



# CALL FOR PEACE



**KONGRESI  
RINOR  
KOMBËTAR**



**United Nations  
Association  
Albania**

# In connection to the **Youth Peace Forum** held in Tirana on 26-28 April 2022

War in Ukraine has its own implications in the European Union and its foreign policy including the enlargement policy. The Western Balkans as a region with a major role in maintaining stability in the continent is not part of the EU, even though all WB6 are currently undergoing the EU accession process.

The crisis has once again reminded the EU that a WB outside the Union may become a threat and a factor of destabilization, as many outside players may influence the region. In the meantime, the progress on the integration process of all 6 countries has stalled in recent years and the 'enlargement fatigue' is increasing, while the credibility of the EU for being committed in this process is being questioned.

Set in this context, the **Youth Peace Forum** hosted in Tirana on **26-28 April 2022** was organized in the framework of **Peace Week 2022**, striving to analyze the new dynamics that the Western Balkan region is ought to navigate, in light of the recent aggression in Ukraine. The forum brought together 35 young people from the Western Balkans, with a background in peace work, activism, research, and diplomacy to reflect on how the armed conflict in Ukraine is challenging the stability in the region, how it is affecting the countries' EU Integration and how intra-regional cooperation can be used to sustain peace.

Recognizing the European Union as a transformative and reforming power for Western Balkans,

Reminding that the values of peace, tolerance, stability are in the core of the democratic institutions and consolidated states,

Expressing the appreciation towards the progress that Western Balkans have made in their process of EU accession and alignment with EU's foreign policy,

Emphasizing the need for financial and technical support to Western Balkans and strengthening regional cooperation,

Taking note of the importance of the localization and operationalization of the UN Youth, Peace and Security Agenda,

### **We, the young participants of the Youth Peace Forum 2022:**

- ▶ Urge relevant stakeholders to significantly **improve regional connectivity and enable more regional mobility** by investing in the necessary infrastructure – while keeping in mind the Green Agenda – creating more mobility opportunities and abolishing visa regimes within the Western Balkans. Small incentives similar to the Youth Pass should be offered to encourage regional traveling with the aim to break stereotypes, prejudices and change toxic narratives. Thus, funding for infrastructural projects in the region that would boost connectivity and mobility should be increased;
- ▶ Underline the need **to accelerate the localization and operationalization of the UN "Youth, Peace and Security Agenda"** with the meaningful engagement and participation of youth and all relevant stakeholders;
- ▶ Acknowledge that an increment of investment in education, particularly regarding *the teaching of history, media literacy, and digital competencies, global citizenship education, and academic exchanges* is necessary in order to secure sustainable peace. Additional attention should be allocated to using *peer education* as a powerful tool for breaking stereotypes, encouraging civic and grassroots engagement, and increasing political engagement of youth – including participation in politics and exercise of their voting rights;

- ▶ Recall the need to **improve the accession mechanism** to the EU and **accelerate the process of EU accession for the Western Balkans** by undergoing substantial reforms and consolidating democratic institutions;
- ▶ Underline the importance of being proactive and **participating in discussion and consultation tables**, especially those regarding EU accession, called by the governments and/or other stakeholders;
- ▶ Stress the necessity to **become ambassadors of peace** by sharing with our peers the positive experiences we have from regional programs, using our media and tech literacy to combat misinformation and fake news, and initiate intergenerational dialogue;
- ▶ Further **call upon our peers to get more acquainted with the current regional mechanisms** and spread the word about them and get involved;
- ▶ Notes the necessity to **empower grassroots movements**, especially those working in peacebuilding and those working with marginalized groups, and increase both national and regional networking;
- ▶ Highlight the importance to include *peacebuilding as a cross-cutting issue* in all civil society organizations;
- ▶ Urge to stop using religion as a political tool that creates societal division and to **increase the support to sports as a mechanism for development and peace**;
- ▶ **Call on the media in the region to put integrity, ethics and human rights-based approaches first**, moving away from “sensational news”;
- ▶ Highlight the need to **increase the screen time and non-biased coverage of the region** in local and national media;
- ▶ Stress that **multilateral processes should become more inclusive of all stakeholders** and increase their positive impact in solving bilateral issues;
- ▶ Confirm the role of the private sector and **call for substantial cooperation between Academia and CSOs** for peacebuilding and reconciliation programs;
- ▶ Encourage businesses to significantly **increase their climate and social responsibility programs** and to work towards the creation of a regional stock market.

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