

**Women of SEE - Challenging Prejudices and Fear
Taking Action on Political Violence Against Women**

A Panel Discussion Organised By IPU and UNDP

Conference Room A

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**Crippled Democracies After The Fall of one Party Systems In Central and
South East Europe**

- The expectations of the people before the start of transitions in practice were simplified and naive: freedom, respect for all human rights, better life
- But freedom did not release only the good things: creativity, initiative, free cooperation between citizens, but also narrowmindedness, nationalistic hate, manipulation with religious feelings, and above all – greed
- Women have lost the window of opportunity in the times when political parties were coming into being – they woke up everywhere, after the first free elections, excluded from the legislative and executive power, in the conservative backlash, where new mainstream politics asked them to become “queens of the home, mothers of the nation”

Women In Parliaments In SEE In Early Nineties

Average: 5.7%

COUNTRY	W. RIGHT TO VOTE	BEST % OF W. IN PARL.	% OF W. ELECT. 1990/1
Albania	1920	1974-33,2 %	3,6%
Bulgaria	1944	1981-21,8%	12,9%
Hungary	1919	1980-30,1%	7,3%
Romania	1946	1985-34,4%	3,6%
Slovenia	1945	1982-26%	13,3%
Croatia	1945	1982-17%	4,5%
B&H	1945	1982-23%	2,9%
Serbia	1945	1986-17%	1,6%
Montenegro	1945	1986-17%	4,0%
Macedonia	1945	1986 -17%	3,3%

Forms of Political Violence Against Women In SEE

- Hate speech against progressive women activists and politicians in public space – everywhere at all times
- Denigration and open governmental attacks on women NGOs working for peace and women human rights – Serbia under Milošević, Macedonia today
- Rape as a weapon in genocides in the Balkan wars

- Attempt of political assassination of the best known woman candidate of the albanian democratic party a few years ago
- Bombing of the house of the women ngo leader after an effective actions against corruption in bihać 2008

Indirect political violence against women: tolerance of impunity of perpetrators, systemic exclusion of women from political decision making which makes this tolerance possible, politics of greed and economic and social inequality which stimulates violations of women economic, social and personal rights of women and encourages trafficking, sexual harassment at work, mobbing, lack of rule of law.

Main Challenges – Main Strategies

- Conservative backlash - misogyny in public and political space promoted by extreme religious and conservative political leaders – standing together for indivisible women human rights
- Totally male dominated undemocratic political parties and trade unions everywhere – strife for their democratization
- Instrumentalisation of ethnic, religious and cultural differences to wage armed conflicts in order to stay in power during the transition period – overcoming prejudices and fear, asking for half of political power and a different pattern of transition

Taking Action

- Farewell to private strategies of survival
- Getting organized and globally connected in women peace and human rights ngos
- Establishing of regional networks for empowerment of women within left wing parties (1994) and trade unions (1997)
- Women getting organized within political parties and trade unions
- Establishing of international gender mainstreaming mechanism within stability pact for south east europe 1999-2008
- Developing regional strategy for political empowerment of women with the goal of changing prevailing pattern of transition

Innovative Strategies and New Tools of Action

- Sandwich strategy
- Big coalitions
- Parallel electoral campaigns – massive advocacy campaigns for quotas in electoral legislation

Results – Impact on Mainstream Political Agendas

- **Quotas enacted in B&H, Kosovo, Macedonia, Serbia, Slovenia, Croatia, Albania**

COUNTRY	% OF WOMEN MPs 1991	% OF WOMEN MPs TODAY
Albania	3.6	16.4
Bulgaria	12.9	20.8
Romania	3.6	11.4
Hungary	7.3	9.1
Slovenia	13.3	14.4
Croatia	4.5	23.5
Serbia	1.6	21.6
BiH	2.9	16.7
Macedonia	3.3	32.5
Montenegro	4.0	11.1
Average	5.7	17.8

More Women In Politics –Less Political Violence Against Women?

- The progress of the women's share of power in the parliaments is still below so called critical mass with the exemption of macedonian case.
- The connection between the growth of women's presence in the parliaments and diminishing of political violence against women is not automatic.
- Yes, it helps if the country mainstream politics takes a clear direction towards european integration, not if it doesn't
- Yes, it helps if the country develops more civilized type of conservatism like in the case of croatia or serbia, and not, if the type of conservatism becomes more nacionalistic and aggressive – the cases of Macedonia, Albania, Hungary.

Conclusion: without any doubt, in the SEE region, more women in politics changed the agenda of mainstream politics to a certain degree, but did not lead to the general transformation of political climate or to the structural change of gender power balance