



# **BUILDING ALLIANCES FOR SUSTAINABLE PEACE**

## **13 ACTIONS & 25 CONCLUSIONS**

FINDINGS AND CONCLUSIONS OF THE 1<sup>st</sup> INTERNATIONAL WOMEN, PEACE AND SECURITY  
(WPS) FORUM  
Prishtinë, Republic of Kosovo, 22-23 October 2022



## Foreword by the President of the Republic of Kosovo, H.E. Dr. Vjosa Osmani Sadriu

Through the international Women, Peace and Security Forum, the Republic of Kosovo claimed its rightful place in the international arena for its leadership in supporting the Women, Peace and Security (WPS) Agenda. Preventing wars, bringing peace, relief and recovery in order to build and maintain the safe, inclusive and equitable societies we all seek to live in is our shared responsibility the world over.



From 22-23 October 2022 the Republic of Kosovo hosted the first iteration of the Kosovo's International Women, Peace and Security (WPS) Forum in our capital city of Prishtina bringing together an impressive array of WPS Agenda leaders, policy makers, practitioners, academics, and advocates from all over the world to challenge and champion the broad range of perspectives impacting women, peace and security.

The event was dedicated to an undeniable WPS Agenda champion and first female U.S. Secretary of the State, Madeleine Albright, who will forever remain an inspiration for her staunch defense of human rights and freedoms for the People of Kosovo and around the world, as well as her unremitting advocacy for women and girls' inclusion in policy and decision-making processes.

At a time when Russia's brutal and illegal war of aggression against Ukraine brought large-scale war to the European continent and conflicts and crises around the globe continued marked by increased violations of human rights and rising authoritarianism, the core WPS Agenda foundations of participation, protection, prevention and relief and recovery are no longer progressing – they are regressing.

Kosovo intensely knows too well the deep physical and psychological damage women and girls, and other victims of gender-based violence, in places like Ukraine are experiencing. Our young nation emerged from a horrible war less than 25 years ago leaving behind the scars of tragedy, while simultaneously reinforcing our collective and unyielding commitment to Freedom, Human Rights, and Democracy.

It was during the Summit for Democracy in 2021 that I, as the President of the Republic of Kosovo, on behalf of all of its citizens, made a commitment to host this International Forum as a testament to our steadfast commitment to advancing human rights, diversity, and inclusivity, defending against authoritarianism and fighting corruption.

Moving forward, the International Women, Peace and Security Forum will continue to serve as a platform for dialogue to convene peace and security stakeholders from a broad professional and geographic spectrum. Kosovo is where the International, Regional and Local WPS Agenda focused dialogue and debate will occur enabling us all to look at lessons learned, identify emerging trends,

and more crucially ensure we jointly advance the participation, protection, prevention and relief and recovery of women and girls the world over in word and deed.

Embracing the WPS Agenda does not only guarantee fundamental human rights, but also ensures a prosperous, stable and peaceful future for all.

*President of the Republic of Kosovo, Dr. Vjosa Osmani Sadriu  
Host of the international WPS Forum*

## Introduction

The Women, Peace and Security (WPS) Agenda is underpinned by a set of United Nations (UN) Security Council resolutions originating with UNSCR 1325<sup>1</sup> adopted in 2000<sup>2</sup>. It laid the foundations for today's WPS international policy framework through addressing the impacts of war on women and the importance of their full and equal participation in conflict resolution, peacebuilding, peacekeeping, humanitarian response and post conflict reconstruction.

Since its adoption, the WPS Agenda has shown an incremental progress, however this year's U.N. Secretary General Report on Women Peace and Security was a sobering reminder that while gender equality provides a path to sustainable peace and conflict prevention – the world is moving in the opposite direction with the world experiencing a reversal in generational gains in women's rights through violent conflicts. Military expenditures, military coups, displacement and hunger continue to increase. Progress made is now running the risk of becoming progress lost<sup>3</sup>.

While Kosovo, the Europe's youngest country, is not yet a member of the United Nations, its commitment to Women Peace and Security, and in particular the WPS Agenda, is central to its policies designed to ensure its practice. The UNSCR 1325 is enshrined in the national legislation of Kosovo, thus in times of conflict it is fully applicable and treated with priority from the institutions. The decision to host the first Kosovo WPS International Forum crystalized following Kosovo's participation in the Summit for Democracy, and like many countries in the region, our focus on women, peace and security is constant and evolving above and beyond a single event.

The 2021 Summit for Democracy convened by the Biden – Harris Administration reminded us all that we need to jointly work together to ensure human rights, strengthening the rule of law and promoting gender equality committing to initiatives that ensure the function of democratic societies at global scale. In light of current threats to democracy, this Summit and its intent came at a critical time.

The President of the Republic of Kosovo, on behalf of the nation, committed to three areas of intervention: (1) fighting corruption, (2) defending against authoritarianism, and (3) advancing human rights – diversity and inclusivity<sup>4</sup>. It was under the *advancing human rights* pillar, that the President of the Republic of Kosovo, Dr. Vjosa Osmani Sadriu, committed for Kosovo to be a host of the WPS International Forum.

The Forum took place in late October 2022, as a joint endeavor with the Ministry of Foreign Affairs and Diaspora of the Republic of Kosovo and with the support and partnership of international organizations, diplomatic missions, bilateral partners, regional and domestic

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<sup>1</sup> United Nations. Resolution 1325 (2000). <http://unscr.com/en/resolutions/doc/1325>. Accessed on: 01 November 2022.

<sup>2</sup> Other Resolutions of Women, Peace and Security (WPS) Agenda consist of Resolutions 1820 (2008), 1888 (2008), 1889 (2009), 1960 (2010), 2106 (2013), 2122 (2013), 2242 (2015), 2467 (2019), and 2493 (2019).

<sup>3</sup> United Nations Security Council. (2022). "Women and peace and security Report of the Secretary-General\*". <https://www.securitycouncilreport.org/atf/cf/%7B65BF9B-6D27-4E9C-8CD3-CF6E4FF96FF9%7D/S-2022-740.pdf>. Accessed on: 16 January 2023.

<sup>4</sup> To read full commitments, mechanisms and actions, please refer to <https://www.state.gov/wp-content/uploads/2022/02/KOSOVO-Summit-for-Democracy-Written-Statement-Acessible-Final-Feb-2022.pdf>

leaders, thinkers and practitioners. Through this well-established partnership, Kosovo convened the first iteration of the Women Peace and Security International Forum under the main theme of *Building Alliances for Sustainable Peace*.

