



CONCEPT NOTE

Regional Peace Dialogue Conference

"WOMEN BUILDING LASTING PEACE IN THE WESTERN BALKANS:

Defrosting the stalled Brussels Dialogue and ensuring the implementation of reached agreements through dialogue between women from Kosovo, Serbia, and the wider region."

Context:

Peace and security in the Western Balkans continue to be threatened by unfinished peace, weak democratic institutions (growing autocracy), ethnic divisions, distrust, recent geopolitical challenges, non-resolution of normalization of relations between Kosovo and Serbia and, delays in European and Euro Atlantic integration of countries in the region.

The EU facilitated Dialogue between Kosovo and Serbia (Brussels Dialogue) ongoing since 2011 among many important agreements has produced an important agreement on 27 February 2023 known as 'Basic Agreement on the path to normalization between Kosovo and Serbia' aiming at final normalization of neighborly relations between the two countries, contributing to peace and stability in the post-conflict region of the Western Balkans.

The Basic Agreement raised hopes for a peaceful future for our region which still suffers pains from tragedies of wars. In addition, the Implementation Agreement was reached on 14 September 2023, known as 'Ohrid Agreement'.

However, there was no implementation of the agreement for about a year, even worse there has been the stall in the Brussels Dialogue between Kosovo and Serbia since 14 September 2023 to the date. It has caused tensions between the two countries, leading to negative effects even in the region. The tensions, particularly in the northern part of Kosovo, have further polarized the situation, putting prospects of resuming the dialogue to uncertainty. It has also undermined the mutual trust achieved between the Albanian majority and the Serbian minority in Kosovo in the previous phase of the Brussels Dialogue.

It is interesting to notice that the Brussels peace dialogue, which at present is in the hands of men (both sides have men chief negotiators) has produced more tensions than peace in efforts or normalizations of relations between the two parties. However, when the Brussels dialogue had women as the chief negotiator on one side and men on the other side for seven years (2011 - 2017) it succeeded in producing more peace than tensions, not only many agreements were reached fixing the open issues in bilateral relations based on EU standards, but also majority of them were implemented. As a result, interethnic trust was progressing raising hopes for final peaceful neighborly relations between Serbia and Kosovo. This has demonstrated that women's

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participation in formal peace processes provided for more peace agreements, as evidence shows in many relevant reports.

The stalled dialogue for about a year has worsened already fragile peace in the Western Balkans region, negatively affecting the population of both countries and especially in Kosovo. It has also been affecting the WPS agenda and gender equality, thus leaving women in sidelines of peace-making and peacebuilding processes in the region.

Why do we claim that WPS agenda has been further affected? This because that both agreements reached in the Brussels Dialogue, The Basic Peace Agreement and Implementation Plan were reached without women, both parties succeeded to exclude women from formal peace process of the Brussels Dialogue.

Despite the fact of increasing recognition that placing women's agency at the center of the transition from crisis to sustainable development offers enormous potential for transformative change, as stated in the UNSG Report of 2015 on WPS¹ the dramatic underrepresentation of women in formal processes not only continues but further is deteriorating, as it is the case of the Brussels Dialogue of past two years.

We, the RWLSEE do believe that establishing a chapter of peaceful bilateral relations between Kosovo and Serbia of hostile past it is of essential importance to building lasting peace in our region, but we also consider that equal and meaningful women's participation in formal peace processes allows for a just, peaceful and prosperous future for both parties and entire region that we all need. Moreover, by coming to terms of lasting peace we would not leave this burden of from the past /non-normalized relations/ to young generations. Our strive is to ensure the finalization of the peace process in Brussels Dialogue which must be gender inclusive, in both terms of peacemaking and peacebuilding.

Even though the current situation in the region is discouraging regarding the challenges to peace, security, stability and crisis of the stalled dialogue that, women have sufficient strength and readiness to strive and engage equally with men in building lasting peace.

We women want to take role as actors of change, especially in difficult times, in times of crisis in which currently our region is. Through raising our agency and our regional women's voice we want to share responsibilities and decisions for ensuring lasting peace in the Western Balkans and its European and Euro-Atlantic future.

