



OSCE SUPPLEMENTARY IMPLEMENTATION MEETING

GENDER ISSUES

Vienna, 14-15 June 1999

FINAL REPORT

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I. BACKGROUND

Supplementary Meeting on Gender Issues, 14-15 June 1999

In accordance with new modalities for the OSCE Implementation Meeting on Human Dimension Issues approved in July 1998, the OSCE held the second of three Supplementary Meetings in Vienna on 14-15 June 1999. The meeting was dedicated to gender issues, with a particular focus on the situation of women. The goal was to discuss key substantive concerns, identify examples of good and bad practice, and to make concrete recommendations as to how the OSCE and its participating States can better address gender issues in policy making and projects.

The OSCE as a whole is in the early stages of focusing on gender issues. In May 1998 a Gender Focal Point, with a full-time assistant, was appointed in the OSCE Secretariat, with responsibility for mainstreaming gender into the work of the Secretariat, including in the OSCE's internal policies, and for providing training for Mission members on gender issues. In April 1999 Switzerland also seconded a full-time Gender Adviser to the Secretariat. In August 1998 the United Kingdom seconded an Adviser to the Office for Democratic Institutions and Human Rights (ODIHR). Her responsibilities are twofold: to mainstream gender into the work of the ODIHR, working within the Democratization and Election sections, and to develop, implement and evaluate projects focused on the human rights of women.

Gender mainstreaming and the human rights of women

The concept of mainstreaming broadly means that the needs and aspirations of women as well as of men should be taken into account when designing and implementing programmes, policies and projects. Often, women's views are not taken into account at all, or it is assumed that a particular project design will automatically benefit women as well as men. In fact, unless women's views are taken into account from the very beginning, and unless the project is designed in such a way as to address these views, there is no guarantee at all that women will benefit. It cannot, for example, be assumed that an Ombudsman mechanism will be as accessible to women as to men, and technical assistance programmes should seek to ensure equality of access and specific training for staff. Nor can it be assumed that recruitment policy will automatically result in applications from female as well as male candidates, unless the process of writing job descriptions, selection processes and interviewing are monitored to ensure they do not discriminate. Gender mainstreaming, then, should be a component of all projects and all policies.

Particularly at the ODIHR, the primary OSCE institution implementing projects in the field, gender work has focused not only on mainstreaming but also on the human rights of women. These aim to work directly and only with women in key areas, to help them to attain specific skills or knowledge or to address issues faced predominantly or only by women. Since women continue to face discrimination, it is essential to work with women to empower them to change their situation.

The purpose of focusing on gender issues at this Supplementary Meeting was both to look back to what has been achieved, and also to look forward to priorities for the future. All those who participated in the Meeting contributed their experience, knowledge and skills to produce a series of concrete recommendations on which the OSCE, its institutions and its participating States, must now focus. The aim now is to ensure the effective implementation, consistent evaluation and constant follow-up to the ideas generated.

II. EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

The Meeting opened with a keynote address by Martina Vandenberg of Human Rights Watch (ANNEX I), who identified the key problems facing women in the OSCE region. Participants then dispersed to one of three working groups, focusing on areas of concern in each of the OSCE's main spheres of activity. First, action in the economic sphere, looking at barriers and solutions to unequal access of women to the labour market and to economic development programmes. Second, action in the security sphere, with a special focus on post-conflict rehabilitation, where the focus was on the different impact of conflict on women and means to address women's specific needs. Third, action in the political and public spheres, where the participation of women in national, regional and local government, in national human rights institutions and in civil society were the main focal points. Some of the key issues identified in each group, and by the key-note speech, include:

In the economic sphere:

- Discrimination in the labour market, in terms of initial access to the market, access to vocational training and access to promotion
- Marginalization of women into low-paid, low prestige labour sectors
- Elimination of social benefits for women coupled with failures to enforce anti-discrimination laws

In post-conflict situations:

- Women who have lost male family members become heads of household for the first time
- Trauma, in particular rape, sexual violence and increased domestic violence during and after conflict
- Failure to take women's needs into account in reconstruction efforts, including unequal access to loans and diversion of women into low-paid, gender-stereotyped areas.

