



REGIONAL WOMEN's LOBBY for PEACE SECURITY and JUSTICE in SOUTHEAST EUROPE-RWLSEE (<http://rwlsee.org/>)

Conclusions and Recommendations

From the International Conference “From Fragility to Empowerment: 20 years of Women, Peace and Security Agenda”, 15 December 2020, online

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1. ADOPTING GENDER EQUALITY AS A STRATEGIC PRIORITY FOR A BETTER WORLD

- Regional Women’s Lobby in South East Europe (RWLSEE) considers that twenty years after the WPS agenda, it is time to strategically focus in ensuring equal and meaningful participation of women in decision making, in governments, formal peace processes as well as in ensuring gender inclusive peacebuilding. This because, it has been documented that women can contribute to achieving more lasting peace, sound democratic governance, and sustainable development.
- Recognize the linkage between gender equality and peacebuilding and democratic governance as a mutually constraining and mutually reinforcing processes and, acting systematically to empower women for equal participation in decision making in governance, peacebuilding, and sustainable development for a better future
- Adopt a strategic framework ‘from fragility to empowerment’ to identify gaps and adopt proper policies that will move the region of Western Balkans from current fragile situation into sustainability. It requires to make a shift from gender-blind policies into gender inclusive policies in the areas of peacebuilding, democratic state building, economic development, and European and Euro-Atlantic integration. It would enable to empower women, as a half of human capital, to jointly and equally with men work and decide in addressing and resolving the ongoing issues of unfinished peace, threatened democracy, autocracy, weak justice and rule of law, corruption, weak economy, delayed transitional justice and reconciliation, geopolitical tensions in the post-conflict region of Western Balkans. This would bring hope for the future to youth and entire society and, make them stay and develop their countries rather than search for their future in foreign countries.
- Replace the symbolic representation of women that maintains the existing dynamics of power in the socio-cultural context with the proper involvement of women in the creation, decision-making and implementation of policies in all structures.
- Ensure sincere political will by national and international authorities and policy makers to support politically and financially the goal of empowering women and gender equality to achieve a just, peaceful, and prosperous future.



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2. ENSURING WOMEN'S EQUAL AND MEANINGFUL PARTICIPATION IN POLITICS, DECISION MAKING AND PEACEBUILDING

- Invest in empowerment of women in politics and public life as a top priority, because the women's voice and presence in positions of political power is a crucial condition for achieving gender equality in decision making in government and peacebuilding, which will be beneficial to all.
- Ensure equal participation of women at all levels of decision-making in democratic governance, peacemaking, peacebuilding, and sustainable development, in line with the UNSCR 1235, national legal frameworks on gender equality and considering strategic relevance of women as peace drivers and good governance drivers
- Support equal representation of women in governments at national and local levels, if necessary, by adopting quotas. In 20 years since the end of wars in the region and the adoption of UNSCR 1325, women are mostly given a space in parliaments or local assemblies, thanks to quota of 30%, which is not a real empowerment while serves as appeasing to public conscious about gender balance.
- Promote greater motivation and participation of women in political parties, decision making bodies and leadership and, encourage their engagement in the struggle for power to achieve gender equality.
- Inspire and encourage continuously women's involvement in helping resolve difficult issues in society and, maintaining cooperation among women on topics such as peace, security, political participation, economy, fight against violence and education of young women. Promoting women role models who inspire with their successful work in making changes during latest historic transitions from war to peace, and from communism to democracy in the Western Balkans.

3. SUPPORTING THE MAINSTREAMING OF WPS AGENDA

- Speeding up full implementation of UNSCR 1325 and WPS agenda is essential. We acknowledge achievements but reality of gender equality remains far. We have built structures, legislation, policies, action plans and listened to strongly outspoken commitments, however, what we need is things happen. Hence, it is time to move from commitments to implementation, particularly in conflict and post-conflict settings and governments should be accountable for these commitments.
- Support the mainstreaming of the WPS agenda into national policies and planning frameworks in line with gender equality principles, which requires advocacy and dialogue with national governments and international organizations to raise the commitment towards the importance of this process.



