



REPRESENTATION PERMANENTE DE LA FRANCE  
AUPRES DE L'O.S.C.E

**HDIM/ Tolerance and Non-Discrimination II - Women's Rights  
(Working Session 3 - Tuesday 24 September, afternoon)**

*Translated from the French*

1) Violence against women is not a series of isolated incidents but a continuing worldwide phenomenon. It is the world's most widespread violation of Human Rights. A global response is therefore indispensable. The OSCE action plan fully supports this effort. France is fully involved in it.

2) At national level, major strides were made last year. Following the meeting of the Inter-ministerial Committee on Women's Rights on 30 November 2012, a number of strong measures were taken to make further progress on defining a third generation of women's rights. Following the civic rights recognised in France in 1944 and the economic and social rights acquired in the 1970s and 1980s, the focus is now on defining rights that will produce genuine equality. This third generation of women's rights should enable men and women to be equally active in building a society that they equally form. This society will be built by working on education and convictions and re-thinking lifestyles. This work starts in schools, from the earliest possible age, but should also take place in institutions, administrations, families, companies, the media and associations.

The definition of this inter-ministerial roadmap has already resulted in the adoption of strong practical measures including: strengthening wage equality monitoring in companies and gender balance requirements in senior civil service positions; introduction of a programme to combat gender stereotypes in schools; establishment of an inter-ministerial mission to combat violence against women; and work with the media to ensure respect for the image of women and the promotion of women's rights in the media.

3) At international level, we are focusing particularly on three major objectives that should enable us to make significant progress in the struggle for gender equality: education and political rights for girls and women; protection against violence, including sexual violence, where we fully support the British initiative; and reproductive and sexual rights, which cover women's freedom to control their own bodies and access to sexual and reproductive health services. We must be very careful not to backslide from the standards set by the major international documents covering these issues.

As our Minister for Women's Rights, Najat Vallaud-Belkacem has stated: "The fact that aspects of male dominance are universal is no reason to consider them a foregone conclusion. Human Rights and women's rights, which are an integral part of Human Rights, are also universal." States should not invoke any custom, tradition or religious consideration to avoid their obligations to eliminate all forms of violence and discrimination against women and girls.

This is the message France strove to convey in hosting the first World Francophone Women's Forum in Paris on 20 March 2013 and the Ministerial Conference of the Union for the Mediterranean on Strengthening the Role of Women in Society on 11 and 12 September of this year./.