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Title of document: Connecting Women's Local Experiences to Empower Change

Side Event: Wednesday, 28 September 2016 – 1 p.m. to 3:30 p.m.

Despite distances and differences among them, three OSCE field operations and their partner civil society organizations have found that grassroots approaches to empowering change can promote equal economic opportunities, increase women's engagement in political and public life and prevent and address domestic violence. In Armenia, Moldova and Tajikistan, OSCE-supported community-led initiatives, such as women's resource centres, are deepening women's impact at local and national levels. This discussion is the first time that representatives of grassroots women's organizations from the three countries will meet to share how they identify which challenges to take on, how they build advocacy and action partnerships and how they see the role of community-based organizations in helping shape local and national policy and practice.

The OSCE Mission to Moldova support to crisis centres working on family counselling in relation to domestic violence has contributed to making services to victims of domestic violence available in small communities. Support started in 2015 and consists of outreach and transportation assistance. While several crisis centres have access to state budget allocations for staff and premises, their resources for outreach is limited. Centres in Causeni, Comrat and Drochia, on the right bank, and Ribnita and Tiraspol, on the left bank, provide services through Mission support. Access to crisis services for women and families remain a challenge, in particular in smaller communities on both banks.

The OSCE Office in Tajikistan contributed to the established and strengthened Women's Resource Centres (WRCs) first started in 2004 to protect victims of domestic and gender based violence in Khatlon region of Tajikistan. Since 2004, the OSCE Office in Tajikistan has been working with the WRC (NGOs), focusing on providing free-of-charge legal and psycho-social consultations to the local population, especially to women victims of violence, raising awareness in local communities on gender equality, girls' education, violence in the family, and mobilization of community members through organizing *Community Initiative Groups* in all targeted project remote areas and involving them in finding a way to address those identified problems. Since then WRCs have been established in 18 locations throughout the country.

The OSCE Office in Yerevan contributed to the establishment of the Women's Resource Centres in Armenia in 2008. Three centres were opened in the republic's southern Syunik region and have grown in strength. In 2014 they were invited to be com members of the European Association of Women Resource Centres (WINNET Europe) the only non-European country to be a member. Since 2015 the WRCs were able to support the expansion of three new centres in Vayat Dzor and Tavush regions of the country. Projects have focused on enhancing women's political participation through capacity-building events. In the 2012-

2013 local self-government elections 71 per cent of project participants were elected o local councils. An important focus has been on strengthening women's economic empowerment through developing skills in handicrafts and business models. Over 120 job opportunities have been created through these activities. In addition, the WRCs have engaged on a number of other issues in their communities, including in combatting domestic violence. Awareness-raising events, creating support networks and assisting in referrals has been an important aspect of their work.

The Convenors would like to thank the following delegations for their support to the women's resource centres that have enabled numerous opportunities for women to advance political engagement, develop economic opportunities and provide support in a number of areas including on issues related to domestic violence. The OSCE Mission to Moldova would like to thank: the delegations of **TK**. The Office in Tajikistan would like to than the delegations of Andorra, Austria, Finland, Lithuania, Netherlands, Norway, Slovenia and the United States of America. The OSCE Office in Yerevan would like to thank the delegations of Germany, Italy, Netherlands and the United States of America.