In the political and public spheres:

- Under-representation in national, regional and local decision-making bodies and under-representation of women within the OSCE itself
- Where women are represented, they often face marginalization into 'soft' policy areas such as the family and social affairs

The linkages between economic deprivation and discrimination, lack of effective political representation (that is, representation not only in numbers, but in access to decision-making), lack of effective legal remedies, and lack of resources, have long been known. Barriers to equality may be legislative, or economic, or political, and are often as much barriers of attitude as of policy. Lack of access to political decision-making means that women's specific needs and aspirations are not translated into effective legislation and policy, and that even where programmes for women do exist, resources are not devoted to them. Where legislation appears adequate on paper, equality has generally not been achieved in practice, yet without effective mechanisms to redress inequality, unless women receive information, training and the support to use these mechanisms, and unless the effectiveness of these mechanisms is monitored and evaluated, legislation can merely hide the problems rather than provide solutions.

In conflict and post-conflict situations, these problems are thrown into even sharper relief, with women being excluded from decision-making processes and marginalized when democratization and economic

reconstruction programmes are designed and implemented, so that the dislocation and trauma of conflict become perpetuated in the post-conflict period.

III. RECOMMENDATIONS

This report, just as the Meeting itself, focuses on concrete recommendations arising from the working groups. These recommendations, from non-governmental organizations (NGOs), international organizations (IOs), and delegates, are wide-ranging and aimed at all OSCE institutions and at the participating States. The recommendations have no official status, and the inclusion of a recommendation in this report does not suggest that it reflects the views or policy of the OSCE.

It is emphasized that the OSCE cannot implement all of these recommendations. Nevertheless, it is also emphasized that continued support for work on gender issues is essential to ensure follow-up. This report, then, provides a basis on which the OSCE can move forward and a series of benchmarks against which its progress can be measured.

RECOMMENDATIONS MADE IN MORE THAN ONE WORKING GROUP

- *Gender as a focus in all OSCE bodies:*
The OSCE should ensure that all relevant OSCE bodies, including the ODIHR, the field activities, the Office of the High Commissioner on National Minorities, and the Special Representative on Freedom of the Media, take gender issues into account in the course of their work.
- *Permanency of gender adviser positions:*
Gender adviser positions, currently organized as secondments, should be made permanent in the relevant OSCE institutions.
- *Internal co-ordination:*
The Chairman-in-Office should establish an informal, ad hoc group on gender issues within the OSCE.
- *Training for OSCE staff:*
OSCE staff, in particular field staff, should receive the necessary training to enable them to monitor and work effectively on gender issues.
- *Research, data collection and analysis on the situation of women in the OSCE region:*
OSCE Missions, the Economic Co-ordinator and the ODIHR should collect, analyse and publish data on the situation of women in the OSCE region, including the situation of women in conflict and post-conflict areas. In collecting information, the OSCE should take into account data already available through other sources, including the UNDP Gender Disaggregated Human Development Index.
- *Representation of women within the OSCE:*
The OSCE should promote a more equal gender balance within all its institutions and at all levels and should monitor the proportion of women and men within the OSCE. Participating States are encouraged to make appropriate changes to secondment policy, and to develop and have recourse to rosters of experts.

Links and co-operation with international organizations:

The OSCE, in particular the field offices and the ODIHR, should develop closer co-operation at headquarters and field level with other international organizations working on gender issues.

- *Using the full range of international standards:*

The OSCE, as well as monitoring compliance with its own commitments, should take into account other international instruments on equality, non-discrimination and the human rights of women. In this regard, participating States are encouraged, when it is opened for signature, to ratify the new Optional Protocol to CEDAW. The OSCE is also encouraged to take the gender mainstreaming policies developed by other international organizations into account when formulating its own strategies.

- *Working with NGOs:*

The OSCE, in particular the ODIHR, should support, promote and render assistance to women's NGOs in order to raise awareness and legal education for the full and equal participation of women. The OSCE should promote the establishment of NGO networks and, in post-conflict situations, should assist in designing a model for building women's NGO networks.

- *Action against trafficking:*

The OSCE should try, through its field missions, to identify cases of trafficking and to attract attention to this issue at national and international level. The OSCE should serve as an effective forum for co-operation between source, transit and receiving countries to seek solutions to trafficking.

Further recommendations specific to the individual working groups are presented in the next section of the report.

