



Ministry of Foreign Affairs
and International Cooperation

International Conference

Giving voice to Girls and Boys for lasting peace and security.

The establishment of the YouthNet Mediators for lasting peace and security

A Project of the Universities Network for Children in Armed Conflict and the Institute of Political Studies "S Pio V"

supported by the Italian Mofa

within the Fourth Italian Action Plan on UNSCR1325

29 November 2024, University of Pristina (Kosovo)

UN Security Council Resolution 1325, adopted in 2000, marked a historic milestone by emphasizing the critical role of women in peace and security and highlighting the disproportionate impact of conflict on women. This resolution calls for the increased participation of women in peacebuilding efforts and acknowledges their contributions to the prevention and resolution of conflicts. While primarily focused on women, Resolution 1325 has laid a foundation that extends to children, particularly girls, as key agents in peace and security processes. Building on this framework, Italy's IV National Action Plan (NAP) on Women, Peace, and Security has introduced an innovative approach by including children, not solely women, as essential actors in advancing peace and security.

Children in conflict-affected areas face formidable challenges, often becoming direct victims of violence, displacement, and exploitation. At the same time, they possess tremendous potential to act as mediators and agents of peace within their communities. Recognizing and empowering children, especially girls, to play a role in peace processes is essential for building long-term, sustainable peace. With the right support, children can promote dialogue, reduce tensions, and cultivate trust within their communities, contributing meaningfully to conflict resolution and societal healing.

This conference, organized by the Universities Network for Children in Armed Conflict, in collaboration with San Pio V University and the University of Pristina, and supported by the Italian Ministry of Foreign Affairs (MAECI), seeks to amplify the role of children as mediators in conflict and post-conflict settings. It will provide a platform for presenting insights from a groundbreaking project aimed at establishing an international Network of young mediators. This project seeks to foster a global network of child mediators from diverse backgrounds, strengthening their role in peacebuilding and conflict resolution.

The conference follows an intensive course and legal clinics organized by the Universities Network, involving young participants from countries affected by conflict, including Kosovo, Iraq, the



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Democratic Republic of the Congo, Lebanon, South Africa, Slovenia, the USA, and Brazil. This initiative showcases a commitment to nurturing the skills of young people from various regions to become proactive peacebuilders in their communities and beyond.

Objectives of the conference

This conference centers around several key objectives aimed at enhancing the role of children and young people in peace and security initiatives, particularly within conflict-affected regions. The first objective is to recognize children and youth as active mediators and agents of peace. Traditionally, young people in conflict zones are primarily viewed as victims. However, this conference seeks to emphasize their potential as contributors to peacebuilding, recognizing their resilience and unique ability to foster reconciliation within their communities. Acknowledging young people in this way not only empowers them but also broadens our perspective on their essential role as mediators in complex and challenging environments.

A second aim is to provide a platform for sharing best practices and real-world case studies from regions where children and youth have taken active roles in promoting dialogue and reconciliation. By presenting these examples, the conference hopes to highlight the transformative impact that young people can have in peacebuilding efforts. These case studies provide practical, proven models that can inspire and inform similar initiatives in other conflict-affected regions, demonstrating how the involvement of young people in peace processes can lead to sustainable, community-driven change.

The conference also seeks to discuss the establishment of an international network of young mediators. Such a network would provide children and youth engaged in peace efforts with a supportive structure to connect, share experiences, and develop their roles as mediators. The gathering will explore the potential benefits of this network, focusing on how it can encourage ongoing collaboration, enhance mediation skills, and facilitate knowledge-sharing across borders. Building a supportive community for these young mediators is essential to help them continue making an impact in both local and international peacebuilding initiatives.

Finally, the conference aims to foster partnerships among academic institutions, international organizations, and civil society organizations to strengthen the role of children and youth in peace and security. By bringing together diverse stakeholders, the conference seeks to encourage collaborative efforts that lead to more effective policies, insightful research, and impactful programs centered on supporting and protecting young people involved in peace processes. These partnerships are crucial for developing and sustaining the resources and frameworks needed to empower children and youth as active contributors to peacebuilding.

