



**PERMANENT DELEGATION OF NORWAY  
TO THE OSCE**

**STATEMENT MARKING THE  
INTERNATIONAL DAY OF THE GIRL**

Delivered by Ambassador Steffen Kongstad at the Permanent Council  
Vienna, 11 October 2018

CHECK AGAINST DELIVERY

Mr. Chair,

I am honoured to be delivering the following remarks on behalf of Albania, Andorra, Austria, Belarus, Belgium, Bosnia and Herzegovina, Bulgaria, Canada, Croatia, Cyprus, Czech Republic, Denmark, Estonia, Finland, France, Georgia, Germany, Greece, Iceland, Italy, Ireland, Latvia, Liechtenstein, Lithuania, Luxembourg, the Former Yugoslav Republic of Macedonia, Malta, Monaco, Mongolia, Montenegro, Moldova, the Netherlands, Portugal, Romania, San Marino, Serbia, Slovakia, Slovenia, Spain, Sweden, Switzerland, Ukraine, the United Kingdom, and Norway.

Mr. Chair,

Today, October 11th, marks the Seventh International Day of the Girl themed “With Her: A Skilled Girl Force”. Publicly marking this day is important in working towards the recognition that girls deserve as equal and powerful actors in society. This year, our countries again express our commitment to standing with girls everywhere as they inspire and creatively take charge of their own futures. We commit to address the gap that still exists worldwide in recognizing and supporting girls and young women, and addressing the particular obstacles they face around the world. We will continue to work through our national and collective policies towards the protection and advancement of the human rights of girls and young women; supporting their equal participation in all political, economic, and social matters that affect them; and reducing inequalities in access to, and control over, resources.

Our countries agree that advancing gender equality and the empowerment of girls and young women is one of the best and most effective ways to reduce poverty, create lasting peace, and achieve sustainable development. We envision a world where girls and young women are valued and empowered, have control over their own lives, fully participate as decision-makers in their home and societies, and contribute to and benefit

from development and economic prosperity. We also recognize that engaging boys and young men as stakeholders and partners is critical to achieving true gender equality. It requires transforming unequal power relations and challenging social norms and gender stereotypes that limit opportunities for women and girls and restrict men and boys to specific roles. This societal change requires everyone's attention and will benefit all of us.

Unfortunately, within the OSCE region girls continue to face challenges to realizing their human rights, including access to quality education, health and nutrition services and information, as well as employment and other economic opportunities. They are at higher risk for sexual and gender-based violence, trafficking, and harmful practices such as child, early, and forced marriage, which can lead to a lifetime of disadvantage and deprivation, can inhibit their sexual and reproductive health and rights, and prevent their full participation in economic, political and social spheres. The challenges girls and young women often face manifest themselves in multiple and intersecting forms of discrimination and violence.

Mr. Chair,

In our region, the OSCE and each participating State has an important role to play in providing an environment that empowers girls and young women. We look forward to the continued assistance that ODIHR and the Gender Unit will offer and provide to participating States in this area. We also look to Secretary General Greminger to continue his efforts to enable the full implementation of gender-mainstreaming in the OSCE, including upgrading the function of the OSCE Gender Unit. We expect that the Secretary General will ensure that gender equality considerations are taken into account by all OSCE staff and in all areas of the OSCE's field operations and policy.

Mr. Chair,

We would also like to thank you for your intention to pursue a Ministerial Decision on Combatting Violence Against Women in Milan. As you know, last year we were very close to reaching consensus on such a decision. An OSCE Ministerial Decision on this issue will be an important step towards making concrete progress towards championing girls' rights throughout our region.

Thank you