

His Excellency Mr. Ban Ki-Moon
Secretary General
The United Nations
1 United Nations Plaza
New York, New York 10017-3515



<http://www.rwlsee.org>

RE: Your appointment of a Special Representative for Women, Peace and Security, in line with UNSCR 1888 of 30 September 2009 and UNSCR 1889 of 05 October 2009

Zagreb, Croatia, 20 January 2010

Your Excellency,

The Regional Women's Lobby for Peace, Security and Justice in Southeast Europe brings together women politicians and activists from the region who are committed to the goals of deepening human security, promoting women's rights and participation in decision-making processes and breaking barriers of ethno-centric politics. Our Lobby is writing to request that you appoint a woman to the post of UNSR for women, peace and security. The Regional Women's Lobby is active in the seven countries of the SEE region: Albania, Bosnia and Herzegovina, Croatia, Kosovo, Macedonia, Montenegro and Serbia. As a post-conflict region the Lobby is very aware of the importance of fully implementing Resolution 1325 and its "sisters" Resolutions 1820, 1888 and 1889.

Resolution 1888 of 30 September 2009, and its call for the appointment of a Special Representative to concentrate on and give visibility to the role of women in conflict and post-conflict situations, is very welcome. We very much hope that the appointee will be someone with political clout, who will be able to mobilise broad support across the different layers of society and thereby make a real difference to the lives of millions of women who have suffered and continue to suffer conflicts worldwide.

It is with this in mind, esteemed Sir, that we request you take into account the importance of appointing a suitable woman candidate to this post, which we believe to be crucial in order to respect the overall spirit of Resolution 1888 and the specific requests of Resolutions 1325 (2000) and 1889 (2009) that the Secretary General appoint more women as Special Representatives and Envoys to pursue good offices on his behalf.

As you are well aware, Resolutions 1888 and 1889 call for more involvement of women in peace processes and for the important role women play in rebuilding societies devastated by war to be recognised and maximised. This appointment concerns thus the protection but also the *representation* of women. At the moment, women are very much under-represented in formal peace-processes, and are generally seen only as the victims of war rather than as actors helping to build peace. It is for this reason that a woman should be appointed to lead efforts for the protection of women from sexual violence, but also for their attainment of equality within their societies. It is also for this reason that we would favour the mandate of the UNSR being extended beyond sexual violence to cover women, peace and security more broadly.

We believe that it is crucial that the new Special Representative be someone with a track record on promoting gender equality, who can build trust and mutual understanding around women's experiences in conflict and post-conflict situations, set the example and help to change perceptions and mentalities where necessary. This is in line with Resolution 1888's call for the Special Representative to engage in advocacy efforts with all parties to armed conflict, civil society and all stakeholders.

Honourable Secretary General,

We are convinced that it is essential that men be fully involved in the UN's work on combating sexual violence in conflict situations. All those, men and women, engaged in peace-keeping and peace-building activities must be adequately trained to deal with issues of sexual violence and gender equality. Furthermore, men's voices must be mobilised for awareness-raising on this issue at the highest levels of governance, and a variety of expertise must feed into the work of the Special Representative for women, peace and security.

Nevertheless, it is clear that only by appointing a woman to this post can you as Secretary General respect the will of Resolutions 1888 and 1889 to actively promote the full participation of women in peace-keeping and peace-building. We trust therefore that you will not hesitate to seize this opportunity to make the protection and equal representation of women a reality.

Finally, dear Sir, we have been led to understand that there are currently only two candidates for the post of Special Representative for women, peace and security: one man, and one woman. While we are open to the consideration of other women candidates should they come forward, we would wish to inform you that the Regional Women's Lobby has at this stage no reservations regarding the candidature of Ms. Margot Walström, whose profile, we feel, would be very much in keeping with the requirements of this important post.

We thank you warmly for giving this issue the consideration it deserves, and look forward to working further with you and your Special Representative in order to substantially progress on the realisation of women's fundamental human rights in the framework of UN peace and security initiatives.

Sincerely yours,

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read 'Edita Tahiri', with a stylized, flowing script.

Edita Tahiri
RWL Chair