



**PERMANENT DELEGATION OF NORWAY
TO THE OSCE**

**STATEMENT ON THE OCCASION OF
THE INTERNATIONAL WOMEN'S DAY 2021**

Delivered by Ambassador Anne- Kirsti Karlsen at the Permanent Council
Vienna, 11 March 2021

CHECK AGAINST DELIVERY

Thank you, Mdm. Chair,

I was only eleven years old when Norway's first female prime minister Gro Harlem Brundtland was elected and made sure that 40 percent of her ministers were also women.

It meant a lot to me as a girl to see that I could become what I wanted, regardless of my gender. I learnt that progress in gender equality is a political choice. It is an investment that will bear fruit also for future generations, men and women.

That political choice, this investment in equality, has to be made every day, over and over again. Gender equality is a human right. Gender equality also unlocks the full potential of a country.

My country has experienced this. Women's participation in the labour market contributes more to Norway's prosperity than our petroleum revenues, in terms of tax income and GDP.

For many years, Norway has invested in universal welfare schemes designed to make it possible for parents to combine family life and work. Due to such investments, Norway has a high participation of both men and women in the labour force. 67, 5 percent of women in Norway are in paid jobs, 73,4 per cent of men. Providing girls and boys with education has proven important. Quality education is the basis for jobs and income.

Even if Norway ranked second in the Global Gender Gap Report 2020 – behind our Icelandic neighbours – unpaid care work at home is still not evenly distributed among Norwegians. Women spend more time on household chores and taking care of children than their partners

– no matter how much they work outside the home. The COVID-19 pandemic has further increased this difference. When schools and kindergartens closed in Norway a year ago, a greater share of the increased care burden fell on women.

Worldwide we see the same picture, or worse. Women make up a large majority of the informal labour market. These women have no insurance or pension to rely on. Women and girls are more prone to experience violence during crises and when they are isolated in their homes.

Women are in the front-line in the battle against COVID-19 all over the world. When planning response measures, it is important to ensure that women participate on an equal footing with men. Only then can we hope to retain the same level of security, political stability and economic growth that we had before the pandemic.

Mdm. Chair,

The 2009 MC Decision on Women's Participation in Political and Public Life calls for gender balance among elected public officials at all levels of decision-making, as well as for women's equal participation in political parties. The number of women in influential political positions in the OSCE region has increased. However, women continue to experience barriers that frequently hinder their participation in political life. Participating states can do more to fulfil the promises of 2009.

Let me also support the point made by Canada today on how the gender issue is already a part of every aspect of the OSCE work.

Women's participation makes peace and development more sustainable. Norway is contributing to ensuring that peace negotiations are inclusive, and that peace agreements safeguard the rights, needs and priorities of both women and men. There is much that remains to be done, however. There are still too few conflict resolution processes and peace agreements that adequately incorporate a gender perspective. This also goes for conflicts in the OSCE area.

Mdm. Chair,

Denying women equal rights has no valid ground. We need diversity in politics and business. We need to tap the full talent potential of our populations in order to drive innovation and to allow our societies to prosper.

The fact that the leadership of our organisation is now to a large extent in the hands of women, is a confirmation that we have moved forward.

But counting heads is not enough. To quote Norway's second, and present, female prime minister, Erna Solberg, "we have not reached our goal until we no longer consider the gender composition of our leadership relevant".

Thank you