



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

PRESS RELEASE

Impressive women's peace-building efforts to make progress on strained inter-ethnic relations and reconciliation in Kosovo and beyond, at the Regional Conference of the Regional Women's Lobby of Southeast Europe led by Edita Tahiri

(Prishtina, Kosovo, September 05, 2024) This dialogue between the women of the Albanian majority and the Serbian minority in Kosovo with the mediation of the women of the Regional Lobby (RWLSEE) took place at the Regional Conference "Women shaping the peaceful and European future through the promotion of inter-ethnic relations and reconciliation in Kosovo and throughout the region after the Western Balkans conflict", which was held on 5 September 2024 in Pristina, Kosovo, organized by the Regional Women's Lobby in South-Eastern Europe/RWLSEE and Cordaid with the support of the Women's Peace and Humanitarian Fund (WPHF). "Women through regional cooperation promoted the importance of inter-ethnic relations and ethnic reconciliation in the Western Balkans of the tragic past", in the presence of the Deputy American Ambassador to Kosovo Anu Prattipati and Gender Equality Expert Anne Kwakkenbos as well as the head of the OSCE, Michael Davenport as well as many international experts and women from the four northern municipalities and all other municipalities from all over Kosovo.

The conference was opened with an introductory speech by Edita Tahiri, president of RWLSEE, Anne Kwakkenbos, expert on gender issues Cordaid and Anu Prattipati, Chargé d'affaires of the United States Embassy in Kosovo.

Edita Tahiri in her speech said that it is a pleasure to open the Regional Conference of Local Women for Peace Building and Ethnic Reconciliation so that together we can build peace, gender equality and ethnic reconciliation for a better and Euro-Atlantic future for everyone in Kosovo and in all the countries of the Western Balkan region that went through tragic wars, the consequences of which we still suffer, but our commitment to overcome these consequences and build a bright future is necessary and we must do it.

Anu Prattipati. In her speech, she emphasized "inter-ethnic relations and ethnic reconciliation are essential for building comprehensive and lasting peace, although it is not easy, but it is possible to achieve multi-ethnic democracy". Chargé d'affaires of the American Embassy Anu Prattipati said that inter-ethnic relations are essential for fostering mutual understanding, respect and cooperation between different communities, they can help bridge gaps, reduce tensions and promote peace. At the end she said "All together for peace and the Euro-Atlantic future".



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Anne Kwakkenbos in her opening remarks of the conference emphasized that she and CORDAID strongly support RWLSEE's regional peacebuilding and women's empowerment initiative. She further said that women are vital in promoting peace and reconciliation. Their role in promoting inter-ethnic dialogue is essential for creating stability. Despite ongoing challenges, their efforts are laying the foundations for a more equal future in the region.

The Regional Conference of Local Women for Peace Building and Ethnic Reconciliation was intended to address the issue of strained inter-ethnic relations and the stalled reconciliation process in Kosovo, but also in the wider Western Balkans region. The obstacles to increasing inter-ethnic cooperation and the prospects for advancing inter-ethnic reconciliation in the wider region were discussed, emphasizing the importance of multi-ethnic coexistence for peace building and development. Focusing on the roles and perspectives of women as essential drivers of peace building and promoters of dialogue. The conference aimed to facilitate discussions between majority Albanian and minority Serb women in Kosovo with the participation of women from the region, from seven RWLSEE focus countries (Albania, Bosnia and Herzegovina, Croatia, Kosovo, Montenegro, North Macedonia, Serbia). . The aim was to build bridges between different ethnic communities, promoting collaborative solutions and strengthening the involvement of local women in peace, security, justice and decision-making processes, all while fostering regional cooperation to amplify the voices of women and girls in local peace-building and gender inclusion.

Conference participants engaged in lively and inspiring discussions presenting their views, ideas, experiences and recommendations related to the objective of the Conference.

The overall objectives were to promote inter-ethnic cooperation and reconciliation in Kosovo, providing space for dialogue for local women of majority and minority ethnic communities through the regional peace mediation of RWLSEE for discussions, interactions and mutual trust building, to be in a condition of addressing issues of mutual interest, challenges and ways leading to solutions for community development, peaceful inter-ethnic coexistence and inter-ethnic reconciliation with the support and participation of women from the region, as a way forward towards a peaceful and European future with women that have a leadership role, too, such as strengthening the full and equal participation of women in decision-making at all levels in peace-building, security and reconciliation processes, promoting the WPS agenda at all levels.

Moreover, that the local women of Kosovo make a breakthrough in the recently strained inter-ethnic relations between the Albanian majority and the Serbian minority due to some identified factors and jointly promote stability and lasting peace building through inter-ethnic cooperation and reconciliation with an active role of women, leading to a gender-inclusive peaceful future, as well as strengthening the equal participation of women in peace, security processes at local and



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national levels, emphasizing that local government and mayor positions cannot be in the hands of men only, but power must be shared among men and women. In addition, by promoting mutual understanding, trust-building and open dialogue to remove obstacles to inter-ethnic harmony and reconciliation.

The Regional Conference of Local Women for Peace Building and Ethnic Reconciliation continued with panel discussions. Topics covered by the panels: The state of inter-ethnic relations in the countries of the Western Balkans from the perspective of women: Best practices and lessons learned; Advancement of inter-ethnic relations and reconciliation at the regional and local level: Challenges and perspectives?; Brussels Dialogue, EU Integration and Ethnic Reconciliation in the Western Balkans with the leading role of women; Inter-ethnic women's dialogue between the Albanian majority and the Serbian minority in Kosovo - "Strengthening the participation of local women in the processes of peace, security, decision-making and reconciliation through regional cooperation: Regional Voice of Women and Girls for Gender Inclusive Local Peace Building.

The conference continued with working group sessions for the preparation of recommendations, which will be discussed in the plenary sessions in order to build a set of concrete recommendations that will be approved by the participants to be shared with policy makers, decision makers at the national, regional and global level.

The conference brought together local women from ten multi-ethnic municipalities of Kosovo, members of the RWLSEE Steering Committee from seven focus countries (Albania, Bosnia and Herzegovina, Croatia, Kosovo, Montenegro, North Macedonia, Serbia), representatives of international partners, Cordaid and WPHF (Women in Humanitarian Peace Fund), Rapid Response Window and international organizations and agencies, UN Women experts, researchers, practitioners.

Present at the Conference were: Ms. Edita Tahiri, Ms. Sonja Biserko, Ms. Nada Drobnjak, Ms. Irina Pockova, Ms. Memnuna Zvizdic, Ms. Vesna Škare Ožbolt, Ms. Gordana Čomić, Ms. Flora Macula, Ms. Time Kadrijaj, Ms. Xevahir Izmaku, Ms. Slavica Strikokvic, Ms. Savka Todorovska, Ms. Anne Kwakkenbos, Ms. Anu Prattipati, Mr. Michael Davenport, Ms. Cornelia Taylor, Mr. Xavier Rouard, Ms. Ora Prelvukaj, Ms. Charles Cuellar, Mr. Lulzim Peci, Mr. Elmi Reqica, Ms. Lirije Kajtazi, Mr. Erden Atiq, Ms. Katarina Adjancic, Ms. Marina Bogojevic, Ms., Elga Miter, Ms. Emona Salihi, Ms. Veprora Shehu, Ms. Biljana Zarkovic, Ms. Snezana, Mr. Rikalo, Ms. Olivera Milosevic, Ms. Hasime Tahiri, Ms. Radmila Kapetanovic, Ms. Jelena Aksentijevic and RWLSEE support staff Ms. Diana Cekaj-Berisha and Ms. Arbëresha Dedinja.

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