

NEWSLETTER

Civic Dialogue

March 2007.

- To create a region of peace, cooperation and tolerance.
- To form alliances among people of good will across ethnic divides.
- To facilitate open dialogue between the ethnically diverse populations in Kosovo as well as between Kosovo and Serbia
- To publicly oppose official policies that threaten human rights and weaken the capacity for establishing a rule of law

PARTICIPATION OF WOMEN IN SOCIAL CHANGES-REGIONAL EXPERIENCE



participated in the conference. The conference was covered by numerous local and regional media, including Kosovo Radio and Television that prepared a report and a show on the event.

After the welcoming speeches of Civil Dialogue representatives Tatjana Tucic, Zef Shala and Aleksandar Popov, the meeting was opened by representatives of institutions from Vojvodina and Kosovo, that is, by Shqipe Krasniqi from the Gender Equality Agency of the Government of Kosovo and Snezana Lakicevic Stojacic, the Provincial Secretary for Labor, Employment and Gender Equality from Novi Sad.

Shqipe Krasniqi informed participants about the implementation of policies and development of mechanisms for the achievement of gender equality from 1999. At the central level the Office for Gender Equality was established according to UNMIK regulation 2004/18, with an overall mandate of implementing and monitoring the implementation of the Law on Gender Equality, in addition to encouraging the development of gender equality in Kosovo. This office was transformed into the Gender Equality Agency in September 2006. At the central level, additional mechanisms and institutions for the promotion of gender equality are active, such as the

The conference titled **PARTICIPATION OF WOMEN IN SOCIAL CHANGES — REGIONAL EXPERIENCE** was held on Friday, February 9, 2007, in the Vojvodina Hotel in Novi Sad. This was the third meeting dealing with gender issues organized by the Civic Dialogue. The participants had an opportunity to see eleven presentations delivered by experts and NGO activists who addressed different issues related to this subject. In cooperation with the Provincial Secretariat for Labor, Employment and Gender Equality and with several women's NGOs from Pristina and Novi Sad, we closely defined subjects and selected presenters. The dialogue between women's organizations from Kosovo, Serbia, as well as representatives from Croatia and Bosnia and Herzegovina gathered a

number of participants and drew significant media attention. The following subjects were addressed:

Women in peace processes: *Peace activists and initiatives from Serbia, Bosnia and Herzegovina and Kosovo*

Women in transition *Legislative and institutional changes in Kosovo, Serbia and Croatia*

Economic empowerment of women: *Experiences of entrepreneurs in Vojvodina*

Regional cooperation: *Kosovo women's network, Women's Peace Coalition Participation of women in politics and their presence in the media in Vojvodina and in Kosovo.*

Around 40 participants, representatives of different women's organizations and relevant institutions from Kosovo, Serbia, Bosnia and Herzegovina and Croatia,

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Advisory Office of Good Governance, Inter-Ministerial Council for Gender Equality and the Gender Equality Unit within the institution of the Ombudsperson. At local level, officers for gender equality were appointed in each municipality. Ms. Krasniqi concluded that, on the whole, Kosovo created a solid legal basis as far as gender equality issues are concerned. A permanent monitoring and evaluation of the effectiveness of policies, programs and measures is being implemented. Women's position in Kosovo is still influenced by historical and cultural attitudes about the stereotypical roles of women and men in the family, their contribution in public life and in economy. Therefore, the Kosovo Government has drafted a document "Kosovo Development and Strategy Plan 2007-2015" with an aim to mainstream the gender equality perspective. Shqipe Krasniqi then presented data concerning the employment of women, stressing that there is no institutional gender-based discrimination. However, so far, women in Kosovo are seen as having a primary role in the family and community life, and are culturally perceived as playing a supportive role, rather than having leadership or managerial responsibilities. The Kosovo Government is committed to draft policies and programs based on the principles of creating equal opportunities for men and women, taking into consideration the specific needs and concerns of women, concluded Ms. Krasniqi.

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Snezana Lakicevic Stojacic pointed out the joint starting points that link the conference participants, such as peace-building after periods of armed conflict, transition processes in a post-socialist society, as well as efforts to promote the status of women and the development and improvement of institutional and legal mechanisms for achieving gender equality. Mrs. Stojacic stressed it was necessary for governments of neighboring countries to recognize the role of women in order for them to equally participate in peace processes, in accordance with UN Security Council Resolution no. 1325, and that regional cooperation and exchange of successful practices are of greatest importance in the process of transition and building gender equality mechanisms in countries in the region. Presenting the activities of the Provincial Secretariat in regional projects, as well as the 2007 Women's Diary, a publication of the Secretariat, Mrs. Lakicevic wished the participants fruitful work during the conference.