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- Support inclusive implementation and monitoring process. The implementation of Resolution 1325 requires the effort of everyone, every individual, state, society, and international organizations such as UN, EU, OSCE etc. and in particular the UN Women. That is why national plans are so important.
- Harmonize laws, bylaws, strategies, policies and programs, within the scope of work of competent institutions, with the law on gender equality and UNSCR 1325 and subsequent resolutions is necessary.
- Support the development of the new action plan for UNSCR 1325 based on open, transparent and inclusive participatory process, including women organizations, academia, media and all other stakeholders.
- Establish sustainable mechanism for greater inclusion of CSOs in the implementation of the NAP, both at national and local level. The current process of implementation of the NAP is not sufficiently inclusive and open to all interested members of civil society.
- Support capacity-building at all levels of national government and local government and CSOs for effective implementation of WPS agenda and NAPs, responsive to context-specific conditions.
- Support the establishment of accountability mechanisms as well as mechanisms to monitor, measure and evaluate progress of implementation of the 1325 NAPs. In this regard, parliaments and local assemblies can play crucial role to oversight proper implementation.
- Ensure that women's movements and CSOs are included in monitoring processes. They are an important source of information and play important role in increasing the transparency and accountability of the monitoring
- Provide sufficient funding by governments for implementation of the new action plan for Resolution 1325, as well as financial support for gender budgeting initiatives.

4. BUILDING INCLUSIVE PEACE

- Broaden the definition of peace to include women's perspectives on peace that resolves and secures socio-economic needs of citizens and not just ending violence. Gendering peace is essential and leads to sustainable peace.
- Ensure gender inclusive peace as a strategic investment to lasting peace. Science shows valuable evidence in support.



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- Ensure equal inclusion of women in formal peace processes where decisions are made on peace and future. This including ongoing international peace processes in the Balkans, and in particular the EU mediated Kosovo- Serbia dialogue on normalization of neighborly relations. Women can not be forever at track 2 or 3 of peace processes. Women's courage and capacities in responses to conflict resolution should be translated into women's rights to be equal with men in deciding on peacemaking.
- Ensure gender equality provisions in peace agreements by adopting legal obligation of peacemaking frameworks, as a way of guaranteeing that women play a central role in peacebuilding.
- Consolidate the understanding of relationship between women's presence in peacemaking processes, women's rights and gender provisions in peace agreements that would enable women's meaningful participation in post-conflict governance and peacebuilding;
- Promote the culture of inclusive peace among society and institutional thinking to consolidate an understanding that including all groups from all walks of life and, particularly women and youth, leads to lasting peacemaking and peacebuilding
- Support local peacebuilding, local movements and actors, as a key to overall peacebuilding
- Build capacity and enhance advocacy for women's inclusion in peace agreement negotiations and ensure better publicity for the achievements of women in the peace and security sectors and promote positive examples and achievements
- Ensure that women's access to peacekeeping missions and, especially, in conflict-prevention and conflict-resolution negotiations becomes more structured and systematic.

5. ENSURING SECURITY FOR ALL

- Observe security through the concept of human security, including the right to live in a healthy environment
- Empower and support women and women's organisations to participate in security sector processes through the provision of security and logistical support, capacity building, mentoring and support to coalition-building, as necessary and develop and implement strategies to promote leadership of women within armed forces, police services, defence institutions and the judiciary



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- Establish civilian and democratic control over the armed forces (army, security services and police). Only the National Assembly determines what the national interests of the country are, only it decides on the security situation in the country, and not the army and the police.
- Prevent the tendency to privatize the armed forces and security services, which is reflected in the uncontrolled proliferation of protection agencies and their efforts to abolish the state monopoly on the lawful use of force.

6. NO PEACE WITHOUT JUSTICE

- RWLSEE adopted “WPS and Justice” agenda to ensure justice serving to both goals: to build a just society and, to address post-war reparations and reconciliation with special focus on redressing and seeking international justice to women victims of rape during wars in Balkan, and for perpetrators to not go unpunished.
- We call for an inclusive and gender sensitive justice system at national, regional and international level. So far, we have male dominance in the judiciary, so the time has come to apply gender equality in the justice system.
- Access to justice is a basic human right enshrined in many international instruments. However, it must be implemented at the state level, guaranteeing access to justice for every individual/ women and protection from any violence and injury.
- Implement court decisions (International Court of Justice, European Court of Human Rights and the Constitutional Court of BIH)
- Promote women mediation in justice to improve women's access to justice

7. TRANSITIONAL JUSTICE FOR PEACE AND RECONCILIATION

- Establish international justice for women victims of war rape during the wars in the Western Balkans, namely in Bosnia and Herzegovina, Kosovo and Croatia, paves the way to peace and reconciliation. This tragic issue cannot be kept hidden anymore and perpetrators cannot go unpunished.
- National Governments should assume a leading role in taking measures to provide justice to the many victims of war in their countries.