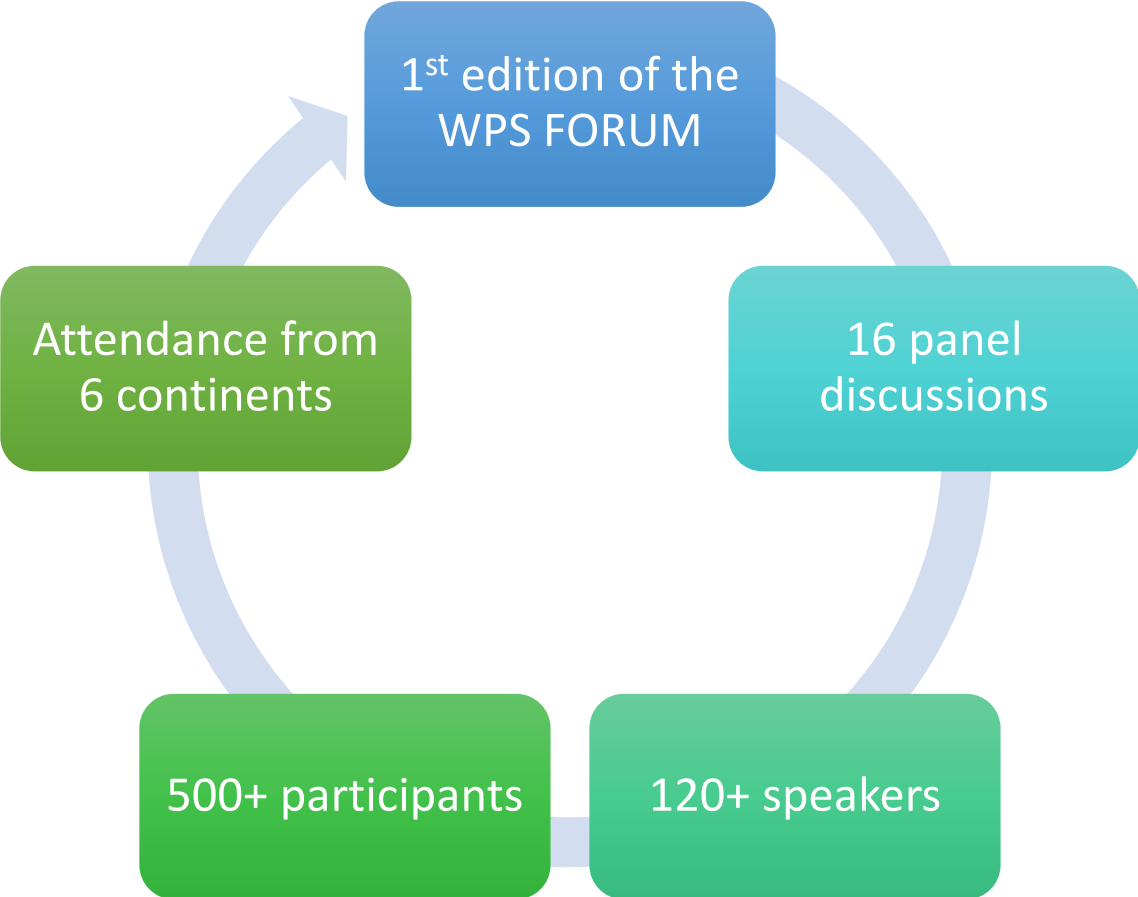
The main objective of the Forum was to facilitate a stakeholders' dialogue on advancing the WPS Agenda at this critical time and recognizing the key role of partnerships across sectors and countries. The International Forum was, and is just that, international in scope with opportunity for identifying shared challenges and opportunities in all levels, being internationally, regionally and domestically. This was achieved by focusing on five core objectives:

1. **Evaluate** – designed to look at the WPS Agenda 22 years since its inception and in light of the current and future threats to global peace and security,
2. **Raise awareness** - on the necessity to recognize the capacities of women and girls to contribute actively and resolve in a sustainable matter global peace and security challenges,
3. **Encourage deepening partnerships** - and discussing the type of future joint engagement required to meet the objectives of the WPS Agenda in the current global context,
4. **Encourage young women and girls** – in the Republic of Kosovo and beyond to actively engage in peace and security processes and ensure the opportunities are provided to them,
5. **Promote** - the WPS Agenda and how the Republic of Kosovo is as an active agent and advocate for this framework in the region and beyond.

The Kosovo's WPS International Forum was attended by more than 500 participants, brought together more than 120 speakers from all over the world to participate in 16 WPS specific panels sharing insights, experiences, lessons learned, and recommendations, which this report seeks to capture. Kosovo laid the corner stone to building alliances for sustainable peace and will continue to build on that annually moving forward.

The first edition of the Forum was dedicated to a global champion of democracy and human rights, Madeleine Albright, Former Secretary of State of United States of America and the first female to serve in that role, who prior to and long after, her appointment to that one of many titles she would hold, worked tirelessly to promote, support and advance women and girls' leadership worldwide. Secretary Albright will forever remain a historical and inspiring figure for people of Republic of Kosovo and beyond. Through her legacy, hope is still prevailing that women and girls will be protected, violence and discrimination against them is prevented, they can and do participate equally and when, as often is the case, the need arises they receive relieve and can recover.

THE WORLD MET IN PRISHTINA TO DISCUSS THE WPS AGENDA



## A FORUM LAUNCHED AT A HISTORIC SIGHT



In a seamless fusion of history, culture, and the imperative of women empowerment, the inaugural edition of the WPS Forum commenced at the historic Great Hammam in the capital city of the Republic of Kosovo, Prishtina.

In a collaborative effort with Manifesta, the renowned European Nomadic Biennial making its debut in Kosovo,

the location was thoughtfully chosen due to the compelling installation it hosted. This installation expressively depicted the daily narratives of Kosovo's citizens, with a significant portion dedicated to highlighting the challenges confronted by women and girls. This blend of historical resonance, contemporary issues, and a clear ambition for the future served as the captivating backdrop for a two-day marathon of profound, meaningful, and focused discussions.

The launching event at the Great Hammam epitomized the intersection of the past and present, offering an enriching platform for insightful exchanges that contributed significantly to advancing the cause of women's empowerment. The WPS Forum's debut successfully set the stage for engaging dialogues that underscored the significance of collaborative efforts in shaping a more inclusive and empowered future for women and girls.



## KOSOVO LEADERS ON THE IMPORTANCE OF THE WPS AGENDA



“This year’s theme, *Building Alliances for Sustainable Peace* is about bringing nations together to ensure that we share the challenges in implementing this agenda, but also find ways in which we can **build new partnerships to not only ensure we move forward collectively, but also sustainably**. To ensure that change is not only positive, but permanent.”

*President of the Republic of Kosovo, H.E. Dr. Vjosa Osmani Sadriu  
Host of the International WPS Forum*



“I am convinced that only by working together and joining forces to fight a discriminative public discourse towards women that normally prevails in historically patriarchal societies, we can create a better world for women and girls.”

*Speaker of the Parliament of Republic of Kosovo, H.E. Glauk Konjufca*



“Inclusion means that women contribute, but participation means they also benefit. Women contribute, so they should also benefit. **Gender equality means liberation, not just integration; it means participation, not just inclusion**. If women have no voice in the institutional response to all threats to human security, the response will also be half-hearted and unbalanced.”

*Prime Minister of the Republic of Kosovo, H.E. Albin Kurti*



“Women still have to be better, have to work harder to succeed. Mobilizing the great potential of women is about equality and is about quality, because women bring a different much needed quality to the table.”

*Deputy Prime Minister and Minister of Foreign Affairs and Diaspora of the Republic of Kosovo, H.E. Donika Gërvalla – Schwarz  
Co-Host of the International WPS Forum*

## THE 1<sup>ST</sup> EDITION OF THE WPS FORUM – A SPECIAL TRIBUTE TO SECRETARY ALBRIGHT’S LEGACY ON WOMEN, PEACE AND SECURITY

Madeleine Albright, the first U.S. Secretary of State, was a true trailblazer and a strong champion for women’s rights. During her time in the office, but also throughout her entire public lifetime engagement, she turned into an advocate of feminist foreign policy and stood up for values that lay the foundation of strong and prosperous democracies.

This first edition of the International Forum on Women Peace and Security was dedicated to her legacy and to honoring the memory of a cherished friend of the Republic of Kosovo, who chose to stand on the right side of history and stood up for peace and protection of human rights 1999 when the people of Kosovo were victims of Milosevic’s genocidal regime.

The WPS Forum was launched with a special address by U.S. Secretary of State, Antony Blinken, and followed by a special panel dedicated to her lifetime legacy and work focused on ensuring the inclusion and advancement of women and girls, especially in policy and decision making, as well as, peace and security processes.



“Secretary Albright fought for engaging women in all aspects of peacebuilding and security decision-making in part because she’d seen the difference it made when they were given a voice. Whether those women were peace negotiators or peacekeepers, humanitarian workers or human rights defenders, whether they worked in diplomacy or defense, **the process and outcomes were better for their participation.**” – [Antony Blinken, U.S. Secretary of State](#)



“As Russia continues to wage its unprovoked and senseless war in Ukraine, we all have to ample reason to Ms. Secretary’s Albright **diplomatic mind, her insights into authoritarianism and her profound commitment to democracy and freedom.**”– **Amanda Sloat, Special Assistant to President Biden and Senior Director for Europe at the National Security Council at White House**



## A PRESIDENTIAL MEDAL AWARDED TO THE WOMEN OF UKRAINE

The Kosovo WPS International Forum convened amid escalating threats to the rights, safety, and security of women and girls all around the world. In particular, in the heart of the European continent, Russia's illegal war against Ukraine is contributing towards exacerbating the challenges faced by women and girls in conflict-ridden areas. In response to these pressing concerns, Kosovo demonstrated its commitment to supporting women Ukrainian journalists seeking safe spaces to continue their reporting on the war developments.

