



Organization for Security and Co-operation in Europe

Conference on “Women in the Security Sector: Challenges and Opportunities for the OSCE Area and Beyond”

Monday 1 October 2018
Vienna, Hofburg

Ladies and Gentlemen,

Dear colleagues,

It is a pleasure to welcome you to this special event. I thank the Italian OSCE Chairmanship for inviting us to exchange views on how to better integrate women into the security sector. I join Alessandro in welcoming Special Representative Melanne Verbeke to this meeting. I am also grateful to the OSCE Gender Section and our Senior Gender Adviser Amarsanaa Darisuren for their significant support to organizing this event. And, of course, special thanks go to the distinguished experts for stimulating the discussions today.

I am just back from New York, where on Thursday, I signed the first-ever memorandum of understanding between the OSCE and UN Women. I am very pleased with this development that will help us to more effectively address key gender equality challenges together. Eleven joint areas of work are included in the MoU, ranging from the implementation of the women, peace and security agenda to ending violence against women and girls, combating trafficking in human beings, especially women and girls, and preventing violent extremism and countering terrorism.

So, I am very pleased to be here with you today, and to continue on to Stockholm later today, to join a high-level conference on women, peace and security that is hosted by the Swedish Armed Forces.

Dear colleagues,

Gender equality and women's rights are essential elements of the OSCE's concept of comprehensive security. Yet, advancing women's equal participation remains a major challenge, particularly in the traditionally male-dominated security sector.

In the OSCE area, the average representation of women in the armed forces stands at just around 10 percent; and figures for the Police are only slightly higher. Of course, there are significant variations between individual states but all, even the most advanced in this respect, have some way to go to reach a more balanced gender ratio.

Improving on these truly underwhelming figures is a matter of principle but it's also the smart thing to do. The simple truth is that inclusive and diverse security sectors are more effective. Illustrating this point further, discussions today will initially focus on the linkages between women's participation and enhanced operational performance.

We will then be hearing from a number of international partners on how they are approaching issues of diversity and inclusiveness in different settings and geographical places. And later on, stimulated by these additional perspectives, we will be reflecting on the OSCE's role: in promoting women's participation in the first dimension; leveraging our partnerships; and exploring ways to further strengthen the OSCE's contribution at the global level.

Allow me to make two more remarks on women's participation.

The first relates to Security Sector Governance and Reform (SSG/R) which will feature among the priorities of the Slovak OSCE Chairmanship in 2019. Inclusiveness is a central pillar of the concept. The *Guidelines to OSCE staff on SSG/R* for instance stress the importance of integrating a gender perspective and creating equal opportunities within the security services.

In this respect, I very much welcome that ODIHR, together with the Geneva Centre for the Democratic Control of Armed Forces (DCAF), is now updating their *Gender and the Security Sector Toolkit* ten years after it was first published. So, through the SSG/R lens, clearly good work has been done and is continuing to be done to strengthen a gender perspective within the security sector. And as we move forward, we will seek to develop a more systematic approach to SSG/R – an approach that is well linked with the women, peace and security agenda.

My second remark is a more general point. As part of the fit-for-purpose agenda, we will seek to enhance our ability to generate and utilize data and to conduct better research and analysis of different aspects of the gender-security nexus. And, we will also seek to fine-tune our recruitment policies to advance gender parity more effectively at all levels, and across the three dimensions. Stronger coherence will allow us to better integrate a gender perspective into all our activities, including in the pol-mil area.

Dear colleagues,

Last year, the Austrian OSCE Chairmanship organized the second OSCE Gender Equality Review Conference; and tabled a draft Ministerial Council decision on “Women in the Security Sector”.

Despite intense negotiations that continued to the very last minute, OSCE participating States got close to agreement but in the end did not reach the needed consensus. But, despite this setback, interest in the topic remains high.

Today’s conference presents an excellent opportunity to dig deeper, exchange practical recommendations on the way forward and help prepare the ground for further constructive dialogue on the subject.

I am convinced that this will be a productive and stimulating meeting. I look forward to hearing about the outcome of today’s deliberations.

Thank you for your attention.