

GENDER EQUALITY

REVIEW CONFERENCE REPORT

Outcomes & Proceedings

This report should neither be interpreted as official OSCE recommendations based on a consensus decision, nor as the official position of the OSCE Secretariat, or the OSCE Office for Democratic Institutions and Human Rights; it reflects opinions expressed individually by participants in the context of this two-day conference.

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FOREWORD

It is with great pleasure that we, the joint organizers of the first Gender Equality Review Conference, present this report on the proceedings and outcomes of this meeting, held in the year of the 10th anniversary of the 2004 OSCE Action Plan for the Promotion of Gender Equality. We believe that the conference was a great success and an example of how political will and leadership can strengthen the awareness and understanding of the important link between gender equality and comprehensive security.

The report includes the document that resulted from the conference discussions and was endorsed by the consecutive Swiss and Serbian Chair-in-Office of the OSCE. These Conclusions of the Chair-in-Office outline the progress and gaps in the implementation of OSCE gender equality commitments as they were discussed by more than 200 representatives from participating States over the two days of the conference. The recommendations are all the more relevant, because they include not only the perspectives of national governments, but also those of civil society organizations.

It is our hope that the conference discussions and recommendations feed into ongoing efforts to strengthen the tools and mechanisms for the implementation of the 2004 OSCE Gender Action Plan and subsequent OSCE gender related documents throughout the OSCE executive structures and in participating States. The past ten years have proved that a significant positive impact can be made on policy and programme when we gender mainstream the work of the organization. The 10th anniversary of the Gender Action Plan has indeed demonstrated that promoting gender equality and women's empowerment is much like riding a bicycle uphill - losing momentum means we risk losing ground. It is on this note that we call on all participating States to continue to cooperate and partner on efforts to achieve these goals into 2015 and beyond.

Dr. Thomas Greminger - *Chairperson of the Permanent Council*
Lamberto Zannier - *OSCE Secretary General*
Michael Link - *ODIHR Director*

EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

The Swiss Chair-in-Office, the OSCE Gender Section and the OSCE Office for Democratic Institutions and Human Rights (ODIHR) jointly organized the first OSCE Gender Equality Review Conference, held in Vienna on 10-11 July 2014.

The conference convened participating States in a discussion on gender equality within the comprehensive security framework with two key objectives. First, to take stock of efforts towards the implementation of the 2004 OSCE Action Plan on the Promotion of Gender Equality and second, to make recommendations on measures to improve implementation of commitments and thus contribute towards greater de jure and de facto gender equality across the OSCE region. The sessions were organized around five themes:

A Gender Perspective in Crisis Management

A Gender Perspective of Economic Empowerment

Women's Participation in Political and Public Life

Combating Violence against Women

Strengthening OSCE Institutional Mechanisms for Gender Mainstreaming

Over the course of two days, participating States had the opportunity to exchange good practice and information about strategies, as well as continuing challenges in the pursuit of gender equality. The opening of the conference set the tone for participants to reflect on the developments over the past 10 years, the strengths and weaknesses of the implementation by participating States, and explore areas where the OSCE can assist in promoting equal rights and opportunities for men and women through the comprehensive security framework.

The first working session focused on the topic of *A Gender Perspective in Crisis Management*. In this session, speakers reflected on the progress made in implementing measures to achieve gender equality in policies and programmes in the Politico-Military Dimension. It was noted that there is still a considerable lack of women in the security sector overall and specifically in decision-making capacities, and despite the advances in the policy field, women continue to be excluded from practical efforts on peace and mediation. Additionally, the security sector continues to face challenges recognizing and addressing security issues that predominately affect women during conflict or peacetime. The importance of National Action Plans for the implementation of UN Security Council Resolution 1325 was highlighted, as well as other measurable actions that support frameworks for the Women, Peace and Security agenda.

The second day started with a working session on *A Gender Perspective of Economic Empowerment*,¹ where participating States discussed initiatives dedicated to providing equal opportunities for men and women in the economic sphere and increased opportunities for economic growth. However, although OSCE structures and participating States have aimed to address some of the OSCE commitments for enhancing women's economic empowerment, much more needs to be done to address these commitments within national strategies and OSCE policies, programmes, and activities. Speakers reflected on continuing challenges, including: ongoing inequalities faced by women in the OSCE region in the labour market, including job segregation; disparate access to social

¹Such as the 2004 OSCE Action Plan for the Promotion of Gender Equality, which identifies women's economic empowerment as a priority area, and OSCE Ministerial Council Decision 10/11, which calls for promoting equal opportunity for women in the economic sphere and specific measures for overcoming obstacles and barriers preventing women from economic empowerment.

protection; inequality in access to full-time employment; slow progress in overcoming the pay gap for work of equal value; continued under-representation of women in leadership and decision-making roles across all business sectors; and persistent inequalities around access to and control over economic and financial resources such as loans, property and inheritance rights.

The second day continued with the session on *Women's Participation in Political and Public Life*, where the focus was on assisting participating States in implementing their commitments to increasing gender balance in legislative, judicial and executive structures.² It was noted in this session that while constitutional frameworks guarantee equal rights for all citizens, this often does not translate into equal opportunities for women and men within the political sphere. Despite significant advances in promoting gender equality in the OSCE region, women continue to be under-represented in public institutions in all three branches of government – executive, legislative and judicial – and there are low levels of women's political participation during elections. In particular when it comes to women's participation in parliaments and politics, it was noted that the average among OSCE participating States (24.8%) is still far from the Beijing Platform for Action target of 30% or the Council of Europe's Recommendation (2003) 3 of a minimum of 40% either women or men in any decision-making body in political or public life.

The fourth working session examined the issue of *Combating Violence against Women*, recognizing this as one of the most pervasive human rights violations and a significant cause of insecurity in the OSCE region. Citing the various commitments on preventing and eliminating gender-based violence,³ and recognizing violence against women as a major obstacle to women's participation in all aspects of social, political, economic and cultural life, speakers reflected on the efforts initiated over the past ten years. These efforts included the development of improved legal frameworks on combating domestic violence; trainings for police officers, medical and judicial authorities; supporting telephone hotlines, shelters and resource centers providing protection to victims, including

vulnerable groups such as Roma and Sinti women; developing public education campaigns and facilitating knowledge exchanges through roundtable meetings and study tours. However, this session made clear that preventing and combating violence against women remains a challenge, with high rates of violence against women in the overwhelming number of participating States. Since there is no systematic documentation of the prevalence of violence against women in participating States and no systematic mechanism for exchanging information on this issue, efforts are needed in particular to collect data that would support evidence based policy making in preventing and combating violence against women.

The fifth and final session of the two-day conference looked at *Strengthening Institutional Mechanisms for Gender Mainstreaming* and discussed the various approaches to promote and mainstream gender equality. Speakers gave examples of gaps in the current structures and provided ideas on how these mechanisms can be strengthened. Structures created by other international organizations such as UN Women or the Council of Europe Gender Equality Commission can serve as lessons to participating States when considering to strengthen the OSCE's own institutional setup for promoting gender equality.

The conference concluded with an acknowledgment of the benefits of sharing lessons learned, experiences, and good practice in order to improve efforts to gender mainstream. Presenters pointed out the numerous accomplishments as well as continuing obstacles to promoting gender equality across the dimensions and in the institutional setup ten years since the adoption of the 2004 OSCE Action Plan for the Promotion of Gender Equality. In conclusion, the current Swiss and incoming Serbian Chair-in-Office affirmed their intention to continue to strengthen institutional mechanisms of the OSCE to raise the profile of gender mainstreaming and enhance the implementation of existing OSCE commitments related to gender equality.

² Such as OSCE Ministerial Council Decision No. 07/09 on Women's Participation in Political and Public Life, recommending specific measures to "achieve the goal of gender balance in all legislative, judicial and executive bodies, including security services, such as police services." Paragraph 3 and Article 1, available at <http://www.osce.org/mc/40710?download=true>. ³ The 2004 Gender Action Plan calls on OSCE structures to assist participating States in developing programmes and activities aimed at preventing all forms of gender-based violence, as well as increased efforts to raise public awareness and involvement of civil society in efforts to combat violence against women. Additionally, the OSCE MC Decision 15/05 on Preventing and Combating Violence Against Women encourages participating States to address violence against women through legislative reform, support to victims and their children, access to justice and capacity building of relevant institutions.

“In light of existing challenges, the OSCE and its participating States should strengthen efforts to build capacities, fulfil commitments and enhance implementation in order to achieve gender equality and protect women’s rights in the OSCE region, as an integral part of comprehensive security.”

Chair-in-Office Conclusions CIO.GAL/135/14, 24 July 2014

CHAIR-IN-OFFICE CONCLUSIONS

Based on the discussions and findings of the conference, the Swiss and incoming Serbian OSCE Chairs-in-Office issued the following Conclusions: ⁴

⁴ Chairmanship Conclusions, CIO.GAL/135/14, 24 July 2014

OSCE GENDER EQUALITY REVIEW CONFERENCE

Vienna, 10-11 July 2014

Ten years after the adoption of the 2004 OSCE Action Plan for the Promotion of Gender Equality (MC.DEC/14/04), representatives of the participating States, OSCE executive structures and Partners for Co-operation have gathered on 10-11 July 2014 in Vienna to comprehensively review the implementation of the plan and consider how to enhance the fulfillment of gender-related commitments in the OSCE participating States as well as within OSCE structures.

The first ever held OSCE Gender Equality Review Conference was organized jointly by the Swiss Chair-in-Office, the OSCE Secretariat/Gender Section and the OSCE Office for Democratic Institutions and Human Rights (ODIHR). It addressed achievements in the implementation of the Action Plan as well as gap areas identified by conference participants, also taking into account the Annual Evaluation Reports of the Secretary General over the past decade.

Taking stock of the implementation of the 2004 Gender Action Plan as well as a number of follow-up Ministerial Council Decisions specifying commitments in different areas of the Action Plan,⁵ the participants discussed actions to be taken to strengthen implementation and where appropriate, bring OSCE commitments up-to-date, with a goal to achieving de jure and de facto gender equality across the OSCE region.

The conference participants recalled that OSCE values and commitments on gender equality and women's rights are based on an international human rights framework that includes the Convention on the Elimination of all Forms of Discrimination against Women (CEDAW), adopted by the United Nations General Assembly in 1979, the Beijing Declaration and Platform for Action, adopted at the Fourth

World Conference on Women in 1995, and Resolution 1325 on Women, Peace and Security, adopted by the United Nations Security Council in 2000 and followed by six supporting resolutions.

It was also recognized that the full and equal exercise by women of their human rights is essential to achieve a more peaceful, prosperous and democratic OSCE region and that the OSCE and its participating States are committed to making equality between women and men an integral part of their policies, both at the level of their States and within the organization, as laid down in the OSCE Istanbul Summit Document in 1999. Furthermore, equality between women and men was emphasized as an integral part of the OSCE's cross-dimensional, comprehensive and co-operative approach to security and that the inherent dignity of the individual is at the core of comprehensive security, as outlined in the Astana Commemorative Declaration in 2010.

In light of existing challenges, the OSCE and its participating States should strengthen efforts to build capacities, fulfill commitments and enhance implementation in order to achieve gender equality and protect women's rights in the OSCE region, as an integral part of comprehensive security.

⁵ MC.DEC/14/05 on Women in Conflict Prevention, Crisis Management and Post-Conflict Rehabilitation; MC.DEC/15/05 on Preventing and Combating Violence against Women; MC.DEC/07/09 on Women's Participation in Political and Public Life; MC.DEC/10/11 on Promoting Equal Opportunities in the Economic Sphere.



WOMEN NEGOTIATORS AT PEACE TABLES

From 1992 to 2011, fewer than 4% of signatories to peace agreements were women.



8 | **122** HEADS OF FIELD OPERATIONS

Over the OSCE's history there have been 122 male and only 8 female heads of field operations.

60%

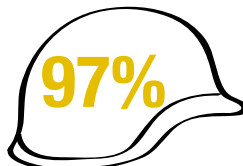
of all OSCE ExB projects in the first dimension in 2013 were gender mainstreamed.

BUDGET IN POST-CONFLICTS COUNTRIES

In a sample made in 2012 of six post-conflict countries, less than eight per cent of spending was specifically budgeted to empower women or promote gender equality



90%
OF OSCE POLICE PERSONNEL ARE MEN.



97%
OF UN MILITARY PEACEKEEPERS ARE MEN.

Only one per cent of UN spending in security sector reform is allocated to initiatives which consider gender equality a significant objective.

