

## **ATIFETE JAHJAGA**

**Atifete Jahjaga** served as the fourth, and the first woman President of the Republic of Kosovo, elected by the Parliament of Kosovo on April 7, 2011 for a five-year mandate that she completed on April 7, 2016. Born on April 20, 1975 in Rashkoc, Gjakova, Jahjaga is Kosovo's first non-partisan candidate, the first female head of state in modern Balkans and the youngest female world leader to be elected to the highest office. Jahjaga constantly participates in national and international conferences and initiatives aimed at empowering women and supporting the survivors of sexual violence during the war. She continues to be resolute in her fight against violent extremism and radicalization and a staunch promoter of peace and stability for the Balkans and beyond.

During her tenure as President she sought to strengthen the democratic institutions of the country and helped to build and to secure greater international recognition for Kosovo. Jahjaga contributed to promoting Kosovo's European and Euro-Atlantic agenda abroad, reconciliation and tolerance, and normalization of relations with neighboring countries. Through her participation in various international forums and numerous bilateral visits, Jahjaga created new bridges of cooperation and gave Kosovo a voice internationally by sharing Kosovo's state-building experience and making it a vital contributor in global debates. President Jahjaga's vision and her moderate leadership in Kosovo and the Western Balkans secured her unprecedented international support, as she actively worked to enforce her constitutional duties.

During local elections of 2013 and early general elections of 2014, she successfully coordinated and mobilized mechanisms of justice and the Central Election Commission for a fair, democratic and transparent electoral process. Due to the efforts led by Jahjaga to ensure a democratic process, according to international monitors, the elections of 2013 and 2014 were fair and inclusive, drawing to the ballot boxes for the first time the citizens of Serb municipalities in the north of the country. However, in June elections of 2014, Kosovo was paralyzed by a political and constitutional deadlock, which prevented the formation of institutions and undermined the country's democratic functioning. In an effort to find solution to the political impasse, President Jahjaga began intensive meetings with leaders of parliamentary political parties in finding the formula for the establishment of the new Parliament and formation of the Government. Jahjaga played a crucial role in resolving the crisis, ensuring democratic functioning of institutions through a credible, transparent and inclusive process, in full accordance with the constitutional court decisions and legal procedures.

Following the formation of the government, in coordination with the Speaker of the Parliament, Prime Minister, Deputy Prime Minister and Minister of Justice, Jahjaga reached institutional consensus on the establishment of the Special Court as an international obligation stemming from the exchange of letters between President Jahjaga and EU High Representative Baroness Ashton. The exchange of letters was approved with broad support of 87 votes in the Assembly of Kosovo. President Jahjaga during this process held regular meetings with opposition leaders, civil society and media to ensure transparency and to seek wider consensus on a national issue.

Determined to reach broader consensus on the national agenda, Jahjaga established three National Councils during her mandate to ensure the inclusion of civil society, academia and business community. She spent much of her time in office meeting with representatives of civil society,

ethnic communities and marginalized groups.

In March 2012, Jahjaga inaugurated the National Council for European Integration, a high-level coordination body with the aim to build consensus on European agenda through an inclusive and cross-party approach. In 2013, the National Council adopted the first Kosovo National Strategy for European Integration, ensuring consensus with all Kosovar society actors involved in the process. Jahjaga has consistently helped coordinate institutions efficiently and to accelerate the implementation of technical criteria as part of the Dialogue on visa liberalization with the European Union. In 2015, in coordination with other institutions, Jahjaga requested that all technical criteria to be completed by May 2015. A month later, Kosovo presented to the European Commission its final report on the fulfillment of the visa liberalization road map.

In February 2012, President Jahjaga established the National Anti Corruption Council with the purpose of coordinating the work and the activities of Kosovo's institutions and independent agencies, to prevent and fight corruption. As the President guarantees the constitutional functioning of the institutions, Jahjaga has continuously sought to promote an independent and impartial justice system.

President Jahjaga has worked to build bridges between Kosovo's various ethnic communities. She has been active in interfaith dialogue and has continuously reached out to minority communities in Kosovo. She also led the Consultative Council for Communities out which came a number of recommendations pertaining to the empowerment of communities in various fields like education, economic development, employment, social and other issues.

During her presidency Jahjaga worked diligently to bring women at the forefront of Kosovo's political, economic, and social life as a means of ensuring a long-lasting democracy. In 2012, she hosted an International Women's Summit "Partnership for Change—Empowering Women," which was attended by 200 leaders from Kosovo, wider Europe, North America, Africa and the Middle East. The summit provided a venue for women from the region to cross the ethnic barriers and come together to launch and promote a platform for their empowerment throughout the Balkans. The discussions led to creation of the Pristina Principles, which affirm the rights of women to political participation and representation, economic resources and access to security and justice, and calls for actions to make these principles a reality.

