

Global Open Day on Women, Peace and Security in Kosovo

Pristina, June 2022



United Nations Global Open Day on Women, Peace, and Security in Kosovo

Breaking Barriers and Building Peace: Advancing Women's Participation in Political Processes

Contents

Introduction2

 Focus on Women’s Participation in High-Level Decision-Making Processes. ...2

Opening Remarks2

 Voices from Kosovo women: The importance of women’s inclusion in
 political decision-making5

The Importance of Women’s Leadership in Sustainable Peace6

Women’s role in strengthening inclusive decision-making processes7

Closing Remarks8

Key Recommendations9

Introduction

On 08 June 2022, UNMIK and UN Women co-organised the ninth edition of the United Nations Global Open Day on Women, Peace, and Security in Kosovo, under the theme “Breaking Barriers and Building Peace: Advancing Women’s Participation in Political Processes.” More than 120 representatives from political and civil society institutions across Kosovo attended the event and discussed the dual needs to increase the presence of women in high-level political processes and for more women to take an active role in peacebuilding.

Launched in October 2010 by the UN in support of United Nations Security Council resolution 1325 (2000) on Women, Peace, and Security, the 2022 edition explored the importance of women’s leadership in creating sustainable and long-lasting peace. Global Open Days have provided a platform to explore how to overcome obstacles to

Focus on Women’s Participation in High-Level Decision-Making

Women and men experience conflict differently and can thus make unique contributions to conflict prevention and peacebuilding. Since the first session of the General Assembly in 1946, the United Nations has recognised the importance of women’s contributions to strengthening world peace. The adoption of the 10 resolutions (2000-2019) related to Women, Peace, and Security (WPS) are part of the UN’s WPS Agenda, with a central focus on engaging women and girls in trust-building processes. The WPS Agenda emphasizes the critical role played by women as leaders and decision-makers in all aspects of the prevention, mitigation, and resolution of conflict, as well as in the fields of post-conflict reconstruction, transitional justice, and humanitarian response. However, despite this strong normative background and evidence of their roles as agents of peace, women continue to be marginalized and excluded from decision-making processes related to conflict prevention, resolution, and trust building.

Opening Remarks

The event began with a keynote speech delivered by the President of Kosovo, Ms. **Vjosa Osmani-Sadriu**. This was followed by opening remarks from the United Nations Special Representative to the Secretary-General (SRSG) and Head of UNMIK, **Ms. Caroline Zideh**, and the United Nations Development Coordinator (UNDC) in Kosovo, Ms. **Ulrika Richardson**. Keynote speakers also included the Kosovo Deputy Prime Minister for Minority Issues and Human Rights, **Emilija Redžepi**, and the Swedish Ambassador to Kosovo, **Karin Hernmarck Ahliny**.

*Ms. Vjosa Osmani-Sadriu,
President of Kosovo*



While noting the importance of UN Security Council Resolution 1325 on Women, Peace and Security, Kosovo President **Osmani-Sadriu** highlighted how girls and women have the strength, knowledge, power, and capacity to achieve common goals of the whole society and secure lasting peace in the world. "The initial premise of any discussion should be that the participation of women and girls in peace and security processes is our best guarantee for lasting peace and security," noted President Osmani, acknowledging the vital importance of increasing women's participation in peace and security, and calling upon all men to cooperate towards women's inclusion in political processes.

"The initial premise of any discussion should be that the participation of women and girls in peace and security processes is our best guarantee for lasting peace and security,"

—Kosovo President Vjosa Osmani

Ms. Caroline Ziadeh, SRSG and Head of UNMIK

SRSG **Ziadeh** acknowledged in her remarks that each element of a peace-building process must incorporate the views and priorities of both men and women in all their manifestations. "In other words, for peace and security to be sustainable, they need to be defined by both women and men," SRSG Ziadeh noted. Emphasising that breaking barriers is about creating conditions for inclusive societies where peace and stability may thrive in diversity, SRSG Ziadeh noted how these efforts should ensure a paradigm shift anchored in partnerships and shared values. "The resolution recognises that the meaningful participation of women in decision-making processes contributes to more democratic societies, more inclusive development, and increasing sustainable peace [...] We remain steadfast in our firm support to all your endeavors to ensure women's participation, inclusion, and ownership of different processes at central, local and communities' level," the SRSG noted.



