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REPRESENTATIVE OF THE RUSSIAN FEDERATION, AT THE
1006th MEETING OF THE OSCE PERMANENT COUNCIL**

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In response to the report by the OSCE Secretary General on gender issues

Mr. Chairperson,
Secretary General,

We thank you for your informative statement. We have carefully studied the Annual Evaluation Report on the Implementation of the 2004 OSCE Action Plan for the Promotion of Gender Equality, which reflects in particular the important work performed by the Secretariat.

It is gratifying to note that since the OSCE Action Plan was adopted significant progress has been made in the OSCE area compared with other regions of the world in resolving the problems alluded to.

It is somewhat surprising to note, however, that the section devoted to the experience of the OSCE participating States is only one quarter the length of that describing the situation in the executive structures. The same applies to the number of countries considered – just 19. Moreover, the information is restricted to a very narrow area.

As far as Russia is concerned, I should like to point out that the example cited in the report offers a poor reflection of the important work carried out by the various departments under federal and regional budgets last year, this year and in general since the Action Plan was adopted. No doubt other countries could also provide a fuller description of their programme, project and other activities to ensure gender equality.

Considering that this year has special significance as we approach the tenth anniversary of the adoption of the Action Plan, the Secretariat could well ask participating States to provide more detailed information, examples of effective programmes and projects and also some statistical data on the basis of a questionnaire based on the model of other executive structures.

We studied with interest the data on the ratio of men and women in the OSCE executive structures. The figures reflect the growing opportunities for women to work in the Organization.

At the same time, it is important that ensuring gender equality both in the OSCE and in the participating States does not turn into a pursuit of quotas. Equal access by men and women to education, employment and participation in public and political life must be contingent above all on a high level of skill and professional competence.

This also applies to the frequently cited idea that only when half of the employees of government and legislative bodies are women will society enjoy stability and security. This estimate is not borne out by investigation results or reliable statistics. The main thing is that politics and government bodies are served by suitably qualified people, experts and specialists in their fields, regardless of their gender.

Regarding the OSCE project activities, the number of gender-related projects – 332 – is impressive. However, the bias observed in recent times towards the promotion of women in political and public life is disturbing. This tendency is also evident in the report. There can be no doubt that it is important. At the same time, other no less relevant issues, particularly in the social sphere, are sidelined. The OSCE could make a considerable contribution to the retraining of men and women at a time of growing unemployment, the protection of the rights of large families and single parents and their children, and social security for mothers.

Particular attention should be paid to safeguarding the rights of women who prioritize family and the raising of children as their main purpose and basic vocation. We should not forget the special role of women and mothers in preserving traditional family, moral, religious and cultural values.

It is gratifying to note that a substantial section within the plan is devoted to combating violence against women. However, the claim that it is mostly women and girls who suffer from domestic or sexual violence is not completely correct. Boys should be included just as much in this vulnerable category. United Nations data shows that in armed conflicts men and women, boys and girls, suffer in equal measure from violence.

This year marks the tenth anniversary of the adoption of the OSCE Action Plan for the Promotion of Gender Equality. When it comes to ensuring gender equality, every country has something to offer. We hope that the Gender Equality Review Conference next week will consider a wide range of issues, including an exchange of best practices, not only in the political, public and economic spheres but also in the social and cultural fields. This is fully in line with the decision of the 1989 Vienna Meeting.

Thank you for your attention.