Speakers on the topic of Women in peace processes were Marija Perkovic, Women in Black activist from Vrbas, Besa Selimi, representative of the Kosovo women's network and Center for Gender Research and Training from Prishtina and Jadranka Milicevic, member of the CURE Foundation and Women in Black activist from Sarajevo.

Marija Perkovic presented the Women's peace coalition that was created at the beginning of 2006 in Struga, with the full support of



UNIFEM, by the network of Women in Black in Serbia and the Kosovo women's network. This coalition presented its demands that peace activists be involved in the negotiation processes concerning the status of Kosovo, expressing the opinion that the future of Kosovo was in a full independ-



ence and keeping complete territorial integrity. Their demands are based on the UN Security Council Resolution no. 1325, a document that enables a framework for the legalization of women's peace policy founded on a difference concept of peace and security. This resolution obligates states to recognize the gender perspective in decision-making processes and participation in peace processes, including the protection of women in the post-conflict period, as well as enabling the implementation of peace treaties. Marija Perkovic also presented the "Women's Resolution" that the Serbian peace network and Women in Black from Belgrade submitted to the Parliament of Serbia in October 2005. This resolution contains demands a non-violent solution of conflicts and the participation of civil society and activists of the peace movement in this process, as well as a list of demands for the protection

and respect of the human right of women, efficient implementation of the Family Law, withdrawal of the law on the support to Hague indictees and their families, as well as the demand of the extradition of all those accused of committing war crimes, etc...The Resolution titled "Women, Peace, Security", as Marija Perkovic stressed, has not yet been considered by the Parliament of Serbia.

Stressing that women are not only victims of war, but active participants in peace processes, **Besa Selimi** presented the Kosovo Women's Lobby group whose goal is to improve the status of women in all fields of life, point out their social and political responsibility towards citizens and entire society. The Kosovo Women's Lobby" is a group comprised of women leaders from politics, civil society and the private sector, that undertakes and supports a critical – constructive attitude and strategic and progressive actions concerning important issues for the political, social and economic development of Kosovo, that affect the whole society and especially women. The Kosovo Women's Lobby's is part of the Women's Political Lobby for Peace, Stability and Justice in Southeast Europe which was supported by UNIFEM in most cases. UNIFEM arranged for three representatives of the Women's Lobby to meet with the Special Envoy of the UN Secretary General for the settlement of future status of Kosovo Marti Ahtisaari and discuss the negotiation process for 40 minutes. At the end of this meeting the women gave Ahtisaari an open letter calling on his support to a just and sustainable peace for Kosovo to a lasting regional stability.

Jadranka Milicevic spoke about great social, economic, systemic and other changes during and after the four-year war. She pointed out that women and men in Bosnia and Herzegovina shared similar experiences of war in some segments, but had different experiences in other fields. The consequence of this was that the subjective experience of a



person's conscience of his/her gender identity changes in different ways.

Ariana Qosaj-Mustafa, the National Legal Adviser on Women and Children from the Anti-Trafficking Unit of OMiK, Marijana Pajvancic, LL.D, professor at the Faculty of Law in Novi Sad and the president of the Council for Gender Equality of the Provincial Secretariat for Labor, Employment and Gender Equality and Snezana Vasiljevic, activist for women's rights and assistant professor at the Faculty of Law in Zagreb, spoke about legislative and institutional changes in the context of transition processes in Serbia, Croatia and Kosovo. Arijana Qosaj-Mustafa presented activities of the Anti-Trafficking Unit of OMiK and recommendations related to achievement of human rights standards and sustainable protection of human rights of victims of gender-based violence through setting up of a comprehensive system of human rights monitoring and institution building.

In her presentation, **Marijana Pajvancic** gave an overview on important steps taken in the legislative and institutional reforms in Serbia since 2000, when the initial meeting of women activists was held in Palic. The conclusions adopted at that meeting related to the turnout of women at elections, creation of the women's political network and establishment of the quota system for women MP candidates in the Parliament. The second meeting was held in 2006 under the title The European Perspectives of Serbia. Marijana Pajvancic stressed that there is a visible form of normative optimism in the legislative field but at the same time she noticed that both progress and halt, and even