We in RWLSEE maintain that investing in women's empowerment and gender equality is a strategic priority for a better future for all, for a peaceful, democratic, stable, and prosperous countries and the region and that time is for 'power sharing' between men and women. Women

¹ The Secretary-General's 2015 Report to the Security Council on Women and Peace and Security, https://www.un.org/shestandsforpeace/sites/www.un.org/shestandsforpeace/files/un_secretary_general_report_on_wps_2015_english.pdf



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are strategic potential to maximize the human capital for building peace and development, not only because they are a half of population, but also because they pursue the concept of peace and governance oriented to citizen's interests and not to their personal interest, which make an essential difference from men. This is why, the strengthening women's participation of women in decision making implies having gender equality in decision making, leadership, governance, democracy, and formal peace processes.

RWLSEE is confident it can carry out this activity even in this sensitive time, because since its creation, the RWL SEE has been successful in bringing together women parliamentarians from Kosovo and Serbia despite fragile situation, with participation of women from the region who have expertise in peace-making and peacebuilding for ten years now. Even when it looked impossible, we made it possible thanks to women's courage, strength, and peacebuilding determination. This is why today, the RWLSEE is considered a most reliable regional actor in promoting and implementing the WPS agenda in the Western Balkans.

Given the strategic importance of women as peace drivers hence half of human capital, we work for moving beyond the normative gender equality and women's empowerment towards making a reality of our ideals for full and real gender equality. This is our overarching goal and driving force that keeps us moving forward despite challenges and existing barriers. This reality must come sooner than later. No more delays are tolerable, we must maximize our joint efforts and accelerate implementation of WPS agenda, gender equality and generation equality.

We, the RWLSEE believe time has come for full political empowerment of women, time has come for 'power sharing' between men and women, as the only viable way of having women in decision making, peacemaking and peacebuilding at all levels. Women's equal meaningful engagement in and influence in peace processes should be coupled with women's leadership. More than ever, we need women's leadership at global level given the fact that today our world lives in uncertainty due to ongoing wars and conflicts which are escalating, instead of peace leadership we face leadership of men of geopolitical focus. Women's values and their unique peace-oriented perspectives provide solutions that citizens need and the world needs.

Therefore, in responding to the current complex context in region of fragile ongoing peace, threatened security in the region and, the lack of meaningful participation of women in decision-making in peace, security, justice, and democratic processes, The RWLSEE offers this platform of inclusive dialogue among women, politicians, parliamentarians, and civil society having them contribute to building lasting inclusive peace in the region.

Activity:

In these challenging times for peace and peaceful relations between Kosovo and Serbia as well as lasting peace in the region, the RWLSEE provides the platform of the dialogue between women parliamentarians of Kosovo and Serbia mediated by the Regional Women's Lobby (RWLSEE) as

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a track two peace process allowing for women vision and voice to be heard by public and authorities of both countries and EU as the facilitator.

The activity is the Regional Peace Conference titled: **“WOMEN BUILDING LASTING PEACE IN THE WESTERN BALKANS: “Defrosting the stalled Brussels Dialogue and ensuring the implementation of reached agreements through dialogue between women from Kosovo, Serbia, and the wider region.”**

The Women parliamentarians Dialogue from Kosovo and Serbia and other women politicians, leaders, civil society from wider region is an informal platform for discussing issues of current developments in region and strengthening regional cooperation among women leaders, with main focus on the state of play and future of the Brussels Peace Dialogue and absence of women in the dialogue, within the context of stalled dialogue and its critical relevance in achieving normalization of relations between Kosovo and Serbia as key contribution to peace, security, and stability in the region as well as to EU integration of countries of the Western Balkans, beneficial their citizens.

The Regional Conference will focus on the stalled Brussels dialogue' reasons and consequences to the political and security situation in both countries and regions, as well as ways of overcoming the stalemate in dialogue while voicing out that there is no alternative to dialogue and peace process and highlighting that no sustainable peace agreement can be reached without equal women's participation at negotiating table. Having this in mind that gender inclusive peace processes lead to lasting outcomes, as evidence shows.

The conference will also serve as an opportunity for participants to strategize on how to increase women's participation and contribution to the formal peace processes (track 1 peace processes); and at the same time to emphasize that women's track 2 peace processes are important and recommendations coming out of them must be taken into consideration by mediators and negotiators, hence including women's vision in the overall outcome of formal peace processes.

