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Intervention made by:

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**Equal opportunity for women and men
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Republic of Macedonia had signed ratified and acceded to all international instruments that cover the area of equal opportunity for women and violence against women. This year for the first time the State had prepared a report on the undertaken measures and activities regarding the Beijing platform and CEDAW. In parallel, the NGO sector had produced a shadow report on CEDAW implementation. These two reports differ in many respects.

In a nutshell, the concept of equal opportunity to a greatest extent was achieved in the political life of the country and to be more precise at the level of political elites in the Parliament, where the quota of 30% of presentation of women was observed and achieved by having a respective number of women Parliamentarians. Yet, the new government in place has only 3 women and at local level the situation is worse – we have only two women mayors in over 80 municipalities and the situation in the municipal councils is worse than that.

All over the administration and other spheres of life the presentation of the women is largest at the base of the pyramid. In respect to the issue of domestic violence and violence against women in general, the situation is not stagnating but regressing. Although the issue of domestic violence is addressed with the latest changes in the criminal code, the latest report of a prominent NGO in this field reports of 65% of women being exposed to violence. The worst situation is actually reported in the social

protection services, law enforcement agencies and the courts, where violence is treated as ‘private matter’ and there is absolute lack of sensitization towards this issue, especially in the judiciary. Retrograde processes are also notable in the field of health care – with increased numbers of maternal deaths, education – where the drop out rate of girls from primary and secondary school is the highest in years and in the socioeconomic domain.

In May 2006 the Law on Equal Opportunity for women and men in the Republic of Macedonia was passed. This law was more than needed, and a big step forward was made with its enactments. However, some of the solutions provided for in this Law are not adequate nor reflect the core matter of enabling equal opportunities both for women and men. One of the obvious limiting factors is that it still focuses for the most part on the labour relations. A large portion of activities are transferred to the municipalities which need to secure the environment and the niche for the equal opportunities. Each of the municipalities has created committees within their councils to promote all equal opportunities measures and to produce an action plan for securing this. These action plans should feed into the National action plan under the responsibility of the Ministry of Labour and social Affairs. The overall concept of gender mainstreaming and making the policy of providing equal opportunities for women and men need a lot of effort of endearing and sensitization. The crucial issue is training and awareness raising, as well as redesigning of the National Action Plan, securing and monitoring its implementation.

Thus the assistance of OSCE and other international actors in the domain of enabling and providing equal opportunities for women and men and achieving gender mainstreaming are more than welcome.