"The resolution recognises that the meaningful participation of women in decision-making processes contributes to more democratic societies, more inclusive development, and increasing sustainable peace [...] We remain steadfast in our firm support to all your endeavors to ensure women's participation, inclusion, and ownership of different processes at central, local and communities' level."

—SRSG Caroline Ziadeh

Ms. Ulrika Richardson, United Nations Development Coordinator



"I have been impressed with the quality, determination, passion, and dynamism of the women's movement, not just in Kosovo, but also the entire region,"

—Ulrika Richardson, United Nations Development Coordinator

UNDC **Richardson** reflected on painful moments that the Western Balkans have seen in the past, observing that for the peace process to advance properly, women must be part of it. "The [Western Balkans] region has chosen peace as its road and there is no turning back. For that journey to advance properly, women must be part of it." Ms. Richardson also stressed the importance of meaningful cooperation between men and women and called on men to share power with women to participate in the construction of sustainable development. "I have been impressed with the quality, determination, passion, and dynamism of the women's movement, not just in Kosovo, but also the entire region," she noted. Women's movements are a condition for driving peace, equality and diversity in Kosovo and the region. She refers to quotas as effective tools to get women into politics and decision-making, leading to power sharing. Men must allow women to enter the space of power. Only then we can have sustainable development, inclusive development sustaining peace and we owe it to the past and the future generations.

Ms. Emilija Redžepi, Deputy Prime Minister for Minority Issues and Human Rights

Deputy Prime Minister for Minority Issues and Human Rights Ms. **Redžepi** highlighted the vital importance of exerting influence on democratic processes, making reference to the importance of representation of different sectors of society. Recognising that equality for women is a long-term struggle, Ms. Redžepi encouraged all members of society to be persistent and united to achieve this goal and promote women's rights. "On behalf of the government, the people of Kosovo across ethnic lines, a big thank you for exerting an influence for democratic processes and for a chance for us to be equal and represented without any discrimination. Equality for women is a lengthy battle, we have to be united in our journey to achieve this."



"On behalf of the government, the people of Kosovo across ethnic lines, a big thank you for exerting an influence for democratic processes and for a chance for us to be equal and represented without any discrimination. Equality for women is a lengthy battle, we have to be united in our journey to achieve this."

—Emilija Redžepi, Deputy Prime Minister for Minority Issues and Human Rights

Ms. Karin Hernmarck Ahliny, Swedish Ambassador to Kosovo



Swedish Ambassador to Kosovo Ms. **Hernmarck Ahliny** noted the importance of involving women in political process at the initial stages, emphasizing on their essential role in creating inclusive processes. "Involving women in peace and security is not only the right thing to do, but the best thing to do. It gives the negotiating table a broader understanding of what the conflict is in a larger sense and what sustainable peace should look like." Ms. Hernmarck expressed her hope to see gender equality actions implemented at all levels, both in Kosovo and across the whole Western Balkans region, including in the EU-facilitated dialogue between Belgrade and Pristina

"Involving women in peace and security is not only the right thing to do, but the best thing to do. It gives the negotiating table a broader understanding of what the conflict is in a larger sense and what sustainable peace should look like."

– Hernmarck Ahliny, Swedish Ambassador to Kosovo

Voices from Kosovo women: The importance of women's inclusion in political decision-making

Prior to the debate, a video featuring three women's rights activists from across Kosovo who spoke about the importance of including women in political decision-making was screened. **Milica Andrić Rakić**, Project Manager at the NGO New Social Initiative in North Mitrovica, stressed that studies show how the participation of women and civil society organisations in peacemaking processes makes agreements 65 per cent less likely to fail. Ms Rakić reflected upon the importance of including women's voices in the peace process, referring to the symbolic and inconsistent number of women's current participation in decision-making. **Teuta Hoxhaj Jahaj**, a Lawyer and Human Rights activist from Pristina, observed that including women in the decision-making process increases the gender sensitivity required to solve all the problems of society. She added that having women at the table is the necessary step to provide solutions benefitting overall society. **Dafina Alishani**, Vetëvendosje member in the Municipal Assembly of Prizren, highlighted that women represent 50 per cent of the population and that the lack of women in politics mostly affects women's rights and needs.

A second video featuring women rights activists was screened at the venue between the two panels. Ms. **Maxhide Mjaku Topalli**, former PDK MP, highlighting the diverse daily challenges that women face and recalled the importance of all actors of society supporting women and ensuring their equal participation in the Dialogue process. Ms. **Ivana Vukašivonić Dokić**, manager at the Center for Human Development, noted that the education of youth and children is fundamental for the advancement of women's careers in different sectors and organisations, and to break gender stereotypes. Ms. **Shpresa Agushi**, Executive Director of the Network of Roma, Ashkali and Egyptian Women in Kosovo, emphasised the importance of ensuring that gender equality strives in every position, representation, and voice.

