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 Office of the Prime Minister



**Women's Federation
 For World Peace
 International**



**International Association
 of First Ladies for Peace**



**Universal
 Peace Federation**

**2nd Annual Conference on “No Peace Without Women”
 What are Women bringing to Peace Processes,
 Conflict Prevention and Human Security in the Balkans?**

Report by Mr. Heiner Handschin, Director, UPF Office for UN Relations, Geneva, Switzerland



Opening Session with Prime Minister Albin Kurthi

Introduction

On June 13, 2023, WFWP Europe and the Middle East, and the IAFLP, with the co-sponsorship of the Prime Minister of Kosovo, organized a conference with the theme “No Peace without Women” at the Parliament building in Pristina, Kosovo. The conference was attended by some 120 participants, besides Prime Minister Albin Kurti and his deputy Prime Minister, Emilija Rexhepi, 3 deputy ministers, 12 parliamentarians, 9 Ambassadors, among them from Austria, Japan, Norway and Sweden. There were representatives of 20 different media outlets present.

The conference began on June 12, 2023, with a welcoming banquet and reception at the Sirius Hotel in Pristina, on the day of the 15th commemoration of the liberation of Pristina (June 12, 2008). Dignitaries present were the President of Kosovo, Ms. Vjosa Osmani, the Deputy Prime Minister, Ms. Emilija Rexhepi, former President of Kosovo, Mr. Fatmir Sejdu and the former First Lady Mrs. Sejdu, former Prime Minister Bajram Kosumi and First Lady Florina Kosumi, as well as many key leaders from the Balkan Region, and members of Kosovo Parliament.

The organizing team comprised Ms. Ejona Miraka Icka, Secretary General of UPF Kosovo, who acted as the representative of WFWP in Kosovo and as the liaison person to the Kosovo Government. Her efforts were supported by Mr. Gani Roshi, Secretary General of UPF Albania and UPF Balkans, who also took care of the Albanian delegation, among them especially, the former deputy Prime Minister of Albania, Ms. Sedina Mesi, present at the conference.

WFPW international President, Mrs. Moriko Hori, supported the event through her valuable presence and contributions. Furthermore, as an additional support for the meeting, both UPF co-chairs of Europe and the Middle East, Dr. Kazumi Otsuka and Mr. Jacques Marion, greatly supported the efforts of the local team.

The foundation for the successful organization of the event in Kosovo was set at the World Summit in early May 2023 in South-Korea, when First Ladies and wives of the invited Balkan leaders participated in the International Association of First Ladies for Peace (IAFLP) session and the discussions around the event being planned for Kosovo in June. It was as he was leaving the hotel in Korea that Prime Minister Kurti, with his wife, committed that he would personally host the “No Peace without Women conference” of June 13, 2023.

The Government of Kosovo graciously supported the conference by taking charge of the speakers and panelists’ conference expenses, including their food and lodging, as well as a special closing banquet hosted by the deputy Foreign Minister, Ms. Liza Gashi, who was also a speaker at the World Summit in Korea as part of the IAFLP delegation.

After the welcoming banquet and reception, on the next day, June 13, 2023, the opening session of the conference took place at a new venue, which was the Parliament building of the Republic of Kosovo, in the center of Pristina. In front of the full conference hall, the opening session at 09h30 was introduced by the Director of the WFPW Office for UN relations, Ms. Carolyn Handschin, welcoming everyone and paying special tribute to the government of Kosovo and host of the meeting, especially Prime Minister Mr. Albin Kurti.



Kosovo Former President, Prime Minister, First Ladies, Deputy Prime Minister with Organizers

Monday, June 12 Welcoming Banquet – Hotel “Sirius”

19:00 WELCOMING REMARKS

Moderator: Mrs. Ermirë Berisha,

- H.E. Vjosa Osmani, *President of the Republic of Kosovo*
- H.E. Emilia Redžepi, *Deputy Prime Minister of Kosovo*
- H.E Fatmir Sejdiu, Mrs. Sejdiu; *President, First Lady, Republic of Kosovo 2006-2010*
- Dr. Katsumi Otsuka, *Chair, UPF for Europe and the Middle East*
- Hon. Donika Gërvalla, *Minister of Foreign Affairs and Diaspora of the Republic of Kosovo*