OUTCOME OF INDIVIDUAL WORKING GROUPS

WORKING GROUP 1 - ACTION IN THE ECONOMIC SPHERE

Context:

In spite of consistently high literacy rates and participation in primary, secondary and tertiary education, women throughout the OSCE area still lag behind men in access to employment, promotion and pay. In transitional economies, economic restructuring and privatization have had a disproportionate impact on women. In developed economies, equality of opportunity in law has not yet translated fully into equality in fact. What are the obstacles to women's full and equal participation in economic life, and what can the OSCE do in this field?

Questions discussed in this working group included:

- Are there legal obstacles to women's full economic participation?
- Do discriminatory employment practices exist, such as targeting of recruitment at men or the belief that women are not as able as men?
- Do women have equal access to vocational training?

MODERATOR'S REPORT

Ceren Yazgan-Etiz

The working group in the first part of its discussions focused on identification of problems, obstacles that women face for equality of opportunity in the economic sphere, and economic empowerment. The discussions showed that although women in all OSCE participating States face similar problems, there are still country-specific aspects of the issue, especially in the case of economies in transition.

1. Recommendations to the OSCE

OSCE Missions, presences, centres and other offices in the field should enhance activity related to gender. Programmes to raise awareness of commitments and the human rights of women in the economic sphere with the help of all relevant OSCE institutions as well as international organizations and NGOs should be implemented by the Missions. The Missions should be given adequate resources for these activities.

OSCE Missions should examine obstacles to women fulfilling their potential in the economic sphere and should work with host governments to develop strategies to overcome these obstacles.

OSCE Missions, in reporting on compliance with commitments and in work to assist states with implementation of commitments, need to include in their activities reporting on issues that are included in the Moscow Document of 1991 in the economic field.

The OSCE Parliamentary Assembly should be better informed by OSCE institutions on obstacles to the economic empowerment of women and should take this issue into account in its work.

The Economic Review process should take gender issues into account. In this respect, specific attention should be focused on women's full and equal participation in economic life during the Review Meeting preceding the Istanbul Summit.

The OSCE should provide political guidance when necessary to the international donor organizations and lending institutions for projects that would enhance the role of women in economic activities

2. Recommendations to participating States

OSCE participating States should:

Support the development of economic skill/education centres for women in the Newly Independent States (NIS).

In their efforts to implement paragraph 40.6 of the Moscow Document of 1991, the participating States should focus particular attention on vulnerable groups of women such as refugees and single parents.

Consider specific anti-discrimination legislation or regulations to provide better protection for women from discrimination in the economic sphere.

WORKING GROUP 2 - ACTION IN THE SECURITY SPHERE - FOCUS ON POST-CONFLICT REHABILITATION

Context:

Bearing in mind that conflicts impact differently on different groups, the focus in this working group was specifically on the impact on women and what the OSCE can do to address the needs of women in its overall post-conflict strategies.

Questions discussed in this working group included:

- What are the specific consequences of conflict for women and what are their specific needs post-conflict? Are these consequences and needs always the same?
- What is the existing best practice in addressing these specific needs?
- How can the OSCE contribute?

MODERATOR'S REPORT

Ian Gorvin

Concrete recommendations – How can the OSCE contribute to addressing the needs of women in post conflict rehabilitation (at the level of participating States, the OSCE institutions and the OSCE field presences)?

1. Recommendation to the OSCE Chairmanship and participating States:

Make this supplementary human dimension review meeting on gender issues an annual OSCE event, so that implementation of recommendations can be scrutinized closely and systematically.

2. Recommendations to the OSCE institutions

Any gender focal point and gender adviser position should have terms of reference that cross into all departments, and the positions should be high status, working in the office of and supported by the senior executive, and with a working budget. There should also be established guidelines.

Have a gender component in the ongoing work on Roma/Sinti, including putting this explicitly on the agenda for the next supplementary meeting in September 1999.

3. General recommendations for OSCE project initiatives (institution and field level)

When talking about concepts such as mainstreaming, empowerment, participation, the OSCE and others should find language which makes it possible to communicate these terms to women and to communities in a way that is accessible.

Create a database of good practice in gender mainstreaming in politics.

Develop grassroots diplomacy programmes for women directed towards conflict prevention and co-operation across national or communal divides.

Make gender awareness a component of police training programmes.

Investigate the possibilities for projects directed at changing social attitudes. The working group heard about the experience of Georgia, where an NGO had done a project looking at the image of women in the media. The working group was also reminded of the varying social responses to raped women, including the example from Bosnia-Herzegovina where affirmative statements from community leaders attempted to remove the social stigma on, and therefore the continuing victimization of, women who had been raped in the conflict.