As a mark of profound appreciation for their bravery, sacrifice, and significant contributions to upholding the values of freedom and democracy, the President of Kosovo, H.E. Vjosa Osmani, conferred upon the women of Ukraine a distinguished Presidential Medal. The medal was accepted on behalf of all Ukrainian women by Ms. Yevheniia Kravchuk, a prominent Ukrainian Member of Parliament. This acknowledgment further consolidated Kosovo’s support for the women of Ukraine, after the decision of Kosovo's institutions to provide support and refuge to women Ukrainian journalists, enabling them to carry out their journalistic duties securely and effectively. The gesture is a testament to the crucial role of international cooperation in safeguarding the rights and welfare of women in conflict-affected regions and upholding the principles of the Women, Peace, and Security agenda.



“Ukraine is committed to the principles of international law and the UN Charter, including the UN Security Council Resolution on Women, Peace and Security. Since 2000, we have made a significant advance in promoting gender equality and empowerment of women. Today, **Ukrainian women show a new gold standard of courage, dignity and determination** from the very first day of Russia’s invasion, 30,000 women soldiers have been fighting shoulder-to-shoulder with men.” - **First Deputy Foreign Minister Dzhaparova (following the receipt of the Presidential Medal of Merits on behalf of all the women of Ukraine)**



### KEY MESSAGES FROM KEYNOTE SPEAKERS



“There is no time for complacency regarding a serious threat to the advancement of women’s rights nor is their time for pessimism. Together as leaders and outspoken defenders of the role of women in preventing conflict and peace negotiations, **we have lessons to share with one another and leverage in abundance to counter ills that we will not tolerate.**” - **President of the European Parliament, Roberta Metsola**

“We believe in consistently promoting gender equality and women’s empowerment, as they are at the core of our European values. In addition, gender mainstreaming is intrinsic to government policy. The success of gender mainstreaming is only possible through strong political commitment, adequate institutional structures and procedures, as well as reinforced implementation across the policy areas. We also believe that **investing in the economic and political empowerment of women yields substantial results.**” – **President Vella**



“The Women, Peace and Security Agenda is an essential tool in ensuring the rights and protection of women and girls. Ensuring that they are observed and appealed at all times and **confirms that a meaningful and equitable role in decision-making is secured for women of all ages during all stages of conflict prevention, peace-making and peacebuilding and post-conflict rehabilitation.**” – **Vice President J. Uduch Sengebau Senior**

“Women are also under-represented in the political life and economic decision-making. We are all witnessing that there are many of women in important positions, but in the Western Balkans, we are still struggling to have more women in important positions. Therefore, let us all do our best to use this Forum, to draw attention to the importance of achieving peace with a particular emphasis on women and their position and role in these turbulent times because I am convinced that **women’s participation and solutions can make the world a better and safer place to live.**” – [Deputy Prime Minister Marović](#)



“The echoes of the wounds of thousands of girls and women who became victims of violence against them is so loud. **Healing their wounds is an important social mission, not just an individual one.**” – [Deputy Prime Minister Grubi](#)



“It [Resolution 1325] also recognized the diverse role women play at resolution of conflict and the restoration of the rule of law, governance and democracy. **Women are mediators of disputes, reinforcement of community resilience, managers of critical resources and defenders of freedom, often at great personal risk.**” – [Irene Fellin, NATO Secretary General’s Special Representative for Women, Peace and Security](#)



“We know that women pay the highest personal prices in times of crisis. They are ideally positioned to be the pillars of conceptualizing and implementing solutions, and this means they must be at the tables where policies and decision are made. That’s the only way to foster **strong and resilient democracies.**” – [Wesley Clark, Former NATO Supreme Allied Commander Europe from 1997 to 2000](#)

“Gender equality is not a zero-sum game. **When women are empowered, the entire society benefits.** Evidence has shown that countries who have less inequality in society are more prosperous, more peaceful.” – [Thomas Daschle, U.S. Senator](#)



**13** ACTIONS / **25** Conclusions

## CONCLUSIONS

### 1. WPS AGENDA – AN IMPERATIVE OF OUR TIMES IN NEED OF REVISITING

As a tool focused on ensuring that women's rights are upheld at all stages of conflict prevention, peacemaking, peace building and post-conflict rehabilitation, the WPS Agenda provides a framework that facilitates navigation and policy interventions in times of ever rising global security threats. However, as the nature of security threats evolves and our societies become more exposed to changing forms of conflict, it is only fitting that the WPS Agenda is revisited and it undergoes potential amendments that would ultimately ensure that suggested policy actions are responsive to new forms of threats, i.e., cybersecurity, climate change, AI, etc.

### 2. GOVERNMENTS MUST STEP UP ACTION TO ENSURE ADEQUATE IMPLEMENTATION AND MONITORING OF THE WPS AGENDA

The rhetoric of gender equality, supporting women, women empowerment and inclusion of women in processes of peace and security has significantly gone up throughout the years. Although more than 100 countries around the world have adopted WPS National Actions Plans, there are still too many remaining that have not done so. Furthermore, the absence of sustainable financing, low levels of bilateral aid destined for gender issues and earmarked for peace and security, and the lack of monitoring mechanisms and bodies that would track the level of implementation on regular basis, hinder the progress and expected outcomes.

### 3. THE WPS AGENDA IS NOT ONLY ABOUT 'HARD SECURITY'

Given the complex developments related to arising global challenges, it becomes an imperative that economic empowerment of women is seen as an integral part of the WPS Agenda. Traditionally, the interpretation of the WPS Agenda almost exclusively implied actions related to 'hard security'. However, this exclusive one-way approach risks to omit a proper understanding of key aspects of security for women, and has a lower consideration for women's socio-economic rights.

A more encompassing understanding of the WPS Agenda becomes particularly important in the immediate post-conflict or post-crisis period, when issues to land ownership, rights to housing and the right to decent work, or equality in marriage are questioned. Lack of these guarantees directly affects women's ability to participate in peacebuilding, conflict management and reconstruction.

#### **4. THE WPS AGENDA IS EQUALLY IMPORTANT IN TIMES OF PEACE AS MUCH AS IT IS IN TIMES OF CONFLICT**

The focus of global discussions on military interventions and hard security implicitly implies that the WPS Agenda can only be invoked in times of conflict and war. However, this approach automatically excludes the full range of everyday threats to women's security, such as is the case of climate change, energy crises, food security, etc. This has become particularly relevant in the context of a post-pandemic world, as we are faced with tremendous security implications for women mostly reflected in increased levels of domestic violence and greater economic hardships.

#### **5. INTEGRATING GENDER PERSPECTIVES IN FOREIGN POLICY ACTIONS CONTRIBUTES TO ACCELERATING THE IMPLEMENTATION OF THE WPS AGENDA AT A GLOBAL SCALE**

Foreign policy actions of countries can contribute to advancing the implementation of the WPS Agenda at the global level. Whether through mainstreaming gender perspectives in foreign policy actions, enhancing parity and equality in foreign service, advocating for gender equality and women empowerment at the level of bilateral exchanges or in regional and multilateral fora, or ultimately allocating adequate levels of resources to enhance and support gender equality through development and humanitarian aid, foreign policy can serve as substantive accelerator for the implementation of the WPS Agenda.

Embracing such a practice in foreign policy actions could ultimately lead to greater benefits for women and girls everywhere by transforming diplomacy, defense and security cooperation, aid, and trade that would be centered on enhancing parity and promoting women empowerment.

#### **6. WPS AGENDA CONTRIBUTES TO THE IMPLEMENTATION OF THE SUSTAINABLE DEVELOPMENT AGENDA AND VICE VERSA**

Although two separate agendas, the WPS Agenda (*adopted by the U.N. Security Council*) and the SDGs (*adopted by the U.N. General Assembly*) overlap in parts in their discourse and have many synergies. In particular, the WPS Agenda marks a significant milestone in achieving the SDGs by 2030, as much as, the SDGs contribute to enhancing opportunities to implement the WPS Agenda. Clearly, *SDG 5: Gender Equality* has the most obvious connection to the WPS Agenda, as progress towards it contributes to ensuring women's participation in security forces, reducing barriers to internal promotion and career advancement in security institutions, as well as, examining and addressing gender stereotypes in security structures.