- Mrs. Mitty Tohma, *President of the WFWP Europe*
- *Musical Performance*
- *Dinner*

Tuesday, June 13 *Conference Program – Pristina Assembly of the Republic of Kosovo*

09:30 OPENING SESSION

Moderator: Mrs. Carolyn Handschin, Director, Office for UN Relations, WFWPI

- H.E. Albin Kurti, *Prime Minister of the Republic of Kosovo*
- Hon. Olga Algayerova, *General Secretary of UNECE, Geneva, Switzerland (video record)*
- Hon. Moriko Hori, *President of the Women Federation for World Peace International*

10:00 FIRST SESSION: **SCRES.1325/UN AGENDA ON WOMEN PEACE & SECURITY: A ROADMAP TOWARD PEACE & RECONCILIATION**

- H.E. Emilia Redžepi, *Deputy Prime Minister of Kosovo*
- H.E. Ellen Johnson Sirleaf, *Former President of Liberia (video)*
- H.E. Amb. Nancy Soderberg, *Senior Director, National Democratic Institute, Kosovo/USA*
- Hon. Anja Margetić, *Deputy Mayor, Sarajevo, Bosnia & Herzegovina*
- Hon. Suzana Pribilovic, *Member of Parliament, Former Minister of Public Administration, Montenegro*
- Mrs. Vlora Tuzi Nushi, *Head of Office, UN Women Kosovo*
- Hon. Arta Bilalli- Zendeli, *Member of Parliament, North Macedonia*

11:00 BREAK

11:30 SECOND SESSION: **WOMEN IN DEVELOPMENT, INTEGRATION, AND FINANCE: ADVANCING PEACE (FREE MOVEMENT, RECOGNITION AND INDIVIDUAL DIGNITY, RECONCILIATION THROUGH MUTUAL UNDERSTANDING, TOWARDS EU)**

Moderator: Mr. Jacques Marion, President, UPF for Europe and the Middle East

- Hon. Flora Brovina, *Former MP, Chairwoman of UPF Kosovo*
- Hon. Senida Mesi, *Former Deputy Prime Minister of Albania*
- Ms. Sally Becker, *CEO, Save a Child, Humanitarian Work in Bosnia Herzegovina and Kosovo, UK*
- Hon. Biljana Braithwaite, *CEO and Founding Partner at Sustineri Partners and Western Balkans Programme Director at the AIRE Centre*
- Mrs. Brigitte Wada, *President, Women's Federation for World Peace, France*

13:00 COCKTAIL

15:00 THIRD SESSION: **(CSW67 THEME); PEACE LEADERSHIP: ACCESS AND OPPORTUNITIES FOR YOUNG WOMEN IN STEM, MEDIA LITERACY AND INFORMATION TECHNOLOGY**

Moderator: Mrs. Ejona Icka, Executive Director, IAYSP Balkans

- Hon. Liza Gashi, *Deputy Minister of Foreign Affairs, Kosovo*
- H.E. Amb. Teuta Sahatqija, *Director, Women in Tech; former Deputy Minister Foreign Affairs, Kosovo*
- Mr. Astrit Istrefi, *Chairman of the Balkan Forum*
- Ms. Diana Ungureanu, *Cardiologist, Vice President of IAYSP, Europe and Middle East*

16:30 **End of the Conference**

19:30 DINNER CELEBRATION: Invitation of Kosovo Ministry of Foreign Affairs

Ms. Carolyn Handschin, President of the NGO Committee on the Status of Women at the United Nations in Geneva, one of the key organizers of the conference, explained in her opening remarks that the idea of “No Peace without Women” began in Geneva in a discussion with what is now the Advisory Group and WFWP leaders, weeks after the outbreak of the war in Ukraine. After the devastation of Bosnia and Kosovo, it was clear that women must decide, “no more war”, and then work in solidarity. This was exactly the mandate of the founders of UPF and WFWP in July 2012, to “work with women leaders and organizations to influence governance for the right priorities.”