The Importance of Women's Leadership in Sustainable Peace



The first panel was moderated by the Head of the UN Women Office in Kosovo, Ms. **Vlora Nushi**, and consisted of an engaging discussion entitled "The Importance of Women's Leadership in Sustainable Peace." Panelists elaborated on the importance of women's active engagement in peace processes. Whilst reflecting upon strategies to better mobilise and include women leaders and changemakers in politics, the speakers exchanged their views on the importance of women participating meaningfully in political parties, the Dialogue, negotiation table, the media, and their experiences in tackling everyday discrimination.

Ms. **Jovana Radosavljević**, Executive Director of the NGO New Social Initiative, elaborated on her experience as a member of a non-majority community in Kosovo running a successful NGO, which consists primarily of women. In her remarks, Ms. Radosavljević wished to see more movements, groups and organisations taking this example while moving forward. She also presented data based on a study of 130 peace agreements since 1990 demonstrating that women's participation in conflict prevention and resolution increases the durability of agreements, noting that it is not only necessary for women to be represented in political processes but that their participation should be meaningful - as mediators, negotiators, and signatories.

Mr. **Shpetim Gashi**, Vice President of the Council for Inclusive Governance, noted that the rooted patriarchal structure of society constitutes the main obstacle to meaningful participation in politics and peacebuilding processes for women. Elaborating on this issue, Mr. Gashi identified education and political parties as the main tools to start fighting any discrimination against women and girls.

Ms. **Donika Emini**, Executive Director at CiviKos, pointed out that women deal with multiple challenges when playing public roles and spoke of the importance of combating discrimination on both public and private stages. Ms. Emini also lamented the absence of consistency in statistics showing women's inclusion and participation and the lack of support from the international community and political parties, arguing for a horizontal inclusion of women's perspective in legislation. She concluded that gender perspectives must be deeply embedded in peace negotiations and overall trust-building processes.

Joining on video call, RTK Correspondent from Brussels Ms. **Gjeraqina Tuhina** reiterated the importance of including women in the EU-facilitated dialogue between Belgrade and Pristina, emphasizing the importance of constantly questioning those in power to ensure the process is transparent and focused on what is best for society as a whole.

"Global Open Day is a forum to remind ourselves, male leaders and our society that we are here and as representatives of half of the population, we are happy to contribute to building sustainable peace and stability together," noted Ms. Nushi.

The Importance of Women's Leadership in Sustainable Peace



The second panel was moderated by DSRSG Ms. **Barrie Freeman** and was entitled "Women's role in strengthening inclusive decision-making processes." The speakers discussed an inter-sectoral approach towards mainstreaming gender diversity in political processes – including women from across ethnic lines such as the Kosovo Roma, Ashkali and Egyptian communities. The discussions broke down problems to offer actionable solutions for the way forward.

Ms. **Luljeta Demolli**, Executive Director of the Kosovo Gender Studies Centre, noted the lack of support from institutions in Kosovo to foster women's participation in politics and decision-making processes. To overcome current barriers, Ms. Demolli called on international organisations to better support women's empowerment and participation. Commenting on the way forward, she also highlighted the need for the collection and analysis of more transparent and reliable data on gender equality-related issues, reforms in the field of harassment prevention and security, as well as more efficient instruments to better implement the law on gender equality.

Ms. **Vetone Veliu**, Executive Director of the Mitrovica Women's Association for Human Rights, noted the importance of trust-building initiatives connecting women from different communities, including those supported by UNMIK. Ms. Veliu said that advocacy and trust-building activities at the local and community level should be designed and supported to reach high and regional level decision-makers.

Mr. **Miodrag Marinković**, Program Director at the Center for Affirmative Social Action, raised concerns about the exclusion of women from non-majority communities, adding that Kosovo institutions failed to ensure women's meaningful participation in politics and the Dialogue process. Expressing skepticism at men's willingness to fully support women's empowerment, Mr. Marinković called for greater social pressure, economic empowerment as well as affirmative action to ensure women's inclusion in decision-making processes.

