



CONCEPT NOTE

Sub-regional virtual consultations for Western Balkans and Turkey: Partnership, Solidarity and Resilience for Localized Generation Equality action

I. Background

25 years after the ground-breaking commitments of the world's governments to women's rights, in their Beijing Declaration and their adoption of the Beijing Platform for Action, the feminist organisations and networks, UN Women and member states had geared up to make the year 2020 a transformative year for gender equality.

UN Women has planned a campaign, described as **PUBLIC ADVOCACY CAMPAIGN**:

In this milestone year of 2020, UN Women's multigenerational campaign "Generation Equality" is bringing together the next generations of women's rights activists—many of whom may not have been born in 1995—with the gender equality visionaries who were instrumental in creating the Beijing Platform for Action in 1995, to accelerate efforts to make gender equality and women's rights a lived reality. The campaign aims to galvanize attention, spark mobilization and actions and make gender equality a relatable, relevant, and real issue for everyone, especially youth.

With the COVID-19 crisis the focus of feminists worldwide is on the impacts on women's lives and women's rights, and how to make sure that our post-COVID world will not have thrown us decades back in time, but that the recovery will lead to a gender-just transformation of our economies and our societies. On 11 March 2020, WHO declared COVID-19 a 'global pandemic', the highest-level classification the organization can give, and on 13 March it declared "Europe at the epicenter of the coronavirus pandemic" due to an alarmingly rapid rise in cases than the rest of the world. Calls for distancing and isolation, barriers in delivery of public services, severe travel restrictions and overwhelming of healthcare systems are differentially impacting the lives of women and men in the region. On 9 April UN SG launched a report that shows how COVID-19 could reverse the limited progress that has been made on gender equality and women's rights. The report provides recommendations to strengthen women's leadership and ensure their valuable contributions at the heart of resilience and recovery.

The Generation Equality Forums in Paris and Mexico City, expected for 2020 as an intergenerational and intersectional gathering for gender equality with a leadership of civil society and support from UN Women, France and Mexico, is re-scheduled for 2021. Forums are aimed to create a renewed momentum for women's rights and to accelerate progress towards gender equality and leaving no-one behind.

The GEF will launch six Action Coalitions:

- ▶ Gender-Based Violence
- ▶ Economic justice and rights
- ▶ Bodily autonomy and sexual and reproductive health and rights (SRHR)
- ▶ Feminist action for climate justice
- ▶ Technology and innovation for gender equality
- ▶ Feminist movements and leadership



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The Action Coalitions represent innovative models of multi-stakeholder partnership, involving governments, civil society, private sector, parliamentarians, trade unions and other stakeholders, who share a common goal to accelerate action on a critical thematic area of concern. **Each Action Coalition will develop a set of concrete, ambitious and transformative actions** that the members of the Action Coalition will take, with time and resource commitments, for implementation between 2020–2025 in order to achieve immediate and irreversible progress towards gender equality.

Due to the re-shorted focus from development related priorities, based on human rights and gender equality principles, to COVID-19 pandemic response and postponed Generation Equality Forums (GEF) there is a high risk of loss of momentum for wide social mobilisation and weakening accountability for gender equality commitments' enforcement despite to B+25 review outcomes at the CSW 64 and regional review meetings; but we can and intend to turn this risk into an opportunity and engage feminist organisations in agenda setting for a post-COVID-19 gender-equal world.

UN Women Programme Office in Serbia is implementing a three-year Project "Support to Priority Actions for Gender Equality in Serbia", funded by the European Commission within the Instrument for Pre-Accession Assistance (IPA) II. The Project supports the Government of the Republic of Serbia in effective implementation of the EU Gender Equality Acquis and national strategic documents. Furthermore, the project supports the establishment of the dialogue mechanisms with women's organizations, CSOs, parliament, academia, gender experts, media, and development partners to serve as the advocacy platform and for the exchange of knowledge. As part of the project activities, UN Women Serbia Office will support Sub-regional virtual consultations for Western Balkans and Turkey, and to open the dialogue around critical issues within the sub-region.

