



## EUROPEAN UNION

### **OSCE Permanent Council No.1464 Vienna, 7 March 2024**

### **EU Statement on the Occasion of the International Women's Day**

1. The European Union warmly welcomes the Special Representative of the OSCE Chairpersonship-in-Office on Gender, Ms. Liliana Palihovici, to the Permanent Council and thanks her for reflecting on the importance of gender equality for our societies and our commitments in this regard.
2. Gender equality is directly related to the OSCE's comprehensive concept of security and is an inherent part of our common commitments. Violence against women and girls remains one of the most prevalent and pervasive human rights violations and abuses in the world and continues to be a serious obstacle to achieving equality, development and peace.
3. The EU strongly condemns all kinds of reprisals, violence, threats and attacks against all women and girls, in particular the killing of women or girls because of their gender. The EU furthermore condemns all threats and attacks, both offline and online, targeting women human rights defenders, women journalists, women peacebuilders, women-led organisations, politically active women and women trade unionists. The EU's accession to the Istanbul Convention demonstrates our commitment to stepping up actions against gender-based violence and in support of its victims.

Madame Chair,

4. The impact of Russia's war of aggression against Ukraine on all women and girls and the evidence of sexual and gender-based violence, including as a tactic of war by the Russian Armed Forces, as documented by the Special Representative of the United Nations Secretary-General on Sexual Violence in Conflict, Moscow Mechanism and ODIHR reports, is of gravest concern.
5. 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 as well as OSCE principles and commitments. 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.

Madame Chair,

6. All OSCE participating States have committed themselves to gender equality, as well as to advancing women's full, equal and meaningful participation in political and public life. We stress the importance of these commitments and call for their full implementation, including the full implementation of the OSCE 2004 Action Plan for the Promotion of Gender Equality. Furthermore, for the protection of women and girls in conflicts and improved participation of women in the security sector, we must also strengthen our efforts to implement UN Security Council Resolution 1325 and the subsequent UNSC resolutions representing the Women, Peace and Security Agenda. The OSCE has an important role to play here, and we recall our unwavering support for an OSCE-wide Action Plan on Women, Peace and Security.
7. Gender equality is a core value of the EU. The EU is committed to support women's and girls' equal, full, effective and meaningful participation, in all their diversity, including in all spheres of public and political life, and promote whole-of-society efforts to engage men and boys as allies and beneficiaries for gender equality in eliminating all gender inequalities, addressing discriminatory laws and social norms and combating gender stereotypes.
8. The EU has made significant progress over the last decades as a result of equality legislation, gender mainstreaming into all other policies. Encouraging trends are the higher number of women in the labour market and their progress in securing better education and training. However, gender gaps remain and in the labour market, women are still over-represented in lower-paid sectors and under-represented in decision-making positions.
9. While we mark 20 years of the OSCE Action Plan for the Promotion of Gender Equality, we welcome all efforts by the autonomous institutions, field missions and the Secretariat in promoting gender equality within our organisation and in the OSCE region.

The Candidate Countries NORTH MACEDONIA\*, MONTENEGRO\*, ALBANIA\*, UKRAINE, the REPUBLIC OF MOLDOVA, BOSNIA and HERZEGOVINA\*, and GEORGIA, the EFTA countries ICELAND and LIECHTENSTEIN, members of the European Economic Area, as well as ANDORRA and 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.