

UPF's Conference in Kosovo's Parliament: Peace for the Balkan Peninsula

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Pristina, Kosovo -- A two-day conference held in Kosovo's parliament envisioned a peaceful future for the Balkan Peninsula.

The conference, whose theme was "The Necessity of Cooperation, the Challenge and the Need for Integration," was organized jointly by UPF and Women's Federation for World Peace (WFWP), an affiliated organization. In the context of tense relations between Kosovo and Serbia, the theme addressed the larger issue of the Balkan nations' integration into the European Union.

The event was held on June 7 and 8, 2019, in the Assembly Building of the Kosovan parliament. The audience consisted mainly of members of parliament and representatives of civil society, including many UPF Ambassadors for Peace. One objective of the conference was to announce the upcoming Southeast Europe Peace Summit organized by UPF, to be held in Tirana, Albania, on October 25 to 27, 2019.



In their opening remarks, President Alfred Moisiu of Albania (2002-2007) and President Fatmir Sejdiu of Kosovo (2006-2010) expressed their conviction that their countries will contribute to the stability of the Balkan region after integrating into Europe.

Recalling his first visit to Belgrade, Serbia, as a young army officer, President Moisiu stated that ordinary citizens in the Balkan nations do not want war but rather peace and cooperation.

Denying claims that Kosovo would be a destabilizing factor in the region, President Sejdiu said, "I can boldly affirm that Kosovo and Albania are a peacebuilding factor in the Balkans."

After words of greetings by Dr. Katsumi Otsuka, the regional chair of UPF for Europe and the Middle East, several prominent speakers took to the stage, including the deputy minister of defense, city mayors, members of parliament, and leaders of NGOs and academia.

On the morning of June 8, a session on the theme "The Role of Women in Peacebuilding and Creating Bridges of Cooperation" was held, with the purpose of launching the Women's Federation for World Peace in Kosovo. Several women members of the Kosovan parliament and NGO leaders joined the program.



Mrs. Carolyn Handschin, the regional president of WFWP for Europe, who also is responsible for the WFWP offices at the United Nations, gave a brief overview of the organization's worldwide activities, noting its consultative status at the United Nations Economic and Social Council. She invited Kosovan women leaders to join her in various programs at the United Nations Human Rights Council in Geneva or in New York.

Speakers described women's concrete contributions to Kosovan nation-building and expressed their confidence in the central role women can play in conflict resolution in a region still suffering from open wounds from the war.

The last session was dedicated to the launch of the Youth and Students for Peace (YSP) initiative in Kosovo. Students from various universities joined the audience. H.E. Skender Reçica, the Kosovan minister of labor and social welfare and a UPF Ambassador for Peace, gave the opening remarks, commenting on the role and potential of young people, who represent over 50 percent of Kosovo's population.

He was followed by Mr. Koji Matsuda, the YSP international vice president, who described some of the organization's activities around the world. He mentioned that he was on the way to São Tomé and Príncipe in Africa, where YSP is developing an educational project with the government.

The UPF, WFWP and YSP sessions each concluded with the awarding of Ambassador for Peace certificates to selected participants in recognition of their dedication to peacebuilding in Kosovo, each in their own field.

On June 7, WFWP-Europe President Carolyn Handschin and UPF-Europe Vice President Jacques Marion were invited to be interviewed on the television morning talk show RTK 1 Live to speak about the objectives of the conference and the future activities of UPF and WFWP in Kosovo.