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OSCE Human Dimension Implementation Meeting Warsaw, 11-22 September 2017

Working session 16: Tolerance and non-discrimination I, including equality of opportunity for women and men, implementation of the OSCE Action Plan for the Promotion of Gender Equality, prevention of violence against women and children

Madame Moderator,

I am honoured to speak on behalf of the European Union and its Member States. I would like to deliver our key messages and recommendations on today's topic.

The European Union remains fully committed to efforts to promote the important subject of gender equality. We are committed to advancing the empowerment of all women and girls and to preventing violence against women and children. Unlocking the potential of half the world's population is in everyone's interests; it is not only the right, but the smart thing to do, as it will lead to a more stable, more prosperous world. Gender equality is at the core of the EU's values and is enshrined in its legal and political framework. It is vital for achieving the SDGs and cuts across the whole 2030 Agenda. The EU and its Member States will promote women's and girl's rights, gender equality, the empowerment of women and girls and their protection as a priority across all areas of action.

In 2015, the year of the 20th anniversary of the Beijing Platform for Action, there were significant developments regarding the normative framework of gender equality at the global level. Those new Sustainable Development Goals and the Agenda 2030 were adopted by the UN with a stand-alone goal on the achievement of gender equality and the empowerment of all women and girls. The UNSCR 2242 on women, peace and security renewed the call on regional organizations to work on the inclusion of women in peace and security issues, 15 years after the adoption of UNSCR 1325. Now, it is high time to improve the implementation of



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those commitments through concrete and well-resourced action, and to ensure that no woman or girl is 'left behind', including those who may face multiple or intersecting forms of discrimination because of their personal circumstances such as disability, race, religion, social class, sexual orientation, gender identity or other factors.

Gender equality is not a 'women's concern' but the responsibility of all individuals and of society as a whole. Men must take joint responsibility with women for the promotion of gender equality. More attention should be paid to how men and boys are involved in the achievement of gender equality, as well as to the positive impact of gender equality for men and boys, and for the well-being and health of society as a whole. In that regard we welcome the efforts of the OSCE's Men Engage Network, as well as OSCE engagement in the International Gender Champions Network, which was launched in Vienna this June.

We know that violence against women and girls is one of the most systematic and widespread of human rights violations worldwide. Globally, it is estimated that 1 in 3 women has experienced either physical and/or sexual intimate partner violence or non-partner sexual violence in her lifetime. The numbers are concerning for the European Union as well; according to 2014 EU-wide survey, approximately 1 in 5 women have experienced violence since the age of 15. The stark reality is that violence against women and girls is rooted in power imbalances and in the social norms that maintain gender inequality between women and men, girls and boys. Violence against women and girls carries social and economic costs. Recognition and establishment of the costs of violence against women and girls is powerful advocacy tool to bridge the gap between declarations and actions.

Tackling this issue is an EU priority. These are changing times in the OSCE region. It is only by working together that we can overcome some of the most pressing and difficult challenges that we face. The OSCE Ministerial Council Decision 7/14 taken in Basel in December 2014 marked an important step to tackle the issue in the OSCE region and we welcome the follow-up with concrete actions by the OSCE executive structures and participating States, including dedicated discussions, for example the symposium on combating femicide.



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We note with regret the decision of the authorities of the Russian Federation to decriminalize acts of domestic violence. This act sends a wrong signal that domestic violence is something that is acceptable in the 21 century.

We welcome this year's OSCE Gender Equality Review Conference. It proved to be a valuable forum to highlight the importance of gender mainstreaming in the OSCE, as well the scale of the task in implementing our commitments on gender equality, three years on from the OSCE's first ever Review Conference. A number of themes emerged as fundamental to successful implementation of the OSCE's 2004 Gender Equality Action Plan, including on the Gender Focal Point network; gender-sensitive budgeting; education on gender mainstreaming in practice; and making best use of the Men Engage Network.

We would like to propose the following recommendations to the OSCE and its participating States:

- Establishment of a roadmap of follow-up from the Gender Equality Review Conference to ensure concrete outcomes and sustainability;
- Enhance efforts to combat violence against and sexual exploitation of women and girls throughout the OSCE area, including in conflict situations;
- Adopt OSCE Action Plan on Combating Violence Against Women;
- Focus more concretely on implementation of the Women, Peace and Security Agenda, most notably but not exclusively in the First Dimension, including through adoption of OSCE-wide Action Plan on implementation of UNSC resolution 1325;
- Measure the effectiveness of policies to prevent violence against women and girls, including those aimed at engaging men and boys, as well as establish the cost of violence against women and girls through collecting adequate and comprehensive data;
- Elaborate the OSCE's gender markers system, compliant with OECD DAC standards in this regard as a central component of the Secretary General's annual report on gender



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equality, which should be shared with participating States to ensure full accountability and an effective reporting regime;

- Institutionalise the Gender Focal Point network to ensure it has sufficient visibility, consistency and recognition.

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

* The Former Yugoslav Republic of Macedonia, Montenegro and Albania continue to be part of the Stabilisation and Association Process.