Chair-in-office conclusions

I . GENDER PERSPECTIVE IN CRISIS MANAGEMENT



OSCE COMMITMENTS

A number of OSCE commitments provide the framework for the inclusion of gender considerations throughout the comprehensive security concept with the aim of achieving gender equality in the Politico-Military Dimension. The OSCE's active role to implement relevant parts of UN Security Council Resolution 1325 is outlined in the OSCE Gender Action Plan, and specified in Ministerial Council Decision 14/05 on Women in Conflict Prevention, Crisis Management and Post-conflict Rehabilitation. Ministerial Council Decision 3/11 on the conflict cycle, inter alia, highlights the significance of UNSCR 1325 throughout the stages of a conflict.

As a regional arrangement under Chapter VIII of the Charter of the United Nations and with its comprehensive security concept, the OSCE is in a unique position to develop and apply a gender mainstreamed security model that truly addresses the needs and concerns of all citizens in the OSCE region. Being the largest security organization in the world, the OSCE is in a prime position to become a leader of practical implementation of gender mainstreamed security, and it has already made advances in this direction in the ten years since the adoption of the OSCE Gender Action Plan.



ACHIEVEMENTS & CHALLENGES TO DATE

In the past decade, the OSCE has made strides in implementing measures to achieve gender equality in its policies and programmes in the Politico-Military Dimension. This development goes hand in hand with a steadily growing awareness globally of the importance of the Women, Peace and Security agenda. The trend is reflected in the OSCE through an increasing number of discussions and activities related to gender aspects of security. The Forum for Security Cooperation (FSC) has appointed a special Focal Point for UNSCR 1325 that ensures that Women, Peace and Security issues are included in the agenda of the FSC. Some 60 per cent of participating States are reporting on the implementation of their commitments on Women, Peace and Security in the Annual Information Exchange on the Code of Conduct on Politico-Military Aspects of Security. Additionally, the OSCE executive structures are increasingly gender mainstreaming their policies, programmes, projects and activities, in particular those related to the conflict cycle, such as mediation capacities.

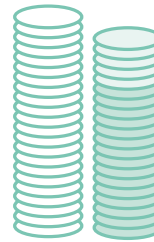
However, there is still a considerable lack of women in the security sector, access of women to decision-making in security fields is limited and women continue to be excluded from peace and mediation efforts. Furthermore, security sector actors are still not in a position to recognize and fully address security issues that predominately affect women during conflict or peacetime. There is a need to build on existing training efforts on the implementation of gender equality commitments in the Politico-Military Dimension so as to have the greatest outreach, efficiency and output in OSCE's efforts on reaching and maintaining security and stability.

ACTIONS NEEDED

- * OSCE tools and mechanisms should be developed to include a gender perspective in conflict analysis as well as in the organizational response to conflict and crisis in order to identify and address women's security concerns.
- * OSCE field operations should include gender considerations in their regular activities and reporting. Appropriate training to staff should be provided in this regard.
- * The OSCE should identify entry points for women's participation in all stages of the conflict cycle, in particular throughout mediation and peace processes, conflict prevention, crisis management and post-conflict rehabilitation while giving due consideration to the inclusion of women in formal and informal peace initiatives.
- * The OSCE and participating States should take into account the needs and concerns as well as the role of Roma and Sinti and displaced women when addressing the different stages of the conflict cycle.
- * Participating States are encouraged to identify women working in the Politico- Military Dimension that could potentially be deployed to OSCE executive structures, in particular at decision-making and senior management positions
- * Participating States are encouraged to identify senior women leaders, such as former ministers, high level diplomats or prominent women activists, who could serve as members of mediation/peace negotiation teams or as senior mediators/ peace negotiators or Special/ Personal Representatives.
- * Participating States should remove any existing obstacles towards increasing the number of women in all positions and in decision-making throughout their security structures.
- * The inclusion of gender analysis in issues related to national security should become standard as should the recognition of women's roles in peace-keeping, mediation and reconstruction efforts.
- * Participating States are encouraged to report voluntarily on their gender mainstreaming efforts as part of the information exchange on the Code of Conduct on Politico-Military Aspects of Security. This would give the participating States an opportunity for information sharing and possible twinning efforts.
- * In order to allow for information exchange on good practices and challenges relating to gender mainstreaming the conflict cycle and other women's security issues, a periodic OSCE review conference on Women, Peace and Security should be organized.
- * Participating States are encouraged to further consider the adoption of an OSCE-Wide Action Plan on Women, Peace and Security that would foster the implementation of all the above mentioned issues in a more systematic and structured manner.
- * As the largest regional security organization in the world, the OSCE should increase coordination and co-operation with other relevant international organizations in the area of Women, Peace and Security, in particular with a view of the progress report prepared by the United Nations Secretary General for the upcoming 15th anniversary of UNSCR 1325 in 2015.

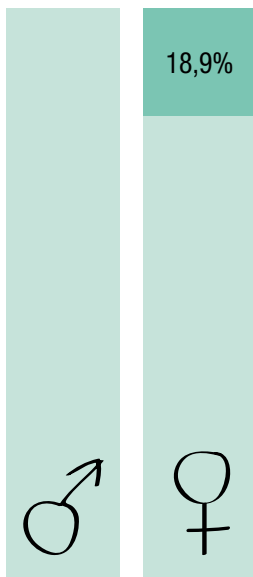
Women's global labour force participation has stagnated, in fact decreasing!

FROM 57% IN 1990 TO 55% IN 2012.



Women in the OSCE region on average earn between 10% and 30% less than men.

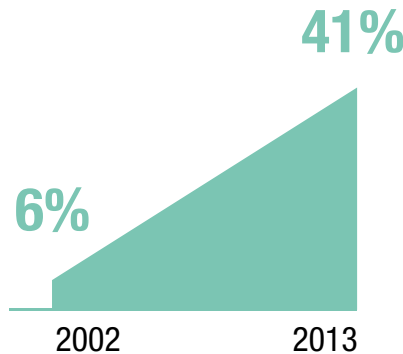
CHF



SWISS GENDER WAGE GAP FOR THE PRIVATE SECTOR

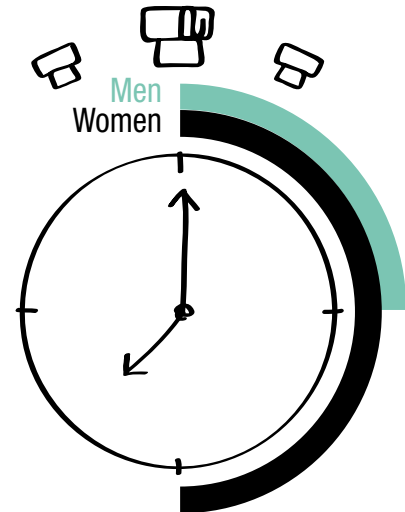
WHEN MORE WOMEN WORK, ECONOMIES GROW.

If women's paid employment rates were raised to the same level as men's, the United States' gross domestic product would be an estimated 9% higher and the euro zone's would climb by 13%.



This increase is the result of the gender quota legislation adopted in 2003.

SHARE OF WOMEN ON PUBLIC LIMITED COMPANY BOARDS IN NORWAY



Time on unpaid domestic work

Chair-in-office conclusions

II . GENDER PERSPECTIVE OF ECONOMIC EMPOWERMENT



OSCE COMMITMENTS

In its policy framework, the OSCE emphasizes the importance of both women and men having equal access to economic resources. OSCE participating States have recognized that providing equal opportunities for men and women in the economic sphere increases the opportunities for economic prosperity and growth, which in turn contributes to the stability and comprehensive security in the OSCE region. The 2004 OSCE Action Plan for the promotion of Gender Equality recognizes the importance of women's economic empowerment and has identified it as a priority area. This is underscored by the OSCE Ministerial Council Decision 10/11, which calls for promoting equal opportunity for women in the economic sphere and specific measures for overcoming obstacles and barriers preventing women from economic empowerment.



ACHIEVEMENTS & CHALLENGES TO DATE

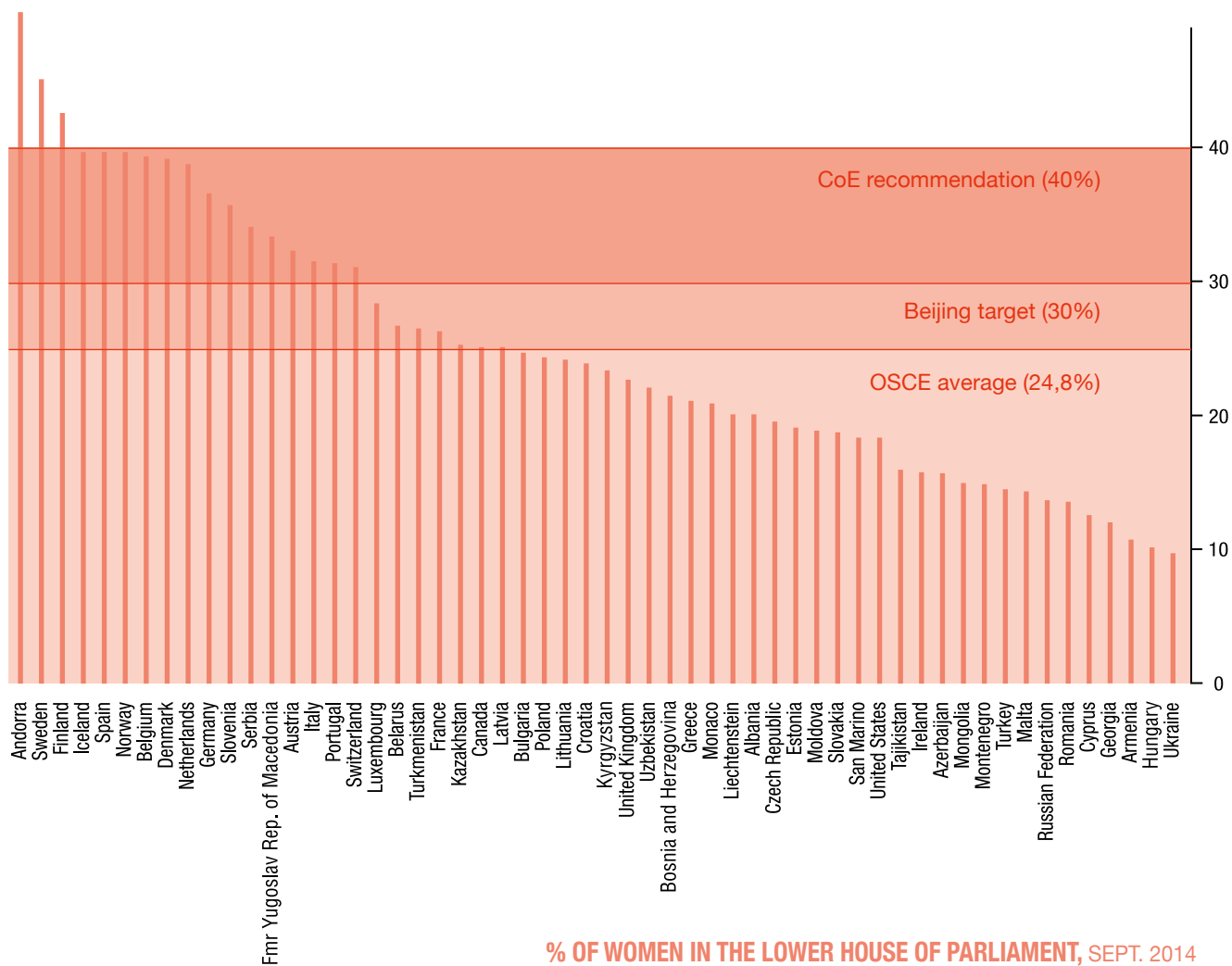
Although relevant OSCE structures and participating States have aimed to address some of the OSCE commitments for enhancing women's economic empowerment, much more needs to be done to integrate these commitments into national strategies and OSCE policies, programmes, and activities. Efforts that have been undertaken so far in this area lack a coordinated and strategic approach which would include a better assessment of what still needs to be done. On a regional level there is a lack of information exchange about policies and good practices for providing equal economic opportunities to women and men.

Against this background, challenges that were identified in the OSCE MC Decision 10/11 remain valid: continued inequities faced by women in the OSCE region in terms of labour market participation, including job segregation; disparities in access to social protection as well as to quality, full-time employment; slow progress in efforts to overcome the pay gaps for work of equal value, resulting in women's reduced lifetime earnings and pensions and increased female poverty; continued under-representation of women in economic leadership and decision-making processes in the public and private sectors; and persistence of constraints on women's effective participation in the economic sphere, in particular with regard to access to and control over economic and financial resources such as loans, property and inheritance rights.

In addition, the persistent financial and social crisis in many countries of the OSCE region, which often affects women differently than men, requires gender-sensitive responses, which are only being recognized by some participating States.