Ms. **Mimoza Gavrani**, Executive Director at the Kosovo Advocacy Group, raised concerns over the exclusion of girls and women in the Roma, Ashkali and Egyptian communities, particularly in terms of their participation in decision-making. She stressed the need for political representatives to create solid and acceptable mainstream policies that are inclusive for women and that have a direct impact on people's lives, to create a safe and trustful environment.

"Peace processes by their very nature should be inclusive, without inclusivity they are just power politics," said DSRSG Freeman as the panel came to a close, noting the constructive exchange of ideas and solutions.

The Importance of Women's Leadership in Sustainable Peace

In her closing remarks, the Gender Adviser to the SRSG, Ms. **Javiera Thais Santa Cruz**, spoke of the ways in which women can ensure durable political solutions and sustainable peace. Ms. Thais Santa Cruz encouraged all members of society to undertake efforts and contributions toward institutional incentives, gender-responsive decision-making processes, effective compliance measures, and long-term strategies targeting socio-cultural change. "Without women's views and contributions, we are missing out on half of the population's talent and potential. We cannot afford to continue repeating the same mistakes over and over again," concluded Ms. Thais Santa Cruz.



Key Recommendations

Global Open Day on Women Peace and Security 2022 created a unique platform to engage with women and men from different communities in Kosovo and discuss the advancement of gender equality and the WPS agenda. The event contributed to a better understanding of the progress made so far, identified shortcomings in the implementation, and explored avenues for much needed improvements.

Participants provided a number of specific recommendations during the event highlighting the need for:

Greater political commitment by political leaders for more inclusive political negotiation processes to ensure that the voice and views of women and men, including from non-majority communities, are represented in ongoing discussions.

Women politicians and aspiring politicians to be supported by their parties, including through human and financial resources.

Gender-inclusive policies that are designed through consultative processes involving a diversity of actors, including member of non-majority communities, and implemented in accordance with their inclusive nature.

Increased development of and support for programmes empowering young women and exposing them to political leadership to advance women's access to decision-making.

Men's commitment to advancing gender equality and WPS at all decision-making levels, including by opening spaces traditionally occupied by men.

Tapping into women's knowledge and access to information from community networks to ensure inclusive decision-making processes at all levels.

Greater collaboration and consultation between women at high-level decision-making and women at the grassroot level to promote inclusive and sustainable peacebuilding.

Participation quotas for women to be assigned in all decision-making instances, including in the EU-facilitated dialogue between Belgrade and Pristina.

Women from different communities to be involved in central and local decision making processes.

Equal and unbiased representation of women in media, as well as their inclusion in statistic assessments designed to inform policies.

Institutional harassment to be addressed in order to create safe and inclusive environments where women feel welcome.

NOT ALL OF US CAN DO GREAT THINGS BUT WE CAN DO SMALL THINGS WITH GREAT LOVE

SOME PROGRESS MUCH MORE TO DO

POWER SHARING

A FINITE RESOURCE ... SOMEONE HAS TO STEP ASIDE

women's role in strengthening

INCLUSIVE DECISION MAKING PROCESSES

DATA COLLECTION, ANALYSIS

SHOW IT WORKS

RIGHTS RESOURCES REPRESENTATION

3% OF BOARDS ARE WOMEN

DOCUMENTATION

PEACE

women are not the "icing on the cake" they are an ESSENTIAL INGREDIENT

MALE ALLIES

BUILD A BIGGER TABLE

QUOTAS in boards, companies, universities

LOCAL POLITICAL PARTIES

THE HIGHER UP, THE LESS DIVERSITY

CREATE SAFE ENVIRONMENTS

WOMEN PERSPECTIVE

PROCESS

PEACE BUILDING MUST BE AN INCLUSIVE PROCESS

THE SYSTEM IS BUILT FOR MEN - IT IS HARDER FOR WOMEN

"STEREOTYPING"

DISCRIMINATION

PROMOTING INTER-ETHNIC PEACE

EDUCATION

IN SCHOOLS & UNIVERSITIES

YOUTH PROGRAMMES

BUILDING BRIDGES BETWEEN COMMUNITIES

MINORITY COMMUNITIES

WORKSHOPS EDUCATION RECOGNITION

LEADERSHIP

GENDER PERSPECTIVE

EQUALITY

MOBILITY STILL A PRIORITY SOCIETY

BREAKING BARRIERS & BUILDING PEACE

ADVANCING WOMEN'S PARTICIPATION IN POLITICAL PROCESSES

COMMUNICATION + INVOLVEMENT

when women are involved in negotiations, peace agreements do better