

European Leadership Seminar "Principles and Practices for Sustainable Peace and Security in Kosovo"

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At a time when peace and security in the Republic of Kosovo is fragile and under threat from the situation in the north of the country, a European Leadership Conference (ELC) was held at the end of May in the capital, Pristina. Participants included high ranking government ministers and U.N. officials, international experts, governors, members of the Kosovo Parliament and leading representatives from civil society. After the success of the ELC in Tirana, one month previously, UPF Europe was able to count on the wholehearted support of the government of Kosovo during preparations for this conference.

Taking into consideration the complicated relationship that exists between E.U. countries and this part of the Balkans (which is now something of a hot potato in the hands of the international peace keeping forces KFOR and EULEX that police the country) many challenges had to be overcome before the final form of the programme could be arrived at. This programme included twenty three speakers from twelve different countries speaking in four sessions over two days, 28-29 May 2012.

The government of Kosovo and its Ministry of Justice, headed by Deputy Prime Minister Mr Hajredin Kuçi, (who is one of more than 300 Ambassadors for Peace appointed in the country since 2006) was the main partner of UPF in organizing and holding this important conference entitled "Principles and Practices for Sustainable Peace and Security in Kosovo and the wider Balkans". Aware of UPF's work in the Balkans and beyond, the government offered its best meeting hall and ensured the participation of high level representatives from the Serb community living in Kosovo; something rare in gatherings in Kosovo.

On the morning of the conference's opening day, a delegation led by UPF International president, Dr. Thomas Walsh, was welcomed by the Speaker of the Kosovo Parliament, Mr Jakup Krasniqi. Later on he himself was one of the speakers in the ELC sitting beside the Serbian Deputy Prime Minister Dr. Slobodan Petrović.

Although only a select group of 50 very high level participants were expected for the first day of the conference, more than 60 such people turned up at the beautiful meeting hall at the Sirius Hotel in downtown Pristina, drawn by the "buzz" that the event itself and the high level of participants, created.

For the same reasons Dr. Thomas Walsh, UPF International President flew from New York to arrive a couple of hours before the start of the first session, before having to depart again that same evening for Tbilisi, Georgia. "We live at a very interesting time in history, not only here in Kosovo and in the wider Balkans, but globally, particularly when considered through the lens of states, or nation states," said Dr. Walsh in addressing the conference. He referred to emergence of recent states such as Kosovo and South Sudan and the states that emerged after the Soviet era, including Kosovo's neighbors in the former Yugoslavia. He called Europe the birthplace of the nation state, going back to the Treaty of Westphalia in 1648, which set a foundation for understanding states as the primary units of social and political organization. He also cited the influence of Immanuel Kant and Adam Smith on Western political thought and referred to the secularism and rationalism that are legacies of the Enlightenment. He challenged participants to consider the potential positive force of religion in providing incentives for morality and a basis of meaning, especially when balanced with interfaith sensibility.

Corruption is another pervasive challenge, often linked to favouritism for relatives and privileged groups. In this era of globalization he called for "reaching out to others beyond boundaries of religion and ethnic groups in line with other principles of state-building: democracy, free trade, linking with international organizations, and interfaith respect and cooperation".

During his message of greeting Mr Jakup Krasniqi, expressed his gratitude for UPF's presence in Kosovo and promised engagement for peace on the part of all institutions. Other prominent speakers included Mrs Osnat Lubrani, an Israeli-American who is U.N. Development Programme Director in Kosovo and overall Coordinator of all U.N. agencies there. She gave greetings on behalf of her organisations and wished the conference every success.

Another speaker was Mr Aleksandër Borg Olivier, a former senior U.N. legal adviser originally from Malta, who was drafted in by The U.N. to help the fledgling nation of Kosovo develop its legal system and institutions and who played a very key role in that process. He was also an advisor to The Prime Minister.

