



November 13, 2024

## Press Release on RWLSEE'S Strategic Meeting held on 24 October 2024, Online

The strategic meeting of the RWLSEE Steering Committee members with participation of the RWLSEE' Project Coordinator was held 24 October 2024, online. The aim of the meeting was to reflect on past achievements and develop a Plan of work in 2025 based on Strategic Plan 2023-2027 and considering peace and security developments in the region of the Western Balkans during past years.

The strategic meeting was organized as part of the RWLSEE's institutional progress and peace building goals, advocacy to regional peace and stability in the Western Balkan's, and after completing this 2024 successful year with accomplishments of three peacebuilding projects / one international conference and two regional conferences supported by our donor partner WPHF Rapid Response Window and Cordaid.



The Strategic meeting was chaired by Edita Tahiri, Chair of RWLSEE who opened the meeting and expressed high appreciations to Steering Committee members and Secretariat team for their commitments and readiness at every moment to be at service of the

RWLSEE' peacebuilding mission, she appraised this year's work of the Lobby (RWLSEE) as a very successful in delivering effectively the planned projects of 2024 together with our donor partner. She said that this joint journey was a pursuit of real motivation, creativity and full engagement of each of you to effectively make Lobby perform with its standards recognized for many years by our previous strategic partner UN Women ECA and UN Women Kosovo. Tahiri noted that were happy that our donors valued highly our achievements and our commitment for implementation of the goals of the UNSCR 1325 and Beijing Platform, SDG and GEF Compact. She also that in our journey ahead we will be facing old and new challenges but we will stand together to overcome them and contribute to gender equality and peacebuilding in or regional of fragile peace. She

- CONTACT : +383 44 14 20 13
- E-MAIL: [info@rwlsee.org](mailto:info@rwlsee.org)



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emphasized that the RWLSEE remains resolved to respond to whatever challenges that come across us and, given that our expertise is unique and our regional networking makes us a regional women's power for changes needed for a better and peaceful region and world. This year we proved that even in the conditions of the stalled Brussels Dialogue for two years and frozen interethnic reconciliation, we could bring women from entire region of different political and ethnic, civil society background at national and local level in our three conferences, which showed impressive readiness of women for dialogue on lasting peace, trust-building and reconciliation. We proved to be real and courageous women peacebuilders, and will continue so.

Tahiri further expressed her satisfaction for presence of Cordaid representative, Anne Kwakkenbos and Deputy American Ambassador in Kosovo, Anu Prattipati and of women ambassadors accredited in Kosovo.

Encouraged by 1325 and Beijing Platform she said we will move forward our commitments for converting words to actions and spread up implementations of these cornerstone instruments for gender equality and empowerment of women in WPS, justice and politics, decision-making and leadership

The meeting was followed with discussions of participants on their reflections about the achievements during the year 2024 and. They then presented their ideas and concrete proposals on the Action Plan for 2025 as well as on strategic directions of next three years.

The participants shared happiness on the success of the RWLSEE during 2024 and high appreciation for our donor WPHF Rapid Response Window and Cordaid which through funding enabled Lobby to play important role for gender equality and WPS agenda in the context of fragile peace that dominates in the Western Balkans loaded with additional negative such as autocracy, nationalism, geopolitical tensions and insecurity impacted by the less peaceful and less secure world.

Regarding the projects for 2025, the discussions include:

**Sonja Biserko** said we should continue with our existing platform with focus on security, human rights and autocratic regimes.

**Memnuna Zvizdić**, while gave support for existing projects, she proposed to focus on Serbia's destabilizing role in Bosnia and beyond by holding an activity there.

**Nada Drobnjak** said: I support our platforms and propose to focus on misogyny

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**Irina Pockova** proposed to focus more on local peacebuilding, while supporting existing projects

**Eglantina Gjermeni** supported the projects and called to focus on the Regional Academy for Women Leadership and Mediation (RAWLM). We need to empower young women and bridge the intergenerational gap.

**Diana Çekaj-Berisha** briefed on the work in progress of the Operation Manual of the RWLSEE that she is authoring. She further spoke of the importance of this instrument for the functionality of our organization. She said "Operational manual of RWLSEE is on the process to be developed. So far, we did not have our own RWLSEE' manual as all the policies and procedures were respected following UN Women operational manual since established at 2006. And now thanks to this grant, RWL will be on its own foot with its Organizational Operation Manual." Said Diana.

The joint conclusions were that the focus for the 2025 Activities shall be on

Accelerating Progress for Gender Equality by 2030 SDA in the light of historic anniversaries of 1325 and Beijing Platform (respectively 25<sup>th</sup> and 30<sup>th</sup> anniversaries) with special focus in ensuring political power to women, namely pursue gender equality in political power sharing and leadership as the only way to have women included equally in decision making levels and formal peace processes.

Further it was agreed that empowerment of young women for peacebuilding will be a priority including their supporting capacity building and encouraging further young women involvement in politics and strengthening regional cooperation among them and promoting youth vision on WPS and justice, transitional justice, peacebuilding and reconciliation in the region.

Specifically focus on local peacebuilding was considered as important and necessary. Regional Academy towards empowering young women leaders and mediators for peacebuilding and positive change in region in line with European and Euro-Atlantic standards – "Young Women Lead the Way" was agreed as a strategic priority.

In concluding, the Chair Edita Tahiri concluded that RWLSEE' Steering Committee approved the peacebuilding platforms and the Action Plan of 2025 in line with the main directions of the Strategic Plan 2023-2027.