

Mainstreaming gender equality across the Berlin Process 2025: summary of commitments and action

Summary

Promoting gender equality, social inclusion and fundamental rights can reap significant dividends in the Western Balkans. Gender equal societies are [more peaceful and secure](#); institutions that respect women's and girls' rights are the bedrock of [stable democracies](#); and including women in the workforce [can turbocharge an economy](#).

Under the UK's leadership, the 2025 Berlin Process was designed to include practical action to promote gender equality across the core themes - security, migration and growth – with deliverables linked to each Ministerial event. This was in response to recommendations from the 2024 Berlin Process to ensure that gender equality remains a central and continuous focus within the framework, and [reporting from civil society that gendered perspectives had previously been limited](#).

- The UK co-hosted the [Gender Equality Forum](#) with Bosnia and Herzegovina, spurring new commitments to tackle online harm and closer cooperation between gender agencies in the region. [Baroness Harman launched](#) a new Regional Women Diplomats network and a £1m investment in regional women's foundation Kvinna Till Kvinna, who have supported grassroots women's rights organisations across the region since the 1990s.
- At the [Foreign Ministers](#), the UK's Ministry of Defence launched a new Human Security Defence course for delegates from the Western Balkans, to mark the 25th anniversary of the landmark UN Security Council Resolution 1325 on Women, Peace and Security. Western Balkans countries also launched a new statement on [Women in Diplomacy](#) with commitments to increase the number of women in diplomatic leadership positions and promote gender-sensitive foreign policy.
- At the [Interior Ministers](#), the Home Secretary profiled the importance of tackling online harassment and abuse, which targets women in public life. North Macedonia, Montenegro and Kosovo joined the Global Partnership for Action on Gender-Based Online Harassment and Abuse, and the UK announced the expansion of support for victims to remove non-consensual intimate images across the region.
- At the [Economic Ministers](#), Western Balkans countries announced a new Women's Economic Empowerment Call to Action with commitments to support women-led small and medium sized enterprises (SMEs) and expand their access to finance. All

Western Balkans countries joined UN-Women’s TransformCare initiative, which supports governments to redesign care systems and dismantle some of the key barriers that women face in accessing decent work. To support this, the UK announced £1m for TransformCare globally, which Western Balkans countries will be able to draw down.

- Responding directly to a recommendation from the 2024 Gender Equality Forum, the Western Balkans Fund announced it would earmark 15% of core funding for gender equality initiatives.

Please note that the below table may not be fully comprehensive.

COMMITMENT		BY WHO	SHORT DESCRIPTION
<p>Gender Equality Forum, 10 September 2025 <u>Conclusions</u>: “This year’s forum marked a turning point: moving from dialogue and recommendations toward concrete action and accountability. The Forum consolidated its role as a permanent structure within the Berlin Process, confirming its central place in shaping regional cooperation.” <u>Special Envoy for Women and Girls speech</u></p>			
1.	Kvinna Till Kvinna £1m regional funding	UK regional announcement	£1m funding regionally to support 18 women’s rights organisations and LGBT+ organisations over FY2025-26
2.	Regional Women in Diplomacy Network	Regional, led by BiH supported by GIZ.	A new network supporting female, mid-level career diplomats to progress into leadership positions.
3.	STOP NCII training for Novi Put in BiH	Bilateral	STOP Non-consensual images (STOP NCII.org) will build capacity with national organisation Novi Put SOS helpline to address intimate image abuse, provide holistic victim/survivor support and procedures for reporting and removing non-consensually shared intimate (NCII) content.
<p>Foreign Ministers, 8-9 October <u>Conclusions</u>: paras 15-19 on gender equality. “We agreed that threats to women’s and girls’ rights, and the ability to engage in civic life, undermine our collective security.” “Gender equality is a key indicator of stable, secure and prosperous societies.”</p>			

