

Human Dimension Implementation Meeting
1st of October 2007, Working Session 10: Gender Aspects of Security
Introducer: Mónica Gutiérrez Arques, Adviser on Gender Issues,
OSCE Secretariat

Excellencies, Dear colleagues, Ladies and Gentlemen:

I would like to thank the Spanish Chair and the participating States for devoting a Special day to Gender aspects of security. The Gender Section looks forward to working closely with Finland, the incoming Chair, to ensure that gender maintains the high profile that the subject deserves.

Today, I would like to point out some of the gaps in the Organization's implementation of the 2004 OSCE Action Plan for the Promotion of Gender Equality (MC.DEC/14/2004) and possible ways forward to achieve the standards and principles that we, as an organization, have set for ourselves.

Last July, the OSCE Secretary General presented to the Permanent Council the Annual Evaluation Report on the implementation of the Gender Action Plan. Starting with the challenges of promoting gender balance within the Organization, let me underline the chronic problems in recruitment identified in the report. Under-representation of women in senior and policy making positions, the segregation of women in certain field of expertise and at certain staff levels are not acceptable.

Although there has been a positive and progressive increase in the representation of women in the professional positions, increasing from 35 percent in 2004 to 42 per cent in 2006, the number of women in management positions has not experienced any major changes over the past three years representing only 17 per cent of the total number of managers. In fact, there is only 1 female head, out of 21 heads of field operations and institutions and only 2 deputy heads of field operations and institutions are women. An analysis on the nomination of candidates would be useful to better understand, and help identify, the pitfalls that women face during the nomination process and why some participating States fail to nominate women on equal terms with men.

Our statistics have shown that also fewer women apply for management positions. The Gender Section, along with the Department of Human Resources, has established a vacancy notice distribution network to directly target qualified women who would be interested in applying for senior positions within the Organization. It is important that the OSCE provides fair conditions and entitlements in an equal opportunity work environment. The current discussions among participating States in the Advisory Committee for Management and Finance on maternity, paternity and flexible working arrangements is a chance for improvement that the participating States should not miss. It must be stressed that it is only with the combined efforts of the participating States, Heads of Field Operations and Institutions and the Department of Human Resources that we will be able to improve the ratio of women at all levels of the Organization.

Another key challenge identified in the Secretary General's report is the absence of a gender perspective in many OSCE activities. Gender mainstreaming is a strategy to achieve gender equality, and it must be underscored that mainstreaming gender is not only the responsibility

of the gender focal points appointed in field operations and institutions but the responsibility of all staff, in all programmes and in all dimensions.

A clear commitment by management in this regard is fundamental to achieving the objectives set by the Ministerial Council in the Gender Action Plan. Strong and active leadership can better develop if there is a sound understanding of the issues. This is why, in the up-coming year, and as advocated in the past, we would like to engage Heads and Deputy Heads of Field Operations and other managers in gender training. As a first step, later during this month, the Gender and Training Sections will provide training for senior management in the OSCE Spillover Mission to Skopje. We hope this will be a good experience that can be replicated with management in other field operations.

I will now talk about the projects developed in order to assist the participating States in the implementation of commitments in the priority areas established in the Gender Action Plan. The different units within the Secretariat, Institutions and the field operations have primarily focused on: ensuring non-discriminatory legal and policy frameworks, ensuring equal opportunity for the participation of women in political and public life, building national mechanisms for the advancement of women, and prevention of violence against women. However, the promotion of women's participation in conflict prevention, crisis management and post-conflict reconstruction has received little attention. I hope session 11 this afternoon on Gender aspects of Security will move our work forward in this area.

I would like to commend the important work that civil society plays in the implementation of OSCE commitments on gender equality. In many participating States they have been fundamental in, for instance, providing assistance to women victims of violence.

In 2008, the Gender Section, in co-operation with various OSCE bodies plans to put greater emphasis on the implementation of Ministerial Council Decision 15/05 on Preventing and Combating Violence against Women. Violence against women is prevalent in all OSCE participating States and we must co-operate to fight and prevent it. By better understanding the root causes of violence against women and by exchanging best practices to combat it, we can address this problem more efficiently. In fact, some OSCE field operations have practical experience in working with their host countries and civil society organizations on prevention, prosecution, and protection and we believe that the participating States, along with other field operations, would benefit from this expertise. A set of activities have been planned for that purpose.

The Gender Section will continue supporting the implementation of the Gender Action Plan, by developing gender indicators for the evaluation of projects in all three dimensions, by analysing lessons learned and by facilitating the exchange of best practices in the gender mainstreaming of OSCE work.

In closing, I would like to stress the importance of strong and active leadership. Participating States should show leadership to create the necessary political will and to ensure that the necessary resources are available. We should all strive to advance the work on achieving equality between women and men and thus further the work on establishing democracy, rule of law, prosperity and security throughout the OSCE region.

The Gender Section looks forward to working with all of you to obtain these goals.
Thank you.
