



Kvinna till Kvinna



2013-12-04

Baroness Catherine Ashton

High Representative of the Union for Foreign Affairs and Security Policy, EEAS, Brussels

Dear High Representative, Baroness Ashton,

The current dialogue between Kosovo and Serbia has opened new opportunities to normalise relations between the two countries, including the possibility to integrate the four northern municipalities into Kosovo administration. We acknowledge your courage to take on the task and also the historic opportunities that this has brought forth.

Now is the time to reach out for support for the efforts you have made, to a larger part of Kosovo and Serbia societies. We express our concern regarding the lack of participation of women's organisations in the ongoing dialogue. Your engagement for women's participation and women's human rights is well documented and known. Hence, we believe that you, as the leader of the dialogue, share our concern that women from civil society must be heard in the ongoing talks.

The exclusion from the dialogue of women's organisations and civil society come at a price. Firstly, the potential of women and women organisations as peace agents is left untapped. The dialogue and the legitimacy of the agreements reached would benefit greatly from partnering with women.

Secondly, women's priorities, such as the issues of missing persons and survivors of sexual and gender based violence during the conflict, have not been addressed.

Thirdly, other issues, like health and education and economic and social rights at large, that greatly affect women, have not included input from women's organisations. We would like to point out that in order to guarantee that women's perspective be represented in the political dialogue, there has to be continuous consultation with women's organisations.

The UN Security Council Resolution 1325, reinforced recently by Resolution 2122, recognises women's right to participate in peace negotiations and in post-conflict reconstruction. It further calls for inclusion of a gender perspective during repatriation and resettlement, rehabilitation, reintegration and post-conflict reconstruction. The Security Council Resolutions make it clear that women have the right to influence such an important process which regards their daily life, security situation and the reconciliation in their society.

We acknowledge the fact that the parties, Kosovo and Serbia, carry the main responsibility to include women and women's perspectives in the negotiations. In the UNSCR 1325 National Action Plan for Serbia, it is even stated that there should be at least 30 percent of women in negotiating teams and multinational operations.¹ In 2012 several members of the Regional Women's Lobby and a number of other civil society organisations issued a Declaration emphasising that negotiations between Kosovo and Serbia were occurring without any

¹ Government of the Republic of Serbia, *National Action Plan to Implement United Nations Security Council Resolution 1325 – Women, Peace and Security in the Republic of Serbia (2010–2015)*, December 2010, p. 47.

consultations of peace networks or civil society. The Republic of Serbia never acknowledged the initiatives of the CSOs.² The Concluding Observations from the last CEDAW session for Serbia (Article 26b, 25 July 2013), provides severe critique towards the Serbian government for the lack of inclusion of women in the current dialogue.

We strongly believe, however, that the EU, which is brokering the talks and commands the incentives of the parties, has a unique opportunity as well as obligation to request that international principles about women's participation and women's human rights are upheld in the process. The more so, since one party is about to open membership talks and the other is a potential candidate country.

We therefore urge you to use the opportunity to fulfill the UNSCR 1325 and 2122 and uphold international human rights standards and EU commitments such as the EU Gender Action Plan by:

1. Ensuring that the principles of right to information, participation, and non-discrimination, are observed in the dialogue;
2. Facilitating regular consultations with women's organisations and civil society at large and that the input provided by the consultations be brought into the dialogue;
3. Requesting that government representatives of Kosovo and Serbia participate in the civil society consultations;
4. Ensuring that the UNSCR 1325 is mainstreamed into any future agreements;
5. Considering to support women groups financially and politically, as appropriate; and
6. Assuring that the Governments of Kosovo and Serbia adopt and implement their national action plans on 1325 and, in consultation with women groups, up-date the plans with targets and indicators specifically referring to the dialogue.

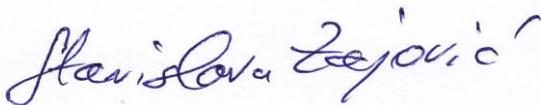
We, the undersigned, would welcome an early opportunity to discuss the above with you. Involving women in the dialogue is not only right; it is the smart thing to do if the achievements of the dialogue are to be sustained and indeed expanded.



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² Žene u crnom, 2013. *Nezavisni monitoring primene Rezolucije 1325 u Srbiji, Beograd*, pp. 43-45
http://www.zeneucnom.org/pdf/nezavisni_monitoring_primene_rezolucije1325_u_srbiji2013.pdf, 2014.10.21.