



United States Mission to the OSCE

Response to the Presentation by the UN Women Deputy Executive Director, H.E. Ms. Åsa Regnér

As delivered by Chargé d’Affaires Courtney Austrian
to the Permanent Council, Vienna
May 20, 2021

The United States warmly welcomes Deputy Executive Director Åsa Regnér to the Permanent Council. Your appearance here today illustrates the focus that we at the OSCE place on promoting gender equality.

We deeply value the Swedish Chair-in-Office’s efforts to mainstream gender equality into all our work across the OSCE’s three dimensions of security. The pandemic has challenged individual and public health, economies, and regional and international security in ways we could not comprehend just over a year ago. We cannot let this human tragedy reverse achievements in advancing women and girls’ human rights and gender equality. Women and girls make up half of the world’s population. We must listen to their voices, experiences, and contributions in order to formulate effective policies as we emerge from the global pandemic, and pursue a more just world based on rule of law and respect for human rights. Earlier this year, President Biden established a *Gender Policy Council* to advance gender equality both at home and abroad.

As Vice President Harris said, “when you lift up women, you lift up families, you lift up communities, you lift up economies, and you lift up countries.”

The OSCE has a broad body of commitments on gender equality to which we all have agreed. These commitments—combating violence against women; promoting women’s political participation, women’s economic empowerment, and the *Women, Peace and Security* agenda are ever more urgent as we chart recovery from the global pandemic. We will use the recovery as an opportunity to mark concrete progress towards meaningful gender equality—which includes the rights of lesbian, gay, bisexual, transgender, queer, and intersex women and girls (LGBTQI+) – as part of our commitment to inclusive economic growth and social cohesion.

The 2018 *Memorandum of Understanding* between our organizations sets the stage for our cooperation. We value the joint work between UN Women and the OSCE Special Representative for Combating Trafficking in Human Beings, and appreciate the OSCE-UN Women joint Chairmanship of the *Inter-Agency Coordination Group against Trafficking in Persons* (ICAT) in 2019 and 2020. We also welcome the series of joint ODIHR-UN Women on-line workshops in 2020, and earlier this year, which drew attention to the impact of the global pandemic on women in the OSCE area, facilitated exchange of experiences and lessons learned, and made recommendations on policy responses.

Finally, we look forward to the launch of the occasional paper entitled “Applying Gender-Sensitive Approaches in Combating Trafficking in Human Beings.” The paper, which draws on OSCE commitments, will build awareness of the importance of incorporating gender-sensitive approaches through efforts to combat human trafficking and protect its victims.

We would welcome any suggestions for how we could improve the OSCE’s coordination with other international organizations, such as UN Women, to more effectively advance gender equality.

Your appearance here today strengthens the dialogue between the OSCE and UN Women. We encourage the OSCE and UN Women to look at ways to enhance this cooperation at all levels, including with the Institutions and Secretariat, and with the field operations. We look forward to continuing and deepening our cooperation.

Thank you, Madam Chair.

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