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- National Governments should ensure that crimes of sexual violence committed during the conflict are thoroughly investigated and prosecuted with adequate provisions for the support and protection of witnesses before, during and after proceedings.
- Ensure that national laws on war victim applies equally to women victims of sexual Violence in wars. Although their status is recognized, they must enjoy the same benefits as other war victims.
- Compensation to the families of war victims should not delay.
- Implement the process of reconciliation with the past of wars and tragedies of genocidal level in Balkans (1990-1999); there cannot be peace without justice; consider apology for genocide as a means of reconciliation.
- Support reconciliation processes through expanding dialogue among women from art, culture, academia, media and other relevant sectors that allows at looking on peacebuilding in a different light.

8. SUPPORTING ECONOMIC EMPOWERMENT OF WOMEN

- Create economy that will aim at human well-being, not just increasing GDP
- Foster women's economic empowerment: strengthen women's economic decision-making power and develop a more supportive environment to ensure greater employment opportunities for women
- Support women economic initiatives at urban and rural areas.
- Catalyze women's entrepreneurship through creating a gender-responsive entrepreneurial ecosystem
- Ensure that women have a workplace that provides adequate wages and safe working conditions, free from workplace harassments.

9. PROTECTING WOMEN'S RIGHTS

- Women rights are human rights, it must be respected and safeguarded legally and practically
- Greater support for ending discrimination and inequalities against women is critical, and full implementation of national and international charters, including CEDAW and other instruments



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- Introduce more effective measures and institutional mechanisms addressing gender based violence and domestic violence as a most concerning phenomena, which exacerbated further during these times of global pandemics COVID-19. There should be implemented a multidimensional approach and well-coordinated efforts to address gender based violence and violence as well.
- Effective implementation of the Family Law, sanctioning violence against women and eradicating a warrior culture that legitimizes violence against women and other persons with less social and economic power.
- Media should be an ally to promote and protect women rights as human rights. Strong partnership with media could contribute to more awareness and more action to achieve gender equality.

10. SUPPORTING EUROPEAN AND EURO-ATLANTIC INTEGRATION

- RWLSEE stands firmly in support of the European and Euro-Atlantic future of the Western Balkan's countries.
- Building the European and Euro-Atlantic future requires gender inclusive process with women having a central role in democratic transformations and european reforms, because it is the two ways road, to bring our countries there and to establish euro-atlantic values at home
- It is necessary to accelerate the process of European integration of all six countries, as a key peace project which has a potential to complete peace in the Western Balkans, because the unfinished peace that continues even 20 after years the ending of wars threatens to destabilize acquired achievements.
- Respect for the good neighborly relations, closing the open bilateral relations and ending of meddling in neighbouring will ensure a European future for all in the region.
- The Western Balkans should not be allowed to become a battlefield of geopolitical ambitions of non-western actors; the western partners, US and EU, should not allow this to happen

11. ADOPTING THE GENDER-RESPONSIVE APPROACH TO COVID-19

- COVID-19 has had the disproportionate impact on women and young women and the WPS agenda. It has deepened social inequalities, including gender inequality, across the region as well as worldwide. It aggravated violence against women, restricted access of women and girls to



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quality education and healthcare services, caused loss of jobs and worsened poverty and discrimination.

- Adopt a gender-responsive approach to COVID-19 response and recovery to protect women and other marginalized groups from negative effects caused by this unusual pandemic and, to prevent further marginalization of WPS agenda.
- Women has been at the center of response to pandemics, particularly in health and education sectors, they should not be excluded from COVID-19 policy planning, and decision-making

12. SUPPORTING THE WOMEN'S MOVEMENTS AND CIVIL SOCIETY

- Recognize the substantial contribution of the women's movements and civil society in peace building and in the implementation of WPS agenda
- Greater support for women's movements and civil society organizations that are essential part of peacebuilding and democratization agendas and, achieving policy change that benefits women as a group.
- National institutions and international organizations should provide sufficient proper and sincere long-term support to women's civil society organizations who are doing incredible work in peacebuilding and reconciliation.
- Ensure that women's and broader CSOs are included in monitoring processes. They are an important source of information, and their presence will increase the transparency and accountability of the monitoring
- Stimulate cooperation between from politics and civil society to create more synergy, power and influence of women in implementing WPS agenda and advancing peacebuilding

13. SUPPORTING REGIONAL COOPERATION OF WOMEN

- Support regional cooperation and coordination among women to ensure real regional progress in gender-inclusive peacebuilding and democratic governance and, to speed up the European and Euro-Atlantic integration of all countries, which is a key to lasting peace, stability and sustainable development.
- Support regional dialogue between women from diverse political, civil society and ethnic backgrounds to build trust, mutual respect and work jointly to build a multicultural and



