



## **Gender Equality Review Conference 2014**

**Ambassador Thomas Greminger, Chairperson of the OSCE Permanent Council,**

### **Closing Remarks**

**11 July 2014, 17.30**

Excellences, Ladies and Gentlemen, dear colleagues

Good afternoon – this has truly been an intense day for all participants. We have heard 35 speakers yesterday and today, which makes for at least 35 great ideas on improving gender mainstreaming in our organization. And this is without counting my Serbian colleague, Ambassador Zugic on whose ideas we will all count in the coming year.

Before I summarize what the Chairmanship regards as the main take-aways from our two days of discussions, I would like to say thank you to the OSCE Secretariat and the ODIHR for the excellent cooperation. Not only did the Gender Section ODIHR and the Chairperson-in-office Representative, June Zeitlin, play a vital role in organizing this conference over the last months but they have ensured, along with the Conference Services and the interpreters, that the past one and a half days have gone by smoothly.

The first ever held OSCE Gender Equality Review Conference saw participating States and civil society take stock of achievements as well as gaps in the implementation of the Gender Action Plan and relevant other Ministerial Council Decisions. Conference participants discussed measures to strengthen implementation bring OSCE commitments up-to-date.

The Chairmanship will issue an outcome document in the coming days, listing the complete list of conclusions we have drawn from our interactive and forward-looking discussions. Now, I will only give you a concise overview of what we consider the most pertinent recommendations which may warrant further consideration as we enter the second half of the Swiss Chairmanship and look ahead to the Ministerial Council in Basel.

## **1<sup>st</sup> Dimension *Working Session One on “A Gender Perspective in Crisis Management”***

Women are notoriously underrepresented in the realm of hard, politico-military security. Yes, in past years, the discussions within the OSCE on gender and security have become more numerous and the awareness in general of the importance of a gender-sensitive approach in the first dimension seems to be on the rise. But, dear colleagues, we need to do more. The OSCE is the dialog platform par excellence but we feel that words and declarations need to be followed by actions, or – as several panelists put it very aptly – the OSCE and participating States have to “walk the talk”. More women should be appointed to OSCE Decision Making and Senior Management positions within the politico-military dimension. What rings true for all dimensions but seems most pressing in the first, moreover, is that Gender Advisors should be appointed to assist in mainstreaming gender in the programmatic units.

We continue to encourage participating States to identify women working in the politico-military dimension for deployment to OSCE executive structures as well as to mediation and negotiation teams. Finally, gender analysis should be integrated throughout the conflict cycle and entry points for women’s participation at all stages of the conflict cycle need to be identified and opened.

## **2<sup>nd</sup> Dimension *Working Session Two on “A Gender Perspective of Economic Empowerment”***

Numerous obstacles to gender equality in the economic sphere remain in place throughout the OSCE region. On the other hand, many good practices exist that should be taken into account by OSCE structures and participating States alike.

They include, for instance, better use of the mentoring programs which allow women to learn from peers about self-empowerment, the use of gender budgeting as an integral part to budget planning or quotas for corporate boards.

We have heard participants advocate for further action by participating States to reduce the informal economy sector in which a large percentage of workers are women without access to social protection. Furthermore, in the same vein of the recommendation on women in management positions in the first dimension, participating States are encouraged to design incentives for more women in decision-making and senior management of public and private enterprises.

Throughout the conference, the situation of particularly vulnerable women has been discussed, such as Roma and Sinti women. Participating States should remain responsive to the needs of women migrants and marginalized women in particular when these women enter the labor market since they run the risk of becoming victims of human trafficking

### **3<sup>rd</sup> Dimension *Working Session Three on “Women’s Participation in Political and Public Life”***

In the panel discussion on women’s public and political participation, it became clear that even though the constitutional framework of participating States may guarantee equal rights for all citizens, this often does not translate into equal opportunities for men and women.

Women remain underrepresented in all three branches of government as well as in public institutions. Relevant policies and strategies on national level should be strengthened, while discriminatory laws may help formalize and concretize the commitment towards equality. This should be complemented by sharing good practices for women in democratic processes. In particular, participating States have been encouraged to share best practices in setting legislative and voluntary measures to enhance women’s representation in parliaments and political parties, as well as to ensure equal opportunities for equitable political competition between women and men candidates in election campaigns. Political parties are key for promoting women in political and public life.

