



**EUROPEAN UNION**

**OSCE Permanent Council 1400  
Vienna, 24 November 2022**

## **EU statement on the International Day for the Elimination of Violence against Women**

1. On 25 November, we mark the International Day for the Elimination of Violence against Women – a day that unfortunately continues to be highly relevant as violence against women and girls remains a grim reality.
2. The impact of Russia's war of aggression against Ukraine on all women and girls is of grave concern, and the growing evidence of sexual and gender-based violence, including as a tactic of war by the Russian armed forces as well as paramilitary entities controlled by them, is immensely alarming. In this context, the two reports under the Moscow Mechanism have contributed to the documentation of IHL and international human rights law violations. The Independent International Commission of Inquiry on Ukraine has held that war crimes were committed in Ukraine. The EU will do its utmost to ensure that any perpetrators are held to account.
3. The EU notes with concern that violence against women and girls, increased during the COVID-19 pandemic. A number of intersecting crises – from climate change to global conflict and economic instability – are further adding to its prevalence. Online violence is on the rise, targeting in particular women in public life, such as journalists and politicians, but affecting all women. At the same time, this violence, in all its forms, remains under-reported and overlooked, both inside and outside the EU.
4. Violence against women and girls, continues to be a serious obstacle to achieving equality, development and peace as well as an obstacle to the full enjoyment of the human rights and fundamental freedoms of all women and girls globally.

5. The EU condemns the increasing reprisals, violence, threats and attacks against women and girls, women human rights defenders, peace builders and women-led organisations both offline and online, and expresses its sincere concerns about the disproportionate effect that armed conflicts continue to have on women and girls worldwide, as well as the prevalence of sexual and gender-based violence.
6. The EU is committed to applying a coordinated approach to risk mitigation and prevention of all forms of sexual and gender-based violence, and will ensure that responses are victim- and survivor-centered and trauma-sensitive, including by access to sexual and reproductive health care services, as well as mental health and psychological support. The EU reiterates its steadfast commitment to uphold international human rights law and international humanitarian law, and to end impunity for international crimes, not least when rape is used as a weapon of war.
7. The EU reaffirms the validity of the EU Strategic Approach to WPS, and commits to the full implementation of the EU's Action Plan on Women, Peace and Security 2019-2024, in which the EU commits to supporting all efforts for institutional mechanisms to be established for the protection of women and girls, as well as men and boys, in fragile and conflict-affected contexts to help prevent all forms of sexual and gender-based violence. Furthermore, as armed conflicts and humanitarian emergencies put LGBTI persons at particular risk, more needs to be done to offer them support, protection and safe spaces.
8. The European Commission's recent proposal for a directive on combating violence against women and domestic violence takes a further step towards an all-encompassing EU-wide standard that responds to the specific needs of its victims. It aims to ensure a minimum level of protection across the EU against such violence, regardless of whether it takes place online or offline.
9. The Council of Europe's Convention on Preventing and Combating Violence against Women and Domestic Violence (the Istanbul Convention) defines a set of standards in this regard, as well as for ensuring protection for victims and bringing perpetrators to justice. It has been ratified and is being implemented by 21 EU Member States. The EU-UN Spotlight Initiative, the world's largest targeted effort to end all forms of violence against women and girls, must also be mentioned.

10. Mr. Chair, the OSCE has an extensive body of commitments, complemented by data collection and projects. The EU strongly encourages all participating States to continue to build on, and strengthen, the principles and commitments that are already in place.

11. The theme of this year's civil society-led campaign's *16 Days of Activism against Gender-Based Violence* is "UNiTE!" Let us unite in the fight against gender-based violence. Change is possible, but it requires commitment and joint action.

The Candidate Countries NORTH MACEDONIA\*, MONTENEGRO\*, ALBANIA\*, and the REPUBLIC OF MOLDOVA, the Potential Candidate Country GEORGIA, as well as ANDORRA and SAN MARINO align themselves with this statement.

\* North Macedonia, Montenegro, and Albania continue to be part of the Stabilisation and Association Process.