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**EU Statement in response to the Special Representative of
the OSCE Chairperson-in-Office on Gender, Ambassador
Melanne Verveer**

The European Union and its Member States thank the Chairmanship-in-Office for organising a discussion on the topic of women's leadership to mark International Women's Day. We also highly appreciate the presentation by Ambassador Melanne Verveer this morning. As we have underlined previously, gender equality is something that we must take into account every day, not just on International Women's Day. The EU and its Member States have been committed to gender equality as a fundamental right since 1957. We have come a long way since then but needless to say, there is still a long way to go.

Put simply: when women thrive, the entire population benefits. We need to act to achieve concrete results so that women enjoy the same rights as men. This goes not just for the EU area, but also beyond. When women and girls have equal access to the political decision-making arena, to education, and participate fully in business and economic decision-making, they can be a key driving force against poverty and for the promotion of peace and security.

The participation of women in leadership roles, including in the security sector, is crucial to ensuring that the needs and potential of the entire population are reflected in decision-making. For example, women are still not actively engaged in many peace processes and mediation efforts, and thus not recognised as the powerful agents of change and peace that they can be. In the OSCE, we continue to see few women in senior management positions, including in the field operations. Women's leadership also provides the visibility and role modelling necessary for fostering an increase in future women leaders. In that regard we are concerned that in some participating States practices, measures and/or laws actively serve to exclude

women from positions of authority and leadership. This clearly runs counter to our joint commitments on gender equality and we call on these participating States to end such discriminatory practices.

Focus on the grassroots level, including by promoting women's participation in political and public life, is a vital component in our endeavour to increase the number of women in leadership positions in society. We welcome that a Human Dimension Committee dedicated to this issue was organised in 2017. Inclusive socio-economic policies are one of such mechanisms to help foster greater participation: free education for all, comprehensive health systems, day care for all children under school age, as well as maternity and parental leave systems, are just a few examples. Combating negative stereotypes that perpetuate the continuing obstacles women face in enjoying full participation, is also crucial.

We welcome the efforts of the OSCE Secretariat to enhance gender mainstreaming throughout OSCE activities. The specific focus on senior leadership in the OSCE, for example through the Gender Coach programme, is also welcomed. We note that the proportion of women in director positions in the Organisation is on an upward trajectory, but this needs to be replicated among deputy director and senior Professional positions.

At the same time, we would like to emphasise that gender mainstreaming is not a goal in itself, but rather an instrument to achieve gender equality and a transformative agenda of conflict prevention and peace, in line with the adoption of UNSC Resolution 1325 and subsequent related Resolutions. The EU remains strongly committed to promoting full inclusiveness and representation at all levels of conflict prevention, management and resolution, including mediation, dialogue and negotiation processes, which lies at the heart of the OSCE.

We reiterate our disappointment that a small number of States prevented the upgrade of the Senior Gender Adviser in the 2018 Unified Budget, but welcome that the Secretary General and Italian Chairmanship have committed to taking practical measures to enhance the visibility of the Senior Gender Adviser and her team. We would welcome Ambassador Verveer's views on how this can best be achieved.

We regret that two draft Ministerial Council Decisions with a specific focus on gender were not adopted at the 2017 OSCE Ministerial Council. We hope that the discussion

generated, including on engaging men and boys on empowering women, and on enhancing the participation of women in the security sector with a view to enhancing the security sector's overall operational effectiveness, will help contribute to constructive discussion in the OSCE, with a view to adoption of future commitments on important issues related to women's leadership. Indeed, our concept of comprehensive security should not in any way exclude or marginalise half of our populations. Also in this context we underline that there is a continuing need to increase implementation of outstanding commitments on gender equality, in particular in the 2004 OSCE Action Plan on the Promotion of Gender Equality.

The Candidate Countries the FORMER YUGOSLAV REPUBLIC OF MACEDONIA*, MONTENEGRO*, SERBIA* and ALBANIA*, the Country of the Stabilisation and Association Process and Potential Candidate BOSNIA and HERZEGOVINA, and the EFTA countries ICELAND and LIECHTENSTEIN, members of the European Economic Area, as well as the REPUBLIC OF MOLDOVA, GEORGIA, ANDORRA and SAN MARINO align themselves with this statement.

* The Former Yugoslav Republic of Macedonia, Montenegro, Serbia and Albania continue to be part of the Stabilisation and Association Process.