Together, these objectives reflect a holistic approach to supporting young people in conflict settings. By recognizing their potential, sharing successful models, establishing support networks, and fostering collaboration, this conference aims to provide young people with the resources, structure, and recognition necessary to make lasting contributions to peace and security worldwide.



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Conference Agenda

9:00 AM - 9:40 AM

Opening Remarks

Mr Arben Hajrullahu, Rector of the University of Pristina (tbc)

Mr Blerim Saqipi, Dean of the Faculty of Education at the University of Pristina (tbc)

H.E. Antonello De Riu, Italian Ambassador to Kosovo (tbc)

Ms Selvete Gerxhaliu Krasniqi, Judge of the Constitutional Court of the Republic of Kosovo

9:40 AM – 10:00 AM

Introduction of the Project of the Universities Network for Children in Armed Conflict within the Italian Agenda on Women Peace and Security, UNSCR 1325, and the IV Italian National Action Plan

Ms Laura Guercio, SG of the Universities Network for Children in Armed Conflict

Mr Luca Fratini, Coordinator for Women Peace and Security, Youth and Mediation, Policies, Italian Ministry of Foreign Affairs and International Cooperation (tbc)

10:00 AM – 11:00 AM

Session 1: Children in Armed Conflict from victims to peace-builders

Moderator: **Ms Simona Lanzello**, Universities Network for Children in Armed Conflict

The Impact of Armed Conflict on Children: A Global Overview

Mr Afrim Hoti, University of Pristina

The international framework in protecting Children in Armed Conflict and the role of the UNSCR 1325: The case of Kosovo

Ms Bahtije Gerbeshi, Professor of the University of Pristina

Children's Perspective in the International Justice System: Voices and Rights in Armed Conflict

Ms. Shyamala Alagendra, human rights Lawyer and Counsel before the ICC



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Q&A

11:00 AM – 12:00 PM

Session 2: Establishing an International Network of Child Mediators. The voice of a member of the Youth Net Mediators on Peace and Security

Moderator: **Ms Laura Guercio**, Universities Network for Children in Armed Conflict

How to work with young people to support them to become Mediators

Mr Ljubomir Petruljeskov, MBA, Mediator, JAMS Fellow

The voice of a member of the Youth Net mediators

Member of the Youthnet from Kosovo, South Africa, Ukraine, USA, Slovenia, Lebanon, RDC, South Africa, Brazil

12:00 PM – 1:00 PM

Session 3: How can we support Children and Young People to become Active Mediators in Conflict Resolution? Analysis of the current conflicts and concrete activities to be conducted

Moderator: **Ms Bahtije Gerbeshi**

Incorporating a gender perspective in mediation activities

Ms Yvonne Vissing, PhD, Director Center for Childhood and Youth Studies, Salem State University

Case studies

Mr Greg Carroll, Professor at Salem State University (USA)

The importance of the cooperation of States and International Organisations

Ms Mikiko Otani, Human rights Lawyer and Member of the UN Committee on the Rights of the Child

1:00 PM – 1:30 PM

Concluding remarks

Ms Bathje Gerbeschi, Professor of the University of Pristina

Ms Laura Guercio, SG of the Universities Network for Children in Armed Conflict



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1:30 PM – 2:30 PM

Light Lunch

“Il presente programma della conferenza è stato realizzato con il contributo dell’Ufficio I della Direzione Generale per gli Affari Politici e di Sicurezza del Ministero degli Esteri e della Cooperazione Internazionale, ai sensi dell’Avviso n. D.D. n. 2111/330 del 31.07.2024. Le opinioni contenute nel presente documento sono espressione degli autori e non rappresentano necessariamente le posizioni del Ministero degli Affari Esteri e della Cooperazione Internazionale”.

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