



United States Mission to the OSCE

Statement on UN Day of the Girl Child

As delivered by Ambassador Daniel Baer
to the Permanent Council, Vienna
October 9, 2014

The United States is proud to celebrate the International Day of the Girl Child on October 11. It is a day to recognize the rights of girls and to galvanize global commitments to end gender stereotypes, discrimination, violence, and economic disparities that disproportionately affect girls. President Obama and Secretary Kerry have made gender equality a policy priority in order to ensure that all young people - both girls and boys - have equal opportunities to contribute to their societies.

We know that in too many communities around the world girls do not enjoy the same opportunities as their male peers, simply because of their gender. Two-thirds of the world's illiterate people are women. Sixty-two million girls do not attend school. An estimated 14 million girls are married every year before they reach the age of 18, and about 16 million girls under 19 give birth every year. Early childbirth is linked to curtailed education, limited economic opportunity, and health risks – complications from early and frequent childbearing is a leading cause of death for girls ages 15-19. Between 100 million and 140 million women and girls worldwide are thought to be living with the consequences of female genital mutilation, and, every year, more than three million girls under age of 15 are at risk.

All of these issues remain relevant throughout the OSCE region. They must inspire all of us to act to put an end to this inequality that affects every nation. If we work to empower girls, entire families, communities, and nations benefit. Data shows that when girls are educated, countries are more prosperous. Providing girls with an extra year of schooling increases their wage-earning potential by 10 to 20 percent. Girls who are in school are more likely to delay marriage and childbirth, have lower rates of HIV/AIDS and other sexually transmitted diseases, and enjoy greater equality at home and in society. Their future children are also more likely to survive and be educated themselves.

The United States is proud to be working in partnership with governments, the private sector, and civil society to ensure that girls have opportunities to make the most of their lives and contribute to their communities. We invite all OSCE participating States to join us in unleashing the potential power – economic, political, and social – of girls, in order to see a more peaceful, prosperous, just and stable world.

Thank you, Madam Chair.