

Dear Members of Congress,
Your Excellencies, Ambassadors of various countries represented in DC,
Dear Distinguished Guests,

It is my outmost pleasure to address you today on behalf of this amazing group of Kosovan women, part of Diplomacy and Democracy Group!

When you are at home you are often too preoccupied with your daily challenges that you often have no time to stop and reflect. And my address to you this afternoon is a reflection of both our past 11 years but also our hopes and determination for the future of our new country.

We must not forget that only 11 years ago most of us were refugees with no homes and no hope! But, the US and its allies listened to the plight of Kosovan people and moreover encouraged the rest of the world to listen. The world acted because they strongly believed that it was their duty to act.

So, you helped us take a country whose people were dispossessed, killed, oppressed and forgotten into a symbol of hope, determination and freedom.

And here we are, still with immense challenges ahead, but we are stateless no more! We have been recognised by 75 UN member states and have gained membership into the IMF and World Bank. But, most important of all – we have PEACE!

Now we, the people of Kosovo, are determining the nature of our state – not only its borders or its sovereignty, but its institutions, its economy and its values. Kosovo is slowly moving towards a country conjuring the rule of law, stability and democratic society. Its image is changing from a war-torn place to a country with potential! And, potential comes from people. It is the people that make the place! People that drive the change!

Looking at the group I am representing today I know that we are very diverse: we come from different backgrounds, we have different views, we represent different parts of our society, but there are fundamental things that unite us! Our determination and love for our country!

- This group has the courage and will to make a difference!
- This group is determined to drive the change!
- This group believes in ACTION! – because a little knowledge that acts is worth infinitely more than much knowledge that is idle.

We are all aware that democracy is not something you only believe in but it is something you do. You participate. And, as the saying goes: Tell me and I forget; show me and I remember; involve me and I understand!

And, this group is involved and understands what it takes to make the change necessary! We ARE agents of change, we are enhancing and promoting democratic processes in the state building phase of Kosovo throughout the sectors.

Our six weeks in Washington DC have been unique in many respects.

We have built the fundamentals of some amazing projects and initiatives. Our projects vary from: the creation of the Diplomatic Academy, Authentication Authority, Building Kosovo's Database of our work with communities/minorities, creation of Public Diplomacy Council for Kosovo, Tools for Branding the image of Kosovo, Ways to diversify our communication with Europe and the World, student participation in decision making, setting up minority and other channels in our public broadcast, approaching the dialogue with Serbia in a strategic way and enhancing the freedom of speech (especially the freedom of press).

Our projects were developed with the help of many institutions here in DC. I would like to extend our gratitude to all of our professional development sites and our mentors at: US State Department, Congress (especially the Office of Congressman Eliot Engel), Washington DC City Hall, Public Diplomacy Council, Intermedia, Meridian International, Open Society Institute, Patton Boggs, East-West Communications, The Institute of World Politics, American University, Johns Hopkins University, George Mason University, CNN, Freedom House, IFES, Voice of America, Bloomberg and Corporation for Public Broadcasting.

We also had the pleasure to express our views on specific topics of importance to Kosovo and the US through Institutions that hosted us for presentations: USIP, NDI, CSIS, PDC, American University, Congressional Albanian Issues Caucus and numerous other institutions that hosted us in meetings.

An important highlight of our time here were our visits to numerous Embassies of different countries represented in DC (those that have recognised us as a state and those who haven't). We were able to share with representatives of different Embassies our views on the recent developments in Kosovo. We also learnt a lot about the positions of different countries towards our statehood. We hope we have opened a new channel of communication, which we believe is of crucial importance and we look forward to continue.

We were honoured to be hosted by 11 congressman and congresswomen during our Shadow Day here at Congress. This was a unique opportunity! It was also an enlightening experience to see how the US Congress works.

There was also an Institution that made us feel proud with the support they gave us: Our Embassy in Washington DC headed by His Excellency Ambassador Avni Spahiu and his wonderful colleagues Jetish Jashari, Gjenezza Budima and Adrian Prenkaj.

But, all of this would not have been possible without the support of USAID and an amazing programme put together by NAAC in Washington DC (Avni, David, Amelda, Jarrett, Jori) and NAAC office in Prishtina (Laura, Mesi, Shqipe and Ardiana). We highly value and appreciate your continuous commitment to strengthening the role of

women in Kosovo. So, USAID and NAAC - we promise you – we will not let you down!

Ladies and Gentlemen,

These are defining moments of our statehood! We are finally moving from hoping to doing! And as the quote goes: There is a time to let things happen, and a time to make things happen.

And we will make things happen!

Thank You!