regression to the past is also visible in this process. Therefore, a step-by-step strategy should be considered. Even the European standards are not allies in this process, and beside their implementation, attention should be paid to the acquired rights which have to be preserved. When institutional changes are concerned, she stressed that consideration should be given to the parliament, executive authority, judiciary and ombudsman. At the provincial level, an action should be directed at the parliament, provincial secretariats, the Institute for Gender Equality, the Council for Gender Equality, the Provincial Ombudsman. At the municipal level, actions should be directed at the local ombudsman and bodies for gender equality. One of the most important problems in this process is the unsatisfactory level of the development of institutions. They are not adequately normatively and systemically positioned, and therefore are fragile and unstable, in search for their identity and position, while their functioning often heavily depends on the outcome of the elections. Marijana Pajvancic concluded that there were several particular positive steps taken before the parliamentary elections 2007. Women voters were widely recognized. With the call for women's turnout at the elections, an attempt was made to influence the European perspective of the society. A campaign for 30% of mandates for women was launched again. At the same time there is a continuity of the lack of implementation of the positive legislation.

Snjezana Vasiljevic spoke about the processes and mechanisms of introducing European standards into gender-sensitive legislation in Croatia. As significant steps for the shaping of Croatian gender-sensitive legislation, she pointed out EU directives and recommendations, the resolutions and declaration that Croatia adopted up to the passing of the Law on Gender Equality (LGE), as well as other gender-sensitive laws, such as the Law on the Protection against Domestic Violence, Law on Same-Sex Relationships, Labor Law, Family Law, etc. Presenting the Law on Gender Equality in brief,

Ms. Vasiljevic also stressed its flaws: some fields are not encompassed by LGE- equality within the family, the issue of domestic violence, trafficking in human beings, prostitution; partial definition of the concept of special measures (quota system); the concept of a gender-sensitive policy was completely left out; no visibility of several significant issues-status of women in rural areas, women members of national minorities (especially Romany women); the problem of so-called economic violence (denial of financial means, economic dependence), the problem of multiple discrimination; lack of provisions concerning health and healthcare (the example of reproductive rights); lack of sanctions for breaches of LGE, etc. The guest from Croatia concluded that the formal legal framework of the Croatian gender-sensitive legislation is optimally adapted to EU standards; however its practical implementation is far from satisfactory.

Slobodanka Markov, PhD and professor of sociology and sociology of education at the Faculty of Natural Sciences in Novi Sad, addressed the issue of economic empowerment of women under the subject "The Experience of Women's Entrepreneurs. She presented the project The Vojvodinian Initiative for Women's Self-Employment implemented by the Center for Enterprise, Entrepreneurship and Management. The project is based on the development of entrepreneurial culture among women and their encouragement to turn to their skills and possibilities to self-employ in the society which is in the state of deep economic and social regression, war and war traumas. She presented the findings of the survey on personal characteristics of women entrepreneurs, their motivation, scale and type of business, inhibiting factors i.e. limitations and difficulties they are faced with in business, and satisfaction that running a private business brings. She also pointed out the important role of NGOs and women's networks in the education, confidence-building, support, the exchange of experience and information and solidarity. Slobodanka Markov mentioned

negative factors relating to the Government's policy such are inconsistency, the frequent change of regulations, the lack of affirmative actions and other losers in the transition. After conclusions which included the examples of benefits society and women themselves have from women's entrepreneurship, a discussion on the real economic power and their participation in business took place.

Regional co-operations projects were presented by **Besa Selimi** and Veronika Mitro, psychologist, gender equality expert and one of the co-founders of the Women's Studies and Research from Novi Sad.

Besa Selimi presented the Kosovo Women's Network, established in 2000, which gathers women's organizations from all over Kosovo. It is a leading network consisting of almost 60 women's NGOs, other organizations and informal groups which have almost 10 years of experience in the local communities development. This network includes women's groups of different ethnicities and support their capacity-building. Marija Perkovic spoke about the Women's Peace Coalition and stressed its key principles: strengthening the coalition, concrete actions at local, regional and international levels, increasing the visibility of women's perspective through actions implemented by the Coalition, exchange of information, experiences and comparative researches between Serbia and Kosovo.

Veronika Mitro presented the research project The Participation of Women in Politics and their Presence in Media in Vojvodina and Kosovo. In the presentation, she informed the participants about the results of the project The Cooperation of Women in Media Analysis: Vojvodina – Kosovo implemented from October 2004 to April 2005, by the Women's Studies and Research from Novi Sad in cooperation with NGO Mundesia from Mitrovica within the Small Grants Program. This program is the joint project run by the Humanitarian Association Mother Theresa from Pristina and the Center for Regionalism from Novi Sad.

Veronika Mitro (Women's Studies and Research) and Remzije Potoku (Mundesia) coordinated the project and collected and analyzed data on the political participation of women and their presence of media.

