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STATEMENT ON THE PROGRESS REPORT ON THE  
IMPLEMENTATION OF THE OSCE GENDER ACTION PLAN  
Delivered by Ambassador Steffen Kongstad at the Permanent Council  
Vienna, 5 July 2018

*CHECK AGAINST DELIVERY*

The OSCE Action Plan for the Promotion of Gender Equality was adopted in 2004. We welcome and appreciate the efforts reported to improve the collection of data on gender equality. Data should make it easy to compare progress over time. However, we must still keep our sights on our goal, which is the full implementation of the plan. A goal that we have yet to reach after 14 years.

The OSCE should have exemplary gender equality practices. We welcome the efforts the OSCE has made to increase the amount of female applicants to its vacancies and further to prevent sexual harassment. However, the report proposes that increased maximum duration for short-term assignments is an equality measure, but there is little to no evidence to support this. Why would those of different genders not equally enjoy more stable and predictable working conditions?

The OSCE meets its needs for qualified staff primarily through hiring for the general, professional and higher categories, as well as through secondment. As such, we should primarily direct our efforts for ensuring equal opportunity hiring practices to these categories. We welcome the measures reported in this regard, including the requirement to reissue a vacancy notice if the share of female applicants is below 20 percent.

Norway appreciates that in 2017, the OSCE achieved gender parity at the director level in the secretariat for the first time. Unfortunately, the overall indicators show that this positive development is not a trend: three of the four top positions are filled by men. Only four out of 14 heads of missions are women. Across the organisation women fill only 31 per cent of senior management positions. We should do all we can to recruit more women, but the lack of gender parity is not the reason we are not doing better. Most managers in the OSCE are men, and men must do more to bring gender equality forward.

It is revealing that at the Annual Security Review Conference, a mere 7 of 27 keynote speakers were women. One recommendation of the current gender equality report is to achieve gender balance among speakers. This is one of several admirable goals set forth in the recommendations. Now we must act to reach them.

The 2017 report on progress towards gender equality is a tool. It is a tool for the Executive Structures and participating States of the OSCE to take stock of our progress toward our common gender equality commitments. However, it is merely a tool. It does not exact change on its own. The responsibility to implement the commitments, and the ability to exact change, remain with the management of the OSCE and with the participating States. As I have said before, gender equality is a management responsibility.

We must use the tools we have. In 2017, we have reports from both the Secretary General and from the Office of Internal Oversight that have evaluated our progress and proposed recommendations. They show that much remains to be done: we have big plans, but have continued to take only small steps. We should aim for a stride towards our objectives. In doing so, we should be clearer about what really creates change and we must ensure a coherent approach across all our areas of activity.

We expect and appreciate the Secretary General to act on the recommendations and keep the participating States updated on progress in his regular reports to the Permanent Council.