Mr Borg Olivier emphasised that compared to 12 years ago the Kosovo of today is a country with a bright future and a clear identity in Europe and in the international community. "Many sacrifices and difficult compromises had to be made by Mrs Osnat Lubrani, Mr Aleksandër Borg Olivier, Mr Adem Demaçi, Mr Jetullah Haliti, Prof. Fatmir Sejdiu

made and Kosovo has not been rewarded enough for this", he said. After numbering the achievements and the positive changes of Kosovo he also mentioned some negative ones -- such as the poor rule of law and the ineffective war on corruption. Whilst Kosovo's internationally supervised independence is coming to an end, he said that Kosovo should take full control of its destiny and future.

In concluding, he criticized U.N. Mission to Kosovo ("UNMIK") structures in the North of the country which through excessive tolerance had, he said, created an opening for alternative structures to develop which have led to the tensions being witnessed today. He called for international bodies in Kosovo and abroad to acknowledge the new reality of Kosovo and speed up the process of recognition and accept it as an equal partner with the all the associated rights and privileges of a member of the international community.

During the first session there was a message of greeting from Ms Maja Miçiç, director of 'Youth Initiative for Human Rights', a leading Serb human rights organisation, who had travelled from Belgrade to contribute to the ELC. One of the prominent local speakers was Mr Adem Demaçi, a former political prisoner for 35 years in the prisons of the former Yugoslavia who is revered as "the Nelson Mandela of

the Balkans" for his attitude of conciliation towards his former Serb captors. He stressed the desire of Kosovo people for peace but was doubtful about the predisposition of Serbian politicians to do the same.

During the break participants had the chance to appreciate the paintings of the well-known Kosovan artist Mr Jetullah Haliti, who had worked on a collection of art works inspired by UPF's vision of peace.

The second session was moderated by Mrs. Flora Brovina M.P. a senior peace and human rights activist. Among the main speakers was Prof. Fatmir Sejdiu, the first president of Kosovo (2006-2010) and a main supporter of UPF in Kosovo. In his speech he emphasised that the year 2000 was both the end of an era of conflict and the beginning of an era of peace and that Kosovo is the classic example of that. He outlined eight points around which Kosovo should design its future. "Contrary to the evil propaganda and expectations of some that Kosovo Serbs would be expelled from their homes after the declaration of independence, as an action of revenge for several decades of oppression, this did not happen and there is no reason for it ever to happen", he said. He called on the international community to enlarge its focus on other countries of the region since, he said, "Kosovo has fulfilled its responsibilities and has done its homework, while the neighbouring countries should do more and better in building the state of law". He said that "first and foremost a lot needs to be done in organising fair election processes that produce governments rooted in the people. This implies parallel efforts against unwanted phenomena like corruption and economic crime."

"Regional peace and stability can be sustainable only through rational and wise approaches and I believe that ambassadors for peace can become an important factor for this purpose." Towards the end he called for similar conferences and gatherings to be held more frequently and in different population centres throughout the Balkan region.

After President Sejdiu, ethnic Serb Deputy Prime Minister Dr. Slobodan Petrovic in a message of greeting presented the achievements of the government of Kosovo in relation to ethnic minorities in the country and pointed out that one strong point of this new state was the multi-ethnic and multi-religious structure of its population. Also among the speakers was Esat Stavileci, a well-known academic who said that "to live together means to live equally, since only equal people can live together in a society where the misfortune of one is not considered an advantage for the other." He based his speech on aphorisms such as "today we are sending many messages but without addresses and names on them" or "better to die for peace than to live in conflict" and "love for peace begins when we stop talking about war". Professor Stavileci emphasised security as a precondition of peace and elaborated on this new concept for the 21st century.

The presence of the deputy commander of the U.N.'s Kosovo Peace Keeping Force ("KFOR") Brigadier General Johan Luif briefly talked about the actual mission of KFOR which is to safeguard life and free movement across the borders of the country.

The last speaker was Mr Jack Corley, an expert on character education programs with 35 years of international experience, who briefly presented the need for education for peace through character education curricula.

