

**Ministerial Declaration**  
**on Support for Gender Equality in Security Sector Reform in the Western Balkans**

**Budva, Montenegro**

**December 7, 2021**

Ministers of Defence in the Western Balkans, the participants of the Ministerial Roundtable – a Way Forward on Gender Equality in the Western Balkans, organized by the Ministry of Defence of Montenegro and UNDP on December 7, 2021 in Budva, Montenegro,

**RECALLING** the Convention on the Elimination of All Forms of Discrimination Against Women - CEDAW (1979), which emphasizes the need of women's participation and leadership in all contexts,

**RECALLING** General Recommendation No. 30 on Women in Conflict Prevention, Conflict and Post-Conflict Situations (2013), which underlines the applicability of CEDAW to a diverse range of settings affected by conflict and political crises and affirms CEDAW's linkages with the UN Security Council's Women, Peace and Security (WPS) Agenda,

**RECALLING** the Beijing Platform for Action (1995), which draws attention to Women in Armed Conflict as one of twelve critical areas of concern and emphasizes the participation of women in conflict resolution,

**RECALLING** the Women, Peace and Security (WPS) Agenda, through several UN Security Council Resolutions [1325 (2000), 1820 (2008), 1888 (2009), 1889 (2009), 1960 (2010), 2106 (2013), 2122 (2013), 2242 (2015), 2467 (2019), 2493 (2019) and 2538 (2020)] which have been positioning conflict-prevention, women's meaningful participation, and sustaining peace as their core priorities,

**BEARING IN MIND** the CEDAW and the WPS Agenda, which together provide a substantive framework for ensuring that gender equality becomes an integral component in conflict prevention, peacebuilding, and post-conflict reconstruction and accountability,

**EMPHASIZING COMMITMENT** towards achieving the Sustainable Development Goals, notably Sustainable Development Goal 5, focusing on gender equality, and Sustainable Development Goal 16 on promoting just, peaceful and inclusive societies,

**REAFFIRMING** the importance of equal participation and the full involvement of women and men in all efforts related to the maintaining and promotion of peace and security,

**AWARE** of the need to expand the role and contribution of women in conflict prevention and recovery, and the need to increase the role of women in decision-making in this area,

**RECOGNISING** the need to mainstream the gender perspective in security sector reform to ensure it best responds to the needs of all members of society and risks societies face in the 21<sup>st</sup> century,

**RECOGNISING** the need for further strengthening regional cooperation on gender equality between the Ministries of Defence and Armed Forces in the Western Balkans for raising the gender awareness of both military and civilian staff in the Ministries of Defence and Armed Forces in the Western Balkans and for increasing the capacities of Human Resources Departments in the Ministries of Defence and Armed Forces in the Western Balkans to develop and implement gender responsive policies,

**DETERMINED** to cooperate at the regional level in developing shared solutions for common challenges within the region in the area of gender equality and within the framework of the Regional Cooperation Council,

and **DETERMINED** to contribute to enhanced, people-centred, and gender-responsive security in the Western Balkans,

**HAVE AGREED:**

1. To cooperate in the achievement of strengthened security sector reform processes in the Western Balkans by mainstreaming gender into security and defence policies and institutions, thus enhancing the effectiveness of their development efforts and contributing to human security that is inclusive of both women and men, and girls and boys;
2. To take part in the regional project activities implemented within the framework of the UNDP managed *Strengthening of Regional Cooperation on Gender Mainstreaming in Security Sector Reform in the Western Balkans* project, in particular in the following activities:
  - Participating in the Regional Platform on Mainstreaming Gender Equality in the Policies and Practices of the Ministries of Defence and Armed Forces in the Western Balkans;
  - Participating in activities aimed at strengthening the capacities of Gender Equality Mechanisms in the Ministries of Defence and Armed Forces in the Western Balkans to achieve improved results through information and good practices exchange, as well as the sharing of knowledge and lessons learned across the region, by utilizing technical advice and expert support in realizing small-scale projects;
  - Participating in activities targeting the Human Resources Departments in the Ministries of Defence and Armed Forces in the Western Balkans which are aimed at collecting and analysing sex-disaggregated data to develop and implement gender responsive policies based on evidence, including the implementation of recommendations from such studies as the *2<sup>nd</sup> Regional Study on the Position of Women in the Armed Forces in the Western Balkans*, of policy recommendations stemming from the Regional Youth Perception Survey – Values and Attitudes, and of other regional surveys that will be undertaken in the future in agreement with the MoDs;
  - Participating in activities targeting the Armed Forces in the Western Balkans aimed at preventing and responding to gender-based discrimination, sexual harassment, and abuse through training, identifying gaps in policies and procedures, and developing appropriate procedures to close the gaps, as well as through the development of guidelines and toolkits, including guidance for their practical use, most notably the *Regional Handbook on Combating Gender-Based Discrimination, Sexual Harassment and Abuse*;
  - Participating in activities aimed at strengthening the Regional Network of Gender Trainers with SEESAC support for the further capacity building of the Network and for knowledge sharing;
  - Participating in activities aimed at ensuring that the next generation of Armed Forces' female and male staff members understand why gender equality is important to fulfilling their mission by developing gender-sensitive military curricula, including the development and use of the regional *Baseline Study on Integrating the Gender Perspective into Military Education and Training*;

- Participating in activities aimed at enhancing the knowledge of Armed Forces commanders and Ministry of Defence decision-makers through the tailor-made gender coach programmes;
- Planning activities and jointly informing and consulting all involved parties on matters of common interest relating to the promotion of diversity, gender equality principles, and different gender identities in defence and security policies;
- Fostering regional ownership of the project through, when possible, the facilitation of exchanges, study tours, trainings, and other common activities in the area of gender equality;
- Participating in regional cooperation, knowledge exchange, and information sharing through the Regional Security Sector Reform Platform with the aim of enhancing capacities for evidence-based and gender-responsive policymaking; and
- Promoting the activities and successes of the project and cooperating in outreach activities.



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