

OSCE Human Dimension Implementation Meeting 2018
Working Session 8 – Statement by the Delegation of Canada, delivered by Senior Policy Analyst Leonard Reil, Friday, September 20, 2019

Moderator,

The achievement of gender equality, the empowerment of women and girls, and the realization of their human rights are key Canadian priorities, and should and must be key OSCE priorities. Canada's Feminist International Assistance Policy and Feminist Foreign Policy puts women and girls at the heart of its efforts, because we believe that advancing gender equality and the empowerment of women and girls in all their diversity is the most effective way to eliminate poverty, create lasting peace, and achieve sustainable development.

We must address the systemic barriers that drive discrimination against women and girls, and ensure inclusive consultation and engagement on all issues. In Canada, one of the ways we have attempted to do this is by ensuring gender-based analysis plus is implemented in all government decisions, such as the Federal Budget. This assesses how diverse groups of women, men and non-binary people may experience policies, programs and initiatives by virtue of multiple intersecting identity factors.

Women's empowerment and full participation in leadership and decision-making processes are fundamental elements of democratic societies that are genuinely inclusive, representative, and sustainable. Canada is proud of its gender-equal cabinet, and reaffirms the importance of women and girls seeing themselves reflected in political leadership.

In Milan in 2018, participating States agreed upon a Ministerial Council Decision on Preventing and Combatting Violence Against Women. This decision included a number of important new commitments, particularly those related to the specific risks that many women face, as well as the intersecting forms of discrimination women face. Women in positions of power, including parliamentarians, journalists, and human rights defenders, are disproportionately subjected to online violence and harassment. This threatens democracy and can limit the full participation and representation of women in political and civil life. Canada condemns in the strongest terms all forms of sexual and gender based violence wherever it occurs. Sexual and gender based violence is a serious human rights issues that must be addressed, including in the digital context.

Achieving gender equality does not rest with women and girls alone, however. Men and boys have a critical role to play in transforming unequal power relations, and challenging social norms and gender stereotypes. Societal change cannot, and will not, be achieved by focusing on women and girls alone.

In light of these comments, we would offer the following recommendations:

- 1) That OSCE participating States take meaningful action to implement the 2004 OSCE Action Plan for the Promotion of Gender Equality and to fulfill Ministerial Council Decision 8/14 to elaborate an addendum to the Gender Action Plan.
- 2) That OSCE participating States implement all the commitments agreed upon in the Milan Ministerial Decision on Preventing and Combating Violence Against Women;
- 3) That OSCE participating States recognize, and take concrete steps to counter, the pervasive and disproportionate abuse, harassment, and violence women face online;
- 4) That OSCE participating States fully recognize the relevance and benefits to our collective security of women's full participation in all decision making processes and that UN resolutions on Women, Peace, and Security are reflected in OSCE decisions and commitments.
- 5) That participating States partner with domestic and international civil society organizations to address systemic barriers that drive discrimination against women and girls.
- 6) That ODIHR and the OSCE Gender Section continue their efforts to assist participating States in the implementation of best practices regarding women's equal participation in public and political life and eliminating violence against women.