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**STATEMENT BY MR. ALEXANDER LUKASHEVICH,
PERMANENT REPRESENTATIVE OF THE RUSSIAN FEDERATION,
AT THE 1276th MEETING OF THE OSCE PERMANENT COUNCIL**

23 July 2020

On the implementation of the OSCE Action Plan for the Promotion of Gender Equality

Mr. Chairperson,
Ambassador Yrjölä,

We take cognizance of the report on the implementation of the OSCE Action Plan for the Promotion of Gender Equality. We note the successes achieved in putting this document into practice, including the appreciable rise, over the past year, in the number of female applicants for senior management posts in the Secretariat. We also note the fact that the proportion of women appointed to international contracted positions, particularly high-level ones, exceeds that of men. In our view, these trends clearly testify to the fruitfulness of efforts to attain the target of 40 per cent of senior management posts in the Secretariat being held by women by 2020.

At the same time, though, we are convinced that in implementing the Action Plan one should not chase after quantitative indicators. When appointing staff it is essential, in accordance with Staff Regulation 3.01, to ensure above all “the highest standards of efficiency, competence and integrity, taking full account of the principle of recruiting staff from all OSCE participating States on a fair basis”. The promotion of gender equality between women and men is an important task, but it should not be allowed to push into the background or even replace these fundamental criteria underlying the Organization’s employment policy.

Apart from reporting on the advancement of the principles of gender equality, we believe that it is important for the Secretariat to conduct a detailed analysis of the extent to which an equitable geographical balance is being achieved in the allocation of posts, particularly in appointments to management-level positions. It is essential to examine retrospectively (covering the past 15 to 20 years) whether or not specific posts in the Organization have been filled with representatives of the same participating States or of countries that are members of certain international organizations and that, accordingly, defend here “corporate” positions.

It would be most intriguing to see the results of such an analysis. On the basis of those results, the Secretariat could develop a separate strategy for achieving equitable representation of the participating States among the Organization’s staff – including the setting of targets – and submit an annual report to the Permanent Council on that strategy’s implementation. The mandate for taking such action is already to be

found in the aforementioned Staff Regulations. Moreover, the regular provision of such information to the Permanent Council would be fully in line with working practice at the United Nations and would help enhance the transparency of our Organization's staffing policy. We expect the next Secretary General to take our proposal seriously.

Significantly, the OSCE's striving to promote the concept of "gender" has already resulted in some curiosities. For example, registration for the high-level conference of the Alliance against Trafficking in Persons that concluded yesterday involved filling in an online form which included the field "Gender" instead of "Title". As a result, clergymen, among others, taking part in the event were forced to use that field to indicate their title (for instance, "Monsignor"), which, to put it mildly, looks odd, quite apart from the fact that it goes against everyday logic. And how should one proceed with the familiar academic title "Doctor"? Has that now also been subsumed under "Gender"? Such blunders should not be tolerated – neither in the Secretariat, nor in other OSCE structures. Things should not be taken to the point of absurdity.

In general, it is our belief that efforts to ensure gender equality should be based on the principle of equal opportunities irrespective of a person's sex. The artificial setting of equal numbers of men and women to be employed in the various OSCE structures must be avoided.

Striking a balance is also essential when it comes to the broader context of human rights of various kinds. In view of the coronavirus pandemic and the hazards associated with it, social and economic rights have come to the fore. We are convinced that in these complicated times our Organization should concentrate its attention on protection of the family, motherhood and childhood, on the professional retraining of women and men faced with unemployment, and on providing protection and support for families with many children and/or of limited means, including single-parent families. That being said, it is of course essential to continue promoting the participation of women in public and political life.

It is also worth staying focused on efforts to combat violence against women, in line with existing commitments, including the relevant OSCE Ministerial Council decision adopted in Milan in 2018. In our view, one can – and indeed should – combat this noxious phenomenon by, among other things, improving the economic situation of women and carrying out systematic work to reduce poverty and social hardship.

As for United Nations Security Council resolution 1325 on "women and peace and security", our point of view remains unchanged. This instrument has indisputable value for us as a benchmark with regard to enhancing the role of women in preventing and resolving conflicts and to strengthening the protection of women during armed conflicts. However, we consider it to be unacceptable to impose action plans in this field on States, all the more so outside the context of conflicts or post-conflict reconstruction.

We also reiterate our appeal for attempts aimed at promoting, within our Organization, formulations not based on consensus or dubious concepts to be avoided.

We should like to take this opportunity to extend to the Secretariat's Gender Section, with which we have established constructive co-operation, and personally to Ms. Amarsanaa Darisuren our best wishes for success in their endeavours in this important area.

Thank you for your attention.