<p><i>“In the 25th year of the landmark UN Security Council Resolution 1325 on Women, Peace and Security, we affirmed the perspective, rights and role of women in relation to peace and security.”</i></p>			
4.	Human Security Defence course	UK regional announcement	UK MoD is offering a bespoke Human Security Defence course for Western Balkans delegates, including elements on Women, Peace and Security.
5.	Women in Diplomacy statement	Regional	Drafted by the BiH MFA, WB6 approved this statement following negotiations at the FMM. The statement includes commitments to increase the number of women in diplomatic leadership positions and promoting gender-sensitive foreign policy.
6.	Western Balkans Fund to earmark 15% for gender equality initiatives	Regional	The Western Balkans Fund, co-funded by WB6 governments, agreed to earmark 15% of core funding for gender equality initiatives. This is in line with UN guidance, and supports a recommendation from the previous Gender Equality Forum (2024.)
<p>Interior Ministers, 15 October <u>Conclusions</u>: paras 19 – 23 on VAWG <i>“Gender-based violence undermines economic growth, democracy, security, and peace.”</i> <i>“Globally, we are seeing an exponential rise in the online and technology-facilitated harassment and abuse of women and girls, including technology-facilitated violence. Participants reached consensus on the need for a coordinated response to this growing public safety threat and human rights issue that affects all societies.”</i> <i>“Participants agree to fully implement the Council of Europe Istanbul Convention, the Council of Europe Convention on Action against Trafficking in Human Beings and the UN Convention on the Elimination of All Forms of Discrimination Against Women.”</i></p>			
7.	Expansion of STOP NCII.org across the Western Balkans	UK announcement	STOP Non-Consensual Intimate Images will provide a lighter touch offer to all Western Balkans countries by translating their website into local languages, so that victims can remove intimate images from Tik Tok, Facebook, Instagram and other sites. They will also conduct a scoping of potential national partners (beyond Novi Put in BiH) that could be trained up to provide wrap around support.
8.	Joining the Global Partnership for Action on Gender-Based Online	Montenegro, North Macedonia, Albania and Kosovo.	The GP aims to combat Gender-Based online harassment and abuse, and the chilling effect this has on democracies. It is a multistakeholder platform, set up by the UK, US and others in 2021. The GP fosters peer learning, engages a range of policy and legal experts, and develops best practice and tools for governments.

	Harassment and Abuse		
Economic Ministers, 16 October <u>Conclusions:</u> paras 18 – 19 <i>“The participants re-affirmed their commitment to institutionalising women’s economic empowerment as an accelerator and enabler of economic security and growth across the region. Despite comprising half the potential workforce, women in the region face systemic barriers to economic participation.”</i>			
9.	Women’s Economic Empowerment Call to Action	Regional	WB6 signed up to the Women’s Economic Empowerment Call to Action with commitments to support women-led small and medium sized enterprises (SMEs) and expand their access to finance and invest in the care economy.
10.	£1m globally for the UN-Women led TransformCare	Regional, and UK announcement	TransformCare is a global UN-Women led initiative to address the disproportionate burden of care carried by women which often impedes their ability to enter formal work. TransformCare works with governments directly, to redesign care systems. All WB countries sent formal letters requesting to join TransformCare as part of the Berlin Process, and the UK announced £1m globally for this initiative (which includes the Western Balkans.)
11.	Promoting the Women Entrepreneur’s Finance Initiative Code	Regional	We-Fi is a World Bank initiative, run by EBRD in the Western Balkans. It unlocks financing for women led SMEs by getting the finance sector to sign up to tried and tested commitments (this initiative is live in the UK and has been successful). Albania, BiH, Kosovo, North Macedonia and Montenegro have formally signed up.
Summit, 22 October <u>Chair’s conclusions</u> <i>“Participants commended the significant integration of gender equality throughout this year’s Berlin Process agenda, with concrete actions launched at the Gender Equality Forum and across all Ministerial events. Participants recognised gender equality as an enabler and accelerator of regional priorities, and that societies where women’s and girls’ rights are respected are more secure, stable and prosperous.”</i>			