



EUROPEAN UNION

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EU Statement on Domestic Violence in the Russian Federation

Two weeks ago, the EU raised concerns about Russia's proposed reduction of the offence of battery within the family from a criminal to an administrative offence. Since then, these changes have passed into law.

No country is immune from domestic violence, which claims so many victims worldwide each year. We are deeply concerned by the persistence of violence against women as one of the most pervasive human rights violations in the OSCE area, manifested as physical, sexual, and psychological violence. In Moscow 1991 all OSCE participating States committed to seek to eliminate all forms of violence against women, including by ensuring adequate legal prohibitions against such acts. Further, Ministerial Council Decision 15/05 urged participating States to take all necessary measures, including legislative, to prevent and combat all forms of gender-based violence against women and girls. With Ministerial Council Decision 7/14, all of us reiterated the particular need to take more vigorous measures in preventing and combating violence against women, and promoting gender equality. We also reaffirmed the importance of effective accountability with regard to violence against women and against children. While most countries in Europe are taking measures to stop domestic violence and violence against women, and to raise awareness of this serious violation of human rights, the signing into law of a bill decriminalizing some forms of domestic violence in the Russian Federation on 7 February goes in the opposite direction and against our OSCE commitments. The Russian Federation's new legislation is a clear step backwards in the country's commitment to tackling violence against women and children as they are the majority of victims of domestic violence. This law fails to recognize the very serious and specific nature of violence against women. We take note of the statement given by

the Russian Federation at the Permanent Council of 2 February. However we remain concerned about the severe consequences it can have both for the victims and for society as a whole. Thousands of women die in the Russian Federation every year as a result of domestic violence.

The European Union will continue to promote the eradication of domestic violence, to protect those who are vulnerable, and to support the victims, both inside and outside of the European Union.

The European Union underlines the importance of the Istanbul Convention on preventing and combating violence against women and domestic violence. Further signatories and ratifications would send a clear sign to the world of our commitment to ending violence against women.

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

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