



**Statement by Ambassador Andrej Benedejčič, Permanent Representative of the Republic of Slovenia, upon assuming the role of the Chair of the OSCE MenEngage Network at the 1106<sup>th</sup> Meeting of the OSCE Permanent Council, Vienna, 23 June 2016**

*Mr. Chairperson, dear colleagues,*

I find it fitting that this handover is taking place just after the conclusion of the OSCE Ambassadorial visit to Bosnia and Herzegovina. There we all received a gift, a book by the Nobel laureate Ivo Andrić, entitled *The Travnik Chronicle*. It talks about the experiences of the consuls of France and Austria in that part of the Western Balkans two centuries ago. I am mentioning this because in Slovenia there is also a similarly titled and well-known book, which is called *The Visoko Chronicle*. However, that one does not talk about diplomats, but about farmers who lived in the Slovenian Alps four centuries ago. According to the author of the book, the Slovenian writer Ivan Tavčar, among them there was also a woman and it was she who held up "the three corners of the house".

This particular phrase has entered the everyday language in Slovenia and it is used to refer to the critical contribution of women to our society. I am therefore honored to be taking over the role of the Chair of the OSCE MenEngage Network. In Slovenia we believe that we need to continue challenging the traditional notions of masculinity, as well as norms, laws and practices that underline them, if we want to build on the positive changes that have already taken place. That is why last year our Prime Minister, as well as all of the male Ministers and male Ambassadors of Slovenia, joined the HeForShe campaign. That is also why we will continue paying attention not only to preventing gender-based violence, but also to challenging gender stereotypes, with a view to enhancing the role of women in conflict prevention and peace processes.

Gender equality is a cross-cutting issue and the OSCE represents a perfect platform for its promotion. It is therefore important that all of us, men and women alike, keep it high on our agenda here in Vienna and out in the field. As I take over the White Ribbon from my Icelandic colleague and friend Ambassador Atlason I can only promise to try to be as active as he has been. Thank you, Auðunn, for having shown us all in the past 12 months what it means to be a modern-day Viking, what it means to be an actual "real man". You have been both firm on principle and caring in engagement. In short, you have been like the Icelandic football team at the European Championship – at once fiery as a volcano and cool as ice. And you will be missed.

*Thank you.*