The second day of the ELC in Pristina began with a visit to the office of the Prime Minister, HE Hashim Thaçi, who has twice been elected Prime Minister since signing the peace agreement to end the war in 1999 on behalf of Kosovo. At this warm meeting Dr. Song again extended an invitation for Mr Thaçi to visit South Korea, which the Prime Minister gladly accepted. He asked his staff to set aside the requisite dates in February 2013 for that purpose. Also present at the meeting was Foreign Minister Enver Hoxhaj, who in a further meeting over lunch held out the prospect of broad cooperation between Kosovo and UPF in a number of areas.

The first session of the second day was held in a beautiful conference hall in the Ministry of Defence. It was opened with remarks by the host Mr. Hajredin Kuçi, the Minister of Justice and ethnic Albanian Deputy Prime Minister, who expressed his "personal pleasure at being part of this conference aimed at promoting the peace which is so longed for in the Balkans".

"Our society has gone through an unfair and bitter history and we are very fortunate that it has ended. Now we need to discover what we should do from now on in order for that (history) never to be repeated." In his speech Mr Kuçi focused on democracy and human rights as a precondition for peace. "The responsibility of building up these two elements lies not only upon the government institutions but also with a very important partner – its citizens." As an example of government efforts for peace and reconciliation he mentioned the latest decision to establish a 'Council for Transitional Justice and Reconciliation', aimed at institutionalising efforts for reconciliation and peace promotion among different ethnic groups living in Kosovo. Mr Kuçi closed his remarks with a citation from American president John F. Kennedy saying: "Our problems are created by humankind and thus can only be solved through exercising human responsibility. Human reason and goodwill have solved seemingly un-resolvable problems and I believe they can do so again."

UPF Europe Secretary-General, Mr Mark Brann, gave a short presentation on UPF's vision of good governance stating that good governance begins with oneself and extends to the family, community, nation and the world. "If someone is unable to govern himself or his family properly there is little chance he can succeed in governing a nation." Besides supporting features of good governance articulated by "U.N.E.S.C.A.P. Mr Brann said that UPF had distinctive good governance proposals of its own. For example, a good leader should be altruistic and be very alert to any possibility of even the slightest self interest clouding his or her judgment. Also a good leader should have true values upon which to build true qualities of character and guide his or her work. Among those qualities Mr Brann particularly emphasised having a parental heart, clear goals and transparent use of financial resources. Finally, he suggested that moral and spiritual principles should be clearly incorporated into regulatory structures and procedures.

Mr Ismail Kurteshi then gave the floor to Ms. Maja Miçiç a leading young human rights campaigner from Serbia, who emphasised the need to educate young people with a correct understanding of people of cultures, nationalities, or beliefs different than their own. We should break from prejudices inherited from older generations or from our parents, she said. This can be done through communication, exchange visits, joint multi-ethnic projects and participation in local politics by young people." Responding to questions from the audience she expressed her concern about the current political situation in Serbia after the election of Mr Tomislav Nikolic as the new president. "With his election Serbia lost the chance for an overall change and I call on the international community to keep an eye in whatever he (Mr Nikolic) says and does in the future."

The next speaker was Mr Goran Marinković an MP representing the Serbian minority in Kosovo who spoke generally on the situation in Kosovo and peace perspectives in the Balkans. He was followed by another MP, Mrs Suzana Novobërdali, who is of turkish descent. She said that currently the European Union is more than ever engaged in building democracies in the region and investing a lot of time and money in so doing. "However, still the Balkan countries are not progressing rapidly. Even though most of the region's nations are on the right track toward the EU, Kosovo cannot see the light at the end of the tunnel. Today we are the only people that cannot travel without a visa to Schengen countries", she said. She concluded by saying that today only 2% of Kosovo's youth have travelled to even one EU country which, she expressed "is terrifying to me".

The last speaker in the session was Professor Pajazit Nushi, who spoke on peace education focusing on Kosovo's education system and curriculum. "With peace we should not only understand opposition to

war, which is a main doctrine of pacifism", he said. He emphasised the major role that academics can play in ensuring that there was either education for peace or for conflict. Among elements for peace education Prof Nushi pointed out 'respect for human dignity'. "When human dignity is threatened then violence, hatred and revenge arise. I recommend three points of reference for peace education. First is respect and understanding for all people, cultures and civilisations. Second is raising awareness on interdependence among nations, especially neighbouring countries and third is solidarity of older, powerful and developed nations with those younger, smaller and less developed ones", he concluded.