Ensure that legal awareness/literacy is not just directed at informing women of their rights, but informing men of the rights of women.

4. Recommendations applicable to all field missions

Attach a gender mainstreaming adviser to all missions. Also, facilitate the exchange of information between field missions about their gender work.

Organize women's support groups, enabling small groups of women to come together in a setting which teaches them to articulate their rights and leads to their empowerment. Those women take that knowledge back to their own communities where it is shared with others and the effect is cumulative. The working group was given the example of the work of the OSCE Mission to Tajikistan.

Provide trainers to the local non-governmental sector to raise their awareness of gender issues.

5. Recommendations connected to the establishment of a response to Kosovo (some of these are general principles for a post-conflict response):

In formulating the OSCE role in Kosovo, take the gender dimension into account immediately and on an ongoing basis, including by incorporating the gender perspective into the mandate of the mission. Women have to be an integral part of reconstruction planning.

Put women in responsible and visible positions in the implementing stage of the OSCE response on the ground. This is important not least in terms of educating and sensitizing Kosovar society to the fact that women can and should be given positions of authority in the reconstruction effort, and that what they see in the OSCE presence should be replicated within their own society.

Ensure that the legal and administrative framework ensures equality and the means of protection of women from such crimes as trafficking. Gender equality should be written into the constitution of any state undergoing political reconstruction, and not only as an afterthought.

Work at changing social attitudes in eg Kosovo, so that men are taught not to stigmatize women who have been raped (ref. Medica Zenica comments about how religious leaders made declarations about raped women in Bosnia which immediately assisted in overcoming attitudes of stigma).

Support the international initiatives for combating impunity for those who perpetrated crimes against women in the conflict, including recognizing that rape is a war crime.

Ensure that the personnel of the new Kosovo field presence have gender awareness training, and specific training in working with women who have experienced human rights violations and trauma, including rape.

WORKING GROUP 3 - ACTION IN THE POLITICAL AND PUBLIC SPHERES

Context:

Increasing the numbers of women in national parliaments is one key way of ensuring that women's as well as men's needs are taken into account at the policy and law-making levels. Equally important is the representation of women in regional and local government, the involvement of national human rights institutions in gender issues and the growth and support of women's organizations within civil society. In each sphere - government, national human rights institutions and civil society - the question of how gender concerns can be translated into effective action is of primary importance.

Discussions in this working group included:

- What barriers remain to the increased representation of women in national, regional and local government?
- How can political parties be persuaded to field more women candidates?
- Does increasing the numbers of women in government always improve their influence over policy-making?
- What role do NGOs play and how can the OSCE assist in promoting equality in the broader civil society agenda?

- How can national human rights institutions, such as Ombudsman offices, contribute to identifying and suggesting solutions to gender inequality, and how can the OSCE assist them?
- Are examples of good practice in the above areas transferable to all societies?

MODERATOR'S REPORT

Elisabeth Rasmusson

Introduction

The OSCE recognizes that the equality between women and men and the protection of the human rights of women are essential to security and stability in the OSCE region as well as to sustainable democracy.

The working group on action in the political and public spheres emphasizes the need for long term and consistent commitment by the OSCE to promote and ensure gender equality. This should be based on co-operation between OSCE institutions, participating States and NGOs. A regional approach to this co-operation is essential to ensure sustainability of all action. The working group noted the crucial need to engage men in all these efforts.

Gender mainstreaming cannot replace specific equality policy and machineries. It is to be regarded as a strategy to achieve gender equality and to complement gender specific policies and action.

OSCE and institutions

The protection and promotion of human rights, including human rights of women, form an integral part of the work of the OSCE, including in its field activities. Gender issues therefore form part of the mandates of the OSCE missions and field presences.

The Chairman-in-Office should issue an OSCE Gender Action Plan within this year. The plan should include practical measures, timelines, it should be made public and be updated on a yearly basis.

The Chairman-in-Office should ensure gender mainstreaming throughout the OSCE Document-Charter on European Security.

The OSCE should call upon participating States and in particular host states to include men and women in gender mainstreaming of educational systems and curricula in co-ordination with relevant international actors with educational mandates.

The OSCE should contribute to the Special Session of the UN General Assembly in June 2000 and fully engage in the preparatory conference in January 2000.

The OSCE should promote the increase in the number of women in leading positions in judicial, executive and legislative bodies in all policy areas.