II. Objective

The objective is to centralize the voices of gender equality advocates and civil society actors in the period leading up to and during the Gender Equality Forums as well as to create opportunities to mobilize partners around critical issues within the sub-regions. More specifically, the objective is to meaningfully and efficiently engage women's rights CSOs, key stakeholders and governments from the Western Balkans and Turkey in advance of the GEF forums and to shape the blueprints for the coming years of gender equality action.

III. Virtual Consultations

The virtual consultations collectively named under the joint title "Future of Equality". The Future of Equality series will consist of four events with the name "SHE TALKS". It will be unique opportunity for stakeholders all over the Western Balkans and Turkey sub-region, to gather and share their points of view, challenges and possible barriers, updates and best practices from our sub-region, Beijing +25 process and Generation Equality campaign, the impacts of the COVID19 crisis and how to shape the gender equality mobilisation for the future. The basic question to be asked is: what is specific for the Western Balkans and Turkey when it comes to gender equality, where are we today, what are our priorities, which are burning issues?



Future of EQUALITY

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First meeting **Future of Equality in the Western Balkans and Turkey** with women's rights CSOs from Western Balkans and Turkey will be general consultations on the status of gender equality and priorities for next 5 years, organised with the aim to set a scene for joint consultations and to prepare for Generation Equality and agree on priorities for the further consultations. The consultations will start with available reviews and analyzes of progress made during 25 years, from the adoption of the Beijing Declaration and Platform for Action until the present moment. Strategic tasks are still relevant: reducing women's poverty, educating and training women, improving women's health, eliminating violence against women, protecting women in areas of armed conflict, economic equality in economic activities, supporting women to occupy decision-making positions, developing mechanisms for improving the position of women, protection of women's human rights, affirmation of women in the media, respect for the role of women in environmental protection, with special emphasis on female children and protection of their rights. Many of these issues are further problematized during the Covid-19 pandemic.

After this meeting, two Thematic Sessions with CSOs, relevant stakeholders and experts will be organised on the following topics: **Innovation, technology and Gender Equality** and **Climate Justice and Gender Equality**.

The consultation on **Innovation, Technology and Gender Equality**, will address the topic: are there any markets for women's innovative ideas and to what extent do existing innovations and technologies respond to the needs of women from the Western Balkans and Turkey? How should support for innovative women's initiatives be increased? It will be presented and discussed the potential of women's participation and the benefits that society will have from innovations that address the needs of different groups of women and men.

Climate justice and gender equality is the topic of the third consultation. It raises the issue of the protection of human rights and justice for those most affected by the effects of climate change. These are the groups of citizens who contribute the least to harmful and negative trends, and suffer the most because of the consequences those trends cause. Climate justice is about putting people at the center of politics.

Final meeting **Future of Equality in Western Balkans and Turkey – General consultations on the status of Gender Equality and priorities under the 6 thematic pillars over the next 5 years** will present CSOs views and suggestions for Generation Equality and Action Coalitions to Governments, National Women's Machineries, Private Sector, EU and other international development partners. The consultations will be rounded off by a discussion between women's organizations and national mechanisms for gender equality. Together, united in order to accelerate the achievement of full gender equality, women's organizations will present to their most direct associates in the state administration – representatives of the mechanisms for gender equality – the conclusions from the consultations. The aim of this conversation is to direct the clear messages that will emerge from the consultations to the state authorities, and to make the voices of women from the Western Balkans and Turkey heard in international forums.



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IV. Communication and visibility

The consultations will be accompanied by a broad media campaign, with a special focus on social media, in order to reach and involve wide audience and to promote consultations’s ideas and conclusions.

Special attention will be given to include women from different social groups and different age groups to interact in the topics of campaign. Communication and visibility plan will be sensitive to inclusion women from diverse age groups, women from rural and urban areas, women with disabilities, Roma women and other diverse ethnic groups.

V. Timeline

Virtual Consultations	Timeframe
Future of Equality in Western Balkans and Turkey – General consultations on the status of GE and priorities under the 6 thematic pillars over the next 5 years	9 September 2020 10:00 – 12:00 (CEST)
Innovation, technology and gender equality	17 September 2020 10:00 – 12:00 (CEST)
Climate justice and gender equality	1 October 2020 10:00 – 12:00 (CEST)
Women’s organizations and National Gender Equality Mechanisms	TBD Last week in October 2020



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