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Gender Equality in Political Power Sharing for a Better World

Expert paper prepared by:

Edita Tahiri*

Chair, Regional Women’s Lobby in South-East Europe

* The views expressed in this publication are those of the author(s) and do not necessarily represent those of UN-Women, the United Nations or any of its affiliated organizations.

Our world today is less peaceful and less secure. Is it perhaps because men lead? It is time to question men leadership and time to test women's leadership at global level. Of course, it is not that easy to make men step down from dominance and allow leadership to half of the population that are women. History has accounted women leadership, but once it has gone to hands of men has become kind of stronghold difficult to pull it down. Once in a panel discussion, a men discussant said "women are not the issue" trying to justify that women's issues should not be seen as an intractable problem. I as another panellist responded saying women are not the issue, but the men are the issue. While my intervention caused laughter among participants of the meeting, a big clapping followed, as majority of participants were women.

Indeed, what I believe is that our struggle for gender equality is to achieve political power for women, for which men should be ready to equally share it with women. So far, we have seen no readiness from men to gender equality in power sharing. Evidence shows men hold leadership globally and nationally, but evidence also show as more men in leadership as less peace, security and prosperity in the world, especially today of changing world, in terms of raising conflicts and declining chances for peacemaking, that affect populations and women as most vulnerable in conflict and war times,

This is why time has come for political power for women and leadership for women. Men should reflect over their legacy on present fragile peace and security in the world and of returning geopolitical ambitions and dynamics. Men and women all together should think what is missing in the paradigm of peacemaking. Answer is clear: women are not at peacemaking tables, they are not in decision making, neither in leadership, despite the fact that women are distinguished peacebuilders.

Over the past two decades since the adoption of the groundbreaking UNSC Resolution 1325 and about 30 years since the Beijing Declaration and Platform for Action gender equality has known different levels of progress and in different public areas in the post-conflict region of the Western Balkans and globally. Significant advancements are evidenced in terms of legislative framework, structures and in capacity building efforts,

However, despite the evidenced progress, women remain underrepresented particularly in politics, decision making, leadership and formal peace and security processes while their discrimination continuous, including women's rights, violence against women in domestic context and war context where violence against women is used as a weapon of war. As well as in socio-economic conditions. Recently there is increase of gender-based violence in all countries of region and women openly share concern about femicide phenomena in rise.

While we women work hard for full gender equality and women's full, equal and meaningful participation in peace, security and justice process, unfortunately a real gender equality is rather far from our ideals for empowerment of women, gender equality in a just, peaceful and prosperous world. In fact, the global current context is playing down women's role and WPS agenda, given

that world has become less peaceful, with rising conflicts, insecurity and even we witness geopolitical wars such as the war in Ukraine, in Middle East and in other parts of the world.

In the new global context, old and new challenges have been hampering the WPS agenda and our overall efforts for gender equality, gender inclusive peacemaking, peacebuilding and democratic governance. Along with old challenges (traditional ones related to patriarchal mentality), the new challenges include fragile peace, weak democracy, growing autocracy, nationalism and corruption which deepen disparity between women and men. In addition, delayed justice for women especially to women raped during wars in the Western Balkans and, delayed European integration of all seven aspirant countries of the region hinders acceleration of WPS agenda.

When looking at official reports, the data from the “Women in politics: 2023” map, created by the Inter-Parliamentary Union (IPU) and UN-Women, presents data for women in executive positions and national parliaments as of 1 January 2023 is as follows:

Women serve as Heads of State and/or Government in only 31 countries. Women make up 26.5 per cent of Members of Parliament. Globally, less than one in four Cabinet Ministers is a woman (22.8 per cent). New data show that women lead important human rights, gender equality, and social protection policy portfolios, while men dominate policy areas like defence and economy.

Though these numbers do not show a real picture indeed, this because most of women in these high-level positions are powerless because the political power rest with men, who have political legitimacy through democratic voting, while women is lacking political power and legitimacy as they are under voted by men.

Hence most of women come to high level state or government responsibilities thanks to political support by their political party bosses, who are generous to grant position to women but not the power. Most illustrative is the fact that men are ready to share almost equally the seats in parliaments, but not in governments. Of course, men want to hold the political power for themselves in leadership and decision-making.

Throughout the world, political party leaderships are still dominated by men and there might be only few and small women-led political parties. It is obvious that power structures are still seen as reserved spaces for men, who use different means, formal and informal, to keep themselves in power.

Access to power structures remains difficult for women, not only because of old and new barriers but also from corrupted systems of governance that work in favour of men. In addition, gender equality is not a policy priority at all levels, national, regional and local levels as it should be.

Faced with this unacceptable reality, women’s struggle must be for political power. We women must adopt a new strategy, the one that defines clearly and in concrete terms the road

of women towards political power equally with men. We women must seek the adoption of new UNSC Resolution, namely “UNSCR 1325+”. The new resolution must call on political power for women, hence, to call on gender equality in political power sharing and leadership. It has to happen after about 24 years since the adoption of this groundbreaking resolution and after about 30 years of the Beijing Declaration and Platform of Action.

Time has come for gender equality in political power-sharing and leadership. This is the only way towards a just, peaceful, secure and prosperous future.