The findings indicate that women from Vojvodina and Kosovo are not represented either in governments, parliaments or in the management of their parties in the percentage envisaged for the less represented gender. The presence of local women politicians in daily newspapers in Kosovo (Koha ditore and Kosova sot) and Vojvodina (Dnevnik i Građanski list) it is even lower than in politics and with additional media tools makes the role of women politicians unattractive and woman in politics invisible.

Meeting with OSCE Representatives

Representatives of the Civic Dialogue met in Prishtina with Jens Modvig, Deputy Head of OSCE Mission in Kosovo and Barbara Hall, Chief of Party IREX/Kosovo Civil Society Program. They discussed future strategies and activities of the Civic Dialogue. The Civic Dialogue Board meeting will be held in Belgrade, on March 9, 2007.

CIVIC DIALOGUE YOUTH ASSEMBLY PROJECT



The round table "**Building Communication Bridges in Multiethnic Areas – The Experience of Youth from the Borough of Orahovac**", organized by KHCS "Mother Teresa" from Pristina and Youth Centre from Rahovec/Orahovac, took place on February 3, 2007, in Orahovac/Rahovec. The debate was moderated by **Zef Shala** – the Executive Director of the Mother Teresa Society from Pristina, **Srdjan Vezmar**, the President of the ELSA Serbia National Board from Novi Sad and **Jeton Cenka** from the Youth Network of Rahovec. The participants of the debate came from the Borough of Orahovac and Serbian municipality Velika Hoča. 15 representatives of various NGOs, which form the Youth Network of

Rahovec and gather members of different ethnic background (Serbian, Albanian, Roma and Goran communities), attended the meeting. The reason for the selection of Rahovec/Orahovac is its multiethnic population and the fact that it represents fertile soil for sowing seeds of cooperation, dialogue, understanding and tolerance, especially among youth of this region. Srdjan Vezmar, the representative of ELSA Serbia, was invited to participate in the meeting and to present experiences in the field of cooperation between young Serbs and Albanians. Since ELSA, Serbia and BIRD from Pristina have been jointly organizing meetings between students from Kosovo and Central Serbia since 2005, the debate was an opportunity to present the most significant results achieved in this field so far. The Civic Dialogue Small Grants Program, which supported their activities, was also presented. The participants were also informed about positive results achieved in the cooperation between the young people living this area and other multiethnic



projects implemented in the previous period. During the debate, the flexibility, good will and possibilities for sound cooperation in this area became evident. The participants expressed their openness for future initiatives and gave concrete ideas and suggestion in this regard. The OSCE representative of the Rahovec Area supported this event. At the end of the discussion, a proposal was made to Srdjan Vezmar to visit the youth centre in the Municipality of Velika Hoča. Velika Hoča is a Serbian municipality inhabited by nearly 900 Serbian citizens and is well known for its 13 monasteries which represents a unique case in Kosovo. The representatives of the youth centre in Velika Hoča arranged future cooperation within the projects which will be realized by ELSA and BIRD.

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Facts about Civil Dialogue Kosovo - Serbia.

Civic Dialogue (CiD), a non-partisan, multi-ethnic initiative of non-governmental organizations (NGOs) from Serbia and Kosovo, was launched in 2002 to abrogate the consequences of the violent conflicts in former Yugoslavia. After the tragic events in 1998 and 1999 that led to a political deadlock in relations between Kosovo and Serbia, civil society leaders joined forces in a focused and sensitive engagement to facilitate dialogue, promote tolerance and trust, guided by a vision of a democratic and stable Balkans.

Through policy research, regional and international conferences, workshops, publications, public debates and cultural events, the CiD designs, implements and promotes civil society-led projects that are of concern and in the interests shared by all ethnic groups in Kosovo and Serbia, including, but not limited to: coming to terms with the recent past, youth and gender issues, media freedoms, free movement of people and free trade. Civic Dialogue is an initiative that engages over 250 NGOs from Kosovo, Serbia and other parts of the former Yugoslavia.

Two NGOs, the Novi Sad-based Center for Regionalism and the Pristine-based "Mother Theresa" Society, are the founding partners. They are supported by the OSCE Mission in Kosovo (OMiK), Freedom House, the Rockefeller Brothers Fund (RBF) and the Charles Stewart Mott Foundation (Mott).

CiD activities are coordinated by a Board of ten individuals from Kosovo and Serbia, headed by two co-presidents, public figures from Pristine and Belgrade, whose integrity and public engagement secure a high level of media attention for activities and values promoted by the initiative.