ACTIONS NEEDED

- * The OSCE should develop a more structured and systematic approach to the implementation of the 2004 Gender Action Plan in the Economic and Environmental dimension. Mechanisms and tools for gender analysis should become an integral part of the activities and policies in the Second Dimension so as to reduce barriers for women in the economic sphere and allow for women's full participation in the labour market. OSCE staff should be offered training in how to utilize the tools and mechanisms developed.
- * The OSCE should draw on the experience of mentoring programmes developed for women's economic empowerment, also taking into account the specific needs of marginalized women.
- * Participating States should develop policies and awareness raising schemes to reduce the informal/grey economy where a large percentage of women in the OSCE region works without social protection (workers benefits, health insurance etc.).
- * Participating States should develop policies to support women's entrepreneurship as well as to remove barriers for women's access to financial markets and banking services.
- * Participating States should identify measures to increase the share of women in decision-making and senior management of public and private enterprises. In some participating States gender quotas have been successful tools for achieving a more balanced representation of women and men in management boards of private and public companies.
- * Participating States shall take all appropriate measures to eliminate discrimination against women in rural areas in order to ensure, on a basis of equality of men and women, that they fully participate in and benefit from rural development.
- * Participating States should develop employment policies that target women specifically, such as vocational training and job requalification.
- * Participating States should develop targeted policies which enable women to have equal access to the labour market. Such measures should include parental leave, accessible child care and non-discriminatory employment practices.
- * Participating States should make efforts to remove the remaining barriers for equal access to education. These efforts should target traditional male dominated fields, such as technology and informatics, in order to open up the whole of the labour market for both men and women.
- * Participating States should develop mechanisms and policies that recognize the vulnerabilities of women migrants, marginalized women as well as Roma and Sinti women when entering the labour markets, paying special attention to their increased risk of human trafficking.
- * Participating States should analyze the existing pay gap between men and women which prevails throughout the OSCE region and establish national mechanisms to tackle inequalities.
- * In order to allow for information exchange on good practices and challenges related to achieving gender equality in the economic sphere, the annual meetings in the Economic and Environmental Dimension should include separate sessions on measures to combat inequalities in this area.



24,8%

CURRENT RATE IN OSCE PARTICIPATING STATES

« If current trends persist, equal representation will only be achieved in 50 years in the OSCE, 150 years worldwide. »

WOMEN'S REPRESENTATION IN PARLIAMENTS OF OSCE



WOMEN'S PARTICIPATION IN POLITICAL & PUBLIC LIFE



GENDER EQUALITY IN ELECTED OFFICE: A SIX-STEP ACTION PLAN



OSCE COMMITMENTS

“Concerned that widespread discrimination against women continues to undermine their effective participation in political and public life at all levels,” the OSCE participating States adopted the MC Decision 07/09 on Women’s Participation in Political and Public Life, recommending specific measures to “achieve the goal of gender balance in all legislative, judicial and executive bodies, including security services, such as police services.”⁶ To assist participating States in realizing these commitments, the OSCE has been entrusted with a mandate to promote women’s participation in political and public life, through institutional reforms supporting parliaments, political parties and elections.⁷ OSCE participating States have further committed to “consider possible legislative measures, which would facilitate a more balanced participation of women and men in political and public life and especially in decision-making.”⁸



ACHIEVEMENTS & CHALLENGES TO DATE

While constitutional frameworks in the OSCE participating States guarantee equal rights for all citizens, this often does not translate into equal opportunities for women and men to access the ballot and stand for office. Significant advances have been made in promoting gender equality in the OSCE region, yet women continue to be under-represented in public institutions in all three branches of government – executive, legislative and judicial – particularly in decision-making positions at the national and local level. For example, while women’s representation in parliaments in the OSCE region now stands at an average of 25 per cent, there is a wide variation among participating States, from a high of 50 per cent to under 10 per cent in a few states.⁹ At the local level, only 13 per cent of mayoral offices are occupied by women.¹⁰ Likewise, a database covering 34 OSCE participating States indicates that only 10 per cent of public prosecutors and presidents of administrative and constitutional courts are women.¹¹ The low level of women’s political participation is also evident during elections. Trends in women’s political participation in the OSCE region point to unsatisfactory progress towards gender parity in politics, as outlined in the OSCE/ODIHR study *Gender Equality in Elected Office: A Six-Step Action Plan*.¹²

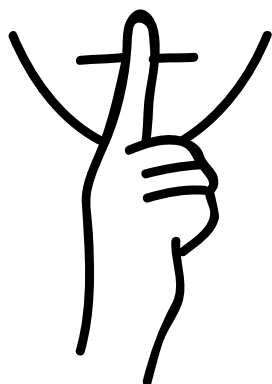
⁶ OSCE Ministerial Council Decision No. 07/09 on Women’s Participation in Political and Public Life, Paragraph 3 and Article 1, available at <http://www.osce.org/mc/40710?download=true>. ⁷ Specifically, the OSCE/ODIHR has been mandated to assist participating States in ensuring equal opportunity for participation of women in political and public life, 2004 OSCE Action Plan for the Promotion of Gender Equality (OSCE Ministerial Council Decision No. 14/04, para 44 (d), available at <http://www.osce.org/mc/23295?download=true>. ⁸ OSCE Ministerial Council Decision No. 07/09 on Women’s Participation in Political and Public Life, Article 2, available at <http://www.osce.org/mc/40710?download=true>. ⁹ Inter-Parliamentary Union, *Women in National Parliaments*, data as of 1 May 2014, available at <http://www.ipu.org/wmne/world.htm>. ¹⁰ According to the European Commission database of women and men in decision-making positions. The database covers 34 countries, including the 28 EU Member States, four candidate countries, and the remaining EEA countries (Liechtenstein and Norway), available at http://ec.europa.eu/justice/gender-equality/gender-decision-making/database/politics/municipalcouncils/index_en.htm. ¹¹ *Ibid.*, available at http://ec.europa.eu/justice/gender-equality/gender-decision-making/database/index_en.htm. ¹² *Gender Equality in Elected Office: A Six-Step Action Plan* is available at <http://www.osce.org/odihhr/78432>.

ACTIONS NEEDED

Gender balance in political and public life is not only required to improve the representative nature, accountability, and quality of democracies, but it has a profound impact on the way politics is done in terms of policymaking agendas. States where women are adequately represented in policymaking and legislative processes gain a better understanding of gender equality and domestic violence, and are more likely to have a substantial, solid and clear legislative basis to address violations of women's rights. To achieve gender parity in political and public life in the OSCE region, the following actions are needed:

- * Participating States should strengthen women's participation in political and public life in the OSCE region, by identifying and remedying discriminatory laws and policies, and sharing good practices for women's engagement in democratic processes.
- * Participating States should strengthen women's participation in parliaments, by mainstreaming gender issues into parliamentary procedures, priorities, and budgets. Structures and initiatives that enable women to influence policy and legislative agendas should also be strengthened.¹³
- * Participating States should encourage all political actors "to promote equal participation of women and men in political parties, with a view to achieving better gender-balanced representation in elected public offices at all levels of decision-making."¹⁴ Special attention should be paid to the successful experience of some participating States in setting legislative and voluntary measures to enhance women's representation in national parliaments.¹⁵
- * Participating States should strengthen women's participation in political parties, by compiling and sharing good practices on measures that have been successful in advancing women's roles in parties. Special attention should be paid to strengthening internal party democracy and including a gender perspective into political party regulation, so that both women and men are able to access political party structures and resources on an equal footing.¹⁶
- * While recognizing that different electoral systems can offer different avenues for women's political participation, participating States should ensure that they provide equal opportunities for equitable political competition between women and men candidates.
- * OSCE election observation missions should continue to examine women's participation as voters and candidates; their involvement in leadership roles within election management bodies; and how the legal framework and media structures affect women, as well as men.¹⁷
- * Participating States, OSCE executive structures, international organizations and civil society should strengthen the capacities and confidence of women to stand for public office, through education and training programmes. Furthermore, political actors, voters, media and civil society should publically scrutinize and adequately portray the skills and capacities of both women and men politicians on an equal footing.
- * Participating States should promote democratic institutions that are inclusive, representative, and gender-sensitive at all levels, so that women from all marginalized groups, including national minorities and migrants, and particularly Roma and Sinti, are given equal access to policymaking processes that affect them the most.¹⁸

¹³ The OSCE/ODIHR Comparative Study of Structures for Women MPs in the OSCE Region Comparative Study of Structures for Women MPs in the OSCE Region is a good basis for this (<http://www.osce.org/odihr/105940>.) ¹⁴ OSCE Ministerial Council Decision No. 07/09 on Women's Participation in Political and Public Life, Article 3, available at <http://www.osce.org/mc/40710?download=true>. ¹⁵ The UN Economic and Social Council originally proposed the 30 per cent target to be achieved by 1995. In its 1995 Beijing Platform for Action, the United Nations recalled that few countries had achieved this goal and urged Member States to take actions to achieve the target as a means to build a 'critical mass' of women's representation in political and public life. Available at <http://www.un.org/womenwatch/daw/beijing/platform/decision.htm>. ¹⁶ The OSCE/ODIHR Handbook on Promoting Women's Participation in Political Parties is a good basis for this (<http://www.osce.org/odihr/120877>.) ¹⁷ Practical steps to be taken by election observation missions to integrate a gender perspective are outlined in the Handbook for Monitoring Women's Participation in Elections (<http://www.osce.org/odihr/elections/13938>.) ¹⁸ Promoting the effective and equal participation of Roma and Sinti women in public and political life is one of the active measures also proposed by the OSCE Ministerial Council Decision 4/13, Enhancing OSCE efforts to implement the Action Plan on Improving the Situation of Roma and Sinti within the OSCE Area, with a Particular Focus on Roma and Sinti Women, Youth and Children, available at <http://www.osce.org/mc/109340?download=true>.



IN SPAIN,
EXPERTS
ESTIMATE
THAT

80%

OF WOMEN
VICTIMS
OF VIOLENCE
REMAIN
SILENT



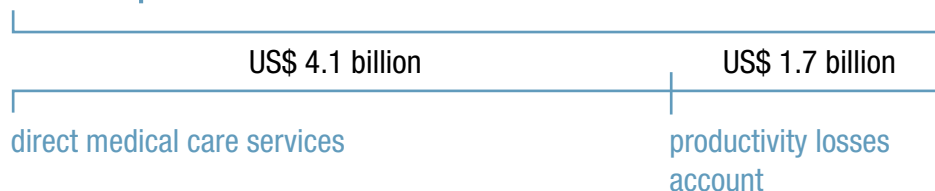
In the EU member states **33% of women** have experienced physical and/or sexual violence since the age of 15. **25%** more than 12 months ago, **8%** in the past 12 months.

38%

of OSCE participating States have signed the Istanbul Convention on preventing and combating violence against women and domestic violence. 15 have followed signature with a ratification.

US\$ 5.8 billion

Cost of intimate partner violence in the US



REPORTS OF DOMESTIC VIOLENCE IN BELARUS :

> 20 000
each month

Chair-in-office conclusions

IV . COMBATING VIOLENCE AGAINST WOMEN



OSCE COMMITMENTS

The 2004 Gender Action Plan outlines that OSCE structures should continue to assist participating States in developing programmes and activities aimed at preventing all forms of gender-based violence.¹⁹ It also calls for increased efforts to raise public awareness on this issue and to facilitate involvement of civil society in efforts to combat violence against women. Furthermore, the OSCE MC Decision 15/05 on Preventing and Combating Violence Against Women encourages participating States to address violence against women through legislative reform, support to victims and their children, access to justice and capacity building of relevant institutions.

Violence against women has manifold causes and requires targeted responses in many areas. The 2004 Gender Action Plan also calls for more awareness-raising of the issue in the public and for the inclusion of civil society in efforts to combat violence against women.²⁰



ACHIEVEMENTS & CHALLENGES TO DATE

Violence against women and girls is one of the most pervasive human rights violations and a significant cause of personal insecurity in the OSCE region. It can manifest itself in psychological, physical, sexual and economic abuse both in the home and in the community, and can be particularly pervasive during periods of crisis, transition, conflict and post-conflict reconstruction. Violence against women has far reaching implications for women's inclusion in society. It is a major obstacle to women's participation in all aspects of social, political, economic and cultural life, ultimately excluding women from the democratic process.

As one of the most widespread and traumatic violations of human rights, the problem of violence against women is compounded by its lack of visibility and the context of institutionalized gender inequality and stereotyping in which it often takes place. Combating violence against women is a fundamental element to achieving comprehensive security.