The OSCE calls upon the participating States to adopt electoral systems that ensure women's representation and participation on an equal basis.

Resources for gender co-ordination and activities should be made available.

The OSCE should support political actors and NGOs in efforts to mobilize women and put gender issues on the political agenda and make them visible through the use of the media.

The OSCE should encourage media to promote prominent, positive, and non-stereotypical representation of women and gender issues.

The OSCE should support women's NGOs representing minorities in the fields of networking, training and facilitating contacts to national authorities.

OSCE programme activities should include accessibility for women in rural areas and minorities.

The ODIHR should emphasize gender perspectives in its election monitoring.

In its work with Ombudsman and other national human rights institutions, the OSCE and, in particular the ODIHR, should pay special attention to building the capacity of those institutions which protect and promote women's human rights.

OSCE Missions should establish a gender expert/co-ordination body in each mission area where such a co-ordinating body does not already exist. Such a body should consist of representatives from relevant international and local NGOs, government/state institutions, and representatives from OSCE and other international agencies. The tasks and responsibilities should include co-ordination of and support to national actors, regional co-ordination between OSCE Missions, co-ordination with the OSCE Gender Adviser. This body could assist the government authorities and NGOs in analysing national legislation from a gender perspective. Every effort should be made to ensure co-ordination between OSCE projects and other gender projects on the ground.

OSCE Missions should assist host states in implementing their international commitments and obligation in the field of gender equality.

OSCE Missions should proceed with organizing regional activities to increase women's political skill and capacities, especially in Central Asia and Central and Eastern Europe.

OSCE Missions should facilitate the establishment of cross-party associations/caucuses of women parliamentarians in order to increase women's effectiveness and pressure in the decision-making process.

ANNEX I

KEY-NOTE SPEECH

Martina Vandenberg, Human Rights Watch

Good Afternoon,

Thank you Ambassador Mevik for that kind introduction.

Ambassadors, Delegates, NGO Leaders, Ladies and Gentlemen:

In October 1997, 161 participants, representatives of 39 States, six international organizations, and 48 non-governmental representatives gathered in Warsaw to discuss women in decision-making, women and the economy and women in conflict situations, including war crimes and violence against women.

At that meeting, delegates reached a consensus that the OSCE should mainstream gender issues and women's human rights into all of its work; that women's human rights are an inalienable, integral, and indivisible part of universal human rights. Delegates also acknowledged that women's interests had not adequately been taken into account by the OSCE in the past. We meet again. Have we made any progress?

To some extent, the answer is yes.

We now have a Gender Focal Point for the OSCE in Vienna, with a mandate to press for mainstreaming of women's human rights and gender issues throughout OSCE field activities, missions, programmes, and institutions. We also have a Gender Adviser at the OSCE/ODIHR in Warsaw to monitor implementation of gender-sensitive policies and projects within the OSCE and by the OSCE in the field. And as of April, we have a Gender Adviser in the Secretariat pressing to initiate gender and women's human rights training for mission staff members and to create mechanisms to halt sex discrimination within the institution. These are major steps forward for the OSCE and steps for which member states who supported the initiatives should be congratulated. The experts who fill these positions – Dr. Monika Wohlfeld, Alison Jolly, and Beatrix Attinger-Colijn – should also be congratulated for successfully using the posts to advocate internally for integration of women's human rights – a goal set in October 1997 by the delegates. They have served as an internal engine pushing the women's human rights agenda forward institutionally.

We have the commitments articulated in the OSCE Vienna and Moscow concluding documents obliging states to promote the effective participation of women in political, economic, social and cultural life, and to work not only for *de jure* – but for *de facto* – equality of opportunity for men and women.

We have the election results in Bosnia, where, after the OSCE required that political parties include women on their party lists, the number of women elected increased from 2.38 percent in the Bosnia and Herzegovina House of Representatives to 26 percent overnight.

As of 1 May 1999, we have the Treaty of Amsterdam, providing that the Council of Ministers take measures to fight discrimination based on sex and adopt measures to create equality of opportunity in vocational activities. And, if the European Union is serious about this treaty obligation, the EU will

place women's human rights high on its domestic and foreign policy agendas. Human rights clauses referring to universal human rights standards, as well as to OSCE documents, have already been included in all partnership, co-operation, and trade agreements between the EU and OSCE member states.

