



EUROPEAN UNION

OSCE Forum for Security Co-operation N°1023 Vienna, 28 September 2022

EU Statement on “Women, Peace and Security”

The European Union and its Member States warmly welcome you, Madam Minister, as well as all the distinguished Speakers to the Forum. Thank you for your insightful presentations here today and for your contributions to a more inclusive security sector. We also express our gratitude to the Belgian FSC Chair that dedicated today's Security Dialogue to the Women, Peace and Security agenda – a crucial topic for sustainable peace and stability in the OSCE area and beyond.

When discussing the full, equal and meaningful participation of women in the first dimension of the OSCE, it is important to consider the Women, Peace and Security agenda in its entirety. The WPS agenda should be implemented in armed forces at all stages of the conflict cycle, and also in representation, leadership and at all levels of decision-making. As Minister Lahbib rightly said, it should be a priority to clarify the relevance of WPS in all aspects of the politico-military dimension. The fact that we have repeatedly not been able to achieve consensus during the negotiations on WPS-related documents at several Ministerial Councils, is a sad illustration of the deadlock regarding this important topic.

Women and girls are disproportionately and differently affected by wars, conflicts and crises in the OSCE area. Russia's illegal, unprovoked and brutal war of aggression against Ukraine has in particular highlighted the importance of a specific emphasis on women and the WPS agenda. In Ukraine, we see every day the essential contributions of women who are committed to the future of their country and well-being of their communities. We see women journalists, women soldiers, women civil society representatives, and women politicians carry on with their

important work under war-time conditions. We see, in short, how empowered women give back to their societies in times of crisis.

We are horrified by reports, including those presented under the Moscow mechanism, outlining widespread conflict-related violence, including sexual and gender-based violence and sexual harassment, committed by the Russian Armed Forces in Ukraine, in particular against women and children. We will support all efforts for all those responsible for such crimes to be held accountable. Russia's war against Ukraine is a wake-up call for all of us to decisively address all forms of conflict-related sexual and gender-based violence anywhere, and to be mindful of other repercussions in crisis situations, such as the risks of increased trafficking in human beings.

At this juncture, we would like to take the opportunity to recall our commitments made in Istanbul 1999 and stress the important role that the OSCE plays in promoting and supporting the regional implementation of the WPS agenda. In line with the Istanbul Document, the EU remains committed to making gender equality an integral part of our policies, both at the level of our participating States and within the Organisation. The Ministerial Council in 2004 in Sofia adopted the OSCE Action Plan for the promotion of Gender Equality that still needs to be fully implemented. We also recall our unwavering support for the proposed OSCE-wide Action Plan on Women, Peace and Security, which seeks to support the implementation of relevant UN Security Council Resolutions.

However, notwithstanding the efforts and progress already made within the OSCE region, much more can be done to strengthen our efforts to identify and remove all gender-related barriers to women's equal opportunities and participation. With regard to our forum and in response to your first guiding question, allow me to refer to the ambitious draft ministerial council decision on equal opportunities and full and meaningful participation of women in armed forces, which was put forward by the Austrian FSC Chair as well as the Swedish OSCE Chairpersonship last year. We are convinced that the FSC can and should play an enhanced role in reporting

on relevant progress as well as exchanging best practices between participating States.

In addition, we stress the need for continued close engagement and cooperation between the OSCE participating States, OSCE Partners for Cooperation, the OSCE Secretariat, the field operations and the autonomous institutions, at all stages of the implementation of the WPS agenda and throughout the whole implementation and evaluation processes.

Furthermore, harmful gender stereotypes and inappropriate attitudes and behaviour need to be addressed. The EU thus commends all the initiatives, including informal OSCE networks such as Women in the First Dimension, Women Ambassadors and MenEngage that support the implementation of the WPS agenda. The latter is crucial since working towards gender equality is the responsibility of everyone and for the benefit of everyone.

To advance the work on the WPS agenda within the FSC, we would like to recall the Joint Statements on UNSCR 1325, made at the 2020 and 2021 OSCE Ministerial Councils that listed some concrete ideas on improving our existing commitments, such as:

- Setting up a plan of action for the full, equal and meaningful participation of women, in all aspects of the FSC's areas of work, including all levels of decision-making and leadership;
- Promoting the information exchange on issues pertaining to Women, Peace and Security through the Code of Conduct on Politico-Military Aspects of Security;
- Facilitating gender mainstreaming, also in SALW/SCA controls and in practical assistance work;
- Encouraging the active use of the 2019 toolkit "Inclusion of Women and Effective Peace Processes" as a practical tool for increasing the role of women in the security sector.

Finally, we wish to draw attention to the EU Commission's Gender Equality Strategy that sets forth policy objectives and actions towards a gender-equal Europe by 2025. It formulates key actions for the coming years and commits to ensure an equality perspective in all EU policy areas, including Foreign and Security policy with a particular attention to the EU Action Plan on Women, Peace and Security. It is our common vision and mind-set and we stand ready to work tirelessly, inside the European Union and with our international partners, to make it a reality.

Thank you!

The Candidate Countries REPUBLIC of NORTH MACEDONIA*, MONTENEGRO*, ALBANIA*, UKRAINE and REPUBLIC OF MOLDOVA, the Potential Candidate Country GEORGIA the EFTA countries NORWAY, ICELAND and LIECHTENSTEIN, members of the European Economic Area, as well ANDORRA and SAN MARINO align themselves with this statement.

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