



PERMANENT DELEGATION OF NORWAY  
TO THE OSCE

STATEMENT MARKING THE OCCASION OF THE INTERNATIONAL DAY OF THE  
ELIMINATION OF VIOLENCE AGAINST WOMEN

Delivered by Ambassador of Iceland Guðni Bragason at the Permanent Council  
Vienna, 26 November 2020.

CHECK AGAINST DELIVERY

Mr. Chair,

I am speaking on behalf of Canada, Georgia, Liechtenstein, Mongolia, Norway, Switzerland, Ukraine, the United Kingdom and my own country Iceland.

Let me start by welcoming Special Representative on Gender, Melanne Vermeer, to the Permanent Council and thank her for her contribution.

For most of us, our home is our safe place. However, this is not the case for all. For women and girls exposed to domestic violence, home is a dangerous place. One in two women killed worldwide in 2017 were killed by their partners or family, while, in comparison, one in 20 men were killed under similar circumstances. Violence is as serious a cause of death and incapacity among women of reproductive age as cancer, and a greater cause of ill health than traffic accidents and malaria combined.

This year, strict infection control measures have forced many to spend more time at home with their abuser, while help lines and crisis centres have been less available. Before the pandemic, 30 percent of women and girls in the world experienced violence at some point during their life. The UN reports that during the COVID-19 pandemic, every type of violence against women and girls has increased. Everywhere. With the International Day of the Elimination of Violence against Women, we are reminded of the devastating physical, psychological and social impact of gender based violence.

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Although in recent years the voices of activists and survivors through movements such as #MeToo and #NotOneMore have reached across the globe, violence against women and girls continues in every country. Rooted in gender inequality, violence against women stems from outdated social norms, discriminatory practices, and repressive attitudes. It takes many forms, including sexual violence, human trafficking, domestic violence, intimate partner violence, threats and harassment, and it occurs both online and offline. We know that certain groups of women and girls face heightened risks, such as those who are indigenous, racialized, experiencing homelessness, living with disabilities, and more. Ending violence against women and girls also includes ending harmful practices, such as child, early, and forced marriage and female genital mutilation.

We cannot accept that millions of girls are considered to be of less value than boys, to the extent that they are neglected, abused, subjected to violence, and even murdered. Upholding universal conventions and human rights is critical in this regard, and we must redouble our efforts to ensure that hard-won progress is not set back by the impacts of the COVID-19 pandemic. It is essential to continue to stress that men and boys bear a particular responsibility to take a clear stand against violence directed at women and girls.

Comprehensive security must mean security for all and everywhere. As participating States we must look at ourselves; through words, actions and inactions, discriminatory laws or leniency towards perpetrators, we allow violence against women to continue.

As we conduct our work, we must recognize the many women on the frontlines of the fight for freedom and equality – serving as journalists, political figures, or human rights defenders – and condemn the targeted forms of abuse they continue to face. We must invest in evidence-based prevention, and increase the proportion of funding to women’s rights organisations on the frontline.

We have committed, through the Sustainable Development Goals, to end all forms of violence against women and all harmful practices by 2030. To reach this objective, we must use all the tools in our toolbox. The support to implementation of relevant commitments offered by the field operations, ODIHR, and the Gender Section is important in this regard. In the OSCE, we can achieve comprehensive and sustainable security through sustainable development.