

THE RWLSEE DECLARATION ON THE IMPLEMENTATION OF UNSCR 1325 IN WESTERN BALKANS - Prishtina Declaration

The Steering Committee Meeting of the Regional Women's Lobby in South Eastern Europe (RWLSEE) was held in Prishtina, Kosovo¹ on 8 and 9 December 2017, in close partnership and with funding support from UN Women and the Swedish Government. In a second day the RSWLSEE Roundtable on Peacebuilding efforts at municipal level was held with participation of women of diverse communities from Novo Berdo multiethnic municipality.

The RWLSEE Steering Committee meeting was attended by all its members from seven countries, of the region, its Chair, Edita Tahiri, Kosovo, Gordana Sobol, Croatia, Nada Drobnjak, Montenegro, Eglantina Gjermeni, Albania, Sonja Biserko, Serbia, Irina Pockova, Macedonia, and Nuna Zvicdic, Bosnia and Herzegovina

Chaired by Edita Tahiri, the RWLSEE Chair, for two days participants reviewed the political and security situation in each of seven member countries and entire region of Western Balkans and ways to enlarge women's roles in peace-building and stability at regional, national and municipal levels, in the light of the European and Euro-Atlantic integration and implementation of UNSC resolution 1325. A particular attention was devoted on the current challenges and perspectives of women empowerment in decision making and peace and security processes, where women remain dramatically underrepresented even 17 years since the adoption of the resolution 1325. RWLSEE expressed its gratitude to its strategic partners UN Women and Swedish Government for their crucial support.

The Steering Committee members drafted the Women's Lobby action plan for 2018 based on its Strategic plan 2018-2019. The Action Plan aims at advancing the decade long goals of Regional Women's Lobby to help empower women in peace and security processes in the region, offering a unique model for women leaders to work together for a better future, despite past wars and conflicts in the region.

The Steering Committee agreed on the following recommendations*:

Regional peace and security challenges

- We are deeply concerned on deteriorating political and security situation in the Western Balkans region due to lack of substantial progress in in rule of law, economy and democracy in each seven countries and a rather slow pace of European and Euro-Atlantic integration for six countries that are in path of integration. Instead of progress, the region is faced with numerous new challenges, which includes growing nationalism and populism that is manipulating the energy of society and practically it is turning into a barrier for the development, democracy and liberal values in the interest of citizens, open bilateral issues and normalization of relations, as well as, security challenges coming from Russia's meddling in the region with dangerous geopolitical agenda, extremist violence, emigration and brain drain phenomena.

¹ All references to Kosovo on this website shall be understood to be in full compliance with UN Security Council Resolution 1244 (1999).

- RWLSEE promotes the European and Euro-Atlantic vision for all Western Balkan countries, and we call on Euro-Atlantic partners, US and EU, to increase their presence in the region also the engagement that the Western Balkan countries get integrated into EU and NATO as soon as possible, as a peaceful project that will contribute to sustainable peace and stability in the region. We should be alert and act in unity against the Russia's destabilizing scenarios in the region and other security, because lack of sufficient capacities of countries in region and lack of sufficient focus and presence of Euro-Atlantic partners in the region risks creating a free space for negative interferences for non- western actors.
- In current political and security challenges in the region, the role of women should be increased in all seven countries in order to be able to address these challenges with full human capacities given that present half of population as well as special values women bring to peace and security processes.