OPENING SESSION

She then went on to introduce the keynote speaker and main host of the conference, **H.E. Mr. Albin Kurti, Prime Minister of the Republic of Kosovo**. Prime Minister Albin Kurti took the floor and explained to the audience his background as a non-violent activist, a Professor, and later Dean of the University of Pristina. He thanked the WFPW and organizers for holding the conference at the time of the celebration of the liberation of Pristina. Kosovo has been a success story for peace building in cooperation with the NATO alliance. He stated that peace can only come after the liberation of people who were deprived of their basic rights and freedom. It is after their liberation that women become instrumental in building up a more stable society. He emphasized that, for his young government, gender balance is crucial. Kosovo is trying to work diligently in that direction, so that women are more substantially represented in political and other institutions. Women and mothers are generally empowered by the authorities in Kosovo. Before leaving the podium, the Prime Minister was presented with the Global Women's Peace Ambassador's Award by the WFPWI President.

The moderator then mentioned that there were several messages sent to the conference. **Ms. Mairead Corrigan Maguire**, a courageous and ever passionate Nobel Laureate from Northern Ireland, sent her best regards for this event, very much in line with her own work. Also, the former Ambassador of Bosnia to the United Nations, **H.E. Mirsada Čolaković**, wanted to participate, but could not make it, due to the difficulty in obtaining a visa.

As the second speaker of the opening panel, Ms. Handschin introduced **H.E. Amb. Olga Algayerova, Executive Secretary of the UN Economic Commission for Europe based in Geneva** and former Ambassador of Slovakia to the UN Vienna, who spoke to the audience through a video message. She emphasized the great potential of women's leading participation in peace building and peace leadership and how this potential could be enhanced through the technological empowerment of women. She explained that given the fact that the root causes of conflicts are often times difficult to cope with, there is a need for a broader, more inclusive approach and that gender balance is a great attribute for sustainable development and peace building.

As the last speaker of the opening session, **Ms. Moriko Hori, President of WFPW International**, took the floor. She explained her life experience growing up in Korea as a young girl from Japan, facing many experiences of hatred by the Korean people, classmates, and teachers towards her as a Japanese citizen. It was through these very tough experiences that she learned the value of reconciliation and forgiveness. She closed with a quote from UN Secretary General António Guterres, who said that women are crucial for promoting peace and security in the world. Given the great difficulties in the Balkans, women leaders in this region can make a difference in worldwide peace efforts, and she encouraged strong women leaders from the Balkans to put their potential at disposal in order to create peace around the world.

SESSION I: .1325/UN AGENDA ON WOMEN PEACE & SECURITY: A ROADMAP TOWARD PEACE & RECONCILIATION

As the first session followed directly after the opening panel, the session chair introduced the first speaker, the **Deputy Prime Minister of Kosovo, H.E. Ms. Emilija Redžepi**. The deputy Prime Minister, of Bosnian ethnicity, has been often times promoting the rights of the non-majority communities (which are only 7 % of the 1.8 million people of Kosovo). She stated that since the beginning of the new millennia, we can witness women pursuing peace and succeeding more and more to bring conflicting parties to reconcile. In this context, this second conference, "No Peace without Women", is focusing on Kosovo and the situation in the Balkans. She emphasized the need to work for the equal rights of all citizens, because we all are first and foremostly humans and after that ethnicities can come in to play. She said that the common goal of the Kosovo government is to remove human suffering. In Kosovo, a lot of importance is given to women and, therefore, women's representation is more than 30% in the legislative body, which is the largest female representation in the institutions in the Balkans. Women leaders and mothers emphasize the need to end bad experiences for all. She closed with the invitation to all women to bring in all their wisdom for a great and positive outcome, and learn from great women leaders' abilities and capacities, so that peace will prevail with a greater inclusion of women in decision making. The next speaker addressed the audience through a video message, expressing her deep desire to be present, but was unable to due to health issues.

