



## **Organization for Security and Co-operation in Europe**

**Secretary General Lamberto Zannier**

**Opening Remarks**

**Gender Equality Review Conference**

Vienna, 10 July 2014

Excellencies,

Ladies and Gentlemen,

I am very pleased to be here for the first Gender Equality Review Conference ever held in the OSCE. It has a special significance since it is aimed at assessing the implementation of the 2004 Action Plan for the Promotion of Gender Equality in the year of its 10<sup>th</sup> anniversary. This important policy document has had a profound impact on the way the OSCE views security, making a real difference in how we develop our policies, programmes and projects. The Gender Action Plan has created changes in the Organization and facilitated steps towards more equitable societies in the participating States.

At the 1999 Istanbul Summit the OSCE Heads of State and Government recognized that women's full and equal exercise of their human rights is essential to achieve a more peaceful, prosperous and democratic OSCE region. They also committed the OSCE and its participating States to making equality between women and men an integral part of their policies, both within their own societies and within the Organization. The Gender Action Plan resulted from this commitment.

Eleven years later, in the 2010 Astana Summit Commemorative Declaration, the OSCE Heads of State and Government again emphasized that equality between women and men is 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. Since the adoption of the Astana Declaration, the OSCE has initiated a process to

strengthen the Organization's capacities so that it can better respond to both old and new challenges. Gender equality, as a key element of our holistic understanding of security, is an integral part of this process.

When we look back over the past ten years since the adoption of the Gender Action Plan, we should be happy to see a good deal of progress in the area of gender equality. For example, in 2004, we had 15 per cent women in senior management positions throughout the Organization, and today we have 35 per cent. Very few political institutions or private enterprises have such a high share of leadership positions occupied by women. In the last two years alone, we have seen an increase of women in the positions of Head and Deputy Head of Field Operations and Institutions, and I hope this trend will continue.

We have also seen significant improvement in the percentage of women among our professional staff. In 2004, 36 per cent of the professional staff were women, compared to 48 per cent today. Our staff are also more aware of the need to include gender analysis throughout the project cycle and policy development in order to strengthen the effectiveness and impact of OSCE projects and activities, as well as to ensure they reach a larger and more diverse audience. Allow me to cite just one recent example of the impact of these efforts: In the Special Monitoring Mission to Ukraine, 28 per cent of the 233 monitors are women, and for the first time in an OSCE mission of this kind, a Gender Adviser has been deployed to assist the mission in reaching out to women and assessing the special needs of women in the current crisis. I am convinced this has a positive impact on the mission's work by providing a more comprehensive understanding of the impact of the crisis on Ukrainian society.

The OSCE also assists participating States in enhancing their implementation of gender equality commitments. For instance, last year we organized a conference in Almaty to discuss what practical steps need to be taken to implement the Women, Peace and Security commitments in the OSCE region. The OSCE also launched an analysis of the National Action Plans on UN Security Council Resolution 1325 in our region in order to identify best practices for its practical implementation. The study's findings, which will be presented in October, are intended to assist States when they revise their Action Plans as well as when they develop new ones. We are also looking at how to better integrate minority and migrant women into society, and we have launched a mentoring network to help strengthen their prospects for achieving greater economic and social independence.

Over the past decade, we have also seen increasing efforts among the participating States to promote gender equality on a national level. A growing number of participating States has developed National Action plans or other strategies for implementing Women, Peace and Security commitments. National legislation and mechanisms for combating violence against women have been improved and more attention is being paid to the political and economic empowerment of women.

These are all steps in the right direction. We have come a long way in the past ten years – but we are not yet where I think we ought to be. Some commitments have yet to be implemented. For instance, we still lack women working in the first dimension within the Organization. Although our efforts to mainstream gender in the first dimension have improved, further work is needed in this area. We could also do better in finding entry points for mainstreaming gender into our projects in the economic-environmental dimension. Even more importantly, participating States need more effective mechanisms for sharing their experiences and good practices with gender mainstreaming with the OSCE and among themselves; this would enable us to better assess the status of implementation in our countries and to close existing gaps.

So there is still much work to be done. But we should not be discouraged. Let's take pride in our accomplishments thus far, and use this conference to identify creative solutions to overcoming the remaining barriers to full equality of women and men. We need to build a future that is truly inclusive and that responds to the needs of all people. This is essential to maintain peace and stability throughout the OSCE region.

Before I conclude, I would like to thank Austria, Finland, Liechtenstein, Norway, Serbia, Switzerland, Turkey and the United States for providing the financial support that made this important conference possible.

Ladies and Gentlemen, thank you for your attention. I urge you to seize the opportunity that this review conference provides to find effective ways to reach our goal of gender equality.