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

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## Concept Note

On Regional Dialogue Conference

### **“Towards inclusive peace: Women and gender approach in peace processes and reconciliation”**

11 December 2020, online via zoom

Organized by RWLSEE with support of UN Women and Swedish Government

### **Background**

The UN Security Council resolution 1325 on Women, Peace and Security reaffirms the importance of women in prevention and resolution of conflicts, peace negotiations, peacebuilding, peacekeeping, humanitarian response and more. After the adoption of UNSCR 1325 in 2000 there has been an overall upward trend in increasing women's participation in formal peace processes and in the number of references to women's rights and gender equality in peace agreements. However, this trend is yet rather slow and incremental. Twenty years after the adoption of this landmark resolution, we acknowledge relevant achievements in different areas and different levels. However, we note with concern that women remain largely excluded from decision making and formal peace processes where decisions are made on peace and future. Evidence shows that between 1992 and 2019 women constituted, on average, 13 percent of negotiators, 6 percent of mediators, and 6 percent of signatories in major peace processes around the world. While there has been some progress in women's participation, only few women participated in leadership roles as negotiators, mediators, guarantors, or witnesses.

Not only the participation of women was minimal in the formal peace processes, but also peace agreements reached to date hardly reflect gender inclusive provisions, except in general provisions on human rights and fundamental freedoms.

Women also largely remained invisible and, not tracked down in international studies and reports on women's participation at formal peace negotiations, 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.

Continued failure to include women in formal peace processes ignores their demonstrated contributions in conflict prevention and conflict resolution and, overlooks a potential strategy to respond more effectively to security threats around the world. The lack of gender provisions in peace agreements affects women's participation in peacebuilding as well as hampers the chances that post-conflict societies will move towards gender equality.

In the region of Western Balkans, the situation has not been different than in other parts of the world. Evidence shows low participation of women in formal peace processes, even though women played significant role in liberation processes and peace efforts of ending wars and conflicts following the disintegration of former Yugoslavia and born of new states.



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There have been ten peace processes in the region, in war and peace times, between 1991 to 2020. This includes: The Hague Conference on disintegration of Former Yugoslavia 1991, the London Conference on disintegration of Former Yugoslavia 1992, Dayton Summit on Peace in Bosnia and Herzegovina in 1995, Rambouillet Peace Conference on Kosovo in 1999, Erdut Agreement on the Region of Eastern Slavonia, Baranja, and Western Sirmium in Croatia in 1995, Ohrid Agreement between Macedonian government and Albanian representatives, in Macedonia in 2001, Koncul Agreement between Serbian Government and Albanian representatives in Serbia in 2001, Vienna Status Talks on Kosovo in 2006-2007, Brussels Dialogue 2011-2018 to continue in 2019 after two years stalemate, Prespa Agreement on resolution of name dispute between Macedonia and Greece in 2018. According to evidence, out of all these ten peace processes there has been only one woman in formal international peace processes to end wars who was also chief negotiator in peace time on normalization of relations between warring parties (from Kosovo) and, one women chief negotiator in intra-state peace negotiations on reintegration of certain parts of country (from Croatia). Evidence also shows some important contribution of women behind scenes of peace negotiating tables (in Macedonia). Whereas women civil society organization's contribution in track two and track three peace processes has been notable including lobbying with international mediators on women's inclusion in formal peace processes, and on the durable outcomes supporting peace and stability in the region (i.e. RWLSEE met with the UN Envoy Ahtisaari on Vienna status talks on Kosovo and presented a memorandum sharing views on outcome of talks in 2006, and sent letter to EU Envoy Laicak on Kosovo-Serbia dialogue outcome in 2020).

Having in mind the huge gap in participation of women in formal peace process, the RWLSEE since its establishment in 2006 has been dedicated to greater participation of women in peace, security and justice processes, particularly in decision making and formal peace negotiating tables, aiming to empower women's agency on more durable peace, stability and prosperity.

Aware of linkage between women's participation in formal peace processes and gender inclusive and durable peace agreements, RWLSEE has worked to empower women and lobby in national and international levels in efforts of achieving equal participation of women at the formal peace processes, ensuring gender inclusive peace agreements, while continuing to play their roles in other levels of peacemaking and peace building.

The RWLSEE also works on track two peace process and local peacebuilding in support of formal peace processes and overall peacebuilding in the region. For over 9 years, RWLSEE provides a platform for dialogue between women politicians and parliamentarians from Kosovo and Serbia, with participation of women from region, in support of the Brussels Dialogue on normalization of neighborly relations between Kosovo and Serbia takes place. It has continued even in times when official track one peace process of the Brussels Dialogue was stalled in two years (2018-2019), by showing that breakthrough is possible when vision and peace reason prevails.

RWLSEE considers that twenty years after the WPS agenda, it is time to strategically focus in ensuring meaningful participation of women in formal peace processes as negotiators and mediators as well as in ensuring gender inclusive peace agreements. This because, it has been documented that women can contribute in achieving more lasting peace agreements and,



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ensuring gender inclusive provisions in peace agreements. Evidence shows that out of 98 peace agreements across 55 countries between 2000 and 2016, the peace agreements are significantly more likely to have gender provisions when women participate in negotiating tables. It also shows that the likelihood of achieving a peace agreement with gender provisions increases when women's representation in national parliaments and government increases and when women's civil society participation is significant.