Over the past ten years OSCE structures, and particularly the OSCE field operations, have been working to assist participating States in preventing and combating violence against women. These efforts included the development of improved legal frameworks on combating domestic violence (a type of violence against women); trainings for police officers, medical and judicial authorities and other

¹⁹ It refers in this context, among others, to the United Nations resolution on "Further actions and initiatives to implement the Beijing Declaration and Platform for Action" (A/RES/S-23/3) of 16 November 2000, which states (paragraph 59): "Gender-based violence, such as battering and other domestic violence, sexual abuse, sexual slavery and exploitation, international trafficking in women and children, forced prostitution and sexual harassment...are incompatible with the dignity and worth of the human person..."²⁰ For example, the survey on violence against women, undertaken by the European Union Agency for Fundamental Rights (FRA) in all 28 European Union member states and released in March 2014, found that one in three women in the European Union countries has experienced physical and/or sexual violence since the age of 15, that one in five women has experienced stalking, and that every second woman has been confronted with one or more forms of sexual harassment.

first responders to domestic violence calls; supporting telephone hotlines, shelters and resource centres providing protection to all victims, including marginalized groups such as Roma and Sinti women; developing public education campaigns and facilitating knowledge exchanges through roundtable meetings and study tours.

However, monitoring and assessing progress on preventing and combating violence against women in the OSCE participating States remains a major challenge. Recent surveys in many participating States still show high rates of violence against women.

At the same time, in some other OSCE participating States there is no systematic documentation of the incidence of violence against women and there is no systematic mechanism for exchanging information among participating States, which are not hosting OSCE field operations. New approaches are needed to strengthen OSCE efforts in preventing and combating violence against women.

One of the areas where the OSCE has been innovative in combating violence against women is the establishment of an OSCE MenEngage Network. Engaging men and boys and supporting them to promote positive, non-violent masculinities is a critical aspect of combating domestic violence and other forms of violence against women.

A number of OSCE participating States have civil society organizations run by men to promote positive role models and raise awareness of the effects of domestic violence for both men and women. The OSCE Secretariat has launched the MenEngage Network to also provide an opportunity for positive male role models to speak out on issues of violence against women.

ACTIONS NEEDED

- * In order to facilitate more comprehensive, effective and evidence-based approaches to combating violence against women, the OSCE should improve its efforts to collect relevant data by cooperating closer with other international organizations such as FRA and taking advantage of existing methodologies for data collection on violence against women.
- * The OSCE executive structures and participating States should have a particular focus on data collection when it comes to violence against women from vulnerable groups, including Roma and Sinti women as well as women from displaced populations, as there are almost no data available for these groups.
- * The OSCE should enhance the exchange of information, experiences and good practices among participating States, by organizing exchanges focused on preventing and combating violence against women. This should take into account the cross-dimensionality of the issue.
- * At the same time, OSCE executive structures working on policing, anti-terrorism, economic issues and combating trafficking in human beings should also aim to address the inclusion of combating violence against women in their policies, programmes, projects and activities.
- * In keeping with the 2004 Gender Action Plan, the OSCE executive structures and participating States should be aware of the gender dimension of the proliferation of small arms and light weapons (SALW) and focus activities by the Strategic Police Matters Unit (SPMU), the Office of the Co-ordinator of Economic and Environmental Activities (OCEEA), the Action against Terrorism Unit (ATU) and the OSCE structures working on anti-trafficking issues with a view to protecting women from exploitation and violence.
- * Participating States and OSCE executive structures should be encouraged to improve national legislation to combat domestic violence and ensure it is aligned with international standards, OSCE commitments and good practices. Legal opinions produced by ODIHR upon request can strengthen efforts to improve legal and policy frameworks for preventing and combating violence against women and domestic violence.
- * Participating States and OSCE executive structures should strengthen efforts to reach out to the public and address public attitudes regarding domestic violence and other forms of violence against women. Activities to change the mind-set of people should include initiatives such as public education, working with youth, awareness-raising campaigns and other efforts to inform society of the serious consequences and costs of such violence, both at the individual and societal level. Outreach activities should also provide information on existing national legislation, referral mechanisms and legal remedy.

- * Participating States should continue to invest in capacity building of critical actors in law enforcement and the judiciary in order to best implement legislation and provide victims with access to protection services. In this regard a multidisciplinary and comprehensive approach is needed and sufficient funds and human resources should be allocated.
- * Participating States should continue to improve referral mechanisms and access to support services for victims in a way that is free from discrimination and would encourage victims to report the violence they experienced without fear. At the same time, programmes should be developed to work with the perpetrators of gender-based violence in order to avoid the repetition of acts of violence by the same offenders.
- * Participating States should work closer with civil society organizations regarding violence against women. NGOs are the grass-root level voices of the silent and silenced ones.
- * OSCE participating States and OSCE executive structures are encouraged to promote the signature and ratification of the Istanbul Convention and support its implementation through national legislation. This convention provides the most comprehensive approach to date for addressing gender-based violence. It is particularly relevant to the OSCE's focus on comprehensive security which includes the security of the individual from all types of violence. The Istanbul Convention recognizes many facets of gender-based violence such as forced marriage, female genital mutilation and violence against refugee and migrant women.
- * OSCE structures and participating States should continue to promote the inclusion of men in gender equality issues as well as to encourage addressing violence against men and boys in order to break the vicious circle of violence, as many of the perpetrators of violence against women have previously been victims of sexual and domestic violence themselves.

54/57

participating States have a gender equality mechanism that takes responsibility for gender mainstreaming of government policy and programmes.

BELOW ARE THE DIFFERENT TYPES OF MECHANISMS:

25

have a Government Agency/Office/ Commission on Women's Affairs/Gender Equality under Prime Minister or President

10

have a Department of Equal Opportunities under Ministry of Labour

9

have Departments of Gender Equality under Ministry of Social Affairs

5

have a Ministry of Women or Gender Equality or Equality

2

have parliamentary committees on gender equality

2

have Departments of Equality under Ministry of Justice

1

Department of Gender Equality under Ministry of Education

Chair-in-office conclusions

VI . STRENGTHENING OSCE INSTITUTIONAL MECHANISMS FOR GENDER MAINSTREAMING

This session discussed the various approaches and institutional mechanisms within the OSCE to promote and mainstream gender equality. Participants identified gaps in the current structures as well as ways these mechanisms can be strengthened. Presentations were made by representatives of UN Women and the Council of Europe about the new structures that have been created to better address the institutional challenges for promoting gender equality.

These processes and the resulting new approaches provide know-how for the OSCE on strengthening and more effectively institutionalizing its own work to promote the implementation of its commitments on gender equality.

ACTIONS NEEDED

- * The OSCE should consider establishing or upgrading a senior position on gender equality that reports directly to the Secretary General and mandating the person in this position to be a member of all senior OSCE Secretariat decision-making bodies.
- * The OSCE should consider establishing a Gender Equality Network with representatives of participating States that would more systematically share information and liaise with the OSCE Secretariat and ODIHR and other institutions and structures on policy related to gender equality and implementation of gender equality commitments in their respective countries. Assessments of achievements, gaps, and future goals towards gender equality in the OSCE region should be organised regularly to be done in an inclusive and consultative manner.
- * The OSCE should identify a structure to support the position of the Special Representative on Gender Issues in the future. Models used for other OSCE Special Representatives, including the Special Representative and Co-ordinator on Trafficking in Human Beings, the three Representatives on Tolerance and Non-Discrimination or the Contact Point on Roma and Sinti issues,

- should be explored as possible approaches to providing logistical and other support for country visits.
- * The OSCE should continue to co-operate with other relevant international and regional organizations, such as UN Women, CoE and others, to learn from their experiences in promoting gender equality, to improve exchanges and co-operation, secure synergies and avoid overlap, and engage in joint country visits.
 - * The OSCE should ensure that the discussion on the institutional mechanisms for promoting and mainstreaming gender equality is maintained within the Helsinki+40 process.
 - * In 2015, a global review of 15 years of UNSCR 1325 (2000) will be undertaken; the Beijing Declaration and Platform for Action, adopted by the fourth World Conference on Women in 1995, will be revisited in 2015; and demands on including gender equality as a stand-alone goal in the post-2015 development agenda are growing. This once in a generation opportunity offered by the upcoming anniversaries should be used for fully anchoring gender equality and gender mainstreaming in the OSCE.
 - * Participating States should consider ways to more systematically follow up on the recommendations of the SR on Gender Issues. Approaches to consider might include using the Human Dimension Committee to report on their implementation of the recommendations after the visit, a follow up discussion or even a follow up visit. OSCE structures should assist participating States in implementing recommendations of the SR on Gender Issues (field operations can develop action plans together with the participating States, ODIHR can also provide support as appropriate through its gender team.)
 - * The OSCE should organize a review conference on a regular basis in order to follow up the implementation of commitments and identify further gaps and challenges. Such a conference offers a valuable platform for exchange of good practices and lessons learned.
 - * The OSCE should continue to promote gender equality as a cross-cutting theme in all three dimensions. To that end, gender mainstreaming efforts should be strengthened and expanded within the various units of the OSCE Secretariat, independent structures and field operations at all levels, including notably the decision-making level.
 - * OSCE structures should strengthen gender mainstreaming within their own programmes, activities and procedures, by ensuring a systematic inclusion of gender aspects in all phases of project development and implementation, engaging in an assessment of gender activities being implemented, conducting regular review of achievements, identifying future goals, and assigning targets and responsibilities.
 - * The OSCE should designate a gender focal point in each structure as one of the core staff responsibilities. The OSCE should work toward designating an experienced, full time gender adviser in the field operations and Institutions.
 - * The OSCE Chairs-in-Office, participating States, the Chairs of the three OSCE Committees and other OSCE bodies should ensure that the agendas of all OSCE events are gender inclusive in terms of participation and substance.

CONFERENCE PROCEEDINGS

Introduction

The year 2014 marks the 10th anniversary of the adoption of the 2004 Ministerial Council Decision on the OSCE Action Plan for the Promotion of Gender Equality (MC.DEC/14/04), the key OSCE document on gender equality, developed in compliance with the relevant international legal framework. This anniversary has given participating States, OSCE structures, and Partners for Co-operation a unique opportunity to reflect on what has been achieved over the past decade in terms of integrating a gender perspective into comprehensive security, and very importantly, to look at what remains to be done to fulfill agreed commitments.

In recognition of this anniversary, representatives of the participating States, OSCE executive structures and Partners for Co-operation convened from 10-11 July 2014 in Vienna to review the implementation of the Action Plan and discuss progress and gaps in the fulfillment of gender-related commitments.

The OSCE Gender Equality Review Conference was organized jointly by the Swiss Chair-in-Office, the OSCE Secretariat/Gender Section and the OSCE Office for Democratic Institutions and Human Rights (ODIHR). This conference, the first ever held in the OSCE to review the 2004 Gender Action Plan, highlighted achievements in the implementation of the Action Plan as well as continued challenges over the past ten years.

Discussions during the Review Conference focused not only on significant achievements over the past decade, but also addressed gaps in the implementation of the Action Plan that have been identified through the Secretary General's Annual Evaluation Report. Participants also discussed the need to establish more systematic implementation processes (such as enhancing the institutional effectiveness of OSCE gender equality structures, improving coordination, and enhancing co-operation with participating States through a national gender equality network); and to promote activities targeting priority issue areas in the three dimensions (such as equal opportunities for men and women with a focus on Women, Peace and Security, women's economic empowerment, women's political participation, and gender based violence).

The Conference brought together national stakeholders from government and academia, as well as civil society organizations and resulted in a discussion of innovative methods to enhance implementation in the future.

OPENING REMARKS

Opening remarks were delivered by:

Ambassador Michael Gerber,

Swiss Special Representative for Global Sustainable Development;

Lamberto Zannier,

OSCE Secretary General;

Michael Georg Link,

Director of the OSCE Office for Democratic Institutions and Human Rights;

Ambassador Dubravka Simonovic,

Permanent Representative of the Permanent Mission

of the Republic of Croatia to the OSCE,

and CEDAW Committee Member;

and moderated by

June Zeitlin,

Special Representative of the Chairmanship-in-Office on Gender Issues.

The keynote speech was delivered by

the Honourable Pekka Haavisto,

Minister for International Development at the Ministry for Foreign Affairs of Finland.

AMBASSADOR MICHAEL GERBER

Swiss Special Representative for Global Sustainable Development

welcomed participants to the first Gender Equality Review Conference marking the 10th anniversary of the OSCE Gender Action Plan. The Conference provides an opportunity for participating States and OSCE structures to discuss the progress achieved as well as what remains to be done in the promotion of gender equality and the protection of women's rights. Focusing on implementation of OSCE commitments and strengthening the dialogue with civil society are the Swiss OSCE Chairmanship priorities, and in the joint work plan for the consecutive Chairmanships 2014-2015, both Switzerland and Serbia have expressed strong commitment to work on enhancing gender mainstreaming and the implementation of all gender-related commitments. The Ambassador concluded by stating that Switzerland, along with other participating States and civil society, must continue its engagement in women's human rights on the road to a gender-equal world.

