



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

Press release: WOMEN BUILDING LASTING PEACE IN THE WESTERN BALKANS

(June 17, 2024, in Tirana, Albania) The Regional Women's Lobby in Southeast Europe (RWLSEE) has organized Regional Dialogue Conference "Women Building Lasting Peace in The Western Balkans: Defrosting the stalled Brussels Dialogue between Kosovo and Serbia and ensuring the implementation of reached agreements through dialogue between women from Kosovo, Serbia, and the wider region", supported by the Women's Peace and Humanitarian Fund (WPHF) and Cordaid.

The Conference was opened by the welcoming remarks of Edita Tahiri, Chair of RWLSEE, Achille Sommo, (UN WPHF) and Ingrid van Bouwdijk Bastiaanse, Cordaid.

Edita Tahiri in her speech said "The RWLSEE maintains that gender inclusive peace-making and peacebuilding provides for lasting peace and reconciliation in our region and beyond given the women's potential and their unique perspective for peace, and that there cannot be lasting peace without women's full equal and meaningful participation at the peace negotiating tables. She further said" when there was women Chief Negotiator in the Brussels Dialogue that was me, we succeeded to produce more peace less tensions, in past two years since the dialogue was in the hand of men, it produced less peace and more tensions. We must change this reality in favor gender equality. because all shall benefit more and especially citizens of both countries and beyond.

In these challenging times for peace and peaceful relations between Kosovo and Serbia as well as lasting peace in the region, the RWLSEE provided the platform of the dialogue between women parliamentarians of Kosovo and Serbia mediated by the Regional Women's Lobby (RWLSEE) as 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. Furthermore, the Conference focused on the stalled Brussels dialogue' reasons and consequences to the political and security situation in both countries and region, as well as ways of overcoming the stalemate in dialogue while voicing out that there is no alternative to dialogue and peace process, the Conference had specifically look at the substantial role of dialogue, negotiation/mediation, and media in shaping the path to a peaceful, and prosperous future in the region and beyond.

Participants through discussions shared their views and ideas as how can be overcome obstacles so the dialogue between the two countries to be resuming sooner than later they further highlighted that the dialogue is the only way to normalizing relations between neighbouring counties as a key to peace and stability in the region. They in addition stressed the necessity of women's equal inclusion in formal peace process because of their recognized values and capacities for peace-making and peacebuilding.

Participants expressed joint concerns about current negative developments and tensions as well as for new security related to increasing conflict globally and in Europe. Women called on



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

strengthening regional cooperation among Balkans countries, European and Euro-Atlantic integration as path to lasting peace and prosperity. In this sense they called for more cooperation among women leaders from politics throughout the region.

When discussing on the state of play of the Brussels Peace Dialogue and the absence of women in the dialogue in past two years, they raised their voice against such practice, while calling on establishing quotas for women inclusion in both negotiating delegations but also quotas for women inclusion in the mediation team of EU. within the context of stalled dialogue and its critical relevance in achieving normalization of They called on both parties to take into consideration that normalization relations between Kosovo and Serbia is key contribution to lasting peace, security, and stability in the region as well as to EU integration of countries of the Western Balkans, beneficial their citizens. The Balkans does not need any more conflicts, instead lasting peace, given that people still suffer pains from tragedies of war, while reconciliation is delaying just because unnormalized.

In the three panels, topics discussed included role of mediation, media and gender inclusive European integration in achieving lasting peace in the Balkans.

The conference has served as an opportunity for participants to strategize the strengthening of women's participation in politics decision-making, and leadership, at all levels, particularly in formal peace processes, as well as integrating gender approaches into peace-making, peacebuilding, and security policies, with aim of building lasting peace and speeding up European integration that we all need.

Further, they emphasized and called on acceleration of women's empowerment especially in politics and decision making, of gender equality, generation equality and implementation of WPS Agenda, based on the UN Security Council resolutions 1325 which affirms the vital role of women in conflict prevention and resolution, peace negotiations, peacebuilding, post conflict recovery reconciliation, and WPS processes.

Participants have included women in politics and civil society, parliaments, governments, representatives of international partners, experts, practitioners, scholars, RWLSEE Steering Committee Members from the RWLSEE' focus countries Albania, Bosnia and Herzegovina, Croatia, Kosovo, Montenegro, North Macedonia, Serbia and, WPHF, Cordaid, UN Women, other international, organizations, experts, journalists, academicians, etc.

We will keep you informed also on the proceedings and results of the interactive inclusive debate of the plenary session in as relevant part of the Conference Agenda, in the next press releases to follow.

For further information, please contact Arbëresha Dedinja, at email: info@rwlsee.org