

Joint Statement of Civil Society and Local Actors

Local Communities for Gender-Responsive and Sustainable Peace and Development

Background and Context

This Joint Statement was developed through a participatory process facilitated under the Joint Programme “*Women Lead the Way Towards Peace and Security in Bosnia and Herzegovina*” (WPS Programme), supported by the United Nations Secretary-General’s Peacebuilding Fund (PBF) and implemented by UN Women, IOM and UNFPA, in partnership with the Ministry for Human Rights and Refugees of Bosnia and Herzegovina.

The Statement is the result of an extensive and participatory process initiated with the study “*15 Years of Implementation of the Women, Peace and Security Agenda in Bosnia and Herzegovina (UNSCR 1325)*”, which provided a comprehensive overview of achievements, challenges, and recommendations for advancing the implementation of the Women, Peace and Security (WPS) Agenda.

The study underscored the importance of applying a human security approach, encompassing economic empowerment, access to public services, protection of rights, social cohesion, and trust in institutions, as a fundamental framework for building stable and equitable communities.

Building on these findings, 17 community dialogues were held across Bosnia and Herzegovina between May and July 2025, engaging more than 350 participants from institutions, civil society organizations, the police, academia, and the private sector. These dialogues enabled local actors to identify key challenges and translate country-level recommendations into specific and practical solutions tailored to local context.

As a next step, within the framework of SDG Week 2025, the WPS Programme facilitated an online consultation entitled “*Local Communities for Gender-Responsive and Sustainable Peace and Development*”, which brought together 32 participants from 21 communities across the country.

Through an inclusive and participatory process, participants jointly defined a set of advocacy priorities, concrete proposals, and measures to advance security, equality, and sustainability - contributing both to policy development in Bosnia and Herzegovina and to the implementation of the global 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development.

These processes are also aligned with the *Sarajevo Pledge*, launched by the WPS Programme at the International WPS Conference, held in Sarajevo in June 2025, which calls for renewed commitments across seven priority areas and provides a unifying advocacy framework linking local community priorities with WPS efforts at the country, regional, and global levels.

Purpose of the Statement

This Statement reflects the collective voice of 19 civil society organizations and actors from 21 local communities¹ across Bosnia and Herzegovina that participated in the consultation process and reaffirmed their shared commitment to advancing gender equality, social justice, and peace. They jointly identified priorities and shaped the recommendations outlined herein, aimed at strengthening economic, health, environmental, personal, and community security, which serve as:

- an advocacy tool conveying locally identified priorities to the decision-makers at all -levels of authority;
- a contribution to the 2030 Agenda, particularly SDG 5 (Gender Equality), SDG 16 (Peace, Justice and Strong Institutions), and SDG 17 (Partnerships for the Goals); and
- a platform for continued dialogue among communities, institutions, and international partners, to ensure that local voices are heard and meaningfully considered in decision-making processes.

Community Priorities and Recommendations

We, representatives of civil society organizations, local authorities, and communities from across Bosnia and Herzegovina, call for renewed commitment and sustained investment in strengthening human security, social cohesion, and gender equality at all levels of authority.

1. Economic Security

- 1.1 Local governments, adult education centers, and private companies should organize requalification and additional training programmes to economically empower women, including women from marginalized groups.
- 1.2 Develop and adopt Local Action Plans for Women’s Economic Empowerment and Employment.
- 1.3 Revise local community criteria for allocating economic empowerment incentives by introducing requirements to disclose the gender composition of employees, without limiting eligibility solely to women-owned businesses or farms.

2. Health Security

- 2.1. Establish regular medical check-ups with mandatory psychological assessments for employees in both the public and private sectors, in cooperation with healthcare providers and employers.
- 2.2. Introduce mandatory screening for postpartum depression, both psychological and physical in all primary healthcare centers and hospitals.
- 2.3. Ensure accessible gynecological services for women with disabilities, including adapted equipment and architectural adaptations that enable unhindered access to healthcare facilities.
- 2.4. Improve the availability of developmental and rehabilitation services for children with disabilities (speech therapists, special educators, physiotherapists) in primary healthcare centers in underdeveloped local communities.²

¹ The list of signatories is maintained in accordance with applicable data protection principles and used exclusively for the purpose of Joint Programme coordination and partnership engagement.

² Included following recurring proposals from participant, with the aim of operationalizing existing “Health Security” priorities.

3. Environmental Security

- 3.1 Ensure the meaningful participation of citizen in decision-making processes related to the management of natural resources (e.g., concessions, spatial planning).
- 3.2 Conduct public awareness campaigns on environmental protection, especially at the local level.
- 3.3 Establish gender-responsive protection measures to prevent the increased risk of gender-based violence against women and girls during natural disasters or public health crises.

4. Personal Security

- 4.1 Enhance women's safety in digital spaces through effective institutional responses, improved protection mechanisms and harmonized legal frameworks.
- 4.2 Establish a system of continuous professional education on legal provisions related to the protection from violence against women and domestic violence, for professionals in the health, education, police, justice, and civil society sectors.
- 4.3 Implement women's economic empowerment programmes through employability training, requalification, and upskilling, in line with women's needs and interests.

5. Community Security

- 5.1 Integrate security issues into local Gender Action Plans as part of the localization of the WPS Agenda.
- 5.2 Launch initiatives to better recognize women's contributions by naming more streets and public spaces after distinguished women from local communities.
- 5.3 Increase the number of safe houses at the local level, ensuring that they are established and sustainably financed by municipality/city administrations.
- 5.4 Establish Local Security Coordination Bodies to monitor security conditions and coordinate institutional, civil society, and community responses.³

Joint Call to Action

The effective implementation of these priorities requires continuous cooperation among institutions, civil society, and international partners.

Existing initiatives, including partnerships between municipalities/cities, social welfare centers, and women's organizations, demonstrate that local solutions already exist and can be scaled up and interconnected.

We call on decision-makers at all levels to:

- integrate these priorities into local development and gender action plans;
- ensure gender-responsive budgeting and systematic progress monitoring; and
- maintain inclusive dialogue with communities as part of Bosnia and Herzegovina's commitment to the 2030 Agenda.

³ Included following recurring proposals from participants, with the aim of operationalizing existing "Community Security" priorities.



Together, we affirm that human security, gender equality, and sustainable peace are mutually reinforcing goals, and that the voices of local communities are essential to achieving them.

