

NEW REGIONAL WOMEN'S PEACE LOBBY CALLS FOR SPEEDY VOTE IN KOSOVO

AdvocacyNet

News Bulletin 78, August 4, 2006

Prishtina and Washington, DC: Thirteen women leaders from six European countries and Kosovo have called on the international community to hold elections in Kosovo and respect the result.

Meeting in Zagreb from July 15 to 19 under the auspices of the UN Development Fund for Women (UNIFEM), the women also established a new group, the Women's Lobby for Peace, Security and Justice in South East Europe, to advocate for peace in the Balkans and a greater role for women in reconstruction.

The Lobby's members come from Albania, Bosnia, Croatia, Montenegro, Serbia and Kosovo. They include Igo Rogova, director of the Kosova Women's Network (KWN), a partner of the Advocacy Project (AP).

The establishment of the Lobby represents another strong and constructive statement by women from Serbia and Kosovo at a time when political leaders on both sides are digging in their heels. Serbian Prime Minister Vojislav Kostunica said recently that Serbia would forfeit membership of the European Union rather than lose Kosovo. Kosovo's President Fatmir Sejdiu has insisted that independence is not negotiable.

The new Lobby calls for the status of Kosovo to be put to a speedy vote without any interim measures (such as the current UN mission), and for the decision to be respected. Given that the overwhelming majority of Kosovars are expected to vote for an independent Kosovo, this might be viewed as a concession by the three Serbian members of the group - Natasa Kandic, Sonja Bizerko and Slavica Stojanovic.

But the main focus of the communiqué is on healing wounds of the 1999 war, which affects both sides. It calls for the fate of missing people on both sides to be resolved. This would include almost 2,500 people still missing from the 1999 war, most of them Kosovo Albanian. The communiqué also calls for the return of refugees to Kosovo and "full guarantees" for minorities. This would mainly affect Kosovo's Serbian population.

This focus on collaboration and pragmatism is a hallmark of women's peace-building. It inspired the recent establishment of the Women's Peace Coalition, a collaborative new initiative between KWN in Kosovo and the Women in Black Network from Serbia.

AP has nominated the Coalition for this year's Resolution 1325 Award, which is given by the Dutch Women in Conflict Taskforce. AP intern Barbra Bearden, who is working with KWN this summer, helped to draft the nomination.

- [Email](#) your request for a copy of the communiqué
- Read [Barbra's](#) blogs.