

Tirana, 20 October 2022

Press Release

Today, the Ambassador of Japan to Albania H.E. Mr. Mitsuyuki TAKADA and the Executive Director of the Western Balkans Fund (WBF) Mr. Gjergj MURRA signed a cooperation agreement of the project named “WOMEN’S LEADERSHIP REGIONAL CONFERENCE”. This project aims to foster equal access of women to leadership in business, government, and non-profit organizations within the Western Balkan and V4 regions and beyond.

Japan will provide up to €53,000 to support the Western Balkans Fund to organize a regional conference that will address the equal participation of women and men in decision-making, and advance further towards the goals of achieving equality, development and peace in the region.

Japan’s support comes from the framework of the Western Balkans Cooperation Initiative, launched by former Prime Minister of Japan, Abe Shinzo, in January 2018. This initiative aims to support the socio-economic reforms of the Western Balkans towards the EU accession. For this reason, Japan attaches great importance to the cooperation with the Western Balkan’s Fund, as an organization that shares our common goal of strengthening cooperation and advancing the integration of the region into the European Union.

Japan has supported the Western Balkan’s Fund three times so far, with the latest example being in March 2022, when the Embassy supported the Fund to hold a regional conference that aims to counter hate speech and defamation in the Western Balkans and Visegrad regions.

This is the second time that the International Visegrad Fund (IVF) has joined the efforts with the Embassy of Japan and the Western Balkan’s Fund, bringing forth the experiences and challenges of the Visegrad region. This project is an achievement of the 7th “V4 plus Japan” Foreign Ministers’ Meeting, held during the visit of Former Minister for Foreign Affairs of Japan, Mr. Motegi Toshimitsu to Poland on May 7th, 2021, when the ministers confirmed assistance for the Western Balkans. In this context, this project is an excellent example of Japan’s and V4 cooperation in the Western Balkans.

At the meeting held before the signing ceremony, Ambassador Takada and Mr. Murra spoke about the situation in the Western Balkans region, with the Ambassador confirming the commitment of the Government of Japan to further support the region and finding new concrete possibilities for cooperation both with the Western Balkans and with the Visegrad region.