It is against this background, that RWLSEE is organizing the regional dialogue conference between women and parliamentarians from the Western Balkans to address the above-mentioned problems and provide ideas and solutions for the future, in line and as a contribution to the WPS agenda, UNSCR 1325 and its related resolutions, other UN instruments and EU gender policies on gender equality, UN Women Generation Equality, aligned with agenda of Sustainable Development Goals 2030. The conference will also address reconciliation processes in the region by providing a platform for discussion on the role of art in peace and reconciliation. This because of the important role of art in post-conflict societies to help restore victims' capacities to participate in reconciliation processes, access their emotions and individual healing processes, while helping in rebuilding of relationships and trust-building in societies previously divided by conflict, and laying the groundwork for long-term and sustainable peace.

The Regional Conference is organized by the Regional Women's Lobby for Peace, Security and Justice in South East Europe (RWLSEE) with support of UN Women as a part of the Phase IV Project 'Women's political empowerment, participation in and contribution to peace and security processes in the Western Balkans' funded by the Ministry for Foreign Affairs (MFA) Sweden.

### **Activity**

The Regional dialogue conference is titled "Towards inclusive peace: Women and gender approach in peace processes and reconciliation." The Conference will take stock on gender inclusiveness of peace processes in twenty years since the adoption of the UNSCR Resolution 1325 on women, peace and security; it will discuss the relationship between women's presence in peacemaking processes, women's rights and gender provisions in peace agreements, and women's participation in post-conflict governance and peacebuilding; it will address the challenges; and, look for ideas and strategies of ensuring gender inclusive formal peace processes and peace agreements for the sake of sustainable and gender inclusive peacebuilding. Special focus will be given on the ongoing Brussels Dialogue between Kosovo and Serbia, as a key contribution for lasting peace in the region, where women's role and vision should be integrated equally with men.

The Conference will also look at reconciliation processes from the perspective of art and culture. It will launch the dialogue between women artists from the region with participation of international experts. The focus will be on visual art and its potentials to build peace and facilitate processes of reconciliation, with aim at looking on peacebuilding in a different light.

In this historic 20<sup>th</sup> anniversary of the 1325 and WPS agenda we will strongly emphasize that women's involvement in political decision-making processes and equal opportunities to



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participate at the negotiating table are essential to the success of peace efforts, and in shaping policymaking and peace agreements in ways that better reflects their needs, as well as those of their children, families and communities.

### **Goals and objectives**

The overall goal will be to increase women's meaningful participation in formal peace processes where issues of peace and security are being decided and increase their agency and influence in shaping and deciding on gender inclusive peace agreements, as a way of leading towards inclusive peace, gender equality, stability and reconciliation while speeding up European integration of the region. It specifically aims to support the Brussels Dialogue between Kosovo and Serbia as a key contribution for peace and stability in the region and ensure its gender inclusivity. It also aims at raising awareness that women's equal participation in formal peace processes ensures sustainable peacebuilding, gender equality and reconciliation in the aftermath of conflicts, with special focus on the Brussels dialogue. The conference will specifically promote the role of art in building peace and reconciliation and, importance of regional dialogue among women beyond politics as a contribution for strengthening peace and reconciliation in post-conflict societies.

### **Specific Objectives**

1. Discuss and develop recommendations on how to advance women's equal participation in the formal peace process and how to ensure gender inclusive peace agreements, as well as how to strengthen other different informal levels in support of peace processes and inclusive peace.
2. Provide the peace talks participants of the Brussels dialogue and other relevant stakeholders with a joint document that reflects women's perspectives and gender inclusive provisions in the anticipated final peace agreements
3. Discuss and design the concept of the exhibition on the 'Art and reconciliation', which will be a presented in seven focus countries and beyond
4. Prioritize issues and identify how to strategically move the identified objectives forward.

### **Expected result**

Expected result of this activity will be accelerated empowerment of women as key drivers of peace and stability, ensuring that women are fully and equally represented at the formal peace negotiating tables when issues of peace and security are being discussed and decided, gender equality and women's empowerment is addressed, and gender inclusive peace agreements are reached. Cooperation between women politicians, parliamentarians and civil society from Kosovo, Serbia and the rest of the Western Balkans solidified based on dialogue and trust building. They will share their good practices in peace processes and cooperation in the region.



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Awareness will be raised that women's equal inclusion at formal peace processes and decision making are essential to the success of peace efforts.

### **Participants, Location and Time**

The Conference will bring together women leaders from the region, politicians, parliamentarians, civil society activists, government officials, RWLSEE Steering Committee members from focus countries Albania, Bosnia and Herzegovina, Croatia, Kosovo, North Macedonia, Montenegro and Serbia, members of the RWLSCEE branch in Albania, UN Women, EU representatives and the Swedish Government / Embassy of Sweden in Kosovo.

The Conference will take place on 11 December 2020, in a virtual format, due to pandemic conditions.