



## Concept Note

### *“Women in the Security Sector: Challenges and Opportunities for the OSCE Area and Beyond”*

Women, men, girls and boys **experience security differently** in any given context, and interact with security processes in different ways. Both the understanding of conflict and efforts to conduct security activities and build sustainable peace vary according to gender.

As in the community, also in the security sector, women and men have **differential access to resources, balance different responsibilities, play different roles, respond to different social norms** and tend to **build peace in different ways**.

Gender perspectives of security should not, however, be understood as focusing exclusively on **women**. Integrating a gender perspective is defined as the “process of assessing the **implications for both women and men** of any planned action, including legislation, policies or programmes, in all areas and at all levels”.

Both men and women are essential to build sustainable peace and security. As highlighted in the **2015 UN Global Review**, at global level, there has been an increasing recognition that integrating a gender perspective in the security sector, taking into account the **different needs** of women, men, girls and boys, and their full and equal participation in security decision-making is vital for an **effective and accountable security sector**.

It is, thus, widely acknowledged that women’s contribution within the security sector is key to ensure the **operational effectiveness** of activities implemented by armed forces, border security and management service, police, intelligence agencies etc.

Nevertheless, in many countries security sector policies and programming have failed to adequately analyse **women’s security needs and priorities and to involve women and men on an equal basis**. In such cases, security institutions are all too often rife with **equality gaps**, and may be unable to provide security for all members of the community. Efforts aimed at integrating a gender perspective into policies and practices of the security sector have predominantly focused on women’s representation rather than on their needs. Similarly, men’s perspectives of security, vulnerabilities and needs are also largely missing in security agendas.



Actions to address persisting challenges within and beyond the OSCE Area include: **promoting a gender-sensitive professional working environment and institutional culture free from discrimination and harassment, reducing barriers by creating conditions conducive to attracting more women, supporting the recruitment, retention, and advancement of women and including well-qualified** –, particularly for senior positions.

Other challenges include the lack of proper analysis of the differential impact of security policies and practices on men and women, particularly during emergencies, and ways to improve the delivery of security.

Overall, a security sector that is **gender-balanced and diverse** can better meet the needs of the community it serves.

In line with **UNSCR 1325 on women, peace and security and subsequent UNSC resolutions**, the OSCE has adopted several commitments, including, the Plan of Action on the Promotion of Gender Equality (2004), the Ministerial Decision 7/2009 on Women's participation in political and public life, the Decision 14 of 2005 dedicated to women in conflict prevention, crisis management and post-conflict rehabilitation and the Decision 3 of 2011 on the "Elements in the Conflict Cycle".

The discussions on the draft MC decision on **“Women's participation in the security sector”** in 2017 proves the positive engagement and interest of OSCE participating States to address the issue.

Formal and informal discussions within the OSCE have proved that there is an urge to continue to address issues such as the **correlation between the inclusion of women and security sector's effectiveness, operational and institutional challenges**, as well as **opportunities for the politico-military work** of the OSCE.

The one-day, high-level expert discussion will be held in Vienna, Austria on **1 October 2018** and will consist of plenary sessions in a panel format, preceded by a high-level opening. The Conference will gather participants from across the OSCE area and will provide a platform to foster exchange of views and best practices among the stakeholders involved with the aim of further advancing the OSCE and its participating States' efforts and commitments in this domain.