And we have this gathering today, offering the opportunity for NGOs and governments to work together to design concrete recommendations for the OSCE and member states to meet those commitments.

But the enormous potential for progress on these issues – especially in light of the growth of the women's human rights movement and NGOs in the region – cannot obscure that the task before us is huge. Women still face rampant sex discrimination, wartime violence, rape, trafficking, domestic violence, sexual harassment, rape and sexual violence in prisons. Women have little voice in decision making. Not all states have ratified CEDAW. Many have not withdrawn their reservations. And all of the issues identified by the discussion groups in the 1997 Human Dimension Meeting remain on the table.

Labor market sex discrimination continues. Despite inflated rhetoric of equal opportunities and equal rights, women's wages lag far behind those of their male counterparts. In the countries making the transition from communism to market economies, the vast majority of the unemployed are female, and most disturbingly, women form an enormous portion of the chronically unemployed in these transition countries. Women have suffered doubly – from the simultaneous elimination of social benefits and the failure of governments to enforce anti-discrimination laws.

Women in many of these countries still read job advertisements looking for women with long legs, blonde hair, under 25 and without complexes – roughly translated as willing to sleep with the boss. Other women, looking for job opportunities, answer advertisements recruiting them to work in Western Europe as waitresses, sex workers, domestics or exotic dancers, only to find themselves caught in slave-like conditions, their passports stripped from them.

Throughout the countries of transition, the work force has become increasingly segregated, with women marginalized in low-wage, low-prestige labour sector ghettos. The catch words of the transition begin with the prefix 'de.' De-skilling, de-education and de-emancipation are three of the trends devastating women in the region of transition. And throughout Western Europe, the Newly Independent States, and Central Asia, women's domestic work continues to be – in the words of Anara Tabyshalieva, an economist from Kyrgyzstan – “unpaid, unprestigious, and unnoticed.”

Sex discrimination in employment blocks women's access to good jobs, exacerbating the phenomenon of the feminization of poverty. Human Rights Watch has found that employers overtly discriminate, asking young women applicants if they plan to have children. In Poland, La Strada, an NGO, reports cases of women forced to sign contracts that they will not have children during the term of their employment.

Women are conspicuous in their absence from positions of economic and political power throughout the OSCE region. Prior to the June elections, women constituted only 26.7 percent of the European Parliament. According to the European Women's Lobby, based in Brussels, only two women have been nominated out of a total of twenty European commissioners. In Russia, the percentage of women

in Parliament plummeted from over 30 percent in the Soviet period to approximately 10 percent after the 1995 elections. Equally disturbing is the lack of women ministers: only 2 out of 40 ministers in Greece are female; only 22 out of 92 in Britain; in Slovenia there are no women ministers. Women economists and activists from the countries of transition attending a World Bank conference held in Washington last week agreed that this was a transition run and managed by men – for whom none of these issues was a priority. In Central Asia, only Kyrgyzstan can boast of women political participants – the head of the Constitutional Court is a woman, there are two women ministers, as well as an ambassador.

Discrimination against women in leadership is not only a phenomenon in national governments. In fact, women are conspicuous in their absence from the decision-making structures of the OSCE. Not one of the institutions of the OSCE is currently headed by a woman. To date, no woman has ever been nominated to serve as the OSCE Secretary General. In Vienna, we have less than a handful of women ambassadors to the OSCE – today there are only seven women ambassadors out of a total of 54 participating States. And the OSCE still has not implemented a formal sexual harassment policy, in spite of numerous complaints and cases from field offices. Our experience with the OSCE indicates that field personnel need a tremendous amount of training on human rights issues generally – with special emphasis on women’s human rights. It is not uncommon for our researchers investigating human rights violations against women to be referred – by the human rights officer – to the democratization unit. Women’s absence from leadership positions within the OSCE – as well as the failure to include women’s human rights in the OSCE’s general human rights mandate – is reflected in the lack of reporting on women’s human rights flowing in from field missions in Bosnia, Croatia, Tajikistan, Macedonia and elsewhere.

