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## WOMEN IN POLITICS MEAN TANGIBLE GAINS FOR DEMOCRACY

The profound effect that women in government can have on the democratic process was the subject of a lecture organized today in honor of International Women's Day by the Informal Group of Women Parliamentarians (WIG) in cooperation with National Democratic Institute (NDI).

The speaker, Kathy Gest, communications specialist and director of public affairs for NDI in Washington, DC, cited NDI Chairman Madeleine K. Albright, the United States' first female secretary of state, who said, "The political participation of women results in tangible gains for democracy, including greater responsiveness to citizen needs, increased cooperation across party and ethnic lines, and more sustainable peace."

Gest talked about the changes that women can bring in politics and offered some tips on the best ways to communicate their ideas.

With the new Assembly mandate, women won 40 seats, the largest number they have ever had, compared to 37 in the previous parliament. In this mandate, three women have been appointed as ministers and two as deputy prime ministers compared to the last mandate with two women ministers and no women deputy prime ministers.

Through their advocacy and lobbying last year and in cooperation with Civil Society Organizations, WIG was able to win approval of a new labour law that included the group's recommendations on maternity leave. Under the new law, an employed woman is entitled to 12 months of maternity leave. The first six months of leave is paid by the employer at 70 percent of basic salary. For the following three months, the leave is paid by the Government of Kosovo at 50 percent of the average salary in Kosovo, and employed women can extend their maternity leave also for other 3 months without payment.

The WIG's priority for this year is a new law on elections and the internal democratization of political parties to increase the participation of women in decision making. "We still have a lot to do since the representation of women in decision making is still low, said Flora Brovina.

Among those present at the lecture were newly-elected and re-elected women members of the Assembly, representatives from nongovernmental organizations and media. The lecture was moderated by Donika Kadaj Bujupi, a member of the Assembly of Kosovo and of the WIG.

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*NDI punon në Kosovë që nga viti 1999 drejt ndërtimit të institucioneve dhe qeverisje demokratike dhe transparente. Programet e NDI në Kosovë përfshijnë fuqizimin e legjislativit, zhvillimin e partive politike dhe pjesëmarrjen qytetare dhe në pjesë të madhe financohen nga Populli Amerikan përmes Agjensionit të Shteteve të Bashkuara për Zhvillim Ndërkombëtar (USAID).*