

9th RYCO Governing Board Meeting Takes Place in Pristina

PRISTINA – The ninth meeting of the RYCO Governing Board took place in Pristina, Kosovo* on Thursday and Friday. The two-day meeting discussed the organization's ongoing activities with a special focus on the second RYCO Open Call for Project Proposals and adopted a number of decisions important for RYCO's functioning as well as its further institutional development.

Throughout its work, the Governing Board continues to exercise its unique composition in decision-making processes by equally engaging the governments' officials and the young people. It also ensures political support for strategic, operational and financial plans of RYCO from the Contracting Parties.

Opening the meeting, the Chair of the RYCO Governing Board for 2019 and Minister of Culture, Youth and Sports of Kosovo Mr Kujtim Gashi underlined that the meeting was extremely important for the decision-making process, especially after the challenges the Governing Board was facing since March this year.

"It has not been an easy period and certainly has required intensive engagement and compromise to overcome the deadlock created. It has been particularly challenging for me as the Chair of the RYCO Governing Board for 2019, but at the same time as a representative of the Government of Kosovo, to find a solution that would enable full decision-making at RYCO. Therefore, today is proof that Kosovo is really committed to supporting the development of RYCO and regional cooperation in general," **Mr Gashi** pointed out.

RYCO Secretary General **Mr Đuro Blanuša** thanked the Chair for convening the meeting and the compromises reached and expressed his pleasure for having the representatives of all the six RYCO Contracting Parties present in the meeting.

"I am positive and confident about the effectiveness of this meeting. It shows that good partnerships and relationships but also this practice are an example of how RYCO can assure a positive impact in the region," **Mr Blanuša** underlined.

The meeting was also attended by UN Development Coordinator and UNDP Resident Representative in Kosovo **Ms Ulrika Richardson** and UN Resident Coordinator in Albania **Mr Brian J. Williams** who both praised the role of RYCO in the region.

Ms Richardson said that the engagement of young people and their potentials are visible across the region and added that there is a need to increase trust and build confidence between the young people and public institutions.

“Without this process, democracy in the region is weakened,” she underlined and stressed that RYCO has created something extremely special in the Western Balkans. *“UN will continue to support, follow and be a partner of RYCO,”* she concluded.

Mr Williams said that the force and value of the idea of what is RYCO is lying in the commitment to reconciliation by working with the youth and added that fundamentally, peace-building and reconciliation are curtail for politics in the region.

“In RYCO, there is the political ownership of the processes which enables building bridges, dialogue, and understanding. The youth are directly involved and represented in the decision-making processes,” he said and concluded that the UN stands beside and supports RYCO as much as it is possible.

The RYCO Governing Board is the highest decision-making authority of RYCO. It is composed of two representatives from each Contracting Party – one Government representative in direct charge of youth policy and one youth representative.

*This designation is without prejudice to positions on status, and is in line with UNSCR 1244 and the ICJ Opinion on the Kosovo Declaration of Independence