Participation of women

- Acknowledging certain progress in politics and other spheres of life, though followed by unsustainability, we are deeply concerned on a dramatic underrepresentation and participation of women in peace and security processes in region and worldwide. The fact that participation of women in conflict resolution and peace negotiations could not grow beyond 5% and only 2% of Chief negotiators are women, shows the weaknesses of society and institutions to respect and recognize women capacities. This despite the fact that the UNSCR 1325 is calling on states to empower women in decision making in peace and security processes for seventeen years in a row.
- RWLSEE calls on empowerment of women's role in peace and security process while emphasizing that political will and financial support remains crucial in implementation of gender equality policies and laws at national, regional and international levels conducive to the Resolution 1325. It is very important for peace, stability, normalization of relations and reconciliation to have women's perspective integrated into the peace agreements, to help overcome differences for the sake of peaceful and Euro-Atlantic future all seven countries in region, and not allow for war legacy to stand in its way.
- Strengthening women leadership and decision making role in politics, peace and security process, helping grow women leadership potentials, creation of successful women's models are factors of stimulation and inspiration for women's empowerment. Working in partnership with men in this joint endeavor remains crucial.
- We call specifically for more women's participation in mediation and peace negotiating table, for which more women should be trained whereas call on UN to appoint more women as special envoys and senior mediators, including women from Western Balkans that show capacities for peacebuilding and reconciliation such as RWLSEE membership.
- It is also very important that the women create networks of cooperation to advance further the agenda of women in their countries, and also the economic independence

of women. The models that ensure public funds guarantee for the participation of women in economic life is very important, along with other measures found in best practices in region and worldwide.

- In this regard, RWLSEE offers its support for Ms. Dunja Mijatovic from Bosnia and Herzegovina, to be appointed as Commissioner for Human Rights in the Council of Europe

Protection of women

- Unfortunately gender discrimination continues in different forms and many areas of life. We are concerned of growing phenomena of domestic violence which in some cases ended up tragically with loss of life of number of women. The discrimination tendencies are noticed even through some covered agendas such as family policies and laws are being shaped with excluding women from public life, or some religious radicalization with the tendency to damage women, which requires vigilance and measures to prevent those phenomena. This including also working to clear up the vocabulary of politicians from the offenses towards women.
- We call on women to engage more on preventing and stopping domestic violence and all other forms of discrimination against women. Women networks from politics and civil society in national, local and regional level should mobilize to stop degradation of acquired rights of women and advance them to full equality between men and women.

Justice and reconciliation

- We call for women access to justice to advance in accordance with international standards and guaranteed rights for women. We are particularly concerned with lack of access to justice for women victims of sexual violence during wars and conflicts.
- RWLSEE considers that international justice for women victims of war rape during the wars in Kosovo, Bosnia and Herzegovina and Croatia remains unaddressed and ignored while criminals are not yet brought to justice and punished. RWLSEE Steering Committee agreed to write a joint letter to relevant international organizations to call for international justice to be established for women victims of sexual violence during wars in the three countries, calling on UN to prepare reports on this matter, similarly as it did in other cases.
- We remain committed for justice and reconciliation while promoting and working on interethnic tolerance and cooperation, breaking ethnocentric politics and removing barriers of mistrust. In this regard RWLSEE will continue to support implementation of peace agreements and focus in peacebuilding broadly and particularly at municipal levels. It will also deal with hate speech in the region as negative development against peace and reconciliation.
- The RWLSEE Roundtable with more than 30 women from Novo Brdo, a multi-ethnic municipality, was held on 9 December 2017. The participants valued highly the RWLSEE contribution in helping common agenda of empowerment of women and interethnic relations at their municipality through roundtables held in 2015 in Novo

Berdo and in 2016 in Prishtina. They spoke of considerable improvements in interethnic and cooperation between women of different communities (Albanians and Serbs). They discussed daily concerns and women concerns, highlighting lack of women in municipal decision making bodies (only one director of department women and some women, directors in schools), and lack of women from their municipality at central government institutions in Kosovo, transport difficulties, improvements in different sectors like education, employment and security. They called on RWLSEE to continue its engagement in helping peacebuilding and prosperity at municipal levels and in their municipality per se, while expressing readiness to participate at the forthcoming roundtables in Klllokot, Ranillug, Partesh in January 2018.

** The views expressed on this document are those of the Regional Women's Lobby for Peace, Security and Justice in South East Europe and do not necessarily represent the views of UN Women, the United Nations, or any of its affiliated organizations*