## **7. NO POLICY FOR WOMEN WITHOUT WOMEN AS PART OF IT**

There are no human rights without women's rights. But, equally so, there are no women's rights without women being included, consulted and empowered during the process. Inclusion and participation lay at the foundations of the WPS Agenda. Bringing women at the table, but also empowering women to claim their seat at the table, must turn into an everyday imperative. Whether in preventing conflicts, responding to conflicts, or rebuilding after conflicts, interventions can only be successful when women are included as designers and shapers of policies and interventions.

## **8. IT IS AN IMPERATIVE TO SWITCH FROM IDENTIFYING WOMEN AS VICTIMS IN THE CONTEXT OF THE WPS AGENDA TO SHAPING WOMEN INTO ACTIVE AGENTS**

Traditionally, the role of women in the framework of the WPS Agenda is perceived from the point of passive recipients and that of the victims in a conflict. This approach does no justice to the everyday reality, nor does it contribute to women claiming ownership and agency in processes of peace and security. It is therefore important, that when discussing the WPS Agenda, the narrative actively transitions towards seeing, identifying and shaping women and girls as active participants and important contributors to processes of peace and security, and not merely as victims of conflicts and wars. In doing so, it becomes mandatory to recognize the leadership of women, instead of only focusing on identifying their needs.

## **9. GREATER WOMEN INVOLVEMENT, GREATER CHANCES FOR PEACE! CONFLICT PREVENTION AND PEACEBUILDING:**

Gender equality is the number one predictor of peace. Respectively, women's security is one of the most reliable indicators of peacefulness in a country. It contributes to building collective power rather than a dominating one. It means ousting possibilities for exploitation of vulnerable groups and empowering them instead with necessary tools and resources to claim an active role in processes of peace and security, but not only. The greater the disparities and inequalities, the harsher the economic, social and political realities for women compared to men, the higher the chances of conflict, instability, and disputes.

## **10. GENDER STEREOTYPES CONTRIBUTE TO A MEN-DOMINATED SECURITY WORLD**

Gender stereotypes and socially imposed roles on women and girls have historically kept women and girls away from joining security structures (i.e., police, army, etc.). Traditionally, their role has been linked to family care which has penalized their participation and active engagement in security structures, forcing them to choose between their career and family planning.

The WPS Agenda's role in fighting these stereotypes and encouraging higher women participation in security structures is essential. Supporting and promoting women leaders and active women agents in security processes and institutions contributes to empowering other women to do the same, hence slowly dismantling the trend of a heavily men-dominated security world.

#### **11. ADEQUATE FINANCING HELPS PEACE AND SECURITY**

International Financial Institutions and financing mechanisms could play an essential role in advancing and implementing the WPS Agenda. Nonetheless, financing for WPS Agenda is still seriously lagging behind. The failure to recognize gender equality considerations in designing financing instruments is harming the prospects of a successful implementation of this agenda. Financing policy, projects and initiatives that lead to transformative actions that enhances gender equality and women's rights is crucially important in pre, during and post conflict settings. The Addis Ababa Action Plan on Transformative Financing for Gender Equality and Women's Empowerment provides a great platform to design interventions in this regard.

#### **12. THE POWERFUL ROLE OF EDUCATION IN TRANSFORMING SOCIETIES THROUGH PROMOTING INCLUSIVITY AND PARITY**

Education remains the strongest tool for eradicating poverty and gender inequality. Educating girls and designing quality training and education programs is essential towards enhancing gender equality, participation and parity. It is widely recognized that education lays at the forefront of fighting poverty and violence. It is an enabler that contributes to women empowerment and enhanced women rights. Education remains one of the strongest tools to fighting instability, tensions and rising conflicts in society, through greater social inclusion, representation and agency. It is also the most crucial enabler that contributes to more openness of women towards new opportunities and challenges.

#### **13. THE POWER OF DATA TO TRANSFORM SOCIETIES AND FIGHT INEQUALITIES**

It is a common understanding that data lay the foundation of a better comprehension of problems, trends, as well as serve as a great measurement of the level of the implementation of relevant policies and legislation. In particular, data bring us closer to providing sustainable and fit-for-purpose solutions to everyday challenges and persistent problems faced by different groups of society. The collection of gendered data must turn into the imperative of our times. The availability of data helps us understand better different processes at country level, hence, ultimately enabling a comparative analysis between countries to measure progress. As such, data become useful in helping us measure progress, especially in the area of gender equality, while offering us the opportunity to enhance policy interventions and improve necessary legislation.

#### **14. WPS AGENDA IS ABOUT WOMEN AND MEN WORKING TOGETHER FOR A SAFER WORLD**

Historically, women's issues were perceived as a matter that concerns women only. The practice throughout years has been to isolate the gender agenda and women's issues and leave those mainly in the hands of women and girls. But, women cannot and should not be expected to change the system of society in isolation. This approach is flawed in many ways often leading to more isolation rather than a much-needed integration.

The WPS Agenda, and the gender equality agenda overall, will only be successful in meeting the objectives if men, as well, are involved at all stages of planning, designing and implementation of relevant policies and interventions. The importance of men champions for gender equality is ever more crucial given their role as partners, parents, as leaders and co-workers at work. As such, men must be seen and must be engaged as an active part of the solution. A successful transformation of the existing system of society requires cooperation from all and across all sectors and groups of society.

#### **15. THE WPS AGENDA AS A TOOL TO FIGHT SEXUAL ABUSE AND VIOLENCE IN PRE, DURING AND POST CONFLICT SETTINGS**

Violence against women becomes more evident in times of crisis or post-conflict settings. However, it is now widely recognized that it is a wide spread plague even in times of peace and stability. In patriarchal societies, findings suggest that domestic violence is seen and tolerated as a socially accepted behavior and rather justified as a result of traditional and patriarchal perceptions on the role of women in societies. In post conflict environments, findings indicate a significant rise of masculinity and consequently a lack of appropriate understanding of needs of women and girls. Meanwhile, during conflicts, sexual violence is increasingly being recognized as a tool of war.

Interventions from the WPS agenda through women's meaningful participation in all levels of decision-making related to peace and security policy and programming actively contribute towards prevention of violence. Inclusion and promotion of gender perspectives and women's participation in the development and implementation of security measures is crucial for peacebuilding and advancement of human rights.

#### **16. INCLUSIVENESS AND INTERSECTIONALITY ARE ESSENTIAL FOR PEACE AND SECURITY**

A better understanding of peace, means a broader understanding of intersectionality. In conflict and crisis areas, multiple marginalized groups are often exposed to multiple layers of discrimination. Therefore, the introduction of inclusive mechanisms that support their integration and advancement in all security structures becomes ever more important. Just like women, racial, ethnic, sexual or gender minorities, need special frameworks of protection. As such, when adopting policies in the framework of the WPS Agenda, one

must work toward an inclusive gendered framework that acknowledges the needs of all targeted groups of society.

#### **17. ROLE OF YOUTH IS ESSENTIAL FOR THE SUCCESSFUL IMPLEMENTATION OF THE WPS AGENDA**

Chances for sustainable peace become ever more promising with a greater integration of youth in all relevant processes. Youth should be seen as crucial contributors to peacebuilding, but not only. As such, their inclusion in decision-making bodies and policy making processes, is recommended. This would ensure that their needs and their concerns in areas of safety and security are duly incorporated and addresses. Moreover, the existence of youth leadership programs which contribute to community cohesion and peacebuilding, as well as programs for treatment of traumas from conflict are an absolute necessity. There can never be sustainable peace without addressing needs and challenges of different communities in a society, with youth being at the center of these efforts.

#### **18. THE CRUCIAL ROLE OF MEDIA IN SHAPING THE PUBLIC OPINION AND NARRATIVES**

Media play a crucial role in how women are portrayed in society. They have the capacity and the power to shape the public opinion. Unfortunately, more often than not, media end up promoting and amplifying social norms and public narratives that harm women and negatively impact the public perception about them. As the global challenges increase and the form of security threats becomes ever more uncertain, the role of media becomes ever more important. While freedom of speech and freedom of reporting should be protected under all circumstances, the regulation of media and public reporting should go hand in hand with the increased level of challenges.

