



Office of the Secretary General
Gender Section

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Report to the Permanent Council

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Mr. Chairperson,
Excellencies,
Ladies and gentlemen,

It is a great pleasure and honour for me to report for the first time to the Permanent Council about the work of the OSCE Secretariat on gender issues, together with the Special Representative June Zeitlin. Allow me to express my gratitude to the Swiss Chairmanship for making this possible and also for its exceptional support in promoting gender equality issues in circumstances that have been a great challenge for the whole Organization. I believe that this year's Chairmanship set an example of how political will and leadership can strengthen the awareness and understanding of the importance and the benefits of the equality between women and men for comprehensive security.

Let me also say that I see certain added value in delivering this presentation to the Permanent Council, in addition to the Annual Evaluation Report of the Secretary General. While I believe that the Secretary General's report is an important and valuable tool to assess and measure progress made by the OSCE structures and participating States in implementing gender related commitments, I am convinced that greater transparency in what we in the Secretariat do in order to achieve better results will produce more trust in and support for our activities.

This year has been an important one for the OSCE area with many issues requiring our attention and resources. In the midst of these events we have also spent the year marking the 10th anniversary of the OSCE Gender Action Plan, including by holding the first Gender Equality Review Conference. The conference was a great success with more than 200 representatives from participating States attending, including from civil society. I will say more about the conclusions from the conference later.

First I will report on the most important areas of our activities, starting with our responsibility to **improve the Organization's internal gender mainstreaming**. This is one of the main provisions of the Gender Action Plan and the key tool to ensure that a gender perspective is included in our work. To this end the Gender Section provides training and support to other

parts of the executive structures on how to incorporate a gender perspective into policies, programs and activities. In 2014 we continued to conduct on-site gender mainstreaming training for staff, for example in the OSCE Mission in Kosovo, the Office of the High Commissioner on National Minorities, and the Special Monitoring Mission to Ukraine. These training sessions provide an important opportunity to help staff understand how gender equality relates to comprehensive security and how they can do a gender analysis of the context they are working in.

But we need more of this kind of training and awareness-raising. In February this year we started consultations with all departments and units of the Secretariat on how to improve gender mainstreaming in their work. The results of these consultations are now being consolidated into an **implementation strategy for the Secretariat**. Among the main challenges raised by staff is the lack of understanding of how to apply gender mainstreaming in their daily work. This kind of knowledge and understanding is crucial to reach gender inclusivity. We have to make sure that the gender aspect becomes a natural part of our thinking and acting. There are already some excellent examples where this works well, such as the Mediation Support Unit, or the Anti-Terrorism Unit of the Transnational Threats Department, which incorporated the issue of the role of women in violent extremism and radicalization that leads to terrorism (VERLT) at an early stage and has developed unique global expertise in this field, recognized by UN Women and other important stakeholders.

The Gender Section decided – as a part of the implementation strategy – to better systematize this issue and hold annual tailor-made trainings for all departments and units of the Secretariat individually, despite our limited human and financial resources. We will continue to do this kind of training also for Field Operations. In addition, we will further develop our network of 59 **Gender Focal Points** for the purposes of gender mainstreaming, which has proved to be a valuable resource for coordinating implementation and translating commitments into action. Unfortunately, the position of Gender Focal Point is still a voluntary task and its effectiveness depends on the personal commitment of the individual focal point. By contrast, a pilot project in the Mission in Kosovo which has had a full-time Gender Adviser seconded by Finland for two years has demonstrated that having a staff member fully dedicated to gender can produce excellent results in mainstreaming gender in the Mission's activities.

This is why we are very pleased that a Gender Adviser was deployed to the **Special Monitoring Mission (SMM) to Ukraine** right from the start, providing input in the critical early phases of the planning process in order to include a gender perspective in all subsequent efforts. This is important in ensuring that the OSCE's conflict resolution and prevention efforts in Ukraine are socially inclusive and underpinned by the principle of equality so that they heal divisions instead of reinforcing them. When I visited Kyiv and the SMM in the beginning of September, I had meetings with the Mission's leadership as well as with the Gender Focal Points of the ten regional teams and we tried to identify the challenges the mission faces with respect to gender issues. It was no surprise that one of the main issues raised was the need for capacity-building in gender mainstreaming. As a result we will

provide special training for all mission staff in the next few months to ensure more gender-inclusive and thematic reporting.

The SMM continues to struggle to recruit women candidates as monitors and to leadership positions. I would like to take this opportunity to encourage participating States to pay more attention to gender balance in recruitment and secondment efforts. Creating rosters of female experts with expertise in different areas for these purposes is a good practice and it would be helpful if you could campaign for this practice in your capitals.

Another strategic objective of the Gender Section is **supporting participating States to promote gender equality and gender mainstreaming in their policies and programmes**. In 2014, one of the major projects in this regard is a study on National Action Plans for implementing the Women, Peace and Security agenda, conducted in cooperation with the Peace Research Institute in Oslo (PRIO). This analysis of national action plans of 27 OSCE participating States seeks to identify best practices and lessons learned and offers concrete recommendations of how best to approach the development of National Action Plans or other strategies to implement the Women, Peace and Security agenda. As a follow-up to the study, we will organize a series of expert meetings next year under the title "Peace through Inclusivity - the Vienna 1325 Seminars" to present the findings and discuss with participating States how they can improve their approaches to the implementation of the Women, Peace and Security agenda.