The Conference will also focus on local inclusive peacebuilding as core support to sustainable peace through the role of dialogue, facilitation, and mediation in support of inclusive peace and conflict prevention and management, In addition, it will focus on the role of media in shaping the path to peace, through the dialogue between women politicians, journalists, and civil society.

The number of violent conflicts and crises has been on the rise worldwide in the last decade with devastating impact on populations and negative effects on economic, social, and political development. Current trends also show an increased complexity in conflict patterns. To respond to this complexity there is the need to design support to dialogue and peace processes with increased women's involvement and leadership.

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The Conference will look at innovative ways of engagement and inclusiveness. Hence the necessity of building Peaceful and Inclusive Societies as one of major priority, having in mind that that local peacebuilding is core support for lasting peace ²

The activity is supported by our international partners, CordAid and Women in Peace Humanitarian Fund (WPHF)

Objectives:

- 1.The conference aims to facilitate the exchange of views, experiences, best practices and ideas among women parliamentarians from Kosovo and Serbia and women of different backgrounds from wider region in support of the Brussels Peace Dialogue and reached agreements as well in support of resuming this dialogue which is stalled for about a year, while highlighting the importance of this dialogue for peace, security, stability in the region, and for European integration of both countries and all other countries in region as well as to their citizens.
- 2.Strengthening women's equal, full and meaningful participation in politics and decision-making, leadership at all levels, particularly in formal peace processes, integrating gender approaches into peacemaking, peacebuilding and security policies,
- 3.Promoting peace by having women as central actors in responding to crises and achieving gender equality in leadership in building lasting peace and reconciliation in region.

Outcome:

Women's regional voice heard by decision makers and policy makers for equal full and meaningful participation of women in decision making, leadership at all levels, as significant power for formal peace negotiations in general and specifically of the Brussels dialogue on the normalization of relations between Kosovo and Serbia, for the sake of lasting peace and stability in the region.

Women's support on necessity of resuming of the Brussels Dialogue and gender inclusive implementation of reached agreements relevant to EU integration of all Western Balkans countries, ensuring sustainable peace and reconciliation in region is accomplished.

Awareness raised that gender equality, women's empowerment ensures a peaceful Balkans and European future, consolidated belief that gender equality and greater women's empowerment can help overcome crisis, conflict resolution, conflict prevention and achieve durable outcomes.

Empowerment of women accelerated as key drivers of peace, democracy, justice, security, stability, prosperity and, implementation of WPS agenda, and Generation Equality Agenda.

Regional cooperation between women politicians, parliamentarians, civil society from the Western Balkans enhanced, based on dialogue and trust building, through sharing ideas and experience and good practices of cooperation in the region.

² ANNE KWAKKENBOS: "PEACEBUILDING CAN ONLY BE SUCCESSFULL IF EVERYONE IS INCLUDED"
<https://www.cordaid.org/en/anne-kwakkenbos-peacebuilding-can-only-be-successfull-if-everyone-is-included/>

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Discussed and developed the recommendations on how to ensure gender inclusive peace agreements, implementation, monitoring and peacebuilding, as well as, how to strengthen cooperation between formal and different informal levels of peace processes for inclusive peace and sustainable outcomes.

Providing participants of the Brussels dialogue and other relevant stakeholders with a joint document of recommendations that reflect women's perspectives on the topic of the conference and objectives.

Methodology:

The discussions will take place as per the topics of the agenda through plenary sessions and panels. There will also be an open interactive debate with all participants to allow for them to share their views and ideas and specific recommendations on advancing the objectives of the conference and WPS agenda.

Participants:

Participants: Parliamentarians from Kosovo and Serbia and from wider region, politicians, parliamentarians, women leaders, civil society activists, government officials, RWLSEE' Steering Committee Members from seven focus countries (Albania, Bosnia and Herzegovina, Croatia, Kosovo, Montenegro, North Macedonia, Serbia), representatives of international partners Cordaid and WPHF (Women in Peace Humanitarian Fund), and of UN Women, other international organizations and agencies, experts, scholars, practitioners.

Location and Time:

The Conference will take place on 17 June 2024, in Hotel Tirana International, Tirana Albania

The Regional Conference is organized by the Regional Women's Lobby for Peace, Security and Justice in South East Europe (RWLSEE) and Cordaid, supported by Women's Peace and Humanitarian Fund (WPHF)

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