LAMBERTO ZANNIER

OSCE Secretary General


opened by discussing the special significance of the Gender Equality Review Conference, aimed at assessing the implementation of the 2004 Action Plan for the Promotion of Gender Equality in the year of its 10th anniversary. The Secretary General noted the profound impact of the Action Plan on the way the OSCE views security, and the difference it has made in how the OSCE develops policies, programmes and projects - facilitating steps towards more equitable societies in the participating States. Highlighting improvements in the number of women among professional staff at the OSCE as well as the increase of women in the positions of Head and Deputy Head of Field Operations and Institutions, the Secretary General expressed the positive impact of these trends on OSCE projects and activities. While stating that some commitments have yet to be implemented - women are still under-represented in the first dimension and gender mainstreaming in the economic-environmental dimension continues to face obstacles - participating States need effective mechanisms for sharing experiences and good practices with gender mainstreaming within the OSCE and among themselves.

The Secretary General concluded by pointing out numerous steps in the right direction, including the growing number of participating States that have developed National Action plans or other strategies for implementing Women, Peace and Security commitments; national legislation for combating violence against women; and attention dedicated to the political and economic empowerment of women.

MICHAEL GEORG LINK

Director of the OSCE Office for Democratic Institutions and Human Rights

remarked that participants have gathered to determine what achievements as well as gaps can be found in the implementation of the OSCE Gender Action Plan. Using the issue of women's political representation as an example, Mr. Link pointed out that the higher one looks on the decision-making ladder, the fewer women we see. Mr. Link highlighted that, despite advancements being made in the OSCE region, women continue to be under-represented in public institutions in all three branches of government – executive, legislative and judicial – particularly in decision-making roles. In fact, Mr. Link reported that women make up only 25 percent of parliamentarians in the OSCE region, and women's political participation is not the only challenge facing the region. Mr. Link spoke on the topic of domestic violence as well as women who face multiple forms of discrimination, such as Roma and Sinti women and girls. Finally, Mr. Link concluded by referencing the 1991 Moscow Document, where the OSCE participating States declared that they want to achieve not only *de jure*, but also *de facto* equal rights for men and women – calling on participants to ensure commitments to gender equality on paper, but more importantly to implement actions and measures towards gender equality in reality.



Women continue to be under-represented in public institutions in all three branches of government – executive, legislative and judicial, particularly in decision-making.

AMBASSADOR DUBRAVKA SIMONOVIC

Permanent Representative of the Permanent Mission of the Republic of Croatia to the OSCE


Permanent Representative of the Permanent Mission of the Republic of Croatia to the OSCE, CEDAW Committee Member, continued the opening remarks by pointing out the shared gender equality vision of international instruments such as CEDAW, the Beijing Platform for Action and the OSCE Action Plan on the Promotion of Gender Equality – all aimed at achieving substantive gender equality based on recognition of an existing gender inequality gap at all levels marked by ongoing sex and gender-based discrimination, violence against women including sexual violence in conflict, harmful gender practices and stereotyping resulting in exclusion of women from equal enjoyment of human rights and fundamental freedoms. Focusing specifically on the guidance of CEDAW, the Ambassador referred to the Convention as dynamic women's human rights and empowerment instrument and the CEDAW Committee as a global accountability mechanism. She recommended that Committee recommendations should be used by all its State parties but also by other stakeholders such as the OSCE field missions when they are supporting participating States to meet their international and regional commitments. Participating States have committed themselves to make equality between women and men an integral part of their national policies and within the OSCE²¹ and have endorsed the OSCE Plan for Promotion of Gender Equality. The Ambassador concluded by asserting that the CEDAW Convention and the OSCE GAP are complementary instruments that are mutually reinforcing complimentary tools for the elimination of discrimination against women and the practical realization of gender equality that is an essential component of security and stability in the OSCE region.

²¹ In the Decision N.14 of 2004 at the OSCE Ministerial Council participating States recognized “that equal rights of women and man are essential to peace, sustainable democracy, economic development and therefore to security and stability in the OSCE region”.

HONOURABLE PEKKA HAAVISTO

*Minister for International Development
at the Ministry for Foreign Affairs of Finland*

The keynote address was given by Honourable Pekka Haavisto, Minister for International Development at the Ministry for Foreign Affairs of Finland, who opened by pointing out that Finland's commitment to gender equality is born from the experience that the country has benefited enormously from increasing gender equality and women's participation in all sectors of society. He then focused his attention on how to further integrate gender into a comprehensive security strategy, as the fifteenth anniversary of UN Security Council Resolution 1325 approaches. The Minister called on the opportunity to review the status of implementation and consider ways forward. Specifically, the OSCE, as the world's largest regional security organization, is well-positioned to make a unique and important contribution in advancing gender equality.



Finland's commitment to gender equality is born from the experience that the country has benefited enormously from increasing gender equality and women's participation in all sectors of society.

Minister Haavisto emphasized the need to address the protection and distinct needs of women and girls in conflicts, including supporting their active roles in preventing, managing and solving conflicts, and building more durable peace. Speaking on women's role in mediation as a case in point, he commended OSCE activities in mainstreaming a gender-sensitive approach to mediation and expressed hope that the OSCE Group of Friends of Mediation²² will also be instrumental in mobilizing support for women's participation in mediation.

The Minister reiterated that active participation of women at all levels is a key consideration of gender equality and some women, such as in the case of Roma and Sinti women, are among the most vulnerable and suffer from multiple discrimination. Calling for empowerment and awareness-raising to create environments where women can act on their own behalf, and on an equal standing with men, will create groups that can tackle the inequality and vulnerabilities that they face. In times of crisis, inequalities often leave women in a more vulnerable situation as conflicts aggravate these vulnerabilities. Speaking on the situation in Ukraine, Mr. Haavisto shared his appreciation with the way Ambassador Ertugrul Apakan highlighted the importance of incorporating a gender perspective in the work of the Special Monitoring Mission. Mr. Haavisto concluded his keynote address by praising the gains that the OSCE has the potential to bring in promoting gender equality and mainstreaming it into security, including the traditional political-military dimension as well as promoting gender equality through political participation and economic empowerment and fighting gender-based violence.

²² Launched in March 2014 by Finland, Turkey and the Swiss Chairmanship.



DISCUSSION

In the open discussion that followed the presentations, participants expressed the importance of taking ownership over the promotion and achievement of gender equality, with a special focus on the importance of speaking out against all forms of gender-based violence as well as increasing women's political participation. Additionally, participants acknowledged the need to address multiple discriminations and compounded vulnerabilities, such as those experienced by Roma and Sinti women and other marginalized groups of women. Finally, many participants spoke on the urgency for gender mainstreaming in the conflict cycle, including the areas of conflict resolution and mediation.



CONFERENCE SESSIONS

A GENDER PERSPECTIVE IN CRISIS MANAGEMENT

OSCE's comprehensive security approach is strengthened by its commitments on gender equality as it provides a holistic perspective of the causes and consequences of crisis and conflict. This recognition is reflected through the OSCE policy framework for implementing the women, peace and security agenda through several Ministerial Council Decisions.²³ Additionally, participating States are called upon to pay special attention to the situation of women from vulnerable groups, specifically Roma and Sinti women, in crisis and post-crisis situations.²⁴

The OSCE serves as a key instrument for early warning, conflict prevention and resolution, crisis management and post-conflict rehabilitation²⁵ and, as such, promotes equal opportunities for men and women into the OSCE's conflict cycle policy and programming. This session, moderated by Ms. Bilge Koçyiğit, FSC Coordinator on UNSCR 1325, Counselor, Permanent Mission of Turkey to the OSCE, afforded participants the opportunity to discuss entry points and invigorate on-going efforts to find practical mechanisms and implementation tools to enhance its conflict cycle initiatives in accordance with the Women, Peace and Security agenda.

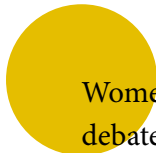
²³Including MC. Dec/14/04 on the Gender Action Plan; the dedicated MC. Dec/14/05 on women's participation in crisis management and conflict resolution; as well as MC. Dec/3/11 on the inclusion of gender issues in early warning and early action. ²⁴The OSCE Action Plan on Improving the Situation of Roma and Sinti within the OSCE Area (2003). ²⁵The OSCE's role is made clear through a regional arrangement under Chapter VIII of the Charter of the United Nations.

AMBASSADOR ERTUGRUL APAKAN

Chief Monitor of the OSCE Special Monitoring Mission to Ukraine

made clear that women's participation in the political debate is a critical ingredient of any peace process. The Ambassador specifically noted the importance of raising the profile of women and gender issues in the present crisis. Similarly, he acknowledged the fact that women and children make up much of the populations affected by crises, as well compose the majority of community-based organizations who provide assistance to people in need. Current efforts in Ukraine are focused on monitoring and reporting along with dialogue and facilitation. The Chief Monitor reported that monitors interacting with women and civil society actors hear the call for increased transparency, democracy and peaceful dialogue. Pointing out the key role of women and youth in fostering peace and transforming societies, the Ambassador reaffirmed the critical voice of women in institutional, social and local-level thinking. The wealth of knowledge women bring to the table, as providers of humanitarian assistance, services, and educators, gives them a broad perspective on the challenges and needs of communities – and that knowledge must be brought to the peace process.

The Chief Monitor reflected on the high participation of women in Maidan demonstrations, including in leadership roles and in transforming the movement into advocacy-based strategies for democratic reforms, good governance and anti-corruption efforts. Challenges remain, however, with only 26% of Special Monitoring Mission to Ukraine staff comprised of women and only two out of ten Team Leaders. Participating States are encouraged to nominate more qualified women to the mission in order to address this imbalance, as well as continued support, training and exchange of good practices across field operations and institutions on the Women, Peace and Security agenda. The Ambassador concluded by reaffirming his commitment to gender-inclusiveness in reform efforts in Ukraine, not only solely to advance gender equality but also in pursuit of ultimately creating safer and more peaceful communities.




Women's participation in the political debate is a critical ingredient of any peace process.

ERIKA KVAPILOVA

UN Women Country Representative in Georgia

discussed the relationship between the current Women, Peace and Security frameworks. Ms. Kvapilova outlined the development of a normative framework that grew after the adoption of UNSCR 1325, and the difference between political commitment and actual actions and results. In addition to National Action Plans on a state level, there are continuing gaps in the areas of women's contributions to conflict prevention; women's participation in conflict resolution; the protection of women and girls; women's post-conflict economic recovery; and reparations for victims of sexual violence. The CEDAW review process, along with technical support to assist with implementation and the sharing of good practices, all contribute to moving the Women, Peace and Security framework towards meaningful implementation.



There are continuing gaps in the areas of women's contributions to conflict prevention.

DR. CORDULA REIMAN

Core Consultancy & Training in Conflict Transformation, Switzerland

presented on numerous ways in which women's participation as social change agents would assist in integrating a gender perspective into the conflict cycle. Dr. Reiman also recounted the importance of men as agents for gender equality. Finally, the presentation touched upon the importance of identifying ways to track progress on Women, Peace and Security, such as the development of enforcement mechanisms and indicators, as well as the necessity of meaningful training and institutional gender approaches that defy stereotypes within leadership roles.

KARINE SOUDJNA

Head of Human Rights and Humanitarian Issues Division, Ministry of Foreign Affairs of the Republic of Armenia

stated that the development of a National Plan of Action on United Nations Security Council Resolution 1325 is being considered by Armenia. This Plan of Action would incorporate foreign and national policy objectives, with targeted implementation of strategies related to gender and security.



DISCUSSION

In the discussion that followed the presentations, participants affirmed that achieving gender equality is a priority, and made special note of the many forms of violence against women in armed conflict. The benefits of women's participation in mediation processes were discussed as well as a gender perspective throughout the conflict cycle. The importance of UN Security Council Resolution 1325 for gender equality was raised, as well as the benefits of National Action Plans. Finally, the situation of Roma and Sinti women in the conflict cycle was highlighted as an area for further action.

