



STATEMENT OF THE HOLY SEE
2019 Human Dimension Implementation Meeting

Working session 8: Tolerance and non-discrimination I, including: Equal opportunity for women and men – Implementation of the OSCE Action Plan for the Promotion of Gender Equality – Violence against women

Warsaw, 20 September 2019

Mr. Moderator,

OSCE efforts to prevent and combat violence against women and girls were fortified in 2018 through the Ministerial Council decision no. 4/18 “Preventing and Combating Violence against Women”.

In that decision, the Ministerial Council calls on OSCE participating States to “organize awareness-raising campaigns on the risks of specific forms of violence facing women and girls, including through digital technologies, and on their rights and the support available for victims of such violence”. In our common work to ensure the full and faithful implementation of this and all OSCE consensus-based commitments on preventing and combating violence against women by the participating States, the Holy See believes that greater focus on two issues is necessary:

- 1) The hyper- or over-sexualized culture that has become pervasive in our societies, in the media, in entertainment and in social media, is deeply destructive to women and girls; this must be challenged. Such a culture, which not only distorts the dignity of women and human sexuality, but advances an acceptance for such distortions, represents a tragic relapse into a view of women that should have been surpassed long ago. Women are not property, women are not sexual objects, and women should not have to accept that men regard them as such, or have to conform to such a distorted vision.
- 2) A particular form of violence directed against women that should be given further attention is that suffered by girls, including very young girls, again because of their sex. In this regard, it is also troubling that even in the OSCE region, abortions of unborn girls, for the sole reason that they are girls and not boys, do in fact occur. This disturbing phenomenon must not be ignored.

It is regrettable that the implementation of the 2004 OSCE Action Plan for the Promotion of Gender Equality remains incomplete. The recruiting of qualified women to the OSCE executive structures, notably to so-called “first dimension posts”, is particularly challenging. One might need to consider, with realism, the root causes and concrete obstacles that actually impair the implementation of “strengthened and innovative recruitment strategies in the OSCE to promote equal opportunities for all,

and to ensure that well-qualified women are identified and attracted”.¹ In this regard, our Delegation would kindly ask to give additional consideration to the impact that family-friendly policies could have in this regard.

The OSCE participating States – assisted by the OSCE executive structures – should now carefully consider how to advance the implementation of the specific goals and objectives of the *2004 OSCE Action Plan for the Promotion of Gender Equality*. The same should apply to the other decisions and commitments subsequently adopted by the OSCE participating States, on women in conflict prevention, crisis management and post-conflict rehabilitation (MC Dec. 14/05), on women’s participation in political and public life (MC Dec. 7/09), on promoting equal opportunity for women in the economic sphere (MC Dec. 10/11), and on preventing and combating violence against women (MC Dec. 15/05, 7/14, 4/18). Our Delegation would, therefore, question the opportunity, at this stage, of introducing or moving on to other issues, without first having done our utmost to make good on our existing consensus-based commitments. It would also question the real necessity to duplicate the work that is being carried out in some other international organizations, thereby devoting already limited resources in the OSCE to cover the gaps within the work of other international organizations.

Hence, the Delegation of the Holy wishes to make the following recommendations:

- that OSCE participating States should ensure stronger focus on how this Organization’s work related to equality between women and men promotes peace and security within and among the 57 participating States;
- that OSCE participating States ensure that this Organization’s work related to equality between women and men avoids duplication of the work of other international organizations, and it is suited to the specificity of its mandate.
- that OSCE participating States advance efforts within the Organization to use an adequate and clear language regarding “gender equality” which complies with the common, ordinary and generally accepted understanding of the expression;
- that the Office of Democratic Institutions and Human Rights, in its next publication on violence against women or discrimination against women, devote particular attention to the harmful impact that today’s hyper-sexualized culture has on women, especially on young women and girls.

Our Delegation takes this opportunity to also re-affirm that the interpretative statements that the Holy See made in regard to Permanent Council decisions no. 638, “2004 OSCE Action Plan for the Promotion of Gender Equality” and no. 1288, “Approval of the 2018 Unified Budget” remain valid.

¹ 2004 OSCE Action Plan for the Promotion of Gender Equality, 10a.

In conclusion, the Holy See would like to reiterate its strong support for those efforts made to protect women and girls from any form of violence and exploitation, and to ensure their access and participation in every sphere of society.

Thank you, Mr. Moderator.