

Speech of H.E. Mr. Edi Rama, Prime Minister of the Republic of Albania at UN Women Global Leaders Meeting on Gender Equality and Women's Empowerment

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Mr. Chairman,
Distinguished Heads of state and government
Ladies and gentlemen

Firstly, let me join previous speakers in thanking the President of the People's Republic of China, SH.TZ Xi Jinping for the initiative taken in co-organizing with the office of Secretary General of the UN, this meeting on Gender Equality and Women's Empowerment, as a fundamental civil right and common value of all our countries.

In those few minutes I will try to share with you some of the achievements and challenges that Albania faces today.

The government that I lead has placed gender equality at the center of its agenda, considering that the economic and social development of the country cannot be achieved without concrete results, especially in promoting gender issues and making them part of all the country's development policies.

Albania has taken important legal commitments nationally and internationally to combat discrimination and promote gender equality.

In this context, the government structures in collaboration with the civil society and international organizations, have worked intensively on:

- Harmonization of the national legislation in a constant manner with international standards, where I would point out the drafting of the new legislation on gender equality and domestic violence, and
- Drafting and implementation of the national strategy of gender equality and domestic violence.

In the meantime, concrete steps have been taken to increase public awareness aimed at changing gender stereotypes through various awareness campaigns; changing attitudes to gender issues through strengthening the capacity of public administration and the responsible actors in the field of gender equality and domestic violence; and reducing gender-based violence and domestic violence; the establishment of the Referral Mechanism of cases of violence in municipalities, professional training of actors responsible for implementing the law on domestic violence, etc.

One of the tangible achievements of recent years is the increased representation of women in political and public decision-making. If we refer to facts and statistics, women's representation in the current legislature of the Albanian Parliament has 29 women or 21%, while in the cabinet that I lead women ministers are 7 of 19 in total and 9 deputy women of 23 total, while locally today we have 9 women as Mayors.

Ladies and Gentlemen,

We are all aware that besides achievements, every time we face new challenges in the implementation of our objectives.

I'll outline briefly three of the main challenges facing Albanian society, by promising at the same time an effective engagement of all institutions responsible for their implementation:

1. Economic empowerment of women through increasing and improving access to credit, as well as promotion and expansion of employment programs for women and girls, narrowing the gap in unemployment and increasing the participation of women in the labor market. Women and girls with disabilities are a priority group in this regard.
2. Prevention and reduction of violence against women and domestic violence, elimination of gender discrimination in education, health, media, strengthening the legal and institutional mechanisms, as well as improvement of monitoring and evaluation mechanisms.
3. Increased participation of women in political bodies and decision-making as well as central and local representation of women in managerial and professional positions in all public administration bodies, including the representation of women in police and armed forces.

Ladies and gentleman,

In conclusion I would once more reiterate our commitments to go along with the fulfilment of the Beijing Declaration as well as the Plan of Action as a comprehensive roadmap in our way forward for achieving gender equality.

Thank you