A GENDER PERSPECTIVE OF ECONOMIC EMPOWERMENT

Participating States have recognized that women's participation in the economic sphere contributes significantly towards economic recovery, sustainable growth and the creation of cohesive societies, and thus is essential to the security and stability of the OSCE region.²⁶ However, a lack of research and understanding of what interventions have proven to be efficient has contributed to a slowing down of progress in the area of women's economic empowerment. Integration of a gender perspective in the early phases of policy and programme design is necessary to achieve equal access to opportunities.²⁷

The gender pay gap²⁸ is a powerful example of a persistent challenge that still exists throughout the OSCE region, caused by wider gender inequality issues in the economy and in society as a whole. Although the overall gender pay gap has narrowed in the last decade, in some countries the national gender pay gap has actually widened. The gender pay gap exists even though women's enrollment in university and graduation rates is now equal to or exceeds men's. Expanding and sharing knowledge of the most effective interventions to increase women's economic empowerment will provide needed support to civil society and government policymakers as they seek to create better policies, based on evidence, that have an impact on both women and men.

Additionally, it is recognized that women from ethnic minority groups, such as Roma and Sinti women, face multiple discrimination in access to quality education and employment. OSCE participating States are encouraged by recent commitments to increase their efforts to combat discrimination against minority women, and encourage their equal access to employment, internships and mentoring opportunities.²⁹

The goal of this session was to identify key interventions that have been successful in increasing women's productivity and earnings in different economic and country contexts in the OSCE region. Moderated by Ambassador Olga Algayerova, Permanent Representative of Slovakia to the OSCE, Chair of the Committee on Economic and Environmental Affairs, participants were led in a discussion of areas of concern, effective tools and recommendations to further progress in women's economic empowerment. While progress has been made, including through the use of tools such as gender quotas, the gender pay gap in the OSCE region remains over 20%. Participating States were encouraged to make the issue of economic empowerment for all women a priority that is reflected through the promotion of equal opportunities.

²⁶ MC. Dec/ 10/11 on Promoting Equal Opportunities for Men and Women in the Economic Sphere. - ²⁷ OECD, Promoting Pro-Poor Growth: the role of empowerment – © OECD 2012. - ²⁸ The gender pay gap is the difference between men and women's pay, based on the average difference in gross hourly earnings of all employees. The impact of the gender pay gap means that women earn less over their lifetimes; this results in lower pensions and a higher risk of poverty in old age. - ²⁹ Ministerial Council Decision 4/13, Enhancing OSCE Efforts to Implement the Action Plan on Improving the Situation of Roma and Sinti Within the OSCE Area, With a Particular Focus on Roma and Sinti Women, Youth and Children.

OLGA BATALINA

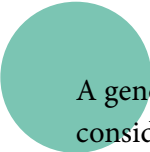
Deputy Head of the Russian Federation State Duma Committee on Family, Women and Children

spoke about the importance of assisting women in balancing competing roles, emphasizing the need for social support for women so that they can both work and care for children. She also remarked that another measure to assist with women's economic empowerment is the creation of employment programmes for women, specifically focused on women returning to work after maternity leave or caring for children.


MARI TEIGEN

Research Director, Institute for Social Research in Norway

continued the theme of the importance of equal opportunities for men and women. Ms. Teigen explained how the use of quotas in Norway, ultimately giving women 40% of positions on corporate boards, was a successful tool in achieving gender balance.



A gender perspective should be considered at every level of the budgetary process and policies should actively work to remedy the gender pay gap.



Switzerland has developed a tool to assist companies in eliminating gender discrimination from their salary structures and such tools are encouraged to eliminate the gender pay gap.

SYLVIE DURRER

Director of the Swiss Federal Office for Gender Equality

emphasized the need for equal pay for equal work. There remains a great need to eliminate gender discrimination within the workplace and labour market in order to achieve actual equality. Switzerland has developed a tool to assist companies in eliminating gender discrimination from their salary structures and such tools are encouraged to eliminate the gender pay gap.

FRIEDERIKE SCHWARZENDORFER

Deputy Director General of the Budget Department in the Austrian Ministry of Finance

discussed the specific tool of gender mainstreaming in the budgetary process to advance gender equality. In a presentation about how to implement gender budgeting, Dr. Schwarzenborfer illuminated the objectives of gender budgeting – including taking into account the special needs of men and women, focusing on the economic independence and equality of women, and giving the opportunity for women to participate equally in all fields of social and economic life and decision-making. She emphasized

using an integrated approach, and provided a detailed explanation of performance budgeting on different budget levels, using the Austrian context as an example where gender budgeting is referred to in the Austrian Constitution and implementation is integrated throughout all levels of performance budgeting. She encouraged a gender perspective to be considered at every level of the budgetary process and policies should actively work to remedy the gender pay gap.

KRISTINA SAGHATELYAN

Syunik Women's Resource Centers Network in Armenia

described the use of women's resource centres as a way to create equal opportunities for women. Ms. Saghatelyan shared information about the three women's resource centers in the Syunik region to illustrate project activities dedicated to women's empowerment, initiated by the OSCE Office in Yerevan. The mission of the Women's Resource Center Network is to promote the increase in the roles and competitiveness of women at the national, regional and local levels through collaboration and civic engagement, and the activities it engages in include political involvement, economic development and social activism and support. Specifically, Ms. Saghatelyan shared that they are used to raise awareness about a multitude of issues and support women by increasing their skills and competencies in the labour market, empowering them to be active players in the economic sphere.



DISCUSSION

The discussion that followed the panelists' presentations reaffirmed the importance of equal opportunities and freedom from gender discrimination. Additionally, the need to support women in work-family life balance was mentioned, along with the importance of affirmative action to support women's economic participation. While a number of countries have gender equality strategies and the benefits of equal economic policies and increasing women's participation is not considered controversial, there are still contexts in the OSCE region where targeted initiatives are not widespread. The link between domestic violence and economic dependency was discussed and particularly how it affects women in Roma and Sinti communities. Additionally, participating States mentioned an ongoing need for economic empowerment initiatives for women in rural communities.

WOMEN'S PARTICIPATION IN POLITICAL AND PUBLIC LIFE

Participating States have recognized that full and true equality between men and women is a fundamental aspect of a just and democratic society. However, while legal and policy frameworks in the OSCE participating States guarantee equal rights for all citizens, women's participation in decision-making processes remains at low levels.

In the OSCE region, women remain under-represented in public institutions in all three branches of government – executive, legislative and judicial – particularly at decision-making levels at the national and local level.³⁰ Recognizing this imbalance, participating States have agreed to consider introducing specific measures to “achieve the goal of gender balance in all legislative, judicial and executive bodies, including security services, such as police services.”³¹ To assist States in realizing these commitments, the OSCE has been entrusted with a mandate to promote women's participation in political and public life.³²

Women's meaningful representation in public institutions is not only required to change the way democracy is perceived, but has a profound impact on the way politics is done in terms of policymaking agendas. States where women constitute a “critical mass” of policymakers and legislators are more likely to adopt meaningful laws on gender equality and domestic violence, and to ensure that there is a substantial, solid and clear legislative basis to address violations of women's rights in areas such as employment, marriage, divorce, property and inheritance. Making democratic institutions more inclusive, representative, and gender-sensitive at all levels requires that women from all marginalized groups, including minorities and migrants, and particularly Roma and Sinti, are given equal access to policymaking processes that affect them the most.³³

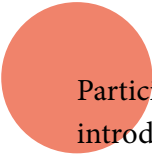
This third session of the conference was dedicated to discussions on women's participation in political and public life, and was moderated by Dr. Marcin Walecki, Chief of Democratic Governance and Gender Unit, OSCE Office for Democratic Institutions and Human Rights (ODIHR). Dr. Walecki highlighted the fact that 2014 marks the 5th Anniversary of the OSCE MC DEC 7/09 on Women's Participation in Political and Public Life, which calls for Participating States to “consider possible legislative measures, which would facilitate a more balanced participation of women and men in political and public life and especially in decision-making.”

³⁰ For example, while women's representation in parliament in the OSCE region now stands at 24.8 per cent, only 12 per cent of mayoral offices are occupied by women. A database covering 34 OSCE participating States indicates that only 10 per cent of Public Prosecutors and presidents of administrative and constitutional courts are women. This is according to a European Commission database of women and men in decision-making positions. The database covers 34 countries, including the 28 EU Member States, four candidate countries, and the remaining EEA countries (Liechtenstein and Norway). Please see http://ec.europa.eu/justice/gender-equality/gender-decision-making/database/index_en.htm - ³¹ OSCE Ministerial Council Decision No. 07/09 on Women's Participation in Political and Public Life, para 1. - ³² Specifically, the OSCE/ODIHR has been mandated to assist participating States in ensuring equal opportunity for participation of women in political and public life, 2004 OSCE Action Plan for the Promotion of Gender Equality (Decision No. 14/04), para 44 (d). - ³³ Promoting the effective and equal participation of Roma and Sinti women in public and political life is one of the active measures also proposed by the Ministerial Council Decision 4/13, Enhancing OSCE efforts to implement the Action Plan on Improving the Situation of Roma and Sinti within the OSCE Area, with a Particular Focus on Roma and Sinti Women, Youth and Children.

RADMILA ŠEKERINSKA

Former Deputy Prime Minister and Former Acting Prime Minister, the former Yugoslav Republic of Macedonia

opened the session by speaking about her personal experiences when entering politics. She described major changes in FYROM, which started with the introduction of legal gender quotas and continued with efforts to strengthen them. Ms. Šekerinska called on the participating States to be bold and introduce legislative measures to advance women's political participation, without relying on voluntary measures alone. Challenges remain with women's under-representation in the executive branch, and the role of the media in portraying women in politics is of critical importance – with women's capacities in politics assessed differently than men's and the imposition of double-standards that impact voter support and perpetuate gender discrimination. Ms. Šekerinska highlighted the need to go beyond offering capacity building for women, but rather to address systemic discrimination against women in politics. Ms. Šekerinska concluded with the recommendation of personalizing the gender dimension of politics, driven by the belief that personal stories change hearts and minds.



Participating States should be bold and introduce legislative measures to advance women's political participation, and not rely on voluntary measures alone.

ARTA DADE

Member of Parliament

continued the session by speaking of her personal story and the challenges she faced as a woman politician. She discussed the electoral framework in Albania and its gender quota legislation, and described its strengths and weaknesses. Ms. Dade recommended that the gender quota would benefit from a placement system that would prevent the habitual placing of women candidates at the bottom of party lists and thus unlikely to be elected to parliament. Ms. Dade stated that the current focus in Albania is on local government elections and working on changes in the electoral code, noting that while women are represented in local councils, they are grossly under-represented as mayors. A positive development is the cross-party Women's Alliance in Parliament that was re-established to help women parliamentarians co-operate on issues of common interest and to further the promotion of women in political and public life. Ms. Dade concluded by highlighting the importance of national mechanisms for the advancement of gender equality, including the importance of the electoral system, effective legislation, and women's caucuses in parliament.

HIJRAN HUSEYNOVA

Chairwoman of the State Committee for Family, Women and Children

addressed the spectrum of social problems faced by women in Azerbaijan. She discussed the importance of having a strong legislative framework, including laws on gender equality, combating domestic violence, preventing early marriages, and provision of gender expertise and gender-budgeting within the national budget. While discussing the issue of women's equality and vulnerability to violence, Ms. Huseynova highlighted the importance of women becoming economically independent, which would also foster their participation in politics and other fields. She also spoke on the importance of education and women's access to education, reporting that women's participation in higher education is increasing in Azerbaijan. Linking women's economic empowerment with women's political participation, Ms. Huseynova reported a significant increase of women in local politics in Azerbaijan.

DORIS BINGLEY

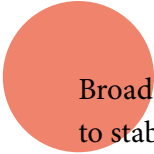
National Council of Women, Malta presented a historical context for OSCE gender equality commitments

culminating in the 2009 MC Decision 7/09, which recognizes political parties as the key actors responsible for advancing women's role in politics. She reported that current representation of women in parliaments of the OSCE's participating States stands at an average of about 25 percent, which is below the UN Beijing target of 30 percent, with Malta an example of low representation of women in its Parliament. Citing ODIHR's study on Gender Equality in Elected Office: A Six-Step Action Plan, Ms. Bingley expressed that if progress were to continue at the same rate and without serious interventions, gender parity in parliaments will only be achieved in the OSCE region in 50 years. To that point, she recommended the consideration of legal gender quotas have double the progress in terms of women getting elected than countries without quotas. Noting that political parties are the "gatekeepers" of democracy, and should represent interests of both women and men, attention to how parties recruit candidates and allocate resources should be increased. Ms. Bingley emphasized the importance of Parliaments mainstreaming gender into their policy work, priorities, and budgets. This includes the appointments to parliamentary committees, which must be transparent and gender balanced so that women are on an equal footing nominated as chairs of parliamentary committees, and not solely in traditional "women" areas. Ms. Bingley recommended Parliaments alter their working conditions and cultures to address obstacles to the equal inclusion of women and men in decision-making and leadership roles within parliaments. She concluded by recommending the ODIHR study Comparative Structures for Women MPs as a valuable resource on the topic.