The Hon. Ellen Sirleaf Johnson, the former president of Liberia, and global champion to end violence against women, congratulated the organizers for this important conference. She reminded everyone in her video message, that 33 years ago a resolution was adopted by the UN: UN Security Council Resolution 1325. She re-iterated that there cannot be peace without women. Countries like Sudan, Senegal and many other places came to recognize that solutions cannot be found by military means. She mentioned that according to research, countries with insufficient women leadership have great difficulties in realizing peace. Ellen is the first and, so far, the only African woman leader of a government. Each nation has to find its own ways of realizing peace, **but women should be an integral** part of any peace efforts. Despite the fact that one still feels far away from women being a decisive part of peace processes, it seems that the time is now ripe for action and women to be an integral part of peace processes anywhere in the world.

Amb. Nancy Soderberg, former ambassador and appointee by the Clinton Administration as Senior Director, National Democratic Institute, Kosovo/USA, stated that without women the crucial issues of our time cannot be addressed. Referring to the previous speaker, she emphasized: “As Ellen said, we can do better by including women into all facets of society. The OECD found narrowing the gap between men and women does bring substantial results in terms of peace and prosperity. In Northern Ireland there were women pressing for peace beyond the religious and cultural divide. Put women at the table, and peace will be stronger! Let’s take that to heart in the Balkans!” She ended her presentation by stressing that the participation of women will increase chances for prosperity, in Kosovo, where more and more women are playing a decisive role.

The Hon. Suzanna Pribilović, a Judge, and former Government Minister, and current Member of Parliament from Montenegro, explained that very unfortunately Montenegro’s efforts to join the EU stalled three years ago. Despite the fact that the Constitution of Montenegro guarantees the equality between men and women, it can be observed that the institutions and the general society are still very patriarchal, and the data show very slow changes. She requested that the institutions in the Balkans in general should do more to prevent violence against women in society. There are widespread difficulties related to the patriarchal system in the institutions, for example the current legislation, in case of a divorce, too often causes a very complicated situation for the children of divorced women. Yet there are signs of hope, as many programs in Montenegro try to make things easier for women. She concluded by re-iterating the conference theme, there is no peace without women being involved in the process.

As the final speaker of the session, **Hon. Anja Margetic**, the Deputy Mayor of Sarajevo, a Bosnian politician and a medal winning Olympic swimmer, expressed her enthusiasm about the topic of the conference. She stated that she wished that the next conference of this kind would be held in Sarajevo. As the first female Deputy Mayor of Sarajevo, Bosnia, she said she was proud to be here as a representative of the mayor and that it was a shame that, despite living in Europe, the importance of women still has to be emphasized. She then explained that Sarajevo has been famous for various reasons; first as the place where WWI started and then, in the 1990’s, because of the dreadful siege and war in Bosnia. But even after the end of hostilities, there is still a threat of violence. Women have more importance, she said. No mother would send her sons to war. Men do send men to war! She wrapped up her very compelling presentation by stressing that reconciliation isn’t needed by the people, but by the politicians. “Women, much more than men, seek practical solutions! Women are used to taking care of others and therefore have more capacities in creating peace and harmony. Unfortunately, it seems that men, create war and fall prey to corruption more easily.”

SESSION II: **WOMEN IN DEVELOPMENT, INTEGRATION, AND FINANCE: ADVANCING PEACE**

The session chair, **Mr. Jacques Marion**, Co-chair of the Universal Peace Federation in Europe and the Middle East, after a brief introduction of the theme, opened the panel by giving the floor to the **Hon. Flora Brovina**, Former MP and Chairwoman of UPF Kosovo. As a professor and Human Rights activist who spent time in a Serbian prison during the Kosovo war, she spoke about the painful details of the Kosovo war, including poisoning, rape, brutality, etc. But she stated that much could be turned around through women. Women’s groups here in Kosovo are meeting with Serbian women, even when the political leaders from different sides didn't dare to do so. She commented that there are very active women’s parliamentary groups with a creative and strategic focus. Strikingly, she added: “Hatred is a cancer. Women will protect life, and Kosovo is a peace-loving nation and should never turn into a hateful state.