The OSCE region is one of conflict. Although it is the conflict in Kosovo which dominates our television screens, conflict has only recently ceased in Bosnia and Herzegovina, Tajikistan, Chechnya, Ingushetia, Georgia, Armenia, Azerbaijan, Croatia and hopefully Kosovo. These conflicts – and the complex reconstruction issues they leave behind – have a profound impact on women’s lives. Many women in these conflicts have lost male family members and find themselves as heads of households for the first time. Other women have faced rape and torture at the hands of state or non-state parties to the conflict. The trauma experienced by the entire population – male and female—pervades any reconstruction effort. Discrimination against women during the reconstruction period is legion. Bosnia provides an excellent case study. Human Rights Watch conducted four missions to Bosnia to interview women about reconstruction aid and women’s rights. Women received far smaller loans and were pressed into training programmes focused on gender-stereotyped, low-paying, low-prestige skills such as hairdressing, sewing, and knitting. As one Bosnian woman told Human Rights Watch, “Women came last – after everything else came women.” Men in peacetime benefited disproportionately from loans, jobs programmes and training.

Our agenda for the next two days is clear – to develop policy recommendations for member states and OSCE institutions to make gender equality in the region a reality – and not just a rhetorical exhortation. However, in spite of the progress made to date, two issues appear to have fallen off of the OSCE’s agenda: trafficking and domestic violence. The OSCE must address all of the violations of women’s rights in order to make progress on any. Violence against women is an enormous human rights concern for all women in all of the OSCE region. Disturbingly, statistics in Russia, Ukraine and several other countries in transition indicate that reporting of rape and domestic violence is actually decreasing. This does not reflect success in combating this scourge, but instead exposes police refusals to take reports. In

Russia, for example, Human Rights Watch documented numerous cases of police refusing to take reports or launch an investigation into rape. In egregious cases, police gave the perpetrator the victim's address with the instructions "make a deal." Sexual harassment – a form of discrimination and violence against women in the workplace – also remains invisible due to lack of reporting. In Ukraine, only 3 cases of sexual harassment were reported nationwide in 1997, although we know that the abuse is far more widespread.

Trafficking plagues the OSCE region, with women from such countries as Belarus, Russia, the Czech Republic, Ukraine, Poland, Romania, and Armenia trafficked throughout Western Europe, the United States, and even into Bosnia and Herzegovina. The absence of trafficking from the agenda today underscores an impression we have formed from interaction with OSCE officials in the field. One OSCE human rights officer serving in Republika Srpska noted that he knew of several brothels full of foreign women in the country, but had never provided any human rights reporting on that topic in his weekly report.

I would like to close by spending a few moments reviewing the recommendations from 1997. They can only remind us of how far we have to go. I do this in the hope that we can use the next two days to build on the foundation created by many of you in this room. I think that this will set the stage for making concrete recommendations to member states and to the OSCE for combating these violations of women's human rights.

Now, as then, our point of departure is the Moscow Concluding Document which stipulates that participating states will take measures "to ensure full economic opportunity for women, including non-discriminatory employment practices and policies, equal access to education and training, and measures to facilitate combining employment with family responsibilities. And states will seek to ensure that any structural adjustment policies or programs do not have an adversely discriminatory effect on women."

The participants in October 1997 called for increased micro-credit programmes for women, gender disaggregated economic statistics, enforcement of anti-discrimination labour codes, adoption of measures to increase women's political representation. All these tasks remain to be done. The question I address to you all today is – what concrete mechanisms should be created to implement these reforms? And what is the role of the OSCE in battling human rights abuses against women in the region?

I have one recommendation to get us started: the position of gender adviser should be a permanent one. What progress we have made to date is largely due to the efforts of the gender advisers.

We – the NGOs – hope to work intensively and informally with state delegates and OSCE officials to map out concrete recommendations which can – and will – be implemented. That is the challenge of the next two days.

Thank you

ANNEX II

AGENDA

Day One - Monday 14 June

14.00 Opening Session

Moderator: Ambassador Leif MEVIK

Introductory remarks
Explanation of modalities

Key note presentation

15.00 Working Groups

1 Action in the economic sphere

Moderator: Ceren Yazgan-Etiz, Permanent Mission of Turkey to the OSCE

2 Action in the security sphere - focus on post-conflict rehabilitation

Moderator: Ian Gorvin, ODIHR

3 Action in the political and public spheres

Moderator: Elisabeth Rasmusson, Deputy Head of Mission, OSCE Mission to Bosnia and Herzegovina

18.00 End of Day One

Day Two - Tuesday 15 June

10.00 Working Groups (continued)

13.00 Buffet Lunch for all participants offered by the Norwegian Chairmanship

15.00 Closing Session

Moderators' Reports
Comments from the floor

17.00 Close of meeting