

The Second Eurasian Women's Forum, Business Programme – St. Petersburg, 19-21 September 2018

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Debate on “Female Governors: Strategy of Regional Performance and Growth”

Saint Petersburg, Russia, 21 September 2018

Dear colleagues,

Thank you for giving me the floor in this important debate. I would like to thank in particular the Governor of Khanty–Mansi Autonomous Okrug, Natalia KOMAROVA, for this invitation.

The question of women in political life is central in the democratic cultures we have been building over the past decades. It is also central to expanding women's contribution to building peace and security, and developing a just and barrier-free society based on the respect of human rights – a theme on our agenda today.

When I entered political life some twenty years ago, it was still rare to see a woman in a high-level political office. But times have been changing. As the first woman President of the regional parliament of Salzburg AND of the Congress of Local and Regional Authorities of the Council of Europe, I have a first-hand experience of this change – as, I am sure, have all of you.

Today, as women are becoming more present and visible in politics, we need more dialogue and cooperation among us to advance the female agenda and harness the women's potential. The Council of Europe Congress, with its Chamber of Regions and Chamber of Local Authorities, offers a platform for such experience-sharing and mutual support, open to women elected locally or regionally in Europe.

I am very pleased that we will be launching today the process of establishing a Eurasian Association of Women – Regional Leaders. We need such associations and networks to support women active in politics, business, science, in social and cultural spheres, and to increase their number. Let me give you one concrete example of women supporting women:

- Simone Susskind, a member of parliament of the Brussels-Capital Region in Belgium. She runs an initiative called „Women leaders of tomorrow”, where elected women prepare female candidates in Morocco and Tunisia for local and regional elections. From the 34 candidates, that took part in her training in Tunisia last year, 12 were elected into political offices in the municipal elections in May 2018.¹

Supporting such ideas and initiatives will help us bring to all spheres of society a **female perspective**, our unique vision and approach to dealing with problems and challenges.

¹ <http://simonesusskind.be/2014/on-our-way-to-2018-2021-aim-launches-the-second-phase-of-the-program-women-leaders-of-tomorrow-tunisia/>

Both women's *presence* and *perspective in politics* have a tremendous impact on the way policies and strategies are designed and implemented, and I look forward to hearing from your experiences and opinions today.

Thank you.