On the other hand, the educating role of media should be further empowered. Media could play a crucial role in sharing information and stories about transitional justice, which helps in fighting the prejudices and societal stereotypes that often lead to violation of the rights of women and girls. Equally so, the media has the power to shape the expectations of society as to the role of women in processes of peace and security and all stages of peace building, but not only.

#### **19. TECHNOLOGY AND ONLINE SPACE – STUCK BETWEEN BEING AN EMPOWERING TOOL VS. AN ADDITIONAL CHALLENGE FOR WOMEN EMPOWERMENT**

Women and girls are often victims of online violence. Hence, the existence of mechanisms that condemn and regulate the digital sector to prevent the devaluation of the image of women and girls becomes ever more important.

The social media is having a double impact in lives of women in the age of technology. The prevalence of online violence and hate speech against women is triggering

discouragement among and negatively affecting their engagement in public roles. Fake news and media trolls are increasingly designing dangerous narratives around women and girls, which ultimately also become a matter of national security. The lack of proper reporting about women issues or misreporting about roles of women in society contribute to enhanced violence, increased insecurities, and greater exposure to everyday threats that directly impact peace and security of women and societies at large. Because girls and women get exposed to systematic online abuse, the importance of designing supporting fit-for-purpose mechanisms and legislative frameworks becomes ever more important.

On the other hand, it is precisely due to the social media and grass roots initiatives that there is greater potential to increase women participation in peace and security processes. The media is also helping to have a better portrayed role of women in conflict zones and the case of the women of Ukraine is the best testament to this.

## **20. THE IMPORTANCE OF PROTECTING WOMEN HUMAN RIGHTS DEFENDERS**

While the role of institutions and responsible organizations for the protection of women and their rights is essential, one must not forget about the crucial role of Women Human Rights Defenders (WHRDs). It is precisely WHRDs that push for more meaningful roles for women in peacebuilding. However, in their job, WHRDs often encounter risks and threats, and are exposed to occasions that eventually criminalize their jobs. However, evidence shows that increased targeting of WHRDs correlates to an escalation in conflict. Therefore, the support to and protection of WHRDs becomes vital in advancing WPS objectives. In pursuing to do so, the implementation of the UN Declaration on Human Rights Defenders and subsequently 10 resolutions affirming commitment to protect WHRDs becomes crucially important.

## **21. THE ROLE OF PARLIAMENTS IN PROMOTING THE WPS AGENDA**

Parliamentarians, through their law-making and oversight functions, can ensure that government institutions promote peace, security and gender equality by guaranteeing that all laws promote and protect human rights, inclusive governance and accountability. Parliamentarians themselves and those who work or are interested to work with MPs must be equipped with necessary tools, ideas, and programs that help them understand how to directly contribute towards progressing the WPS agenda.

Parliaments and members of parliament can play a crucial role in ensuring that laws contribute to women empowerment and more active role of women in peace and security processes not only in their intent but also in everyday application. It becomes a matter of great importance to help MPs develop practices that contribute towards considering gender sensitivity in structure, procedures and in culture of this particular legislative institution.

## **22. THE POWER OF CIVIL SOCIETY ORGANIZATIONS AND THE TRANSFORMATIVE POWER OF GRASSROOTS INITIATIVES**

The role of civil society organizations and agents has been instrumental in the promotion and implementation of the WPS agenda. As the voice of grassroots communities, minority and ethnic groups, through their systematic engagement they develop a wide range of expertise in data gathering and monitoring of relevant processes. Therefore, they turn into a valuable resource and a serious partner for institutions and international organizations. Historically, CSOs have contributed actively towards institutionalizing WPS principles and advocating for women's rights. They have been particularly instrumental in serving as advocates for the needs and protection of rights of victims of conflict-related sexual based violence. Globally, women led CSOs, have stood out for working closely not only with the affected groups and communities, but also, for building relevant bridges and partnerships with institutions, relevant committees, improving access to social services, but also encouraging interfaith dialogue, and not only.

## **23. ADVANCEMENT OF TECHNOLOGY: TORN BETWEEN A BLESSING AND A CHALLENGE FOR GENDER EQUALITY**

Human interaction in all its aspects has been radically transformed by the advent of digital technologies which now form an integral part of our daily life. The benefits spawned by the technology have been enormous. ICTs have created new spaces of political engagement, promoted greater transparency and accountability, facilitated government and public sector efficiency, enhanced social empowerment through knowledge sharing, enabled greater access to education, healthcare and other social services and promoted economic empowerment through the creation of new industries, new relationships and new employment opportunities. But not all have benefitted. And in too many situations the technology has exacerbated existing inequalities, including gender inequalities.

In the context of ICTs, understanding the nexus between the rise in online violence against women and the growing tide of militarism is critical to combating both. Systematic human rights violations, including online violence against women, do not occur in a vacuum.

## **24. PARTNERSHIPS – A PRECONDITION FOR SUSTAINABLE PEACE**

In pursuing to implement the WPS Agenda, partnerships play an existential role. Partnerships across communities, sectors, countries, regions, and at all levels of governance. By including different perspectives and through building networks of cooperation, we create the necessary platforms of inclusion that contribute to the advancement of the WPS Agenda. Diversity and communications help identify what at times might be invisible. Hence, through promoting and encouraging partnerships, we increase the chances to yield good results and improve the safety and peace conditions for women and girls.

## **25. THE IMPORTANCE OF EXCHANGE AND REGULAR FORUMS FOR NETWORKING AND SHARING STORIES TO SHAPE NARRATIVES AND ACTION**

By bringing people and institutions together, we come closer to identifying challenges and opportunities through learning from each other and engaging in regular exchange of knowledge, experiences and technology. The importance of regular WPS themed events becomes ever more crucial as they serve as an impetus to reflect on achievements marked so far and create the necessary platforms to identify necessary action as we move forward.

## ACTION POINTS

### **1. CONDUCT A COMPREHENSIVE REVIEW OF THE WPS AGENDA TO ENSURE IT ADDRESSES NEW AND EMERGING SECURITY THREATS**

It is essential to examine the existing Women, Peace, and Security (WPS) Agenda to determine if it adequately incorporates and responds to evolving security challenges. This review would help identify areas where the agenda may need to be updated or expanded to address emerging issues like cybersecurity, climate change, and artificial intelligence. It has turned into imperative to analyze how these new threats impact women's security and considering strategies to mitigate their effects. The comprehensive review would help the WPS Agenda remain relevant and effective in addressing the changing landscape of security threats.

### **2. ENCOURAGE GOVERNMENTS TO ADOPT AND IMPLEMENT WPS NATIONAL ACTION PLANS, PROVIDING SUSTAINABLE FINANCING AND ESTABLISHING MONITORING MECHANISMS TO TRACK PROGRESS**

A successful implementation the WPS Agenda requires promoting the adoption and implementation of WPS National Action Plans by governments. National Action Plans as policy frameworks developed by countries guide their efforts in advancing the goals of the WPS Agenda at the national level. Encouraging governments to adopt these plans involves advocating for their creation, providing technical support, and emphasizing the importance of sustainable financing to ensure their effective implementation. Additionally, establishing monitoring mechanisms allows for the tracking and evaluation of progress made in implementing the plans, enabling accountability and the identification of areas that require further attention.

### **3. PROMOTE A MORE INCLUSIVE UNDERSTANDING OF THE WPS AGENDA THAT INCLUDES ECONOMIC EMPOWERMENT AND SOCIO-ECONOMIC RIGHTS OF WOMEN, PARTICULARLY IN POST-WAR OR POST-CONFLICT PERIODS**

It is important to broaden the understanding of the WPS Agenda to encompass not only physical security but also the economic empowerment and socio-economic rights of women. It would contribute to emphasizing the importance of addressing the specific needs and challenges faced by women, particularly in post-conflict or post-crisis contexts. This would help with promoting access to economic opportunities, ensuring equal participation in decision-making processes, and addressing gender disparities in accessing resources and services. By recognizing the socio-economic dimensions of women's security, it would contribute to creating comprehensive and inclusive approaches to post-conflict recovery and development.