President Jahjaga led institutional efforts to rehabilitate and reintegrate survivors of sexual violence during the conflict. In March 2014, President Jahjaga established the National Council for Survivors of Sexual Violence During the War in Kosovo, a coordinating body consisting of representatives of key ministries, civil society and international partners, to provide legal remedies to survivors of sexual violence during war. The President's efforts through this national council mobilized public opinion in support of the survivors of sexual violence, included Kosovo in global initiatives on prevention of sexual violence as a tool of war, helped create the necessary legal infrastructure, the necessary strategies and clear vision in order to guarantee all the rights to the survivors.

Under the Jahjaga's patronage, in June 2015 the Kosovo-born artist Alketa Xhafa-Mripa organized in Pristina an artistic installation "Thinking of you" to increase awareness and provide support to the survivors of this war crime. Thousands in Kosovo and abroad responded to the President's call to donate dresses in a sign of solidarity with survivors of sexual violence during the war. The echo of this work of art exceeded Kosovo, becoming a rallying cry to bring to an end this practice and seek justice for the victims. The event gained worldwide attention and was covered by all major

world media, including the New York Times, Washington Post, The Guardian and dozens of other international media.

Jahjaga has been constantly engaged in creating new partnerships for Kosovo and attracting more foreign investments. In Kosovo, she called for a partnership and coordination of government, and private sector to improve good business practices that would make Kosovo attractive to foreign investment. In 2015, Jahjaga reached agreement on economic cooperation with the United Arab Emirates (UAE) as well as interagency group established for concrete investment projects between Kosovo and the UAE. President Jahjaga signed a 22 million euro donation by Sheikha Bint Mubarak of United Arab Emirates for a Pediatric Surgical Hospital building within the University Clinical Center of Kosovo.

Jahjaga led the efforts to make Kosovo eligible country for the U.S. Government's Millennium Challenge Corporation (MCC) development funds. In February 2015, she created a working group led by the Office of the President of Kosovo and worked closely with national institutions and UN specialized agencies in Kosovo to improve policy performance on 20 independent and objective indicators on economic freedoms, democratic rights, control of corruption, good governance and investing in people. On November 6, 2015, the MCC announced that Kosovo has passed for the first time MCC scorecard with 13 out of 20 indicators, and improved Control of Corruption indicator with 16%, compared to previous year. At its quarterly meeting on 16 December 2015, the Millennium Challenge Corporation Board of Directors voted to make Kosovo eligible for a compact, MCC's large-scale investment program.

During the political deadlock of 2014, Kosovo was increasingly threatened by violent extremism as the number of Kosovo citizens joining the terrorist groups in the Middle East as foreign fighters was growing. Determined to stamp the flow of foreign fighters and address the security challenge they posed, President Jahjaga successfully led security mechanisms in the fight against violent extremism, by turning Kosovo into an international example how to address a common challenge to national security. In this regard, President Jahjaga had also an important role in the adoption of the law to prevent citizens joining armed conflicts abroad, decreed on March 23, 2015, and measures for preventing the activities, organization and any extremist activity in Kosovo. In December 2015, Jahjaga's office was directly engaged in securing funds and assistance to prevent violent extremism at the local level as part of the initiatives of the Global Community Engagement and Resilience Fund (GCERF). Access to this fund will create new partnerships and opportunities for various initiatives that will help empower Kosovo's citizens to play an active role in preventing violent extremism.

Prior to her election as the President of Kosovo, Jahjaga had been the Deputy General Director of the Police of Kosovo from February 2009. She had served as a police officer since the establishment of the Kosovo Police in early 2000, progressing to responsibilities at a regional level and then to General Headquarters. Early in her career, President Jahjaga served in different positions in the implementation of law and order, among others in the professional standards unit, human resources department, personnel and training department, administration of the Kosovo Police and border police. She completed her studies at the Faculty of Law of the University of Prishtina, in 2000. In 2006-2007, she attended a postgraduate certification program in Police Management and Penal Law at the University of Leicester in the United Kingdom and a

Postgraduate Certification in Crime Science at the University of Virginia in the United States in 2007. President Jahjaga has also attended professional and research programs at the European Centre for Security Studies “George C. Marshall” Germany, at the National Academy of the FBI in the USA and at the Department of Justice in the USA.

Jahjaga is a member of the Council of Women World Leaders and the recipient of numerous honors and awards including the Doctor Honoris Causa from the University of Durham (2013), the Leadership in Public Service Award from the Clinton Global Initiative (2014), and the honorary degree of Doctor of Laws from the University of Leicester (2015). In addition to her native Albanian, Jahjaga speaks Serbian and English. She is married to Mr. Astrit Kuçi and lives in Prishtina.