



Organization for Security and Co-operation in Europe

Office of the Secretary General

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Statement by Jamila Seftaoui, Senior Adviser on Gender Issues, at the Human Dimension meeting on 18 December 2007

Mr. Chairman,

Thank you very much for this introduction.

Thank you also to the participating States for devoting this Human Dimension meeting to a discussion on the implementation of the OSCE gender commitments.

Dear Ambassadors, ladies and gentlemen,

When an esteemed group like you gathers on a day like today, in the second half of December, at the end of the year and despite other ongoing important OSCE events, to me, it means at least one thing: the subject “Gender equality” is important to all of us.

Today, I speak to you as a person who recently joined the Organization, and who is eager to work as efficiently and as closely as possible with you, with the incoming Finnish chair, and with all bodies, institutions, programmes and structures of the OSCE in order to help achieve tangible progress in the area of gender issues.

In 2004, the consensus on the Action Plan for the Promotion of Gender Equality was reached after a long and broad process of discussions, consultations and negotiations, reflecting many years of experience and maturity of the OSCE. As such, it includes the contributions of all bodies, institutions, missions, all political perspectives and all approaches to the OSCE’s overarching goal of comprehensive security. It has a coherent philosophy and a strong ethical basis. It is a firm foundation for action.

More than three years later, where does the OSCE stand with regard to the commitments contained in the Action Plan?

More precisely, two questions come to mind, namely:

First, how is the Organization implementing the gender commitments it has set for itself? Where are we?

Second, what are the key improvements that we need to make from 2008 onwards that would help us be on the right track to reach gender equality in the coming five to ten years?

In response to this **first question**, allow me to refer to the Secretary General's evaluation report of last June on the implementation of the Action Plan. I believe there is no need to repeat the substance of that report here, nor the content of the food for thought paper prepared by our Section for today's meeting. But in short, let me summarize:

1. Over the last years, despite notable efforts, only few women have been recruited, nominated or have advanced to senior ranks of management in the OSCE;
2. Insufficient involvement of OSCE senior management has been noted as a key difficulty in implementing the Action Plan;
3. The gender perspective has not yet been mainstreamed into OSCE policies, nor into the major part of the programmes and operations of its three dimensions. Especially in the politico-military and in the economic-environmental dimensions, and despite advances (such as the recruitment and training of female police officers or the integration of gender into discussions related to the migration policies or the follow up on UN resolution 1325 on Women, peace and Security), the integration of a gender perspective clearly lags behind the expectations expressed in the Action Plan. Gender debates and issues seem rather confined to the human dimension and progress reports are only rarely discussed by the participating States in the Permanent Council, in fact, only once a year;
4. The implementation of specific measures (according to Para 44, Action Plan) needs more support in field operations. Added to comprehensive gender mainstreaming, specific measures are to enhance women's rights where women

are suffering discrimination, to improve women's economic situation where they have no equal access to economic opportunities, to protect women from gender based violence and trafficking, to pay due attention to their specific vulnerability, their needs and their possible contribution to conflict prevention, crisis management and peace reconstruction.

Ladies and gentlemen, while saying this, I am aware that a number of good initiatives and successful activities have been undertaken. Yet, some of them might not have been documented and therefore, unfortunately, they are not visible, not shared, not replicated.

I am aware that it is hard to advance, if there are no clear monitoring and evaluation schemes, no time-bound implementation plans, no concrete indicators for the measurement of the achievements that guide us.

And yes, if we are to keep gender equality as a high priority in the ongoing activities, supervisors and senior staff must show consistent leadership and interest in the subject. In the first instance, this includes management of the field operations, the Secretariat and the Institutions, but it also includes a clear and consistent message from the Organization's governing bodies – after all, it is ultimately the representatives of the participating States who serve as our board of directors.

I am aware that it is not easy to closely follow-up on the implementation of the Action Plan with the very limited resources allocated at all levels.

I know that it is difficult to advance the integration of a gender perspective in activities traditionally dominated by men, like most military and economic programmes, unless there are comprehensive tools at hand, specific training, good examples, and best practices to turn to.

And indeed, it is not easy to choose the right strategy for increasing the number of female professionals without a thorough audit of the recruitment and selection methods, without an analysis of national secondment systems and ways to improve them, and without a plan for the advancement of qualified female staff members into management positions.

Moving towards Action

These considerations bring me to the second question:

What are the key improvements that we need to make from 2008 onwards and that would help us to be on track to achieve gender equality in the coming five to ten years?

The participating States may want to consider supporting the following measures:

- 1) To define and put into place monitoring, evaluation and accountability schemes, time-bound and assorted with measurable indicators for the achievements of each department/section/unit/programme and project.
- 2) To specify plans with time-bound targets for the increase of the number of qualified women in higher management positions based on a thorough gender analysis and lessons learned from the current ways of advertising vacancies, of selecting, recruiting, and of secondment of female candidates.
- 3) At the same time, to define a strategic plan for the management of the advancement of female staff members. Affirmative advancement and retention policies assorted with targeted actions (such as mentoring programmes) would encourage women to stay, improve their skills, and compete for senior positions.
- 4) To include sex-disaggregated data and a gender analysis in initial assessments and preparations of all OSCE projects in the three dimensions. This, for example, would help determine how various forms of insecurity are being dealt with through OSCE actions for boys and girls, for women and men.
- 5) To consider putting the debates, deliberations and decisions on gender issues on the agenda for the implementation meetings of not only the human but also the economic and environmental as well as the politico-military dimensions.
- 6) To encourage male involvement in gender issues within the OSCE. All of us know that gender issues are not “a women’s issue”: Men, like women, at all levels, but

especially as senior politicians from the participating States, senior managers and supervisors from the OSCE Secretariat, institutions and field operations, have a key role to play in any gender equality efforts. Gender knowledge and awareness, for example, should be part of the job descriptions of male and female senior managers, of their capacity building, where needed, of their activities' portfolio and of their performance assessments.

- 7) And finally, to consider that the above-mentioned efforts should be matched by sufficient resources for their implementation and by a demonstrative leadership by top decision makers, including the representatives of the participating States.

My team in the Gender Section and I will be honoured to provide advice, assistance and technical expertise to support each one of these efforts. Furthermore, and within the limits of our mandate and resources, we will make available adequate gender mainstreaming tools, provide training and facilitate knowledge of best practices and strategic networking to all our partners in the Secretariat, institutions and field operations at their request.

Ladies and gentlemen, bringing about gender equality should not be seen as diluting the security mandate of the OSCE; on the contrary, achieving gender equality gives it a greater credibility. The presence, participation and progress of women (as representatives of the other half of the humanity!) in governance structures and processes, in all vital development areas, such as the environment and the economy, should be a key indicator by means of which OSCE institutions and field operations can measure action and success in their work for stability, inclusiveness, sustainable development, security and good democratic governance.

As I stand before you today, looking to all our good intentions as described in the commitments to implement the Action Plan for the Promotion of Gender Equality, I am reminded of something Erich Kaestner, a pragmatic German writer once said:

“Es gibt nichts Gutes, ausser man tut es”

“There is nothing really good, unless it is put into practice”

I would like to conclude in this spirit, offering you, dear Ambassadors, delegates and colleagues, my very best wishes for the coming year, hoping that the year 2008 under the incoming Finnish chairmanship will be a turning point for our Organization to turn equal opportunities for women and gender mainstreaming from its stated values into visible realities!

Thank you.