



Women's rights are inextricably linked to security

Statement by Ambassador Andrej Benedejčič, Permanent Representative of the Republic of Slovenia, on the Secretary General's 2017 Annual Progress Report on the Implementation of the 2004 OSCE Action Plan on the Promotion of Gender Equality, at the 1191st Meeting of the OSCE Permanent Council, Vienna, 5 July 2018

Mr. Chairperson,

I would like to thank the Secretary General for his report and express my full agreement with what he wrote in its foreword; namely, that including a stronger gender perspective in the work of the OSCE will make the Organization more effective and fit for purpose. I also welcome the introduction of the Executive Gender Coaching Program in the Secretariat. Enhanced awareness and capacity of the leadership, as well as personal responsibility, are crucial for further progress in promoting gender equality.

Mr. Chairperson,

In addition to what has been said on behalf of the European Union, let me therefore make several points in my national capacity, also as the current Chairperson of the Forum for Security Co-operation. First of all, I would like to say how very much I appreciate the attention that the report pays to the integration of a gender perspective within the first dimension of politico-military affairs. In this connection, I would like to point out that the Slovenian FSC Chairmanship has placed the promotion of the role of women in peace and security processes high on our agenda. I am especially pleased to report that we have observed the panel parity pledge in all of our FSC Security Dialogues. In other words, we have not had any "manels" or all-male panels. We have also managed to include a gender perspective in all the issues discussed so far. These have included Confidence and Security Building Measures, Arms Control, Small Arms and Light Weapons, regional military cooperation and nuclear security.

I would also like to inform you that on May 9, on the occasion of the FSC Security Dialogue on "Women, Peace and Security", the webpage of the OSCE MenEngage Network was launched here at the Hofburg. I find this important, both as the Chairperson of the FSC and as the Chairperson of the Network. After all, the history of the OSCE MenEngage Network is inextricably linked to the politico-military dimension of our Organization. The Network was established in 2012 precisely with the aim of promoting women's rights in the knowledge that they are inextricably linked to security. The fact that in addition to the Secretary General and several Ambassadors a number of Military Advisers are its members is therefore significant not only in terms of the origins of the Network, but also in terms of its future impact.

I am therefore pleased to report that we have already been able to show in practice what we can do together. Just last week, on the first day of the Annual Security Review Conference, members of the Network performed the acclaimed documentary play SEVEN at the Hofburg. The play celebrates women's empowerment by relating real personal experiences of seven women from around the world that extend from sexual violence and human trafficking to

poverty and a lack of education. All prevailed, despite the challenges they faced, creating a story of hope and change. The first-ever staging of the play at the OSCE thus showed in practice how men can engage to promote women's rights and gender equality. I would therefore like to thank everyone who, like me, took part in it, including you, Mr. Chairperson, as well as the Director of the Conflict Prevention Center and the Military Advisers of Canada, Sweden, Switzerland and the United Kingdom. I also have to point out that the event was moderated by the Ambassador of Belarus. As a veteran of the play herself, she had a crucial role in getting us all prepared on time.

Mr. Chairperson,

This brings me to the issue of visibility. I am glad that we can read about increased reporting on gender-related activities. But more needs to be done. As the report suggests, a substantial acceleration of OSCE performance in the area of gender equality requires additional resources for all executive structures. I therefore believe that the Secretariat's Communications and Media Relations Section should also be strengthened with a view to ensuring the necessary coverage of all the efforts in the promotion of women's rights.

Before concluding, I would also like to express my support for the emphasis that the report places on strengthening partnerships at national, regional and international levels. Here, I would like to underline the importance of synergies among Vienna-based Organizations. They face similar challenges, especially when it comes to the pursuit of greater gender equality internally. The fact that all the heads of international organizations in Vienna are now International Gender Champions should go a long way in making such co-operation and the exchange of experience possible.

Finally, let me say that the broad range of activities presented in the report clearly shows that our Organization is well on track with the implementation of its Action Plan. This is no doubt also the result of the important work of the Senior Gender Adviser and members of her able team. I would therefore like to thank them for their efforts. I would also like to say that I look forward to our continued cooperation in promoting gender equality at the OSCE.

Thank you.