



## **United States Mission to the OSCE**

# **Right of Reply to the Holy See and the Russian Federation on the Prevention of Sexual Violence in Conflict**

As delivered by Ambassador Daniel B. Baer  
to the Permanent Council, Vienna  
July 21, 2016

First, to our colleague from the Holy See -- I wanted to reassure our colleague at the Holy See that, indeed, through what has now been years of negotiations in which the Holy See has played a very active role on the Addendum on the Gender Action Plan, that there is no secret agenda there -- that the agenda is what the Addendum says. And it is unfortunate that the Holy See is one of only two participating states that is preventing us from moving forward on that Addendum. And I think that there is a real opportunity -- Pope Francis has been very successful in once again placing the dignity of the person at the forefront of what the Holy See, what the Catholic Church, is seen as standing for in the world. And I think the Gender Action Plan Addendum is really consistent with that commitment.

So I would urge that our colleague from the Holy See take into account the many hours that have been spent negotiating that Addendum, and to find comfort in the commitment that we all share to the dignity of the person, and to move forward with that at the earliest opportunity -- and to express his delegation's preparedness to move forward with that at the earliest opportunity.

Second, to our distinguished colleague from the Russian Federation -- I don't know what the original Russian said, but I heard the translator say -- the translation that was offered to us of part of his address said, "The notion that it is mostly women and girls who suffer the consequences of sexual violence in armed conflict is not entirely correct." And then he went on to talk about Abu Ghraib.

Now, I have no objection to raising Abu Ghraib in this forum or any other. And indeed, it is true that among the many types of misconduct that were investigated, and for which there have been multiple prison sentences, there was misconduct found at Abu Ghraib that could be classified, and should be classified, as sexual violence. So there's no objection to raising Abu Ghraib. But I'd just like to point out to colleagues that because the Russian Federation is so committed to making digs like that -- or raising issues like that -- it says things like, "the notion that it is mostly women and girls who suffer the consequences of sexual violence in armed conflict is not entirely correct." And that statement is false. And it robs the victims of sexual violence in armed conflict of their place in our concerns. It is simply the truth that in sexual violence in armed conflict, the majority of victims are women and girls. It is also true that men and boys are victims, but they are a minority. And to allow a political dig to pervert an assessment of truth does not advance the dialogue in this forum.

Thank you, Mr. Chair.