



**PERMANENT DELEGATION
OF NORWAY TO THE OSCE**

**STATEMENT IN RESPONSE TO THE ADDRESS BY MINISTER FOR
YOUTH AND SOCIAL WELFARE OF ALBANIA, H.E. ERION VELIAJ**

As delivered by Ambassador Robert Kvile
to the Permanent Council,
Vienna, 6 March 2014

Mr Chairman,

I join others in welcoming Minister Veliaj to the Permanent Council. Let me take this opportunity to commend Albania for their efforts in improving gender equality and for taking measures to prevent violence against women.

Mr Minister, we note your strategy of addressing gender-based violence by engaging civil society, including faith-based organizations, in addition to central and local authorities. I am sure that this approach will enhance the effectiveness of government efforts.

Your intention to work to prevent violence, protect and rehabilitate victims as well as ensure an effective legal response is a good example of a comprehensive approach.

Minister, I am also sure that your forward-looking policy will contribute to greater participation of women in political, social and economic life. This will not only lead to a better life for Albanian women, but also for the family and society as a whole.

Mr Chairman,

Today, two days ahead of International Women's Day, I would like to repeat that equal rights between men and women is a priority for my country.

But enjoying equal rights also means sharing equal obligations. The revised law on military conscription in Norway aims to recruit the best qualified and most highly motivated youth for military service. Men or women. From 2016, young women can be conscripted for military service on an equal footing with men. The armed forces will also continue motivating women to pursue a military career.

Mr Chairman,

To ensure equal rights in practice, we need to continue to take concrete action to end violence against women and children. Let me commend the European Union Agency for Fundamental

Rights for presenting earlier this week the results of the world's largest survey on violence against women. Facts are the basis for effective action.

The Norwegian government's view is clear. Domestic violence is unacceptable. It must be prevented and combated and the victims must be protected. And we must involve boys and men in fighting it.

Mr Chairman,

Gender equality is a prerequisite for a free, fair and democratic society. It must therefore be a top priority for our organization.

In addition, gender equality is good economics. A country's potential is only fully realized when women are actively involved in the labour force.

Here I would like to repeat a point I made in the Permanent Council in December of last year, namely the following: The labour force participation of Norwegian women is 16 percentage points above the OECD average. If Norwegian women's labour participation were to drop to the OECD average, the value of the production loss would equal Norway's entire oil wealth.

Mr Chairman,

In my country, women have enjoyed full voting rights for more than one hundred years. The first woman was elected to Parliament in 1911. However, we are not satisfied that women's participation in the Norwegian parliament is only 37 %. Even though we have a government with an equal share of female and male ministers. We will continue our efforts to promote equality between men and women, which in Norway is a traditional value.

Thank you, Mr Chairman.