Civil society representatives debated the issue of women's participation in negotiations for Kosovo's final status during a public discussion organized by ATRC and the Gender Training and Research Center on March 10. Kosovo women activists have written letters to local and international decision-makers requesting that women be included on the negotiating team for Kosovo's final status, but to date the negotiating team does not include a single woman.

Women's role in negotiations, advocacy for women's participation in this process, and gender equality and legislation in Kosovo were explained by the panelists: Edita Tahiri - Kosovo Women's Lobby, Igballe Rogova - Kosovo Women's Network and Besim Kajtazi - board member of Kosovo Women's Network.

"Kosovo women must be involved in negotiations because of their political capacity and courage, and the contribution they made towards freedom," Tahiri stated.

Participants continuously stressed that status is a matter of the whole society, regardless of gender, religion or ethnic background.

"Women's Participation in Negotiations is a Necessity, Not a Wish"

"No More Flowers, We Want Power," Women Demand Role in Negotiations

At noon on March 8, dozens of women gathered in front of the Pristina National Theater to demand that women participate in the negotiation team, appointed for the Kosovo final status talks.

The Kosovo Women's Network (KWN) organized this public event under the motto "No More Flowers, We Want Power," referring to International Women's Day when women usually get flowers, but this year Kosovo's women want a role in status talks instead.

"UN Resolution 1325 supports democracy where the role of women is an essential component, and it also supports equal participation of women in peaceful processes at a time when Kosovo negotiations are taking place," the media announcement issued by KWN said.

KWN is one of the main women's networks in Kosovo with more than 80 member organizations of different ethnic groups, which work in different fields towards the achievement of gender equality.

For more information, please contact: info@womensnetwork.org

Gender Gap Still Wide Open in the EU

Statistics released by the EU to mark International Women's Day showed that although European women do better in school than men, they get lower pay and fewer top jobs.

Eighty per cent of women complete secondary education compared to 75% of men, and more than half the university students are women.

Despite this, women's salaries are 15% lower than men's and women hold only a third of managerial jobs.

In early March, the European Commission adopted a policy roadmap designed to address gender inequality.

Source: BBC News World Edition
ORA Leader Urges Civil Society to Say "Enough" to Negative Political Phenomena

ATRC organized on March 2 a public discussion between Veton Surroi, leader of the political party ORA and local non-governmental organizations, entitled "Kosovo and European Integration after Status."

ORA leader and civil society representatives linked Kosovo EU integration with efficient governance, functional democracy and respect for majority-minority relations.

It is civil society's role to say "enough" to negative phenomena that are occurring in the political scene, Surroi said, stressing the need for more active NGOs in Kosovo.

This was the first meeting in a series of debates, as part of an ATRC initiative to bring together members of the negation team and civil society representatives.

Kosovo Civil Society to Initiate Qualitative Public Debates

Local NGO representatives and Professor Muhamet Mustafa from Riinvest Institute discussed on March 10 the latest political and economic developments in Kosovo, at a roundtable discussion organized by ATRC.

Mustafa outlined the need for constructive debates in Kosovo. "Civil society has initiated qualitative debates, but still Kosovo has not reached the proper level of debates on sensitive issues for society," he said.

Participants stressed that a lack of government accountability negatively affected political and economic developments in Kosovo.

Citizens Call for Faster Establishment of Independent Media Commission

Media, NGO representatives and actors responsible for the delayed establishment of an Independent Media Commission (IMC) gathered at ATRC on March 6 to clarify the reasons for this delay.

Bob Gillete, the Temporary Media Commissioner in Kosovo, explained that certain recent developments in Kosovo's political scene obstructed the process of establishing this commission, such as the death of President Rugova and the appointment of new Prime Minister Agim Çeku.

Assembly members of the ad-hoc group for IMC: Fehmi Mujota, Mahir Jagxhilar and Gjergj Dedaj stressed the need to speed up the process of establishing the IMC because of its great importance.

This commission should not be influenced by political parties. An independent media is a great value for a democratic society in Kosovo, the ad-hoc group members added.
One key factor to democratic stability in Kosovo is good governance. In order to strengthen the legislative process, Kosovo’s elected officials are facing increased pressure to govern effectively. The Kosovo Democratic Institute (KDI) is a NGO that monitors the work of the legislature and uses the information to advocate on specific issues.

On February 13, KDI published scorecards on the work of six municipal assemblies: Prishtina, Prizren, Peja, Gjilan, Ferizaj and Obiliq for the period of July through December 2005. “The result of scorecards is based on the direct monitoring of municipal assembly sessions, municipal documents and meetings with elected officials,” KDI Executive Director Kushtrim Kaloshi said.

The scorecards evaluate the work of these legislative institutions and particularly the work of each of the 236 municipal councilors. The monitoring results show violations or disrespect of the local legal framework and inefficiency on behalf of some municipal assemblies.

According to Kaloshi, this institute aims, through the publication of scorecards, to inform objectively and impartially citizens about the work and commitment of legislators in including their interests in the institutional agenda.

In February, KDI started to monitor the work of the National Assembly and parliamentary commissions for the first time.
"Organization for Democracy, Anticorruption and Dignity - Çohu" organized a public debate on February 19 entitled "The Kosovo Media's Reporting on Corruption." Local journalists gathered at ATRC to discuss this sensitive issue.

High level governing structures should not use the negotiation process for Kosovo's final status as a pretext for turning a blind eye on reports of corruption, media representatives stated during the debate. According to them, one challenge to reporting about corruption is that political leaders hide behind the motto, "Independence for Kosovo," diverting attention from reports on corruption within the government.

Participants stressed that journalists reporting on corruption are neither supported institutionally, nor by Kosovo society. Representatives from the Office of the Prime Minister for Good Governance and the Prosecutor's Office were invited to attend this debate, but their seats were empty. Participating journalists noted that their absence reflects officials’ attitude towards the work of journalists on issues related to corruption. They also criticized the government’s lack of cooperation with journalists.

For more information, please contact: organizatacohu@yahoo.com

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Regional civil society network

Balkan Civil Society Development Network to Strengthen Peace and Stability in the Balkans

The Balkan Civil Society Development Network (BCSDN) is a network of 12 civil society organizations from 7 countries and territories in South East Europe: Albania, Bulgaria, Croatia, Macedonia, Romania, Serbia and Montenegro and Kosovo.

The main goal of the network is to strengthen coordination, cooperation and capacity-building efforts between civil society organizations in South East Europe.

BCSDN is committed to sustainable peace and stability, prosperity and harmony in the Balkans. Its objectives are to increase communication between civil society actors in the region as a basis for multilateral cooperation, to mobilize resources and support, to increase knowledge and skills, and to promote intercultural exchange and a culture of resource-sharing as a basis for an efficient network.

Activities

From 2003 to 2004, BCSDN activities were directed at strengthening individual/staff and organizational capacities through tailor-made packages of trainings, exchange and consultancies. While maintaining focus on individual/staff and organizational strengthening, the network’s activities for 2004-2006 are to focus on thematic cooperation through three common priority themes: EU funding, lobbying and advocacy; training and consultancy standards and ethics, resource mobilization and specific themes (e.g. women and anti-trafficking; corporate social responsibility and anticorruption; decentralization).

For more information, please visit www.balkancsd.net

Source: Balkan Civil Society Development Network

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