The final session of the ELC in Pristina was on the theme "Ambassadors for Peace as peace promoters in Kosovo and the Balkans." It was moderated by Prof Mazllum Baraliu, Rector of Pristina State University. Among the speakers were former Austrian ambassador Mr Walter Lichem and the Kosovan Chair of the Association for Human Rights Education Dr. Neshad Asllani. He called for education on the U.N. Charter of Human Rights for people of all ages and for employment of creative schemes such as the Human Rights City as established in places like Rosario, Argentina. Other speakers included Mr Robert Williamson, UPF Balkan coordinator and Mr Ali Laçej, member of UPF Albania Presiding Council who spelled out UPF's five core principles that ambassadors for peace were expected to uphold.

Speaking on the role of Peace Ambassadors in the Balkans, Mr Ali Laçej, former Governor of The Province of Skodra, Albania said that "Ambassadors for Peace are those men and women who use the power of love to overcome the real barriers created by social divisions of all kinds.

Mrs Suzana Novobërdali, Prof Mazllum Baraliu, Dr. Walter Lichem, Mr. Robert Williamson, Mr. Ali Laceyj

In conclusion, he called for Albanians in the region to embrace the example of Mother Theresa (the Albanian saint of the 20th century) and to discard that of Skanderbeg (the war-like Albanian King of the 15th century).

The final speech of the ELC Kosovo was left to Dr. Song, Chairman of UPF Europe. He deeply appreciated the warm welcome Pristina showed for the ELC and its European participants, especially the warm reception offered by Prime Minister Thaçi and Parliament Speaker, Mr Krasniqi. Speaking on the special mission of ambassadors for peace he said that "In order to realise sustainable peace we need ambassadors for peace that can resist corruption and manifest goodness even when faced with misconduct. They should be the first to give, serve and care for the others in seeking for the common good. The second mission of Peace Ambassadors was to establish warm families filled with true love between husband and wife, parents and children and brothers and sisters. A way to do this was by participating in the Holy Blessing Ceremony organised by Father and Mother Moon every year.

Dr Song went on "the time has come for religion and traditional morality to be given a completely new lease of life and to play their proper role in guiding the world out of darkness and despair. People of faith and conscience should feel responsibility for the plight, suffering and injustices experienced by the world's peoples. We must repent for our preoccupation with individual well-being and narrow denominational or national interests and put our love and ideals into practice for the sake of the world."

Dr. Song concluded by expressing his desire to bring Father Moon to Kosovo: "I believe that with the establishment of the National Peace Council of Kosovo and its dynamic developments the chances of Father Moon visiting Kosovo are great."

The European Leadership Conference in Pristina concluded with the appointment of twelve new Ambassadors for Peace. Among them were Deputy Prime Minister Petroviç, Mrs. Lubrani (UN

Coordinator in Kosovo) Mrs Nezafete Sejdiu, former First Lady of Kosovo and leading representatives from civil society, the arts and sports in Kosovo.

After the conference the UPF Presiding Council for Kosovo elected its new chairman, a position held previously by Mr Hydajet Hyseni M.P. who has been the driving force behind the success of ELC and UPF activities in Kosovo to date. The position was given to Mr Ismail Kurteshi, a former MP and one of the first Kosovans to be appointed an Ambassador for Peace. He will be assisted by Mrs Flora Brovina M.P. and Mrs Sanie Aliaj, a former MP.

Prominent public figures were appointed as Ambassadors for Peace. Among them were Mrs. Nezafete Sejdiu, wife of former President Sejdiu, Dr. Slobodan Petrovic, Deputy Prime Minister and Mrs. Osnan Lubrani, UN permanent representative to Kosovo and coordinator of all U.N. activities and organizations in Kosovo.