



Organization for Security and Co-operation in Europe

The Secretary General

Vienna, 8 June 2008

**Opening of the Symposium & Launch of the Publication:
Bringing Security Home: Combating Violence against Women
A Compilation of Good Practices**

**OSCE Secretary General
Marc Perrin de Brichambaut**

8 June 2009, 9 a.m., Ratsaal

Excellencies,

Ladies and Gentlemen,

It is a pleasure to welcome you this morning to a symposium dedicated to a most serious issue – violence against women.

This event is an excellent opportunity to share views on a problem that unfortunately persists in one form or another in all OSCE participating States. This is also a moment to launch an important, forward-looking publication: *Bringing Security Home: Combating Violence against Women in the OSCE Region, A Compilation of Good Practices*.

Our starting point is clear: gender equality and a life free of violence lie at the heart of the values of the OSCE, and they are preconditions for security, stability and prosperity across the region. These are the foundations for healthy societies and strong States.

On this basis, participating States in 2005 have agreed to clear commitments in MC. Decision 15/05 on preventing and combating violence against women. I am pleased that OSCE structures, including the Secretariat's Gender Section, OSCE Institutions and field operations are strongly supporting the participating States to make these commitments a reality.

Today's event is another step in a process that is underway. Indeed, this meeting was preceded by an expert seminar on innovative approaches to combating violence against women that was organized in Dushanbe last October. Some 90 international experts, policy-makers, NGO activists as well as representatives of international organizations from 21 countries attended the seminar. Discussions were productive, with experts from participating States sharing their experience with developing effective approaches to prevent violence, to enhance protection for survivors and to prosecute perpetrators of violence against women.

As with the programme of the seminar today, special attention was given in Dushanbe to reviewing methods for engaging young people and men in efforts to address gender-based violence. In fact, some of the good practices that were discussed in Dushanbe have generated case studies described in the compilation launched today.

In this respect, I take this opportunity also to extend special thanks to the countries that have supported this project – namely, Austria, Finland, France, Germany and Greece.

In my last evaluation report to the Permanent Council on the implementation of the Gender Action Plan, I highlighted the important work undertaken by field operations to improve the response to violence against women.

Examples abound of the commitment of the OSCE in practice. The Presence in Albania has conducted the *Women's Access to Justice* project that provides training on the domestic violence law to some 200 police officers, court officials and NGO

representatives. The Office in Baku has monitored the status and development of parliamentary discussions of a draft domestic violence law. The Centre in Bishkek works on combating violence against women with members of the Aksakal Courts -- the community-based structures that mediate disputes in remote areas of the Osh province. For its part, the Mission in Kosovo has supported the creation of a multi-ethnic shelter for victims of domestic and sexual violence and trafficked women in the Mitrovica region.

These are but a few examples from the field.

Participating States have come a long way in recognizing and analyzing the causes and consequences of gender-based violence. Progress has also been attained in developing measures to address violence against women in the family. These points are positive. However, we should be clear. There remains a great deal of work to be done in tackling violence against women in conflict and post-conflict settings.

Quite often, when discussing past, on-going or protracted conflicts, not enough attention is given to the fact that women are at high risk from specific types of violence and exploitation, and that they suffer violence in hidden forms. It is also the case that peace negotiations, and rehabilitation and post-conflict measures, can do more to bring women into key processes.

I am convinced that the OSCE, with its inclusive membership and comprehensive approach to security, has an important role to play in addressing these issues and in implementing MC Decision 14/05 and United Nations Security Council Resolution 1325 on women, peace and security.

Our work is cut out for us -- in the development of legislation, in the prosecution of violence, including sexual violence perpetrated during conflict, in the reconstruction of a judiciary and police forces that respect and uphold women's human rights, in the development of programmes to support victims, and in the

exchange of knowledge about effective policies and measures for pre- and post-conflict periods.

These are difficult tasks. The publication that we launch today is an excellent tool to facilitate work in these areas.

Excellencies,

Ladies and gentlemen,

I believe that today's event shows the OSCE at its best – as a repository of strategies to address gender-based violence, as a clearing house for the exchange of experience, and as a network for innovative international co-operation on complex challenges facing our societies.

I am pleased that the Gender Section has gathered here the OSCE family with the sharpest expertise available on such a crucial matter as a life free of violence.

Let us make the most out of this occasion.

Thank you.