**4. CONFIRM THAT WPS AGENDA IS RELEVANT IN TIMES OF PEACE AS WELL, ADDRESSING EVERYDAY THREATS TO WOMEN'S SECURITY, SUCH AS DOMESTIC VIOLENCE AND ECONOMIC HARDSHIPS**

The WPS Agenda is not only relevant during times of conflict or crisis but also in times of peace. It is absolutely essential to address everyday threats to women's security, such as domestic violence, economic hardships, and discrimination. By recognizing that these issues persist beyond conflict zones, efforts can be directed towards preventing violence, promoting gender equality, and improving the overall well-being of women in all contexts. This action point calls for sustained attention to women's security concerns irrespective of the presence or absence of armed conflict.

**5. INTEGRATE GENDER PERSPECTIVES INTO FOREIGN POLICY ACTIONS, ADVOCATING FOR GENDER EQUALITY, WOMEN EMPOWERMENT, AND ALLOCATING RESOURCES TO SUPPORT THE WPS AGENDA GLOBALLY**

Incorporating gender perspectives into foreign policy actions at the global level is becoming ever more important. It involves advocating for gender equality and women's empowerment in diplomatic efforts, negotiations, and international agreements. By integrating gender perspectives, decision-makers can consider the different needs, experiences, and contributions of women in shaping foreign policy agendas. Additionally, allocating resources to support the WPS Agenda globally ensures that the necessary financial backing is available to implement programs, initiatives, and interventions aimed at advancing women's security and gender equality worldwide.

**6. RECOGNIZE THE SYNERGIES BETWEEN THE WPS AGENDA AND THE SUSTAINABLE DEVELOPMENT GOALS (SDGS) AND LEVERAGE THEM TO ENHANCE THE IMPLEMENTATION OF BOTH AGENDAS**

There is clear interconnectedness between the WPS Agenda and the Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs). As such, it is essential to recognize and leverage the synergies between these two frameworks to enhance their respective implementation. Both agendas share common objectives, such as promoting gender equality, reducing poverty, ensuring quality education, and fostering peace and security. By aligning efforts and strategies, policymakers can optimize resources, promote collaboration between different sectors, and achieve greater impact in advancing women's security and sustainable development.

**7. ENSURE MEANINGFUL INCLUSION AND PARTICIPATION OF WOMEN IN ALL STAGES OF POLICY DESIGN AND IMPLEMENTATION RELATED TO PEACE AND SECURITY**

The importance of meaningful inclusion and participation of women in all stages of policy design and implementation related to peace and security is largely confirmed. Creating opportunities for women to engage in decision-making processes, including conflict

prevention, peace negotiations, post-conflict reconstruction, and security sector reform should turn into a common priority. Meaningful inclusion ensures that women's perspectives, experiences, and expertise are taken into account, leading to more effective and sustainable policies and interventions.

**8. SHIFT THE NARRATIVE OF WOMEN IN THE WPS AGENDA FROM PASSIVE VICTIMS TO ACTIVE AGENTS, RECOGNIZING THEIR LEADERSHIP AND PROMOTING THEIR PARTICIPATION IN PEACE AND SECURITY PROCESSES**

The prevailing narrative of women as passive victims in the WPS Agenda and highlight their active agency and leadership roles must be shifted. It is an imperative to start recognizing and promoting women's contributions to peace and security, both at individual and community levels. By acknowledging women's agency, expertise, and leadership, we would become more successful in challenging gender stereotypes, address gender biases, and create an enabling environment for women's meaningful participation in peacebuilding, conflict resolution, and security-related processes.

**9. PROMOTE GENDER EQUALITY AS A PREDICTOR OF PEACE AND INVEST IN EMPOWERING WOMEN ECONOMICALLY, SOCIALLY, AND POLITICALLY TO PREVENT CONFLICTS AND PROMOTE PEACEBUILDING**

Gender equality qualifies as predictor of peace and stability. It recognizes that investing in women's empowerment economically, socially, and politically is essential for preventing conflicts and promoting peacebuilding. By addressing the root causes of gender inequality and creating opportunities for women's full participation and leadership, this action point aims to build more inclusive and peaceful societies.

**10. CHALLENGE GENDER STEREOTYPES THAT HINDER WOMEN'S PARTICIPATION IN SECURITY STRUCTURES AND PROMOTE WOMEN'S LEADERSHIP AND PARTICIPATION IN THESE INSTITUTIONS**

A successful implementation of the WPS Agenda is possible by challenging gender stereotypes that hinder women's participation in security structures, such as military, police, and peacekeeping forces. It is absolutely essential to overcome barriers to women's entry and advancement in these institutions by promoting gender-sensitive policies, providing training and capacity-building opportunities, and fostering a supportive and inclusive environment. By encouraging women's leadership and participation in security structures, this action point contributes to more effective and responsive security institutions.

**11. ADVOCATE FOR ADEQUATE FINANCING MECHANISMS AND INSTRUMENTS THAT SUPPORT GENDER EQUALITY AND WOMEN'S RIGHTS IN PRE, DURING, AND POST-CONFLICT SETTINGS**

Adequate financing mechanisms and instruments that support gender equality and women's rights throughout the different stages of conflict and its aftermath are an absolute necessity. Those call for securing resources to implement gender-responsive programs, initiatives, and services that address the specific needs and rights of women. Adequate financing enables the provision of essential support systems, including healthcare, education, economic opportunities, and legal services, contributing to the overall well-being and empowerment of women in conflict-affected settings.

**12. STRENGTHEN EDUCATION SYSTEMS AND PROGRAMS THAT PROMOTE INCLUSIVITY AND PARITY, PROVIDING GIRLS AND WOMEN WITH THE NECESSARY TOOLS FOR EMPOWERMENT AND OPPORTUNITIES**

Our efforts towards advancing the WPS Agenda become sustainable through strengthening education systems and programs that promote inclusivity and parity. This would help with providing girls and women with equal access to quality education and addressing gender disparities in education. By enhancing educational opportunities, eliminating discriminatory practices, and incorporating gender-responsive curricula, this action point enables girls and women to acquire the necessary knowledge, skills, and tools for empowerment, leadership, and participation in society.

**13. PRIORITIZE THE COLLECTION AND UTILIZATION OF GENDER-DISAGGREGATED DATA TO MEASURE PROGRESS, INFORM POLICY INTERVENTIONS, AND ADDRESS GENDER INEQUALITIES IN SOCIETY**

The collection and utilization of gender-disaggregated data must become a policy priority. Gender-disaggregated data provides a comprehensive and accurate understanding of the specific experiences, needs, and vulnerabilities of women and girls. By collecting and analyzing such data, policymakers can measure progress, identify gaps and challenges, and develop evidence-based policy interventions. These efforts would help with addressing gender inequalities, monitoring the impact of policies and programs, and ensuring accountability in advancing women's security and gender equality.

With the above in mind, gender equality must turn into a national objective. There is increasing and large-scale evidence that speaks about the absolute benefits of gender equality and advancement of women's rights. However, adoption of policies must go hand in hand with global trends, with adaptation being at the center of these efforts. With the ever-rising global security challenges, the WPS Agenda National Action Plans should undergo deliberate reviews as well. While, the adoption of Feminist Foreign Policy by developed countries, and not only, should be further encouraged. Ultimately, it is advisable to pursue the mainstreaming of the human security concept into the regular interpretation of the WPS Agenda, through elevating the importance of socio-economic security, which ultimately reflects into greater political participation, lowers rates of gender-based balance, and presents a more robust pillar of protection as part of the WPS Agenda.

Furthermore, a successful policy making is one that also incorporates inputs and feedback from grassroots initiatives, as the facilitators that reach out and understand in depth perceptions and needs of different communities. While a centralized institutional approach helps with codifying efforts to advance the WPS Agenda, it is through developing and supporting more grassroots initiatives focused on creating fit-for-purpose platforms that we stand a chance to understand best the realities in the ground. Ensuring sustainable financing, but also showcasing public support for such grassroots initiatives, helps maintain the much-needed platforms that bring women together on regular basis and create opportunities for them to learn about each other's stories through sharing security and everyday challenges.