Women bring unique perspectives to war and to wounds of war and peace.” She chose to follow the example of her parents who were in Nazi concentration camps, but she chose never to bear hatred against the German people. The next speaker, the **Hon. Senida Mesi**, former Deputy Prime Minister of Kosovo, stressed the need for more men to learn from history and therefore to promote greater inclusion of women into politics. She said that she didn’t believe in quotas but, after the terrible genocide in Rwanda, the number of women parliamentarians was 66%. This is a historical fact. Of course due to the many men killed in war, women had to take over and certainly many were not qualified at first. Ms. Mesi stated that she would always give a hand to younger less experienced women, because afterwards they might excel in their abilities. Our economical livelihood is supported by men and women. How much more could we do in economic development if we engaged more in women’s economic empowerment. In the six West-Balkan countries, merely 30-35 % of women are active in the economy. Imagine how much economic growth could be generated if there was more economic empowerment of women and what difference they could make. Empowered women could contribute 30 % more to the nation’s GDP. Also, there needs to be a general reform of the current laws regulating Inheritance in many Balkan nations. The key question is how can we support women to benefit all society? The former UK Prime Minister Margaret Thatcher, said, “If you want to get a job done, ask a woman to do it”. Hon. Mesi ended her presentation by stating, “The world is a very diverse place and men and women are different, but much more can be done if we work together!”.

One of the highlights of this panel was the testimony of **Ms. Sally Becker**, a British humanitarian worker and CEO of “Save a Child”. As Woman of the Year in the UK in 1994, she saved hundreds of children’s lives during the Bosnian and Kosovo wars. She was called the Angel of Mostar, because of her incredible work to save children in war zones. She continues to take care of and save children in trouble spots, such as Israel, Palestine, as well as Ukraine, since 2022. She gave a firsthand account of the frontline situations in the Kosovo war, where she and her convoy of refugee women and children were ambushed and where she tried to negotiate with the belligerent soldiers to let the women and children go. She finally managed to get them to safety; however she was arrested and taken prisoner. She also almost lost her life when she was ambushed again and shot. She has shown incredible courage and persistence for the sake of suffering civilian populations, especially young children, trapped in war zones. She touched the audience deeply, as in Kosovo, the memories of the dreadful war years are still in people’s minds, causing to this day great grief and suffering among the people.

The next speaker, Ms. **Biljana Braithwaite**, is a lawyer and CEO and Founding Partner at **Sustineri Partners** and the head of the AIRE Centre’s Western Balkans Rule of Law Programme. In her opening remarks, she stated that there is a need for men and women to work together. Women should help men, and men should help women to be empowered. She also doesn't like quotas; however she realizes that women will not be included automatically, and it is not just a matter of education. There is a need for a clear goal of including women in any process in society through special measures and support mechanisms. Furthermore, she wonders how to conserve this, so that it serves current and future generations. The proper agenda is critical, even though we don't internalize that. Women on governing boards in the newly called Adria region can be modeled on the basis of European standards. The European Union at the end of 2022 has set general standards for women to be part of governing boards in EU territories. There is a need for short to medium range measures. There are women ready for governing boards. It is better not to create a picture of a perfect board member, but use diverse and wise criteria in order for women to acquire qualifications and sustainability. The newly called Adria region is forward looking, adding Croatia and Slovenia to the West Balkans. Slovenia has gone far to create a balance between men and women in the private sector and corporate leadership.

As the final speaker of this session, Ms. **Brigitte Wada**, Vice-President of WFWP Europe, mentioned at the outset of her presentation that our society is more and more plagued by school violence and bullying. One might ask the question as to why is this happening? Some experts think that the youth need to come back to basic rules for living together with others, as encouraged by many faith-based efforts, an attitude of loving kindness, simply living for others, based on the teachings of the great faiths. WFWPI has developed programs on how to guide youth to a more sustainable way of life for the sake of society as a whole and the individual as well. Research has shown that misunderstanding seems to be, in 90% of the cases, the main cause of conflict. Diversity requires mutual respect, inclusion and integration. By incorporating more women in this process, more promising results will come about.

