

OPENING REMARKS
GLOBAL OPEN DAY ON WOMEN, PEACE AND SECURITY IN
KOSOVO
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SECRETARY-GENERAL AND HEAD OF UNMIK
Pristina
5 March 2018

Distinguished guests,
Ladies and Gentlemen,

Welcome to the sixth Global Open Day on Women, Peace and Security in Kosovo. Global Open Day was launched in 2010, with the aim of reviewing the implementation of UN Security Council Resolution 1325 on Women, Peace and Security. Today, Global Open Days are organized worldwide, providing a unique opportunity to further the historic momentum generated by this agenda and ensure continuous political determination, concerted action and institutional and cultural reform by all governments, civil society and women institutions.

In Kosovo, following the recent parliamentary and local elections, and acknowledging the paramount importance of advancing women's empowerment as a fundamental precondition for gender equality, this year, Global Open Day will focus on women's political participation. We are honoured to host a group of distinguished women and men, who through their work, audacity and dedication have contributed to reinvigorating the gender consciousness and narrowing the gender gap in Kosovo politics. Advancing women's political participation, is based on a broader global commitment to women's full and effective participation and equal opportunities for leadership at all levels of decision-making in political,

economic and public life. This is an undertaking that is also crucial to gender equality, emanating from the universal realization of the full potential of humanity and the capability of each and everyone as a necessary condition for the better functioning of a democratic society, inclusive development and sustainable peace. Moreover, women's political participation is indispensable to gender justice in order to end inequality, subordination, hierarchical status and asymmetries of political power.

Distinguished guests,

In a number of areas, Kosovo has made positive progress in terms of women's political participation and representation. Women are everyday leading by example, from being elected Kosovo's first female mayor to heading the Central Election Commission. In last year's parliamentary elections, nearly one-third of women parliamentarians were elected without the need of the quota. Another positive development is that two out of five Deputy Presidents of the Kosovo Assembly are women and seven out of 14 parliamentary committees are chaired by women.

The experience of the recent elections has shown, however, that women's effective participation in politics does not necessarily translate into effective representation in decision-making. Although the quota was observed, there have been setbacks in women's representation in leadership positions within parties, the government and other decision-making bodies. At the central level, women's representation in leadership positions has remained weak in the absence of any female candidates for Prime Minister, President of the Assembly and with the leadership of the main political parties remaining all-male. Under the newly established government, there

are no female deputy Prime Ministers and only two ministers are women. At the local level, out of 204 mayoral candidates only eight were women. It is, however, more imperative when discussing women's empowerment and political participation that we go beyond the symbolism and beyond the numbers. Quotas and the number of women serving as heads of institutions are not in themselves sufficient to bring about gender equality.

Even though women make up almost 50 per cent of Kosovo's population, their participation at the central and local level remains at the 30 per cent mark, meaning that while quotas have been met, women's voices in politics are still not equally heard. This challenge is unfortunately, a common one world-wide. Equal and meaningful participation matters because women and men each bring unique experiences and views to politics which enhance the quality of debate and enrich and balance policy perspectives on social, economic and political issues.

While there are several barriers to women's effective political participation in Kosovo, three requirements remain crucial:

- **First**, increase the participation of women in politics by fighting the deep-rooted patriarchal norms and ensuring that political climate is free of negative gender-based stereotyping and violence.
- **Second**, ensure substantial support from political parties and especially party leadership for women candidates and their campaigns.
- **Third**, increase capacity building support for elected women and amplify their voices as this will heighten their impact on decision making processes.

Distinguished guests,

I hope that this year's Global Open Day will provide an important opportunity to highlight the experiences of women candidates, including the achievements that were made and the continuing obstacles that women continue to face in reaching greater parity in decision-making bodies at all levels. Our discussions today also provide an exclusive opportunity to look beyond the numbers and to understand the deeper context and factors that both enable and inhibit women's equal participation and influence. We hope that this event will also result in a number of concrete recommendations to support potential policy and legislative change.

I am pleased to have the Vice President of the Kosovo Assembly, Mr. Xhavit Haliti, participating in this event alongside many impressive and inspiring political leaders as well as a broad array of experts from think tanks and civil society, who have been monitoring and analyzing women's participation in Kosovo over the years. In this room we also have a number of emerging young leaders, who through their actions and dedication today are working towards building an equal playing field in leadership opportunities tomorrow. We are also pleased that a number of international actors who have been advancing the women, peace and security agenda are here today, in particular I would like to recognize with appreciation the presence of my friends General Cuoci, COMKFOR, Ambassador Braathu Head of the OSCE Mission in Kosovo, the Office of the UN Development Coordinator and representatives from our sister organisations, EUSR, EULEX and Council of Europe and UNMIK senior managers. Of course, we are delighted to be co-hosting this event with UN Women, our close partner within the UN family who has been deeply engaged in this topic over the years.

Distinguished participants,

Let me conclude by underlining that equal participation itself is not the sole aim of what we want to achieve but rather one step towards the goal of women and men exerting equal influence for positive and sustainable change. In the words of United Nations Secretary-General António Guterres, “Increasing women’s participation and representation in governance and decision-making is not only called for under the women and peace and security agenda, but consistently and positively linked to the durability of peace and perceptions of good governance.”

I thank you all once again for your participation at this event and we hope that the outcome of our discussions will help to further advance implementation of the UN Women, Peace and Security Agenda in Kosovo.

Thank you.

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