ASTRID THORS

OSCE High Commissioner on National Minorities

referred to double-challenges with promoting minority women into politics, so that all voices are heard and that decisions are responsive to the needs of different groups. Stating that broad, inclusive participation contributes to stable, just and secure societies, she reiterated that there are OSCE commitments addressing participation of women and minorities. This is why participation is a large focus of the Ljubljana Guidelines on Integration of Diverse Societies, the most recent thematic recommendations produced by the HCNM.



Broad, inclusive participation contributes to stable, just and secure societies.

Understanding that women may face additional barriers - beyond those based on gender - to their participation in political and public life, Ms. Thors described the Action Plan on Improving the Situation of Roma and Sinti in the OSCE Area. This Action Plan calls attention to the need to promote the participation of Roma and Sinti women in public life. Ms. Thors described the reasons that minority women may face additional obstacles to participation and be at greater risk of marginalization, as the techniques used to exclude women are similarly used against minorities. The double challenge is that certain groups not be promoted to participate at the expense of other groups. Sharing her personal experiences as a member of the Finnish Parliament and chair of the cross-party caucus of women, Ms. Thors recommended cross-party caucuses of women parliamentarians as very efficient and effective when they have good and clear objectives. Finally, Ms. Thors made the point that the absence of minority women at the table means a failure to tap into an underused resource – emphasizing the importance of understanding and taking into account the needs of women in all their diversity.



DISCUSSION

In the discussion that followed, participants pointed out the need to combat stereotypes and remove obstacles affecting women's participation in political and public life, as well as to strengthen implementation mechanisms for existing legislative frameworks. The benefits of legislative gender quotas to increase women's political participation were an overarching theme. Participants argued that on-going under-representation of women necessitates exploring legislative measures as a solution for increasing the number and role of women in politics. Challenges identified included the need to make political parties and parliaments more inclusive and gender-sensitive, lack of effective strategies to address women's underrepresentation, coupled with insufficient funding for gender institutions. The particular vulnerability of the Roma and Sinti community and the frequent exclusion of Roma and Sinti women from public life were highlighted. The use of special measures and increased attention to the issue of minority women's participation was encouraged as part of efforts to increase women's political participation. Additionally, it was recommended that participants work specifically with ODIHR, the OSCE Parliamentary Assembly, parliaments, political parties and women politicians to strengthen women leadership and networks, with the aim to advance women's role and break through the glass ceiling in public office. Concluding remarks were made by panelists, calling for introduction of all measures necessary, whether legislated or voluntary, to achieve gender parity in political and public life in the OSCE region.

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COMBATING VIOLENCE AGAINST WOMEN

Combating gender-based violence, the most pervasive human rights violation and a cause of personal insecurity, is a critical aspect of achieving comprehensive security in the OSCE region. Violence and insecurity prevent the effective participation of women in political, economic and social spheres, and ultimately results in significant costs for government and society. Participating States are encouraged to address violence against women through legislative reform, support to victims and their children, access to justice and capacity building of relevant institutions.³⁵ OSCE participating States and OSCE Executive Structures have undertaken a range of activities to implement OSCE commitments as well as international conventions, such as CEDAW.³⁶


In May 2014, the Council of Europe's Istanbul Convention came into force, and a large number of OSCE participating States embarked on the process of reforming national legislation in preparation for signature and ratification. Effectively addressing each of the Istanbul Convention's obligations requires developing a legal framework and co-ordination of policy and action; the full participation of women and men within public institutions; and the sensitization of public officials and broader society as to the underlying gender dimensions of violence against women.

³⁵ MThe MC. Dec/15/05 on Preventing and Combating Violence Against Women - ³⁶ United Nations Convention on the Elimination of All Forms of Discrimination Against Women. - ³⁷ The Istanbul Convention of the Council of Europe, a comprehensive approach to addressing gender-based violence that came into force this year, highlights four critical areas of action: prevention, protection, prosecution and integrated policies.

LIRI KOPACI-DI MICHELE

Head of Equality Division, Council of Europe

It is against this new global backdrop that this fourth session, moderated by Ms. Liri Kopaci-Di Michele, was held. Ms. Kopaci-Di Michele emphasized that violence against women is one of the most flagrant violations of human rights - with 13 million women across the EU having experienced domestic violence; no policies that address female genital mutilation; and a shortage of shelter beds. She highlighted the Istanbul Convention as a far-reaching and binding document that marks an important step to combat violence against women and to put end to impunity.



Violence against women is one of the most flagrant violations of human rights - with 13 million women across the EU having experienced domestic violence.

HONOURABLE MARIANNA SHCHOTKINA

Minister of Labour and Social Protection of the Republic of Belarus

presented data on violence against women in Belarus Republic. Hon. Shchotkina, discussing the commitment of Belarus to eradicate violence against women, stated that each month there are over 20,000 reports of domestic violence. In these cases, the victims are predominantly women, children and elderly people and more than 90% of the perpetrators are men. The state-provided solutions to violence against women include: legal assistance to victims, crime prevention acts, administrative sanctions against perpetrators, changes in law enforcement practices, electronic recording of reports in police, hotline services, crisis rooms, ongoing trainings, and other systems to help victims of domestic violence as well as a model for working with the aggressors to avoid repetition of the violence. Hon. Shchotkina concluded by recommending an increase in preventive actions to raise awareness and to encourage victims to report, as well as further improvement of support services and legislation to support infrastructure to prevent and combat violence against women.

UMARZODA IKROM ISLOM

Deputy Minister of Internal Affairs, Tajikistan

reported on the numerous activities Tajikistan has embarked on to implement the Gender Action Plan 2004. In 2012, a new law on preventing violence in the family was passed that provides new administrative offences in this area. Mr. Islom highlighted the role of police inspectors in preventing domestic violence; adding that while women are in the police in Tajikistan, there is a need to ensure more women in senior positions as well as training for judiciary and law enforcement personnel.

DR. BEA HANSON

*Principal Deputy Director of the United States
Department of Justice Office on Violence against Women*

referred to long-standing commitment of the United States government to reduce violence against women. In 1994, the Congress passed the Violence against Women Act (VAWA) and in 2013, President Obama signed into law the reauthorization of the Violence Against Women Act. VAWA provides a comprehensive strategy embodying two main principles: safety for victims and accountability for offenders. Dr. Hanson articulated that domestic violence is not a specific cultural issue, it happens all over the world. The United States government is ready to share experience and best practices, including: how essential it is to have multidisciplinary and coordinated approach when dealing with victims of violence against women, LGBT, migrants, refugees; the importance of allocating money and human resources; and providing a victim-centered approach and avoiding secondary victimization.

BLANCA HERNÁNDEZ OLIVER


*Delegate for Gender-based Violence, Ministry of Health,
Social Policy and Equality, Spain*

spoke about Spain's strong framework regarding prevention, protection, assistance to the victims of violence. She reports that in Spain violence against women is a political and public issue and no longer a problem confined to the private sphere. Ms. Hernández Oliver explained that the state policy provides an holistic, comprehensive approach, including a full set of compulsory rights, shelters, information, and assistance. However, challenges remain - 80% of victims remain silent and engagement of men is a necessary component. She concluded by affirming the need to address vulnerable groups, such as young people and child witnesses to domestic violence, so they do not perpetuate the cycle of domestic violence in the future.

NIKOLETA BITU

Romano Butra, Romania

spoke about the importance of the human dimension in the OSCE and underlined the sense that there is not enough consultation with the civil society about violence against women. In fact, there is not much data available on how violence affects Roma and Sinti women, despite the occurrence of early and/or forced marriages in some communities. Poor women, displaced women, and single women are often targets of physical and verbal violence, however are not aware that help exists or understand the definition of gender-based violence. Ms. Bitu reported that these challenges are compounded by the fact that Roma and Sinti women face discrimination based on their ethnicity and race, as well as discriminatory policies by personnel working in support services. She concluded by recommending greater involvement of the private sector, as well as greater engagement of men and boys to change attitudes of violence against women.



Domestic violence is not a specific cultural issue, it happens all over the world.



DISCUSSION

Following the presentations, the discussion focused on the numerous challenges of addressing violence against women. Some of the continuing challenges include the tensions between deep rooted social behaviours and legal frameworks. Participants recognized that gender equality and the empowerment of women is a critical factor in combating violence against women. The increased prevalence of harmful traditional practices was discussed as a rising trend in the OSCE region and strategies for addressing these phenomena were raised. Training at all levels, including health officials and other services providing support to survivors of violence against women, was an area deemed important. The vulnerabilities and lack of protection Roma and Sinti women face due to discrimination and harmful traditional practices, such as child marriages, was a significant topic of discussion as well.

Participants emphasized the need to improve society's attitudes towards gender equality; to decrease women's economic dependency; and to focus on causes of violence against women but to also ensure prosecution of offenders. The need to engage perpetrators through special programmes provided by the states was discussed, as well continued work on the role of the media in perpetuating gender stereotypes.

Panelists responded to the discussion by reaffirming the role that gender inequality plays in the roots of violence, both in supporting violent masculinities as well as preventing women from accessing support services. The panel also recognized priorities such as: providing training to professionals; aligning legislation with international standards; supporting a multidisciplinary and coordinated approach; raising financial and human resources; using technology in awareness raising; engaging men and boys; working with civil society to combat stereotypes; collecting data on relevant indicators; and coordinating between international organizations and states.

STRENGTHENING INSTITUTIONAL MECHANISMS FOR GENDER MAINSTREAMING – CHALLENGES & PERSPECTIVES

The fifth and final session of the Gender Equality Review Conference was organized to discuss institutional gender equality mechanisms within the OSCE and to examine how gaps in current structures can be eliminated. Good practice was exchanged related to how national gender equality mechanisms contribute to the implementation of relevant OSCE commitments. A number of regional and international organizations have recently undertaken processes of assessing their gender mainstreaming structures, in order to understand their institutional challenges and identify new strategies and solutions. These processes provided good examples for the OSCE Secretariat, Institutions and Field Operations on how its own gender mainstreaming approaches can be improved, strengthened and institutionalized.

This session was moderated by Ms. June Zeitlin, Special Representative of the Chairmanship-in-Office on Gender Issues. Ms. Zeitlin provided a historical overview of the current organizational arrangements, from the adoption of the Gender Action Plan (MC.DEC/ 14/04) in 2004 to the creation of the position of Special Representative of the Chairperson-in-Office on Gender Issues in 2010. In addition to sharing the mandate of the Special Representative as encouraging participating States to give the highest possible political priority to fulfilling OSCE commitments on gender equality, she illustrated the complimentary experiences of other international and regional organizations such as those within the United Nations and Council of Europe. In a discussion on lessons learned, Ms. Zeitlin expressed the usefulness of the reforms of the United Nations gender equality architecture as well as the Council of Europe's network of national focal points made up of representatives from participating States. She concluded by providing some guiding points and recommendations for the OSCE and participating States.

SERGIY KYSLYTSYA

Chair of the Gender Equality Commission of the Council of Europe

presented on the importance of strengthening national gender mechanisms. Mr. Kyslytsya outlined the Council of Europe member state's commitments to gender equality and emphasized the need for actionable strategies that include resources. He reported the development of standards and guidelines for national and international institutional mechanisms for gender mainstreaming, and called for all such mechanisms to have clear mandates and sufficient funding in order to make progress.

SABINE MACHL

UN Women Representative in the Republic of Kyrgyzstan

spoke about UN efforts to gender mainstream, along with many organizations, agencies and groups working with a gender focus in Kyrgyzstan. While a gender lens is incorporated at a project-level, she reported that gender mainstreaming can be furthered by additional standards, methodologies, gender budgeting and training.

JIVKA PETKOVA

Advisor to the Director on Human Rights and Democracy and Gender Focal Point, European External Action Service

illustrated the changes that have been made over time as a result of gender mainstreaming. In addition to recommending that Gender Advisors be located at high levels of management, she furthered the idea that programming is impacted through the use of toolkits and training. However, Ms. Petkova reported that challenges remain in the areas of training and seeing international obligations translated into policies in partner countries.

BEATRIZ BALBIN

First Deputy Director, OSCE Office for Democratic Institutions and Human Rights (ODIHR)

began by calling for more systemic gender mainstreaming of laws and policies in the OSCE participating States. Additionally, Ms. Balbin addressed the topic of more inclusive, representative, and gender-sensitive legislative processes and democratic institutions – specifically mentioning the importance of ensuring women's equal access to policymaking. Advising that OSCE structures look into their own efforts as well, she reported on the development of a Gender Mainstreaming Road Map for 2014-2017, which contains clear objectives and assigns responsibilities for gender mainstreaming efforts at ODIHR. Ms. Balbin further highlighted the importance of continuous evaluation and assessment and recommended regular exchanges on gender equality and women's rights, including collaboration between government bodies and gender advocates in participating States, OSCE structures, civil society and particularly young women and men.

