

Speech by Ambassador Ertugrul Apakan, Chief Monitor of the OSCE SMMU, at the OSCE Gender Equality Review Conference, Vienna, 10-11 July 2014

[Moderator: Ms Bilge Koçyigit, FSC Coordinator on UNSCR 1325, Counsellor, Turkish Delegation to OSCE]

Thank you, Madam Chair.

I would like to thank the Swiss Chairmanship and the OSCE Secretariat, in particular OSCE Senior Adviser on Gender Issues Ambassador Miroslava Beham and her team, for organizing this important conference.

Excellencies,
Ladies and Gentlemen,

Throughout my professional life, I have engaged in fostering the inclusion of women, youth and their concerns in peace and democratization processes. In 2010, as Turkey's Permanent Representative to the UN Security Council, I participated in meetings related to the 10th anniversary commemoration of UN Security Council Resolution 1325.

As Chief Monitor of the OSCE Special Monitoring Mission to Ukraine, I am committed to continuing this work and raising the profile of women and gender issues in the present crisis. I and my colleagues have engaged in consultations with state authorities, women's groups, and academics.

The mandate of the OSCE Special Monitoring Mission can be summarized in two pillars: first, monitoring and reporting on the situation on the ground, and second – dialogue and facilitation. Our monitors interact every day with various interlocutors on the ground, including women from the civil society and the local population, who call for increased transparency, democracy and peaceful dialogue. I have personally engaged in talks with women and their organizations in Kyiv, Odessa, Kharkiv, and Donetsk, and will continue to do so in other regions.

In order to foster peace and dialogue we need to be creative and allow for new entry points and new interlocutors in the political debate. Women and youth are the key game-changers in both times of peace and crises for transforming our societies into peaceful, pluralistic and tolerant democracies. Women's participation in the political debate is essential. They should have a say in institutional, social and local-level thinking.

In times of both peace and crisis, women are actively engaged at the community level as providers of humanitarian aid, psycho-social and health services, and as educators. As such, they have a deep knowledge and understanding of the communities they serve, and a broader perspective on their challenges and needs that need to be addressed at the negotiating table. They are therefore able to provide evidence-based and durable solutions to crises situations. Due to their inclusiveness and community-based approach, they are key participants in peace processes.

Women and children also make up the majority of populations affected by crises, both as internally displaced peoples and as people who stay behind, including the elderly. Women

also compose and head the majority of community-based organizations, especially those who provide social and psychological help to those facing difficulties.

In order to adequately acknowledge their contributions as well as boost gender equity, we as international actors have the duty to enhance women's profile and their participation in decision-making and negotiations as often as we can.

In Ukraine, women have participated in high numbers in Maidan demonstrations, almost as numerous as men at the initial stages of the protests. While initially they mostly assumed support roles, such as providing food and psychological and medical services to the demonstrators, they later took up leadership roles by forming women's self-defence groups ("women's sotnyas"/groups of hundreds) and by increasingly enrolling into organized groups. Women have also taken leadership roles in transforming the protest movement into advocacy initiatives in support of democratic reforms, good governance and the fight against corruption.

In response to some of the questions proposed by this panel, please allow me to outline some of the **challenges** faced by our mission:

Our office has been established at the end of March 2014 and has progressively built up its staff. At present, the Mission comprises 253 staff, including 233 international monitors deployed across 10 regions of Ukraine. 26 percent of our staff is female, 74 male. Two Team Leaders out of ten are female. In order to improve the gender composition of our mission, I have urged OSCE participating States to nominate more qualified women to our mission. We have a Gender Adviser in our mission whose role is to provide guidance and expertise on mainstreaming a gender perspective into our monitoring, reporting and dialogue facilitation. All our monitors are provided with initial training, which includes the mainstreaming of gender and the "Women, Peace and Security agenda" into their monitoring, reporting and dialogue facilitation efforts on the ground. Additional human rights and gender training, as well as specific tools (Standard Operating Procedures, questionnaires) have been provided to our teams. Further capacity-building is planned for the coming months.

The abduction of eight of our monitors, including one woman, for more than one month (an unprecedented incident in the OSCE), has temporarily limited our capacity to monitor incidents directly in eastern Ukraine, including the violation of women's, men's and children's rights.

However, our monitors continue to conduct monitoring and gather information from communities who relocate from combat-afflicted areas to other regions, as well as from those who assist them. We will progressively resume our monitoring capacity in eastern Ukraine as soon as the local environment becomes more safe and secure. We are grateful to the Ukrainian authorities who are helping us to assess the security situation on a real-time basis.

National Dialogue roundtables started in May, and consultations between the sides in June, with the facilitation of the Swiss Chairmanship of the OSCE. On the other hand, Ambassador Heidi Tagliavini has been appointed by the Swiss Chairmanship as Special Envoy to represent the OSCE in the Trilateral Contact Group which has been established between Ukraine, the Russian Federation and the OSCE. These processes have so far been marked by an inadequate participation of women, but we actively seek avenues for including women and their concerns in this process. At the local level, women have taken the leadership in

launching a local mediation initiative in Odessa, and there is growing interest in women's engagement in dialogue in other regions.

In those contexts where appointing women as mediators or negotiators is not possible, field missions can convey women's concerns and proposed solutions to the sides. In Ukraine, I have launched breakfasts with women's groups who have called for facilitating people-to-people contacts to build trust across Ukrainian regions. They are also eager to learn from the experience of other countries and co-operate with organizations in other parts of the world.

Heads of Missions and senior management need to be routinely sensitized on the benefits of including women in peace and reconciliation processes, not only within the OSCE, but also in the UN and other international organizations. In order to do so effectively, they need to be supported by gender experts both at advisory and working levels, and provided with adequate funding.

Exchange of good practices and establishing expert networks (both online and offline) across field operations and institutions can ensure linkages and cross-fertilization on the "Women, Peace and Security" agenda. In addition, contextualized training and monitoring mechanisms can be designed in response to local needs.

In this connection, I am committed to promoting gender-inclusiveness in ongoing and future reform efforts in Ukraine. Gender-sensitive security sector reforms not only advance gender equality as a goal in itself, but bridge the gap between civil society, security agencies and decision-makers, and ultimately create safer and more peaceful communities so much needed in divided communities.

These are my candid suggestions based on my experience within the OSCE and the UN. I will be happy to share further thoughts as our discussion develops.

Thank you.