



**EUROPEAN UNION**

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

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As we stated this time last year, each time we mark the International Day for the Elimination of Violence against Women, we acknowledge a failure of our societies. Women and girls are targeted – at home, online, in their communities or at their working place – all over the world. The European Union is no exception, with one in three women in our region experiencing some form of gender-based violence in their lives. This serves as a highly concerning reminder of the truly global character of this challenge.

There can be no room for complacency. By their actions, perpetrators negatively affect girls and women's exercise of their right to study, to work, to choose their partner or to leave them, and contribute to depriving them of their fundamental freedoms. We have dedicated 2017 to European action to eliminate all forms of violence against women and girls both in public and private spheres. Eliminating violence against women and girls contributes to global peace and security and is a part of the 2030 agenda for sustainable development. The EU will continue to work tirelessly through all instruments at its disposal to eliminate violence against women and girls, making it a thing of the past. We also welcome that yesterday's International Women Human Rights Defenders Day gave us the opportunity to reflect on the specific threats of harassment and violence faced by this group of women and the need to respond accordingly.

We welcome that in the OSCE eliminating violence against women remains high on our agenda, given the continuing need to enhance implementation of our commitments in the 2004 OSCE Action Plan for the Promotion of Gender Equality, and to address both gaps in commitments and new and emerging trends. In July 2016 under the German Chairmanship, an OSCE Conference therefore focussed on

“Combating Violence against Women”, and in June 2017, the second Gender Equality Review Conference demonstrated that tackling stereotypes and engaging men and boys were some of the areas demanding further attention in our fight to eliminate violence against women. This was also the topic of a successful MenEngage expert meeting last Friday. We also heard at both the Review Conference and in the PC earlier this year, about the specific risk of violence that can confront women on line, including those working in journalism, and how this rarely happens in a silo, often indicating the presence more generally of other forms of harassment.

We therefore welcome that the Chairmanship have proposed a draft OSCE Ministerial Council Decision on preventing and combating violence against women, which we view as timely and important in terms of promoting concrete focus on specific areas of this agenda, including violence against female politicians, and sexual violence in armed conflict. Also, the draft OSCE Ministerial Council Decision on the contribution of free and pluralistic media to security and cooperation in the OSCE region recognises that the work of journalists may put them at specific risk of intimidation, harassment and violence.

In line with the 2004 Action Plan for the Promotion of Gender Equality, we encourage the OSCE to continue mainstreaming a gender perspective throughout its executive structures – both internally, and across its activities, projects and programmes. The cross-dimensional Women, Peace and Security agenda is crucial in ensuring that women play an active role in the OSCE’s comprehensive approach to security. More needs to be done by both the OSCE and the participating States to implement UN Security Council Resolution 1325 and its subsequent resolutions. Actions speak louder than words.

At a broader level, we encourage all participating States to ratify and implement the UN Convention on the Elimination of All Forms of Discrimination against Women and to ratify the Council of Europe’s Istanbul Convention on preventing and combating violence against women and domestic violence.

The Candidate Countries the FORMER YUGOSLAV REPUBLIC OF MACEDONIA\*, MONTENEGRO\*, SERBIA\* and ALBANIA\*, the Country of the Stabilisation and Association Process and Potential Candidate BOSNIA and HERZEGOVINA, 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, Serbia and Albania continue to be part of the Stabilisation and Association Process.