## PANEL DISCUSSIONS OF WPS FORUM 2022

### The Women, Peace and Security Agenda in light of a constantly changing security architecture

Focused on the dynamic changes in the global security landscape, particularly the prevailing circumstances in Europe and Russia's aggressive actions in Ukraine, this panel discussion examined the evolving social, economic, and security dynamics at a global level. The primary objective was to analyze the impact of these changes on women and girls residing in conflict-ridden regions. The discussion delved into the intricacies of security policies and inaction, human rights transgressions, and the constrictions on personal liberties, shedding light on the challenges faced by women and girls in these contexts.



## 22 years after 1325: what have we (not) achieved?

The world experienced rapid changes, developments, and dynamics since the adoption of UNSCR 1325. In addition to conflicts, various crises including climate, health, energy, and socio-economic challenges emerged, posing a threat to trust and confidence in both domestic and international institutions. Over time, the focus shifted from ensuring women's safety in war to advocating for their representation in security organizations. It became evident that women's presence at decision-making tables, at local, national, and international levels, was essential.

This panel aimed to address several key questions related to the past 22 years since the adoption of UNSCR 1325. It explored the transformation of women's roles from being perceived as vulnerable victims to actively assuming positions as peacekeepers, peacemakers, and contributors to conflicts. Additionally, the panel examined whether men's vulnerability and victimhood were being overlooked. The discussions delved into how the fear of violence, backlash, and discrimination hindered peace and security, affecting the exercise of social, economic, political rights, and freedoms during peacetime. Lastly, the panel sought to move beyond semantics, focusing on resource allocation, representation, and building bridges between grassroots movements, leading nations, and organizations.



## Youth perspectives and their powerful role in peace processes and dealing with the past

The panel focused on the significant role of youth in peace processes and their ability to address historical conflicts. Despite their importance, youth involvement in conflict resolution and prevention was often overlooked. Younger generations brought unique perspectives that held the potential for creative and efficient approaches to peacebuilding and reconciliation. Post-conflict societies faced complex challenges, and it was crucial to provide space and platforms for diverse youth to share their visions on peace and security. By actively involving young people, societies could challenge physical, structural, and cultural violence, counteract political stagnation, and rebuild trust in public institutions.

Key topics discussed included the importance of youth participation in peace processes, the institutional responsibility to enhance youth involvement in peacebuilding, the current narratives surrounding peace-oriented processes, and how these narratives hindered progress. The panel also explored ways to amplify youth voices in combating discrimination and hate, ultimately working towards a more peaceful society. Additionally, obstacles to political stagnation were examined, with a focus on harnessing youth capacities effectively in peace processes.



“... healing wounds of the past was too much of a feat.  
But understand that change,  
reconciliation,  
healing, is a need.  
Stand next to us,  
and **help us lead.**” – Amina Kaja, Youth Activist



## The role of parliaments – an opportunity for accelerated and advanced implementation of the WPS Agenda

The WPS Agenda has a global nature, but achieving its objectives relies on locally-driven implementation efforts. Parliaments, consisting of elected representatives, hold the responsibility of ensuring safer, more secure, and equitable opportunities for citizen participation, representation, and engagement. As governmental legislative bodies, parliaments engage in deliberation, consultation, decision-making, law creation, funding allocation, and oversight to ensure the proper functioning of government and its expenditures.

The level of parliamentary participation in supporting the WPS Agenda varies, with some



parliaments remaining unaware or uninvolved in national implementation. Approximately 80 countries are reported to have WPS National Action Plans or incorporated the WPS Agenda into various sectoral strategic documents, policies, and programs. Parliaments play a significant role in implementing the WPS Agenda, although some could have done more, while others offered valuable lessons. The panel

discussion covered crucial topics such as the role of parliamentary committees and hearings in bringing together multiple WPS stakeholders, the correlation between increasing women's representation in parliaments and their engagement with the WPS Agenda and National Action Plans, and the involvement of parliaments in lawmaking, budgeting, oversight, partnering with field experts, and funding local community groups, civil society, and NGOs.



## Women at the negotiation table in peace processes around the world

Women's participation in conflict prevention and peace talks has been proven to enhance outcomes throughout the stages of conflict. However, they have frequently been excluded from formal peace processes, with only approximately 15 percent of peace negotiations worldwide involving women at the negotiation table. This persistent exclusion disregards the demonstrated contributions of women and overlooks a potential strategy for more effectively addressing security threats on a global scale. The discussion focused on addressing the following questions: Is the inclusion of women in peace processes a benefit or a necessary condition for successful and enduring peace? What unique contributions can women bring to peace and security? Should women negotiators solely focus on women's priorities? How do women negotiators navigate stereotypes and judgments? Given the limited number of seats at the negotiating table, how can men contribute to ensuring women's inclusion in peace processes?

Overall, the discussion aimed to shed light on the importance of women's inclusion in peace processes, explore the valuable perspectives and contributions they bring, and find ways to address the challenges they face in order to promote more inclusive and effective peace negotiations.



## The WPS Agenda as an opportunity for gender sensitive transitional justice



Resolution 2467 (2019) of the Security Council emphasizes the significance of women's meaningful participation in transitional justice processes, which often falls short in adequately addressing the complex intersection of gender and justice. Women's experiences during conflicts, as well as their roles and positions in societies before, during, and after conflicts, often resulted in limited access to justice, remedies, and resources. Their potential to contribute significantly to the process was frequently underutilized, while their suffering remained insufficiently understood or addressed. Therefore, incorporating women into transitional justice endeavors is crucial not only for achieving prevention, peacebuilding, and reconciliation objectives but also for addressing the interrelated root causes of conflict.

The panel discussion explored several key aspects, including the importance of women's participation in transitional justice processes, the concept of a "survivor-centered approach" and its potential to strengthen transitional justice, the specific skills and expertise required within transitional justice mechanisms to effectively address gender considerations and redress sexual and gender-based violence, and the contribution of transitional justice processes to addressing the root causes of conflict and violence, particularly gender inequality and conflict-related sexual violence.

By addressing these critical questions, the panel shed light on the pivotal role of women in transitional justice, the need for comprehensive and gender-responsive approaches, and the potential of transitional justice processes in tackling the underlying factors that perpetuate conflict and violence.

## Amplifying WPS voices: the role of the media and civil society organizations

The ongoing need to amplify women's voices and translate grassroots demands into policy action has remained as crucial as when the 1325 UNSC Resolution was first adopted. In today's digital era, where information can be easily manipulated and weaponized, the significance of this task is even more pronounced. While there is now more data available regarding the Women, Peace, and Security (WPS) Agenda after 20 years, there are also more voices and information platforms reaching individuals globally in real time. However, the digital space has presented increasing challenges for women, as they face various forms of virtual intimidation, threats, and violence.

The media and civil society play vital roles as pillars of human rights and are instrumental in strengthening the position of women in society. They often take risks to ensure that the voices of the most vulnerable are heard and that action is taken. The success of the WPS Agenda, along with its preceding and subsequent efforts, relies not only on specific international commitments but also on the fundamental ability to access and be seen, heard, and represented. This inclusivity ensures that resources, responses, laws, policies, and programs are equally available during times of crisis, conflict, and peace.

The panel discussion delved into several important topics, including the role of the media in implementing the WPS Agenda, the capacity of women's rights organizations to amplify women's voices through media platforms, the negative portrayal of women in the media, and international standards for their protection. Additionally, the panel explored the challenges of bridging the gaps when transitioning from grassroots movements to achieving systemic change.



## The plague of violence against women and girls in wars and post-conflicts settings

The ground of war and peace has always been marked by gender disparities. Violence against women has been recognized as a form of discrimination and a violation of human rights. Women and girls, especially in conflict and post-conflict settings, have borne a disproportionate impact, particularly concerning the levels of violence perpetrated against them. Conflicts often exacerbate gender-based violence in all its forms, including sexual violence, trafficking, forced marriages, arbitrary killings, and torture. Additionally, other forms of gender-based violence, such as domestic violence, tend to increase during times of both conflict and peace.

The Women, Peace, and Security (WPS) Agenda emphasizes the need to protect women and girls from gender-based violence and end impunity for such acts. However, there has been a call for stronger linkages between the WPS Agenda and traditional human rights instruments to enhance both the human rights aspect of the WPS resolutions and the accountability of member states.

