



EUROPEAN UNION

**OSCE Permanent Council No.1452
Vienna, 23 November 2023**

**EU statement on International Day for the Elimination of
Violence against Women**

1. On 25 November, we mark the International Day for the Elimination of Violence against Women – a day that, unfortunately, continues to be highly relevant as violence against women and girls remains a grim reality.
2. According to the latest report by the UN Independent International Commission of Inquiry on Ukraine, rapes and sexual violence have been committed by Russian forces in the district of Kherson province, where the Commission focused its recent investigations. According to the Commission, the victims of rape were diverse in age, including a 16-year-old girl and women aged 19 to 83. Most of them were in vulnerable situations.
3. The impact of Russia's war of aggression against Ukraine on all women and girls and the growing evidence of gender-based violence, including as a tactic of war by the Russian Armed Forces, is of gravest concern.
4. The EU repeats its steadfast commitment to uphold international human rights law and international humanitarian law, and to end impunity for international crimes, not least when rape is used as a weapon of war. The EU, together with its international partners, will not cease calling out Russia's violations of international law. We will continue to seek justice and full accountability for all crimes committed in connection with Russia's war of aggression against Ukraine, including for the crime of aggression.

Mr Chair,

5. Violence against women and girls remains one of the most prevalent and pervasive human rights violations in the world. It also continues to be a serious

obstacle to achieving equality, development and peace, as well as an obstacle to the full enjoyment of the human rights and fundamental freedoms of all women and girls globally.

6. The EU condemns the increasing reprisals, violence, threats, and attacks against women and girls and expresses sincere concerns about the disproportionate effect that armed conflicts continue to have on women and girls worldwide, as well as the prevalence of sexual and gender-based violence. Also, online violence is on the rise, targeting, in particular, women in public life but affecting all women.
7. The EU is committed to applying a coordinated approach to risk mitigation and the prevention of all forms of sexual and gender-based violence and will ensure that responses are victim- and survivor-centered and trauma-sensitive, including by access to sexual and reproductive health care services, as well as mental health and psychological support.
8. The EU reaffirms the validity of the EU Strategic Approach to WPS, and commits to the full implementation of the EU's Action Plan on WPS 2019-2024, in which the EU commits to supporting all efforts for institutional mechanisms to be established for the protection of women and girls, as well as men and boys, in fragile and conflict-affected contexts to help prevent all forms of sexual and gender-based violence.
9. Furthermore, as armed conflicts and humanitarian emergencies put LGBTI persons at particular risk, more needs to be done to offer them support, protection and safe spaces.
10. The Council of Europe's Convention on Preventing and Combating Violence against Women and Domestic Violence (the Istanbul Convention), ratified by the EU, defines a set of standards on ensuring protection for victims and bringing perpetrators to justice.

Mr. Chair,

11. Echoing this year's global campaign on EVaW, there is #NoExcuse for not investing in the prevention of all forms of violence against women and girls.

The Candidate Countries NORTH MACEDONIA*, MONTENEGRO*, ALBANIA*, UKRAINE, the REPUBLIC OF MOLDOVA, and BOSNIA and HERZEGOVINA*, the Potential Candidate Country GEORGIA, and the EFTA country ICELAND, member of the European Economic Area, as well as SAN MARINO align themselves with this statement.

* North Macedonia, Montenegro, Albania and Bosnia and Herzegovina continue to be part of the Stabilisation and Association Process.