



## CONCEPT NOTE

### International Conference

#### **“EMPOWERING WOMEN IN POLITICS AND LEADERSHIP FOR A BETTER WORLD”**

*/ Dedicated to UNSCR 1325+24 and Beijing + 30 Reviews and Generation Equality Compact WPS-HA, of which the RWLSEE is a signatory and commitment maker /*

#### **Background**

Over the past two decades since the adoption of the groundbreaking UNSC Resolution 1325 and about 30 years since the Beijing Declaration and Platform for Action gender equality has known different levels of progress and in different public areas in the post-conflict region of the Western Balkans and globally. Significant advancements are evidenced in terms of legislative framework, structures and in capacity building efforts,

However, despite the evidenced progress, women remain underrepresented particularly in politics, decision making, leadership and formal peace and security processes while their discrimination continuous, including women's rights, violence against women in domestic context and war context where violence against women is used as a weapon of war. As well as in socio-economic conditions. Recently there is increase of gender-based violence in all countries of region and women openly share concern about femicide phenomena in rise.

While we women work hard for full gender equality and women's full, equal and meaningful participation in peace, security and justice process, unfortunately a real gender equality is rather far from our ideals for empowerment of women, gender equality in a just, peaceful and prosperous world. In fact, the global current context is playing down women's role and WPS agenda, given that world has become less peaceful, with rising conflicts, insecurity and even we witness geopolitical wars such as the war in Ukraine, in Middle East and in other parts of the world.

In the new global context, old and new challenges have been hampering the WPS agenda and our overall efforts for gender equality, gender inclusive peace-making, peacebuilding and democratic governance. Along with old challenges (traditional ones related to patriarchal mentality), the new challenges include fragile peace, weak democracy, growing autocracy, nationalism and corruption which deepen disparity between women and men. In addition, delayed justice for women especially to women raped during wars in the Western Balkans and, delayed European integration of all seven aspirant countries of the region hinders acceleration of WPS agenda.

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When looking at official reports, the data from the “Women in politics: 2023” map, created by the Inter-Parliamentary Union (IPU) and UN Women, presents data for women in executive positions and national parliaments as of 1 January 2023 is as follows:

Women serve as Heads of State and/or Government in only 31 countries. Women make up 26.5 per cent of Members of Parliament. Globally, less than one in four Cabinet Ministers is a woman (22.8 per cent). New data show that women lead important human rights, gender equality, and social protection policy portfolios, while men dominate policy areas like defense and economy. Though these numbers do not show a real picture indeed, this because most of women in these high-level positions are powerless because the political power rest with men, who have political legitimacy through democratic voting, while women is lacking political power and legitimacy as they are under voted by men.

Hence most of women come to high level state or government responsibilities thanks to political support by their political party bosses, who are generous to grant position to women but not the power. Most illustrative is the fact that men are ready to share almost equally the seats in parliaments, but not in governments. Of course, men want to hold the political power for themselves in leadership and decision-making.

Throughout the region, political party leaderships are still dominated by men and there might be only few and small women-led political parties. It is obvious that power structures are still seen as reserved spaces for men, who use different means, formal and informal, to keep themselves in power.

Access to power structures remains difficult for women, not only because of old and new barriers but also from corrupted systems of governance that work in favor of men. In addition, gender equality is not a policy priority at all levels, national, regional and local levels as it should be. It mostly is being mentioned as a cross-cutting issue. In addition, the political parties have not taken proper gender equality reforms in their programs and policies, while political will is lacking, funds and electoral campaign support for women are insufficient, despite the gender equality quota in the electoral lists. In addition, Women's economic under-empowerment impacts their chances to get involved in politics and gain votes – not to say that media support to gender equality is insignificant (Despite new gender sensitive media laws).

Faced with this reality, women's struggle must be for political power. Time has come for gender equality in political power-sharing and leadership. This is the only way towards a just, peaceful and prosperous future.

### **Activity**

Against this background the activity of the RWLSEE together with Cordaid supported by the WPHF (Women's Peace and Humanitarian Fund) Rapid Response Window will provide a platform for discussions on the importance of women's leadership in politics and decision-making, as the only way of ensuring equal participation of women in decision making and leadership at all levels and formal peace processes that can help us build a better future for all. This because, the empowerment of women in politics, namely in political parties is a key

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condition that provides power to women and brings them to decision making table in governance, in peace-making and in peacebuilding processes.

