approved following an analytical presentation of the regional review of women's status in the post conflict settings of the Western Balkan region within the Beijing +25 framework by an international expert and subsequent participatory deliberations at the international conference "Beijing +25 Regional Review for Western Balkans" held on 26 November 2019 in Skopje, North Macedonia. The conference included about 70 participants and was organized by RWLSEE and UN Women, with funding support from the Swedish Government.

5. Three Steering Committee meetings were held jointly with the RWLSEE Secretariat and one annual meeting of RWLSEE Members

RWLSEE will stay firm in strives for strengthening of gender equality and equal participation of women in decision-making and peacebuilding, however, funding is an issue that stay in the way for more success.

Lobbying and advocacy, specifically by RWLSEE Chair, Ms Edita Tahiri:

- **New York, March 2019_ New York meeting with Pamela Patten, Deputy UNSG for rape of women, together with the Head of UN Women ECA Alia El-Yassir. Ms. Tahiri presented the RWLSEE Letter to UNSG Guterres requesting support on international justice for women victims/survivors of conflict-related sexual violence in Bosnia and Herzegovina, Kosovo and Croatia and, the Petition of Kosovo Citizens seeking international justice for women raped during the war in Kosovo.**
- **New York, March 2019, participation and speech at at UN Women high level panel on CSW, together with UN Women Head Phumzile Mlambo-Ngcuka and Jean-Pierre Lacroix, the UN Head of the Department of Peace Operations.** In her speech she called for more support for Balkans and women of Balkans as a post-conflict region
- **Skopje October 2019, Beijing +25 Regional Review expert consultations**
- **Geneva October 2019, Beijing +25 Regional Review meeting of CSOs**
- **Geneva October 2019, Beijing +25 UNECE Regional Review meeting of Governments**
- **November 2019, Tunis, UN Women Conference on women and peace in North Africa and Middle East**

I. Public relations

- Publication and dissemination of declarations and recommendations adopted in above mentioned activities
- Press releases and statements on important issues related to empowerment of women including in electoral processes in seven countries
- Periodical update of RWLSEE website

II. Fundraising:

RWL SEE Chair Edita Tahiri in her capacity as a former Deputy Prime minister and Chief Negotiator of Kosovo, jointly with Vlora Nushi, Program Specialist / Head, UN Women Kosovo and Diana Cekaj –

Berisha, RWLSEE Coordinator have been lobbying with embassies in Kosovo for funds, as well as applied for funds on numerous international organizations.

ACTION PLAN FOR 2020

ACTION PLAN FOR 2020 was discussed and agreed by RWLSEE Members during the RWLSEE Annual Meeting in November 2019, in Skopje, North Macedonia.

Main objectives:

- Empowering women to lead the way in shaping a peaceful and prosperous future in the region of Western Balkans
- Empowering women for political decision making and peacebuilding in Kosovo and all seven focus countries of RWLSEE
- Fostering peace through track two peace processes in region and inter-ethnic dialogues
- Mediating track two peace dialogue between Kosovo and Serbia at the level women politicians and parliamentarians
- Empowering local peacebuilding and local women leadership
- Calling for more support for women in post-conflict settings in response and recovery from COVID-19
- Acceleration of women empowerment and WPS Agenda through platforms of UN Women on Generation Equality and historic anniversaries of Beijing+25, UNSCR 1325+25
- Increasing international profile of women's issues in post-conflict setting of Western Balkans and sharing experiences of RWLSEE internationally

Action Plan/ List of Projects:

- Interethnic community trust building and reconciliation regional roundtables with the aim of contributing to the building-peace, community building, development and European and Euro-Atlantic Integration.
- Continuation of peace dialogue between women politicians and parliamentarians from Kosovo and Serbia mediated by RWL. It will include discussions on how women can be included in formal peace negotiations and influence gender inclusive peace agreement and implementation for sustainable peace and stability in the region
- Local Community Dialogues on women decision making at local level, including women mayors so as to enhance their role as potential agents of change
- Capacity building for women and youth in leadership, mediation and negotiation – starting the REGIONAL ACADEMY FOR WOMEN IN LEADERSHIP AND MEDIATION (RAWLM) - depending on funding. It will help building capacities and regional cooperation among women, as a key to sustainable peace and stability in the region
- Annual International Conference on empowering women peacebuilders in response and recovery to COVID-19, and marking **20th anniversary of UNSCR 1325** and **25th anniversary of Beijing Platform**
- Continuation of meeting at local and regional level to exchange information and opinions, update knowledge about the region in order to advocate for women's empowerment in national, regional level and international level

- Strengthening RWL position as a key regional body for empowering women and gender equality so to continue to serve as a leading regional women voice in decision making and peacebuilding
- Training and capacity building in Mediation and Peace Building so that young women in the region become leaders, mediators and agents of peace. This activity is planned to be acquired through Regional Women's Academy in Leadership and Mediation.
- A continued dissemination of declarations, press releases and statements in regards to women's empowerment and political issues related to gender inclusive in electoral processes and women representation in 7 countries of WB
- Increased participation of women parliamentarians and politician in the region through meetings, roundtable discussion and conferences in order to have a greater contribution of women in decision making
- Sharing experiences internationally and inspiring women to engage in conflict prevention and resolution as well as promoting regional cooperation as a way of mutual reinforcing peacemaking and peacebuilding efforts
- Lobbying at the EU level on women's empowerment and support for RWLSEE
- Lobbying at the UN level, including a roundtable at the UN headquarters in NY on women's empowerment in the Balkans.

REGIONAL WOMEN'S LOBBY IN SOUTH EAST EUROPE (RWLSEE)

www.rwlsee.org

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Photo Galley

