

REGIONAL CONFERENCE ON PROMOTING WOMEN'S PARTICIPATION IN LAW ENFORCEMENT IN CENTRAL ASIA

14–15 September 2023

Astana, Kazakhstan

 OSCE Organization for Security and Co-operation in Europe

 WIN – Women & Men Innovating & Networking for Gender Equality

 Women, Peace & Security

BACKGROUND

Despite strong commitments at national and international levels and many benefits of having more women in policing, the representation of women in security sector positions is still at a low level. In fact, female police officers continue to be under-represented across the OSCE region.

OSCE as the world's largest regional security cooperation organization is in a unique position to implement and benefit from the Women Peace and Security (WPS) agenda. OSCE's commitment to implementing WPS has been outlined in the [OSCE 2004 Action Plan for the Promotion of Gender Equality](#), in which women's participation in conflict prevention, crisis management, and post-conflict rehabilitation is enlisted as a priority area of work. It provides the basis for the Organization's activities on gender equality and assigns responsibilities and tasks to the OSCE's Secretariat, Institutions and field operations, as well as to the participating States.

Over the decades, OSCE has adopted several Ministerial and Permanent Council Decisions on police-related activities. Among those decisions, [OSCE's Strategic Framework for Police-Related Activities adopted at the Permanent Council Meeting \(Dec. 1049\) in 2012](#), specifically underlines that "(OSCE) supports, where appropriate, efforts to create multi-ethnic police services, and promotes gender mainstreaming and initiatives to raise gender awareness".

Gender plays an important role in societal inequality, as it puts women, men, boys and girls in different positions of power, risk, security and insecurity. For example, women, men, boys and girls have different needs and experiences when accessing security and justice services. Therefore, security sector institutions need to integrate a gender perspective throughout their work to effectively respond to different needs and avoid perpetuating discrimination.

Women Police Associations could potentially be a valuable mechanism for promoting and supporting gender equality within the police service and for enhancing women's roles and participation within the police. National and regional associations of women police empower female police officers by allowing them to pool their voices, thereby increasing their ability to address the challenges they face and propose practical solutions. In many countries, formal or informal networks of women in law enforcement exist.

The Gender Issues Programme, through its multi-year WIN Project ([*WIN for Women and Men: Strengthening Comprehensive Security through Innovating and Networking for Gender Equality*](#)), implemented a Needs assessment of Women Police Associations in Central Asia, which highlighted several good practices and opportunities for establishing or supporting existing networks, unions and associations of women in law enforcement.

The Conflict Prevention Centre, through its multi-year Project on Security Sector Governance and Reform (*"Support, capacity-building and awareness-raising for Security Sector Governance and Reform (SSG/R) within the OSCE: Phase III"*) has been promoting gender equality in policy discussions on SSG/R across the OSCE area. In fact, Gender equality represents one of the key principles underpinning the concept of SSG/R as a people-centred approach to security. The concept of SSG/R is closely linked to the WPS Agenda and plays a significant role in all the phases of the conflict cycle.

The Strategic Police Matters Unit (SPMU), through its police reform activities, has a specific focus on promoting the role of Women in Law Enforcement institutions. SPMU's model for democratic policing highlights that women's equal participation at all levels of policing helps to build trust and improve the effectiveness of law enforcement work. Independent and autonomous women police associations can be a useful tool to enhance the inclusion and representation of women across police structures. Within this framework, SPMU has initiated and implemented projects to promote and strengthen women's equal position and representation across all areas of policing. The project 'Women in Policing', implemented in Montenegro (2018-2020) and Uzbekistan (2022-2023), identifies factors limiting women's position within law enforcement agencies, and proposes policies and activities to address them.

The OSCE/ODIHR's Human Rights, Gender and Security Programme (HRGS) assists participating States in integrating a human-rights compliant and gender sensitive

perspective to security. UNSCR1325 and relevant OSCE commitments as well international human rights instruments provide the framework for this support. Specifically, the HRGS programme regularly delivers capacity building to security sector institutions on mainstreaming gender throughout their work as well as to policy makers and civil society organizations in implementing the WPS Agenda. In 2022, ODIHR commissioned research to further develop its understanding of the role policewomen associations and networks can play to advance gender equality in law enforcement institutions across the OSCE region. Comparative desk research and interviews led to the identification of ten elements benefitting the establishment of strong and effective policewomen associations. The programme also supports women's organizations and human rights defenders on stepping up women's participation in public and political life.



KEY OBJECTIVES:

- Provide a regional platform for exchange on good practices to strengthen women's representation in law enforcement in Central Asia
- Enable networking and knowledge-sharing between women police associations, networks and unions in Central Asia and other parts of the OSCE region
- Develop recommendations for participating States and the OSCE on how to best support emerging and existing networks for women in law enforcement in Central Asia
- Identify key success criteria for women police associations to have considerable and lasting impact on the role of women in Law Enforcement



TARGET AUDIENCE

The event will gather representatives of relevant national authorities (Ministry of Interior, Police Academies, other relevant law enforcement agencies), OSCE structures and field operations, civil society organizations, academic institutions and international organizations engaged with security sector institutions from across the OSCE region.

**MEETING FORMAT**

In-person meeting.

LANGUAGES

Simultaneous interpretation will be provided in English and Russian.

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