

OSCE HUMAN DIMENSION IMPLEMENTATION MEETING 2006

EU statement for the working session 4: Tolerance and non-discrimination I

4 October, Warsaw

Dear Mr./Madame Moderator,

1. It is a pleasure to address you today on the issue of tolerance and non-discrimination, with a special focus on gender equality, the role of women in conflict prevention and crisis management and the prevention of violence against women.
2. Since last year two important decisions have been adopted by the Ministerial Council and the first evaluation report on the implementation of the 2004 Action Plan for the Promotion of Gender Equality has been presented. Things have started moving.
3. Gender equality is a core value for OSCE countries and it is key to democratic societies. It concerns the recognition and exercise of basic human rights for all, and is a prerequisite for the well-being of families, communities and nations. It is becoming increasingly clear that investments in gender equality lead to improvements in productivity and overall economic growth. Maintaining gender inequalities on the other hand comes at a great cost and undermines countries' ability to develop in a sustainable manner. The European Union is therefore particularly satisfied that the 2004 Action Plan has required the OSCE structure as a whole to analyze its performance with respect to gender issues in the evaluation report that was presented in June of this year. The gender section has provided excellent expertise for this exercise and we are pleased that it has been strengthened in human resources. It is now vital that senior management in all departments show clear commitment to the implementation of the Action Plan. Gender equality issues concern everyone, men as well as women, and should not automatically be the responsibility of women in a specific unit, they are not "women's issues" but they have to be mainstreamed into all decision making processes. In this context, the EU is following with great interest the training of the gender focal points. We are also very pleased with the efforts to develop projects and programs such as the promotion of women's participation in political and public life.
4. The EU looks forward to projects and programs with a similar thrust in the political-military dimension such as the proposed training modules for the CPC borders team. Decision 14/05 of the Ministerial Council in Ljubljana squarely underlines the importance of implementing UN Security Council Resolution 1325 on Women, Peace and Security also within OSCE operations and programs.
5. Let me take this opportunity to inform you about recent EU-activities regarding Resolution 1325: After the adoption of a first set of measures in November an exchange of national best practices was

conducted in early spring. It revealed that while awareness of 1325 was broad, there was still scope for action at the national level. At the EU level, we have elaborated since then a concrete check list for the planning and conduct of operations in the framework of the European Security and Defence Policy. This check list seeks to ensure gender mainstreaming and implementation of UNSCR 1325 from the early planning to the conduct of ESDP operations, including their follow-up. But this is only the beginning. More efforts on this matter are also needed in OSCE activities.

6. Resolution 1325 also refers to the role of electoral systems when it comes to ensuring the human rights of women in post-conflict situations. The European Union welcomes that gender specific analysis of election processes and women's participation in elections has been incorporated into ODIHR methodology and now features as a standard element of ODIHR preliminary statement statements and final reports. In this context, I am pleased to inform you that European Union Election Observation Missions (EU EOM) are drawing on this experience, and incorporating it into their standard observation methodology. A good example of this can be seen in the EU EOM recently deployed to Yemen. We also welcome that this analysis is fed into recommendations to the participating State regarding possible changes in electoral legislation and practices. In this context we would like to highlight the activities that have been undertaken by the Contact Point on Roma and Sinti Issues that includes amongst others, Romani women being selected as Short Term Observers to elections in South Eastern Europe. Awareness raising on gender issues also on other areas is an important step to fight the double discrimination and vulnerability women from these communities often face.

7. Finally, I would like to refer to the persisting level of violence against women and girls throughout the OSCE region. Decision 15/05 from the Ministerial Council of Ljubljana raises important measures that have to be undertaken by participating States in the area of legislation, policy and programming in order to prevent and combat all forms of gender based violence. The EU welcomes efforts by ODIHR to assist with specific legislation and training programs for instance for lawyers on how to pursue domestic violence cases in court.

Thank you, Mr./Madame Moderator.

The Accessing Countries Bulgaria and Romania, the Candidate Countries Turkey, Croatia ¹ and the former Yugoslav Republic of Macedonia, the Countries of the Stabilisation and Association Process and potential candidates Montenegro and Serbia, EFTA country Iceland, member of the European Economic Area, as well as Ukraine align themselves with this statement.

¹ Croatia and the Former Yugoslav Republic of Macedonia continue to be part of the Stabilisation and Association Process