Session III: **PEACE LEADERSHIP: ACCESS AND OPPORTUNITIES FOR YOUNG WOMEN IN STEM, MEDIA LITERACY AND INFORMATION TECHNOLOGY**

The 3rd and last session of the conference was facilitated by Ms. **Ejona Icka, Executive Director**, IAYSP Balkans, Secretary General of UPF Kosovo and liaison person of the organizers to the government of Kosovo. As the first speaker of the panel, the **Hon. Liza Gashi, Deputy Minister of foreign Affairs** of the Republic of Kosovo, took the floor. She stated that women are by experience agents of change in a post war era and they are the ones who can rebuild the nation. Deputy Foreign Minister Gashi was instrumental in organizing the conference and helped very much to bring guests from Kosovo and even sponsored the closing banquet at the end of the conference. She referred to the importance of women in peace processes by mentioning a few outstanding women among the people of Kosovo.

Some of the great women leaders from Kosovo are for example, the current President, Hon. Vjosa Osmani, former law professor and member of the Kosovo parliament, who was instrumental in finalizing the constitution of the Republic of Kosovo, among other great efforts. She furthermore mentioned Hon. Dr. Flora Brovina, former Vice-President of the Parliament of Kosovo, who was a speaker in the last session. Both of these ladies are considered heroic women in Kosovo. The Kosovo experience show that bringing together women and empowering them to take on leadership roles bring great outcomes through women excelling in many fields. This is true for the economy and finances, entrepreneurial activities and so forth. As 70% of the population of Kosovo is under 35 years of age, there has to be a conscientious effort to include more women as STEM students at universities, thus laying the groundwork for a sustainable and gender balanced development in the nation.

The second speaker was H.E. **Teuta Sahatqija**, former Ambassador to the UN in New York and deputy Foreign Minister of the Republic of Kosovo. She is currently the director of the office of “Women in Tech” in Kosovo. She stated that actually it was women who started the dialogue with Serbia through Serbian women. In this process, she discovered that Serbian women have very similar circumstances and concerns, which allowed them to get together and discuss the way forward. She asked for funding to create an academy for Serbian and Albanian/Kosovo women, which no men would dare to do, even while the wounds were still fresh. Also as a tech person, she launched the “Women in Tech” chapter in Kosovo by empowering and teaching women to go into STEM education and technical jobs. It is important to also keep good jobs for women and to transform them and adapt them to the current needs. She closed by saying that she believes that “Gender equality was invented by God” in order to have a critical mass for future development.

The following speaker was Mr. **Astrit Istrefi**, Chairman of the Balkan Forum, a civil society platform that focuses on conflict prevention, peace building and development related issues in fragile and conflict-affected contexts, leading strategic development and management/oversight of complex programs. He stated at the outset that some may expect good news from him in terms of women’s engagement in the Balkans, but he apologized that he couldn’t do that. This was because in terms of women’s engagement in the Balkans, there are less than 15% in politics, less than half of the suggested quota of 30%. There is an underrepresentation of women as leaders, and one must ask why? He answered that, based on his experience, the people in the Balkans want strong leadership, which seems to be more provided by the male leadership that traditionally has ruled the region. There is no use to hide the traditional social norms; they are there. He suggested that the key point for change should be a social transformation in the region and social media could be a helpful tool for achieving that. He closed by stating that women need to show more resilience to withstand traditional norms and this way assure a sustainable future in the region.

As the final speaker of the session, **Dr. Diana Ungureanu, Moldova**, a cardiologist and Vice-President of the youth NGO, IAYSP, of Europe and the Middle East, explained her organization’s efforts to empower young people especially in the West-Balkans to become agents for change and empowered future leaders. She also explained that in Moldova, her home country, she is engaged in projects of teaching girls, especially in IT programs. Young women and girls need to be taught in a safe environment, so that they can build confidence and finally excel in their professional careers, thus contributing to a more gender balanced situation in the region. After a short report about such a program with 60 participants, she closed her presentation. The moderator, Ms. Ejona Icka, offered some closing remarks for the session and the conference and the participants assembled for a final photo shoot.

Later in the evening, the efforts of the day culminated in a closing banquet sponsored by the Foreign Ministry of the Republic of Kosovo, and hosted by Hon. Liza Gashi, and all of the participants were invited to share tasty local food and finally stimulated to dance together to the sound of a very vibrant local music group.