



**United States Mission to the OSCE**  
**U.S. Statement for the**  
**Forum for Security Cooperation**  
**Security Dialogue on Women, Peace and Security**

As Delivered by Deputy Arms Control Delegate Spencer Fields  
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Thank you, Madam Chair,

And thank you to our distinguished panelists for sharing their insights with us and answering our questions today.

The United States is deeply committed to advancing gender equity and equality as a vital element of peace and security. The full, equal, and meaningful participation of women at all levels of political and security decision-making is essential to achieving sustainable peace and security in the OSCE region and around the globe. To this end, we are a proud donor to the OSCE Extra-Budgetary initiative “Empowering young professionals in the security sector towards confidence- and security-building in the OSCE area,” also known as the *Scholarship for Peace and Security*. This year 85 percent of the 130 program graduates are women and 42 of these young women professionals have been invited to Vienna for a November 6-10 program that includes the November 8 FSC.

Madam Chair,

As we have heard many times in this Forum, women are disproportionately affected by war and conflict. We are reminded of this each time we discuss Russia’s war of aggression against Ukraine. Every day brings horrendous new stories of Russia’s forces perpetrating violence against Ukrainian women and girls. The UN has verified the killing of at least 2,296 women and girls between the start of Russia’s full-scale invasion of Ukraine and the beginning of 2023. UN Women assesses that the actual number is likely much higher.

Russia’s war of choice has also led to a massive surge in reports of gender-based violence, including conflict-related sexual violence. The Independent International Commission of Inquiry on Ukraine reported in September that in the

Kherson region alone, Russia's soldiers raped and committed other forms of sexual violence against women of ages ranging from 19 to 83 years old. There are horrific reports that family members were often deliberately kept in an adjacent rooms, forced to listen to their loved ones being attacked.

Furthermore, women and children represent 90 percent of the 7.9 million Ukrainians forced to flee to other countries. Of those displaced inside Ukraine, 68 percent are women. Many have lost their homes and jobs and lack access to basic social services and protection. After one year of war, 7.8 million women and 2 million girls in Ukraine needed assistance. As we approach the second anniversary of Russia's full-scale war against Ukraine, these numbers have steadily increased.

Madam Chair,

Conflict and crises are not gender neutral, thereby our responses to them must be gender responsive. When women are disproportionately affected by an issue, they should not be significantly underrepresented in the response. Yet, when these fora approach such issues, particularly those in the political-military sphere, more often than not, they use traditional frameworks and mindsets that systemically exclude women as well as historically marginalized populations. We must plan and account for the unique security needs for the entire population through our relief and recovery efforts.

Arms control is no exception. Even when we look here within the OSCE, among the 115 registered delegates to the FSC, only 25 are women, or roughly 22 percent of the total. Among the military advisors of the OSCE's 57 participating States, there is just one woman. We need diverse perspectives to address the security challenges facing us in the OSCE region. We would do well to undertake focused efforts to ensure full and meaningful participation of more women, as well as to include more diverse voices and experiences here in the FSC. This means within diversity of thought, but also intersecting identities such as race, ethnicity, religion, sexual orientation, ability, and socioeconomic class.

Achieving peace and security is not simply casting a vote or advocating for and taking a position on an issue. It requires leveraging everyone's interests, knowledge, and experience to craft sustainable solutions and policies. People of

different genders, whatever country they come from, look at the same issues through different lenses. Therefore, to achieve sustainable peace and lasting security for everyone, it requires active and meaningful participation from all of us and the systematic inclusion of those perspectives through an analysis framework that considers gender as a factor.

For the United States, the passage of the Women, Peace, and Security Act of 2017 enshrined our own commitment to equal opportunity for women in this arena into law. This law obliges the United States to implement, both at home and abroad, the principles of the Women, Peace and Security agenda based on the 2000 UN Security Council Resolution 1325, which recognizes the importance of women's involvement in peace and security issues, catalyzing improved solutions that contribute to long-lasting stability.

That said, no one can achieve progress alone. A diverse coalition of champions must be mobilized to support the WPS agenda including national and local governments, men and women civil society leaders, regional multinational fora, international organizations, the private sector, religious groups, and male allies. In that spirit, we applaud Iceland's initiative to host in the Hofburg a "Barbershop Conference" on October 31, which is designed to encourage men to become actively engaged in addressing negative stereotypes of masculinities and promoting gender equality, while also increasing their understanding of the WPS agenda and its role in promoting international peace and security. We look forward to participating in this event. The first step to lasting change most often starts at home, so what better place to begin than right here in the FSC.

Thank you, Madam Chair.