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multiethnic harmony, as a key to sustainable peacebuilding in post conflict settings of the Western Balkans

- RWLSEE represents a unique model of regional cooperation among women from politics and civil society to achieve the goals of gender equality and peacebuilding in the post-conflict setting of Western Balkans, which should be followed by women in other parts of the world.
- At the level of civil society, regional cooperation has always been dynamic and essential during and after the war. It can be said that the number of women in civil initiatives is far higher than the number of men, where all important anti-war initiatives, actions were initiated and organized by women (not only from women's groups but generally from civil society)
- Support financially platforms of regional cooperation among women, which is becoming scarcer and scarcer

14. ENGAGING NON-TRADITIONAL GENDER EQUALITY ACTORS

- Engage non-traditional gender equality actors, such the male allies, media, academia, religious and traditional leaders, business leaders to ensure broad-base support for gender equality and WPS agenda
- Address cultural/patriarchal social norms, including misogyny and sexism, as barriers to the full implementation of the WPS agenda with non-traditional actors of gender equality at all levels, local, national, regional and international levels
- Promote men's positive and meaningful involvement in the implementation of the WPS agenda and develop events and structures dedicated to foster positive contributions by women and men.
- Raise the awareness and capacities of journalist and media actors to develop media programs that promote and give visibility to women participation and contribution in peace and security issues.
- Support capacity building projects to build the gender sensitivity of journalists and editors to report on WPS and women's roles in democratic governance and peacebuilding and non-stereotypical portrayal of women and women's perspectives in the media, in particular conflict and post-conflict settings

15. SUPPORTING CAPACITY BUILDING

- Support to develop long-term strategic approaches aimed at attracting more women to, until yesterday exclusively, the male profession; increasing education of women in universities, in vocational training and education and improving measures to reconcile private and professional



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life - in order to enable more women education opportunities, but also the opportunity to reach levels where they have the opportunity to make decisions and participate equally in decision-making that affect not only their lives but also the lives of their families and communities in which they live.

- Develop and strengthen young women capacities to engage in politics, decision making and peacebuilding. To encourage them to grow in leadership and to take roles of peacebuilders, democracy builders, mediators, and negotiators
- Support capacity building projects for youth, particularly the ones of regional scope, such as the RWLSEE's Regional Academy on Women Leadership and Mediation
- Respect and use domestic knowledge and skills important for domestic context specific challenges

16. SUPPORTING RESEARCH

- Women largely remains invisible and, not tracked down in international studies and reports on women's participation in conflict resolution, formal peace negotiations, and peacebuilding. At least this is a case of women in Western Balkans who has contributed to peacemaking in times of wars during the disintegration of former Yugoslavia, at both formal levels and all other levels and are at center of peacebuilding.
- Support academic research and publications on implementation of UNSCR 1325, by collecting and analysing information about the differential impacts of conflicts on the lives of women, men, girls and boys and propose practical solutions to respond to their specific needs
- A new push for much more quantitative research, qualitative analyses and data collection are important in elevating public understanding and help activist and leadership to direct their efforts towards implementation of the Resolution 1325. This way we will ensure that we are heading in the right direction and that the strategies to be used are effective, sustainable and measurable.

17. SUPPORTING INCREASED BUDGETING

- Investments in gender equality and WPS agenda are vastly insufficient and only a small proportion of national and international budgets are allocated to support projects on women's empowerment and even less for regional cooperation on WPS agenda.
- As larger are the budgets, as sooner we can change this reality and reach the goal of gender equality and a future that rests in a just, peace and prosperous world.



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- We call on international donors and national governments to increase their budgeting to supporting gender equality and WPS agenda projects, with special support to regional cooperation and networking organizations, such as our organization, the Regional Women's Lobby in South East Europe, as a leading regional actor on WPS agenda.

RWLSEE is a unique regional women peacebuilding organization founded in 2006. Our mission is to empower women and promote gender equality in politics, decision making and peacebuilding and formal peace processes and to promote peace, stability and European and Euro-Atlantic integration of the all six countries of Western Balkans. RWLSEE holds that more women represented in the relevant peace and political processes brings better and more sustainable results. Its membership are high profile women from politics, parliaments, governments and civil society from seven-member countries Albania, Bosnia Herzegovina, Croatia, Macedonia, Kosovo, Montenegro and Serbia.

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