This year the Gender Section has also undertaken a number of activities on **gender-responsive mediation**, which relates to the inclusion of women in the conflict cycle as an element of the Women, Peace and Security agenda, and which also complies with MC Decision 3/11. We widely disseminated a toolkit developed in 2013 that contains a number of strong lessons to apply to current mediation efforts in the OSCE region, in particular new efforts in Ukraine. I cannot stress strongly enough how important it is to take an inclusive approach to mediation and reconciliation issues, which means also including women – and not only in Ukraine. Just two days ago the Conflict Prevention Center and the Gender Section hosted a gathering of high-level OSCE representatives to discuss and simulate how gender can be integrated into mediation and conflict resolution efforts in the OSCE region. This workshop was an excellent opportunity for the participants to exchange experiences not only on inclusive mediation, but their mediation approaches in general, and we hope that this will become a regular event, thus ensuring that the representatives involved in track one mediation efforts can design and implement more inclusive processes that yield better results. We have also secured a slot for the OSCE in a high-level training on gender inclusive mediation organized by the United Nations Department for Political Affairs, with which we coordinate closely on this issue.

In another effort to assist participating States in the first dimension, the Gender Section undertook an analysis of the information exchange in the framework of the **Code of Conduct on Politico-Military Aspects of Security**. It showed that 60 per cent, or 34 out of 57 participating States, voluntarily reported on Women, Peace and Security in 2014. We are now developing guidelines that should help participating States to improve their reporting.

I also undertook a number of **visits to participating States during 2014** to promote activities related to the priority areas of the Gender Action Plan. The topics discussed during these visits included sexual violence in conflict, women's economic empowerment, women's participation in conflict resolution and gender-based violence. These bilateral exchanges are a good opportunity to collect best practices, consult with participating States on addressing the priority areas of the Gender Action Plan and identify strengths and weaknesses in policy responses and programmes.

Exactly one year ago today I visited Moscow for the first time, and last week I was in Washington to exchange views on how to improve implementation of the commitments on gender issues. In between these two visits I had a number of other bilateral contacts throughout the OSCE region. I also reached out to other international organizations and participated in important global events such as the Commission on the Status of Women, the Global Summit to End Violence in Conflict and the Security Council Open Debate on UNSCR 1325. These activities helped to raise the visibility of the OSCE's gender equality work and to create synergies with other stakeholders working on the same issues.

First dimension issues have been and will remain a priority area for the Gender Section, but we will also continue to work on enhancing gender equality in the other dimensions. For example, we initiated a longer-term project to promote mentoring as a tool for women's empowerment. We are also working with the European Union Fundamental Rights Agency to broaden the implementation of its methodology for measuring levels of **gender based violence**, and we cooperate with the Council of Europe on promoting the Istanbul Convention, which is being signed by an increasing number of OSCE participating States. Violence against women continues to be the most pervasive human rights violation across all OSCE participating States and it is critical that the OSCE continues to prioritize its response to this issue.

In 2015, our efforts will include collecting best practices on **women's economic empowerment** and sharing them with participating States and Partners for Co-operation. We will also focus on empowering women, particularly in Central Asia, on **water resource management**, also under the aspect of conflict prevention and confidence-building. And last but not least, we will continue to strengthen the **OSCE MenEngage Network** and issues related to it. This initiative has been recognized globally and it is meant to increase the ability of women and men to join efforts on reaching equality.

Mr. Chairperson,

I will conclude with some **observations and recommendations**. The Gender Equality Review Conference in July this year provided an opportunity for the OSCE executive structures and participating States to consider their implementation of the 2004 Gender Action Plan and formulate responses for accelerating progress on existing commitments. The Chairmanship Conclusions provide an excellent summary of the findings and outcomes of the conference, and I believe they merit appropriate attention and consideration. Most of the

issues addressed in this document have been taken up in the **Draft Addendum** to the 2004 Gender Action Plan, currently under discussion in an informal working group.

I encourage participating States to approach these discussions constructively. Gender equality is a universal concern. We all share the same challenges and should be able to work together on a practical basis to find joint solutions. In this context we should also consider that the ability of our organization to mainstream a gender perspective into its work in a way that lives up to the commitments requires an important and ongoing investment in our institutional gender mechanism.

Furthermore, we should also consider enhancing the capacity of participating States to mainstream a gender perspective into national policies and programmes. To accelerate progress on gender equality commitments, it would be useful to establish a **Gender Equality Network** with national representatives from all participating States with the purpose of providing an improved platform for sharing best practices on implementation of gender commitments as well as exchanging information.

Let me also take this opportunity to remind us all of a document that champions a regional approach in an effort to create more coherence in our policies. I am talking about the proposal of an **OSCE-wide Action Plan on Women, Peace and Security**, co-sponsored by four participating States. As the largest regional security organization in the world the OSCE should be at the forefront of promoting and implementing inclusive security in a more harmonized way.

Finally, I would like to warmly thank all delegations for the political and financial support for our work to advance gender equality in the OSCE area. My sincere thanks go once more to the Swiss Chair for its sustained sponsorship of the OSCE's gender equality work, and I look forward to equally fruitful co-operation with the incoming Serbian Chair.

Thank you, Mr. Chairperson.