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EU statement in response to the presentation by the Secretary General of the Annual Evaluation Report on the Implementation of the 2004 OSCE Action Plan for the Promotion of Gender Equality

The European Union thanks the Secretary General for his excellent report to the Permanent Council.

The European Union would like to take this opportunity to reaffirm its strong commitment to the principle of equality between men and women, and is pleased that the OSCE is continuing with the implementation of the 2004 Action Plan. The EU highly values the contributions by many parts of the organization, in particular the Secretariat's Gender section under the direction of the Senior adviser on gender issues, Ms Jamila Seftaoui, and the gender focal points in the field missions, as well as the ODIHR, the HCNM and the RFoM.

It is important that all OSCE structures continue to promote the systematic and consistent implementation of the Gender Action Plan.

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The European Union strongly supports the initiatives taken during the reporting period to promote gender equality. In particular, the EU welcomes the appointment of deputy Heads of missions as gender focal points in five missions and encourages other missions to adopt this practice.

The European Union encourages the implementation of gender-oriented projects and programs in the three dimensions of the OSCE. The EU shares the assessment that more projects related to the promotion of gender equality should be undertaken in the first and second dimension of the OSCE.

The European Union recalls Ministerial Council Decision No. 14/05 on women in conflict prevention, crisis management and post-conflict rehabilitation and calls for the implementation of the United Nations Security Council resolutions 1325 and 1820, specifically with regard to those aspects that have a close bearing on OSCE activities. In this light, the EU hopes that the dialogue in the politico-military dimension will yield tangible results.

Combating violence against women is one of the European Union's priorities in the area of Human Rights, and in December 2008, the European Union further strengthened this commitment by drawing up EU Guidelines on Violence against Women and Girls and Combating all Forms of Discrimination against Them. Decision No. 15/05, adopted by the Ministerial Council in Ljubljana, constitutes an important document as regards the prevention and combating of this scourge. The European Union fully supports all the efforts undertaken in preventing violence against women by the OSCE and

looks forward to further discussing this important issue in the Supplementary Human Dimension Meeting on November 5-6.

As for statistics on the recruitment to the different OSCE structures, the European Union notes the slight improvement in the representation of women in the organization, namely in management positions. Nevertheless, women are still under-represented in senior and policy-making positions. Moreover, the decrease in women's nominations by participating States during the reporting period is a worrying trend. Therefore, the European Union encourages all participating States to nominate more women to higher positions in the organization. We encourage the Secretary General to use all means at his disposal to achieve improved results.

Furthermore, the European Union fully supports the report's recommendation that the Department of Human Resources should aim for a balance between the percentage of female candidatures and the proportion of women eventually selected for positions, especially for professional positions in the Secretariat and Institutions, and invites the Secretary General to analyze the reasons for the discrepancy. Strong leadership by OSCE managers needs to materialize in concrete decisions in this regard, not least in ensuring a higher percentage of women in the panels selecting contracted professional staff.

In conclusion, the EU reaffirms its commitment to the implementation of the 2004 Action Plan for the promotion of equality between men and women, appreciates the achievements to date

and calls upon the Secretary General and his team to redouble their efforts to accelerate progress in the period ahead.

The candidate countries TURKEY, CROATIA* and FORMER YUGOSLAV REPUBLIC OF MACEDONIA*, the countries of the Stabilisation and Association Process and potential candidate countries ALBANIA, BOSNIA AND HERZEGOVINA, MONTENEGRO and SERBIA as well as UKRAINE, the REPUBLIC OF MOLDOVA, ARMENIA, AZERBAIJAN and GEORGIA align themselves with this statement.

*Croatia and Former Yugoslav Republic of Macedonia continue to be part of the Stabilisation and Association Process.