



During the war that tore apart the former Yugoslavia, women protested against food shortage. In 2004, women from the region came together to review progress made toward reconciliation.

Travelling the Road to Peace

Over a decade after the outbreak of the ethnic war that tore apart the former Yugoslavia, women leaders from all ethnic and national groups travelled to Sarajevo in autumn 2004. Driving through the familiar countryside they had not dared enter ever since brought back painful memories, but the politicians, journalists and gender advocates had their eyes firmly set on the road ahead. They were on a journey for peace – coming together to review the progress made toward reconciliation in the region and identify where additional efforts for and by women were needed.

Their discussions at the conference, organized by UNIFEM and two NGOs from Bosnia and Sweden, *Žene Ženama* and *Kvinna till Kvinna*, were guided by Security Council resolution 1325 on women, peace and security. Adopted in 2000, the resolution is a watershed political framework that recognizes the necessity of women's full participation in all aspects of peace-building – from peace negotiations to the reconstruction of war-torn societies. Reviewing the resolution's implementation in their respective countries and regions, conference participants undertook a thorough analysis of achieve-

ments – or the lack thereof.

Priority for further monitoring was given to Bosnia and Herzegovina and Kosovo (Serbia and Montenegro), where the UN presence remains substantial and both opportunities as well as challenges are greatest. A joint declaration from the 52 participants from Albania, Bosnia and Herzegovina, Croatia, Kosovo, Serbia and Montenegro and FYR Macedonia was sent to the Security Council, noting that “women continue to be under-represented or excluded from the various phases of peace-making in our region” and urging the

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Council to ensure the full implementation of its resolution 1325. Committed to helping close the gaps identified upon their return, the women have continued to communicate through an electronic 'e-room', also facilitated by UNIFEM, exchanging information and ideas across ethnic and geographic boundaries.

▼ **BELOW:** A woman at a peace memorial in Georgia. Throughout the Southern Caucasus, UNIFEM has supported women in building peace.



LEFT PHOTO BY HAZIR REKA; RIGHT PHOTO BY VANO SHLAMOV-AFP/GETTY IMAGES

■ **Women in the Southern Caucasus** continued to work on building peace – step by step – with the support of UNIFEM's programme to promote reconciliation in the region. In Abkhazia, Georgia, the Gali Women's Peace Council was established by women who returned home after having been internally displaced. Committed to fostering trust and understanding between Georgians and

Abkhaz, the Peace Council brought together women from both ethnic groups in a series of meetings – the first of their kind in the country. In another initiative, women journalists in Armenia, Azerbaijan and Georgia launched a regional journal, *Women's Appeal for Peace*, in 2004. It provides information on conflict resolution in the region and is widely distributed to government officials and civil society groups.

■ The Provisional Institutions of Self-Government in Kosovo adopted a Gender Equality Action Plan in 2004 that was developed with support from UNIFEM. Inputs came from women and men representing all sectors of society and all ethnic groups. The process of hammering out the plan generated lively debates and drew considerable media attention that helped to mobilize support. As the first major steps towards the plan's implementation, an Inter-ministerial Group for Gender Equality was established and a Gender Equality Law passed.

■ In light of the alarming spread of HIV/AIDS in Kyrgyzstan, UNIFEM organized a journalism contest on gender equality in sexual relationships to highlight one of the root causes of the pandemic. Under the slogan 'There is No Taboo Subject' the contest created significant public visibility and provided insights that helped define future policy interventions.