NINA SUOMALAINEN

Deputy Head of the OSCE Mission to Bosnia and Herzegovina

discussed the BiH Action Plan made up of three elements: putting the proverbial “house in order,” cooperating with domestic institutions, and gender mainstreaming in policies and practices. The promotion of gender mainstreaming is done on multiple levels such as through the report on wartime sexual violence, the Gender Equality Pledge, and working with the National Human Rights Institutions. In addition to ensuring that programmes and projects include a gender component, the OSCE Mission to BiH cooperates with domestic institutions, gender centers, locally and with political parties.

AMBASSADOR MIROSLAVA BEHAM

First Deputy Director, OSCE Office for Democratic Institutions and Human Rights (ODIHR)

concluded the panel by reviewing the OSCE 2004 Gender Action Plan and outlining the commitments over the three pillars. After enumerating the six priority areas, she commended the advancements made but identified that challenges remain. In addressing the first two pillars, the Ambassador recommended the importance of developing an internal implementation strategy that includes clear targets; the creation of gender action plans for Field Operations, Institutions and Secretariat. Finally, in furtherance of the third pillar, she proposed a network of national representatives in order to systematize cooperation, building on the lessons learned by the Council of Europe experience.

CLOSING REMARKS

The conference was drawn to a close by remarks from Ambassador Thomas Greminger, Chairperson of the OSCE Permanent Council, and Ambassador Vuk Žugić, Permanent Representative of the Permanent Mission of the Republic of Serbia to the OSCE.

AMBASSADOR THOMAS GREMINGER

Chairperson of the OSCE Permanent Council

recognized the 35 speakers over the course of the two-day conference and the intention to improve efforts to gender mainstream. Pointing out the accomplishments and obstacles to gender equality in each of the session topics, the Ambassador provided some initial recommendations. These included: the need for more women to be appointed to OSCE decision-making and senior management positions within the politico-military dimension; incorporating a gender analysis into the conflict cycle and identifying entry points for women's participation throughout; use of mentoring programs; gender budgeting; quotas for corporate boards and incentives for more women in decision-making and senior management roles in public and private enterprises; sharing of best practices to enhance women's representation and role in parliaments and political parties; promoting the signature, ratification and implementation of the Istanbul Convention; improving national legislation to combat domestic violence; training of law enforcement and judicial officers on domestic violence; public awareness measures; gender mainstreaming should be secured at the highest levels of OSCE decision-making bodies; and the creation of a Gender Equality Network. The Ambassador finished his remarks by informing participants of a tool called the Women's Human Rights App, which helps to identify legal obligations and terminology regarding women's human rights.



DISCUSSION

In the discussions throughout and upon conclusion of this session, it was noted that there are tools available to assist in gender mainstreaming, including the Gender Equality Index, a report on the effectiveness of gender equality mechanisms, and a web-based tool that provides examples of good practices. However, participants expressed a need for true agreement about gender equality and women's rights. Several participants advanced the understanding that accountability and responsibility for advancing gender equality and gender mainstreaming starts at highest level. Also, in addition to a network of national focal points and promoting women's participation in the political and economic spheres, the importance of recognizing groups of women who are exposed to multiple forms of discrimination was of particular significance. Examples of good approaches, such as the gender coach programme, were offered as effective ways to implement training for senior staff and management. The session closed with the moderator stressing the importance of renewing commitments to gender equality.

AMBASSADOR VUK ŽUGIĆ

*Permanent Representative of the Permanent Mission
of the Republic of Serbia to the OSCE*

Closing remarks by Ambassador Vuk Žugić, Permanent Representative of the Permanent Mission of the Republic of Serbia to the OSCE, acknowledged the fruitful exchanges of experiences, best practice and lessons learned ten years after the implementation of the 2004 OSCE Action Plan for the Promotion of Gender Equality.

The Ambassador expressed that the upcoming Serbian Chairmanship intends to put its efforts into enhancing existing OSCE Commitments related to gender equality. Using the Serbian National Action Plan on Women, Peace and Security, the Ambassador emphasized that successful implementation requires close cooperation of state officials with civil society and human rights institutions, as well as the inclusion of youth and use of the media. Specific mention was made of the position of Roma and Sinti women, and the Ambassador stressed the importance of making certain vulnerable groups not feel discriminated against. Finally, the Ambassador concluded by agreeing with conference participants that there is a need to strengthen institutional mechanisms of the OSCE and to raise the profile of gender mainstreaming, and affirmed support for continued efforts during their consecutive Chairmanships.

CONCLUSION

The aim of the conference was to take stock of progress in implementing OSCE gender equality commitments since the adoption of the OSCE Gender Action Plan ten years ago. The conference clearly showed that there has been substantial progress and the organization has shown leadership in developing policy commitments³⁸ in a wide range of areas such as women's economic empowerment, women's participation in political and public life, women's inclusion in the conflict cycle and preventing domestic violence. It is clear that the OSCE takes its commitments on gender equality seriously and there is a political will and understanding that gender equality within all spheres of life will contribute to the OSCE's comprehensive security concept. This commitment was evident, not the least by the high level of participation as the conference attracted more than 200 participants from all over the OSCE region, but also by the high-level participation by ministers as well as government and civil society experts. Their participation and contributions resulted in a very successful review of the commitments taken on in the Gender Action Plan in 2004.

A general conclusion that can be drawn from the conference is that there has been a practical and visible enhancement of gender equality across the OSCE region in all areas of the three OSCE dimensions. Areas where this can be seen is for instance evident in the increased number of women parliamentarians, the initiatives on gender budgeting, the increased role of men in gender equality issues and the higher rate of women in the security sector and throughout the conflict cycle compared to 2004 when OSCE took on its first gender related commitments. However, the conference also highlighted areas where improvements are needed and where concerted and united efforts are wanted to

³⁸ Ministerial Council Decision No. 14/05 on women in conflict prevention, crisis management and post conflict rehabilitation; Ministerial Council Decision No. 15/05 on preventing and combating violence against women; Ministerial Council Decision No. 7/09 on women's participation in political and public life; Ministerial Council Decision No. 3/11 on elements of the conflict cycle; Ministerial Council Decision No. 10/11 on promoting equal opportunity for women in the economic sphere; Ministerial Council Decision No. 4/13, on enhancing OSCE efforts to implement the Action Plan on Improving the Situation of Roma and Sinti within the OSCE Area, with a particular focus on Roma and Sinti women, youth and children.

ensure that women and men have equal access to resources and decision-making. An area that still needs to be improved is for instance the development of better monitoring and evaluating mechanisms to detect areas where implementation is weak and in this sense the collection of sex disaggregated data is a key component which is lacking in the OSCE. Further efforts need to be made to include women in mediation and dialogue facilitation and linking formal mediation efforts with grassroots initiatives. Women's access to loans and other assets is another area ripe for change in order to enhance economic recovery in the OSCE region in the wake of the financial crisis.

There is, in other words, a lot that remains to be done in the area of gender equality across the OSCE region. However, in comparison to where the OSCE started out in 2004, there is a higher level of awareness of how gender equality can contribute to the creation of peace, democracy, and stability in the region. Additionally, there is a marked increase in the political will to work toward the equality between women and men, boys and girls and this gives hopes for an acceleration of the implementation of OSCE gender equality commitments.

ANNEX 1: AGENDA³⁹

Gender Equality Review Conference

10 July 2014

Original: ENGLISH

**On the Occasion of the 10th Anniversary
of the 2004 OSCE Gender Action Plan**

Date: 10-11 July 2014

Venue: Neuer Saal, Hofburg, Vienna

Thursday, 10 July 2014

14:30-15:00 Registration

15:00-16:30

High-level Opening

Moderator: Ms. June Zeitlin, Special Representative of the Chairmanship-in-Office on Gender Issues

Opening remarks:

- Michael Gerber, Swiss Special Representative for Global Sustainable Development
- Ambassador Lamberto Zannier, OSCE Secretary General
- Michael Georg Link, Director of the OSCE Office for Democratic Institutions and Human Rights (ODIHR)
- Ambassador Dubravka Šimonović, Permanent Representative of the Permanent Mission of the Republic of Croatia to the OSCE, CEDAW Committee Member

Keynote speech:

- Honourable Pekka Haavisto, Minister for International Development at the Ministry for Foreign Affairs of Finland

Discussion

16:30-18:00

Working Session One: A Gender Perspective in Crisis Management

Moderator: Bilge Koçyiğit, FSC Coordinator on UNSCR 1325, Counsellor, Permanent Mission of Turkey to the OSCE

Panelists:

- Ambassador Ertuğrul Apakan, Chief Monitor of the Special Monitoring Mission to Ukraine
- Erika Kvapilova, UN Women Country Representative in Georgia

³⁹ Distributed under SEC.GAL/111/14/Rev.3

- Sonja Licht, Director, Belgrade Fund for Political Excellence, Serbia
- Dr. Cordula Reimann, Core.Consultancy & Training in Conflict Transformation, Switzerland

Discussion

18:00-19:30 Reception, Vorsaal

Friday, 11 July 2014

9:00–10:30

Working Session Two: A Gender Perspective of Economic Empowerment

Moderator: Ambassador Olga Algayerova, Permanent Representative of Slovakia to the OSCE, Chair of the Committee on Economic and Environmental Affairs

Panelists:

- Olga Batalina, Deputy Head of the Russian Federation State Duma Committee on Family, Women and Children
- Sylvie Durrer, Director of the Swiss Federal Office for Gender Equality
- Mari Teigen, Research Director, Institute for Social Research, Norway
- Dr. Friederike Schwarzenborfer, Deputy Director General of the Budget Department in the Austrian Ministry of Finance
- Kristina Saghatelian, Women's Resource Centre Network, Armenia

Discussion

10:30-11:00 Coffee Break

11:00-12:30

Working Session Three: Women's Participation in Political and Public Life

Moderator: Dr. Marcin Walecki, Chief of Democratic Governance and Gender Unit, OSCE Office for Democratic Institutions and Human Rights (ODIHR)

Panelists:

- Radmila Šekerinska, Former Deputy Prime Minister, the Former Yugoslav Republic of Macedonia
- Arta Dade, Member of Parliament, Albania
- Hijran Huseynova, Chairwoman of the State Committee for Family, Women and Children, Azerbaijan
- Doris Bingley, President of the European Centre of the International Council of Women, and Honorary General Secretary at the National Council of Women, Malta
- Astrid Thors, OSCE High Commissioner on National Minorities

Discussion

12:30-14:00 Buffet Lunch, Vorsaal

14:00-15:30

Working Session Four: Combating Violence against Women

Moderator: Liri Kopaci-Di Michele, Head of Equality Division, Council of Europe

Panelists:

- Honourable Marianna Shchotkina, Minister of Labor and Social Protection of the Republic of Belarus
- Umarzoda Ikrom Islom, Deputy Minister of Internal Affairs, Tajikistan
- Dr. Bea Hanson, Principal Deputy Director of the United States Department of Justice Office on Violence Against Women
- Blanca Hernández Oliver, Delegate for Gender-based Violence, Ministry of Health, Social Policy and Equality, Spain
- Nicoleta Bitu, Romano ButiQ, Romania
- Professor Maria José de Sousa Magalhães, Director, Union of Women Alternative and Response, Portugal

Discussion

15:30-16:00 Coffee Break

16:00-17:30

Working Session Five: Strengthening Institutional Mechanisms for Gender Mainstreaming - Challenges and Perspectives

Moderator: June Zeitlin, Special Representative of the Chairmanship-in-Office on Gender Issues

Panelists:

- Sergiy Kyslytsya, Chair of the Gender Equality Commission of the Council of Europe
- Sabine Machl, UN Women Representative in the Republic of Kyrgyzstan
- Jivka Petkova, Adviser to the Director on Human Rights and Democracy and Gender Focal Point, European External Action Service
- Beatriz Balbin, First Deputy Director, OSCE Office for Democratic Institutions and Human Rights (ODIHR)
- Nina Suomalainen, Deputy Head of the OSCE Mission to Bosnia and Herzegovina
- Ambassador Miroslava Beham, OSCE Senior Adviser on Gender Issues

Discussion

17:30-18:00

High-level Closing

- Ambassador Thomas Greminger, Chairperson of the OSCE Permanent Council, Permanent Representative of Switzerland to the OSCE,
- Ambassador Vuk Žugić, Permanent Representative of the Permanent Mission of the Republic of Serbia to the OSCE

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