### **3<sup>rd</sup> Dimension *Working Session Four on “Combating Violence against Women – Domestic Violence”***

Colleagues, Ladies and Gentlemen,

Among the most pervasive of human rights violations, Violence against Women remains a significant cause of personal insecurity in the OSCE region. The OSCE champions comprehensive security, and the Chairmanship believes that the persistence of Violence against Women can only lead to one conclusion: We are all not secure in the OSCE until this crime ceases. Violence manifests itself in psychological, physical, sexual abuse of women both at home and in the communities. It is particularly pervasive during periods of crisis and conflict. And – this bears repeating – it has far reaching consequences for women’s public and political and economic participation.

In order to facilitate more comprehensive, effective and evidence based approaches to combating violence against women, the OSCE should engage with other organizations that have secured reliable and disaggregated data on the incidence of gender-based violence. Indeed, the OSCE has a bit of catching up to do in this area.

For instance, the Council of Europe has a new comprehensive instrument in the form of the Istanbul Convention. Participating States and OSCE structures have been called on to promoting the signature and ratification of the Istanbul Convention and support its implementation through national legislation.

This goes hand in glove with the necessity of participating States to improve national legislation to combat domestic violence and ensure it is aligned with international standards and OSCE commitments. The ODIHR is a particularly useful resource center when it comes to providing States with legal opinions.

The best laws do not help, however, if they are not enforced. Law enforcement and judicial officers ought to be trained to recognize and appropriately treat cases of domestic violence in order to prevent under-reporting and impunity and re-victimization as well as to provide victims with access to protection services.

Finally, the pervasiveness of domestic violence appears to co-relate with widespread public attitudes misconstruing the seriousness of the problem – therefore, measures aimed at awareness-raising and public education should be envisaged by participating States. Governments should address domestic violence at the highest level, and media should complement these efforts.

### ***Working Session Five on Institutional Mechanisms***

Finally, dear colleagues, I would like to say a few words on the last panel we've followed just a couple of minutes ago. That discussion contained a great deal of self-inspection and it is the one which, I feel, is particularly important in bringing about a sustainable and lasting engagement of the OSCE for gender equality.

As an organization, the OSCE may be able to benefit from experiences that other organizations have made in ensuring that gender mainstreaming is directed and overseen at the appropriate level within their structures – which, in plain words, can only mean at the directorial level of the

structures. Recommendations made in this last panel pointed towards establishing or upgrading a senior position on gender equality that would report directly to the Secretary General.

Gender mainstreaming should not only be done within our programs and by program officers – of course, all programs and projects of institutions should be gender-sensitive and officers should oversee that this is properly implemented.

Apart and beyond that – and this, really, is the crux, more strategic guidance from more senior decision-taking bodies needs to be secured. Gender mainstreaming should start in all senior OSCE secretariat decision-making bodies.

There is a number of other challenges with regard to the institutional make-up of gender work. Raising the profile of gender mainstreaming in the organization could be complemented, for instance, by a Gender Equality Network. Such a network would comprise representatives of participating States that would more systematically share information and liaise with the Secretariat and ODIHR and other institutions on gender equality and implementation of relevant commitments.

Moreover, the OSCE should identify ways of more systematically provide support to the Special Representative on Gender Issues in her or his work in all three dimensions in the future.

As this last panel has shown once again, cooperation with other international organizations can be beneficial to the efforts to mainstream gender in the OSCE more systematically – not only could experiences be shared but synergies may be created while overlaps and duplications may be avoided.

In closing, dear colleagues, one final point: As we go about designing the future of our organization this year and next year, we should all remain aware that a gender perspective needs to be fully integrated in all clusters of the Helsinki plus 40 process. On this note, I am pleased to turn the floor over to the incoming Serbian Chairmanship for further thoughts on the future.

One final remark before passing the floor to my Serbian colleague: the Government of Switzerland, together with the Swiss Centre of Expertise in Human Rights, developed a very useful tool, the Women's Human Rights App. It is an app that helps you find legal obligations and terminology regarding women's human rights. With that, Vuk, the floor is yours.