This panel discussion specifically addressed the following key points: the disproportionate burden faced by women and girls in times of war and non-conflict situations, particularly concerning violence against them; the importance of linking WPS goals with other human rights instruments to comprehensively address the scope of violence against women and girls; the outcomes of women's engagement in conflicts and post-conflict scenarios; and the lessons learned and policies needed to strengthen social resilience and prevent inequality during times of conflict and crisis.



## Emerging challenges of the WPS Agenda: Integrating climate change and women economic empowerment

The consequences of climate change and the COVID-19 economic recovery processes have provided an important opportunity to reconsider the future implementation of the 'relief and



recovery' pillar of the Women, Peace, and Security (WPS) agenda. While climate change and WPS have traditionally been treated as separate issues, their interconnectedness is evident.

It is clear that poverty and climate change have a gendered impact, placing a disproportionate burden on women and girls and exposing them to heightened vulnerabilities across the realms of climate,

security, and gender equality. These developments highlight the direct influence of poverty and climate change on peace and security. In this panel, discussions revolved around the inadequacy of the prevailing emphasis on hard security in WPS discourse and programming, the impacts of climate change on women and vulnerable groups, and strategies involving policies, investments, and local interventions to accelerate inclusive action in addressing the climate crisis while harnessing the contributions of women on the frontlines.



“Joining up is rising up! Now, if you want more women engaged in peace processes, attention must also be brought at **ending gender-based violence.**” – **Carlien Scheele, Director at European Institute for Gender Equality**

“The pandemic and the overwhelmed public sector, the rising numbers of conflicts and the rising fuel and food prices resulting from **senseless war in Ukraine has disproportionately affected women.**” – **Mag. Mateja Norčič Štamcar, Acting Director – General of the Directorate for Common Foreign and Security Policy in Slovenia**



## Fostering participation. Empowering women. Building peace together

The participation of women in public life has often come at a significant cost. In comparison to their male counterparts, women have faced a notably higher level of scrutiny, additional family responsibilities, and greater challenges in actively engaging in politics and participating in peace and security processes.

It has often been claimed that when equal opportunities are provided to all, regardless of gender, race or ethnicity, policy making and implementation outcomes are better. This discussion sought to shed light on the impact and importance of women's participation in public life, politics, and peace processes.

It comprised of Women in political parties, MPs, academic faculty members, international organizations and institutions came together to discuss participation and inclusion of women and girls in decision and policymaking in the creation of more peaceful environments, improved peace process outcomes, policy making and negotiations quality and to share their main lessons learned within their respective field with emphasis on these activities occurring in and around conflict zones.



## Women as Security Providers: Challenging gender stereotypes in security sector

Women's perspectives have often been overlooked, raising concerns about whether security access is truly equitable for all communities when women's viewpoints are excluded from the solution-seeking process in peace and security endeavors.

Different perspectives on security efforts and peaceful resolutions have been observed between women and men, highlighting the significance of gender inclusion in the security sector. Despite the recognition by various stakeholders of the need to integrate more women into the sector, as mandated by domestic and international laws, women continue to face operational challenges, unequal treatment, and limited opportunities to address security issues. These disparities have discouraged many women from pursuing careers in the security sector, despite their demonstrated higher levels of efficacy in problem-solving. This raises the question of how to effectively encourage women to join the security sector.

This panel aims to showcase successful stories of women's contributions in the security sector and advocate for increased female participation to enhance community security. The discussion centered around promoting an integrated gender perspective in problem-solving and decision-making processes within the security sector, addressing the challenges faced by women, including toxic work environments and operational obstacles, and bridging the gender representation gap through encouraging greater women's involvement in the security sector.



## Technology and gender equality: A challenge or an opportunity?

In the "age of technology," women's participation in the digital ecosystem has been consistently hindered by systematic gender-based biases. From limited access and participation to experiencing harassment and abuse, women often face inequalities in their interactions with technology and digital platforms. Policymakers must recognize the potential consequences of overlooking these trends, as they could result in the development of technology, peace, and security structures that endanger and undermine core human rights and gender equality norms.

While women have experienced remarkable opportunities and empowerment through the internet and new technologies, both in terms of visibility and access, they are also vulnerable to severe forms of digital violence.

On the other hand, women in conflict areas are increasingly utilizing technology to promote peace and address gender inequality in war zones. Considering the role of technology in



facilitating political engagement and development, bridging the digital divide could offer new avenues for women to contribute to peace processes and other initiatives related to Women, Peace, and Security (WPS).

This panel delved into discussions on various topics, including how the current digital ecosystem reflects and exacerbates existing gender inequalities in society, the recurring gendered issues in the

digital realm as indicators of systemic weaknesses and policy failures, the significance of understanding gender dynamics for the future of technology development and policymaking, the need for greater awareness of international human rights and gender equality frameworks among technology professionals, the importance of establishing universally accepted definitions of different forms of online violence against women, and the impediment that online abuse poses to women's representation in leadership and decision-making roles.



## The role of women in combating anti-gypsyism<sup>5</sup>

Anti-Gypsyism was discussed as a specific form of racism rooted in an ideology of racial superiority and historical discrimination. It involved dehumanization, institutional racism, and various manifestations such as violence, hate speech, exploitation, stigmatization, and blatant discrimination. Roma women and girls were particularly vulnerable to multiple forms of discrimination and violence, including gender-based violence and trafficking.

The discussion highlighted the significance of Roma, Ashkali, and Egyptian participation in political processes as a means to break the cycle of discrimination, stigmatization, and marginalization. Encouraging active political will was crucial in the fight against antigypsyism and discrimination. While progress had been made, challenges persist at national and local levels across Europe and beyond, requiring attention to facilitate meaningful change for these communities. Inclusion and representation were seen as essential prerequisites for sustainable peace and overall social well-being. The focus of the discussion was on exploring opportunities to support these communities and empower them to claim meaningful roles in peace and security processes.



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<sup>5</sup> While the term gypsy is derogatory and inappropriate, the panel title used the term to emphasize precisely that, and in no way advocates or assumes the term appropriate.

## The role of women artists in peace building

The concluding panel discussion of Kosovo's inaugural WPS International Forum focused on the significant role of women artists in advocating for the inclusion of women and girls in public life, decision-making processes, and the establishment of peace. Representing various countries such as Albania, Croatia, Netherlands, Kosovo, and Serbia, these talented artists utilized diverse mediums such as film and theater to convey their powerful messages. Together, they highlighted the invaluable contributions of women artists to the promotion of peace and security within their respective nations and the wider region.

The first edition of the international WPS Forum was successfully concluded with a theatrical performance titled "The Haunted Land" which portrayed the profound physical and psychological pain inflicted by conflicts, particularly on women, and the challenging journey of healing from trauma.



## Launching Event: 1325 Facts & Fables: A collection of stories about the implementation of United Nations Security Council Resolution 1325 on Women, Peace, and Security in Kosovo

The second edition of 1325 Facts & Fables, a collection of stories about the implementation of United Nations Security Council Resolution 1325 on Women, Peace, and Security in Kosovo, was launched by the Kosovo Women's Network (KWN). Serving as a follow-up to the first edition published in 2011, which focused on the Resolution's first decade, this book provides a comprehensive account of the implementation process.

The publication features both "facts" and "fables." The "facts" section includes statistical data and names, while the "fables" section presents stories and perceptions related to the implementation of the Resolution, utilizing the oral history methodology. This in-depth case study of Kosovo offers numerous "lessons learned" and holds relevance for improving the implementation of the Resolution in other conflict-affected and post-conflict regions. While the book encompasses various characters, the launching event specifically highlighted the voices of local women's rights activists who have been actively involved in advancing the agenda of Women, Peace, and Security in Kosovo.



## **A special message from a Kosovo heroine at the conclusion of the 1<sup>st</sup> edition of the International WPS Forum**

The International WPS Forum concluded with a poignant closing speech delivered by Saranda Bogujevci, the Deputy Speaker of the Parliament of the Republic of Kosovo. Her address held particular significance as she herself is a survivor of a devastating massacre perpetrated by Serbia in Kosovo in 1999.

“In order to ensure gender equality and equity, we need to invest in educating and raising awareness of our future generations. We need to work together side-by-side, women and men, to change this mindset and break the cycle of discrimination for our future generation of girls.” – **Saranda Bogujevci, Deputy Speaker of the Parliament of the Republic of Kosovo**

