



## EUROPEAN UNION

### OSCE Permanent Council No 1110 Vienna, 21 July 2016

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#### **EU statement in response to the Rt. Hon. Baroness Anelay, Minister of State at the Foreign and Commonwealth Office**

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The European Union and its Member States wish to warmly welcome the Right Honourable Baroness Anelay, Minister of State at the Foreign and Commonwealth Office, to the Permanent Council. We would like to thank the Minister for this interesting and comprehensive presentation on sexual violence in conflict, including a range of themes and progressive country examples.

Having just celebrated the first International Day for the Elimination of Sexual Violence in Conflict on 19 June, we reaffirm that there must be zero tolerance for any form of sexual violence. Sexual violence in conflict continues to be used as a tactic of war and terror and can also significantly hinder peace-building and reconciliation efforts. Elimination of sexual violence in conflict is also included in the OSCE's commitments, not least in Ministerial Council Decision 7/14 on Preventing and Combating Violence Against Women that was adopted in Basel in 2014. As you, Madame Minister, pointed out, this was an important step in raising awareness of this issue within the OSCE.

The promotion of gender equality and empowerment of women is an important priority for the European Union. We believe that active participation and leadership of women in peace and security decision-making is crucial in achieving peace, security and sustainable development. Despite a large number of international commitments, women remain significantly under-represented in mediation, negotiation and dialogue processes. Such under-representation, as well as lack of gender expertise in mediation teams, seriously limits the extent to which women's experience of conflict, and consequent needs for justice and recovery, are addressed within these processes.

Experience shows that settlements agreed in formats where women have a fair place at the table are more likely to lead to sustainable peace. Women's participation throughout the whole conflict cycle, including in decision-making and mediation should be encouraged. Women's full and effective participation leads to more inclusive outcomes and contributes to lasting peace and a more gender equal society. The European Union, as a security, development and political actor is heavily engaged in supporting conflict prevention, peace processes and addressing the consequences of conflict. Women Peace and Security issues remain a key consideration in EU external policies.

Implementation of UN Security Council Resolution 1325 on Women, Peace and Security and related resolutions remains highly relevant for our Organisation. We recall in this context the preamble of Resolution 2242 underlining the important role of UN entities and regional organisations to implement fully the relevant provisions of Security Council resolutions on Women, Peace and Security. In this context, we reiterate our support for the adoption of an OSCE wide Action Plan on Women, Peace and Security proposed by Austria, Finland, Kazakhstan and Turkey. We look forward to further engage with the OSCE and individual participating States in this important area of common interest.

We would like to express our support for further work in the OSCE on Prevention of Sexual Violence in Conflict, for instance on survivor stigma. Supporting survivors and helping them reintegrate as positive, contributing members of their communities is crucial to mitigate against the long term negative consequences of conflict-related sexual violence for survivors and wider society. The OSCE could also work on capacity-building. Field operations could enhance the capacity of civil society organisations, which play a vital role in identifying and protecting victims. They could also build the capacity of judicial and law enforcement agencies to prosecute perpetrators.

Judicial reform, accountability and access to justice through field operations are important to ensure that perpetrators can be prosecuted in accordance with national and international law. In that regard we welcome the work of the OSCE Mission to Bosnia and Herzegovina on combating impunity in conflict-related sexual violence, and would encourage further focus on this issue. More generally, regular exchange

of views in Vienna would be welcome to enhance efforts on tackling sexual violence in conflict and to provide support to wider international efforts.

In conclusion, we reaffirm our strong commitment to the OSCE's work on advancing gender equality and combating violence against women. We also look forward to the upcoming events on gender including the Conference on Combating Violence against Women in the OSCE Region – Bringing Security Home to be held tomorrow here in the Hofburg and to exchanging views with the Minister there.

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, and the EFTA countries ICELAND and NORWAY, members of the European Economic Area, as well as UKRAINE, the REPUBLIC OF MOLDOVA, 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.