We consider this as a strategic priority and the viable way of ensuring inclusive leadership that can bring change for all women and girls while advancing peacebuilding and sustainable development, so much needed in the post-conflict setting of the Western Balkans.

The activity is the International Conference titled 'EMPOWERING WOMEN IN POLITICS AND LEADERSHIP FOR A BETTER WORLD'. The Conference will provide a platform for discussions on the importance of empowerment of women in politics decision making, leadership, in political parties as a key condition of having women participate equally in democratic governance, formal peace-making and peacebuilding processes. In this framework, the Conference will consider the triple nexus between women's underrepresentation in decision making and formal peace processes, fragile peace and weak systems of democratic governance-generating persisting barriers to women's access to political power and entry into political decision-making. It will address gaps and challenges, old and new challenges, as well as the way forward to ensuring women's full equal participation politics, leadership, peace, security and justice processes, the latter being so important given the war wounds are not yet healed, neither the interethnic reconciliation in entire region. It will also address the gender inclusive justice and transitional justice as a response to increasing violence against women in the war and domestic contexts. The discussion will be held in the context of the UNSCR 1325 +24 Review and Beijing+30 review, thus reflecting on the achievements made and challenges faced in the implementation of these two groundbreaking instruments on gender equality and WPS agenda.

### **Objective**

The overall objective is promoting gender equality and women's empowerment and full meaningful participation in politics, decision making, leadership, peacemaking and peacebuilding, democratic good governance as a way of making changes towards a better future we all need. And promoting WPS agenda and its accelerated implementation.

### **Specific objectives:**

- To discuss the current and emerging challenges to gender equality and WPS agenda in the Western Balkans while providing women's perspectives and strategies of speeding up implementation of WPS agenda at all levels as well as solutions on lasting peace in the ongoing fragile peace in our region, improving neighbourly relations, regional cooperation for speeding up European and Euro Atlantic integration to the benefit of all citizens of countries in the region.
- To raise awareness on the necessity of women's leadership in politics and decision-making, in our countries but also globally, given that world today is less peaceful and insecure under the men leadership.

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- To discuss the importance of gender equality in political power as the only way for the equal, full and meaningful participation of women in decision making tables where peace, security, justice-our future is decided.
- To discuss gender inclusive justice and transitional justice leading to a just and peaceful society in post-conflict setting expand the alliance of support on gender equality and WPS agenda by having journalist as allies of gender inclusive peacebuilding.

#### **Expected Outcomes**

- Women's efforts for empowerment and leadership in politics, political parties, decision-making, peace-making, peacebuilding for a better future for all have further empowered.
- Regional cooperation on gender equality, peacebuilding and effective implementation of WPS Agenda and WPS-HA compact and Beijing +30 commitments have further promoted at all levels, regionally, nationally and locally.
- The set of strategic recommendations are developed in on the topics addressed by the International Conference.
- Public awareness is raised on necessity of gender inclusive leadership and democracy while policy makers and decision makers are lobbied for gender inclusivity on WPS and Justice processes and gender mainstreaming at all levels of governance, through dissemination of the set of strategic recommendations to all relevant addresses, nationally, regionally, and internationally

#### **Methodology and Participants**

The RWLSEE and Cordaid will bring together broader list of participants, as women leaders in politics and civil society, parliaments, governments, local governments, national and international experts and advocates on gender equality, International partners Cordaid and WPHF Rapid Window Response, RWLSEE Steering Committee and all members from the RWLSEE focus countries (Albania, Bosnia and Herzegovina, Croatia, Kosovo, Montenegro, North Macedonia, Serbia), Representatives of UN Women, Embassies in Kosovo, other UN agencies and international organizations

The discussions will take place in plenary sessions with topics as per agenda. There will be breakout sessions – working groups based on topics of panels will be developing recommendations to present in the plenary session. There will be also an open interactive debate with all participants to allow for them to share their views and ideas and specific recommendations on advancing WPS agenda and peacebuilding.

#### **Place and date of the event.**

The Conference will take place on 06 September 2024, in Hotel Prishtina International, Prishtina, Kosovo

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*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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