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**STATEMENT BY
THE DELEGATION OF AUSTRIA AT THE 987th MEETING OF THE
OSCE PERMANENT COUNCIL**

6 March 2014

**In response to the statement by Mr. Erion Veliaj,
Minister of Youth and Social Welfare of Albania**

Minister,

We too are pleased to welcome you to the OSCE Permanent Council. In addition to the statement by the European Union, to which we naturally fully subscribe, I should like to add a few words in my national capacity.

Your remarks on Albania's efforts to counter violence against women and promote gender equality are especially relevant and welcome so close to International Women's Day. We all still have considerable work ahead of us if we are to truly guarantee equality between men and women. The Albanian Government is also well advised to take further measures to promote the involvement of women in public life.

Violence against women is a phenomenon that we encounter every day and everywhere. The European Union is not immune from this either, as the alarming results of the recently published study by the European Union Agency for Fundamental Rights have once again shown us. The Council of Europe Convention on preventing and combating violence against women and domestic violence (known as the Istanbul Convention) is a comprehensive instrument containing measures to prevent violence, protect victims and prosecute perpetrators. Austria recently ratified the Convention, and we urge the participating States to do the same. The Turkish and Austrian Foreign Ministers are preparing a common initiative to that end. The topic is also a priority of the Austrian Council of Europe chairmanship.

Furthermore, Austria gained positive experience in preparing its National Action Plan for the Implementation of United Nations Security Council Resolution 1325. This resolution calls on the United Nations Member States to see to it that women's issues are firmly anchored in all aspects of their work in the area of peace and security. We encourage the participating States that have not yet done so to consider preparing such an action plan. We would be happy to support Albania in this endeavour. We shall also continue our efforts with Finland, Turkey and Kazakhstan and a number of other countries to produce an OSCE-wide action plan on women, peace and security.

I should like to make one further comment regarding the future of Albania, which in our view is clearly on its way towards integration into the European Union. We welcome the activities and reforms undertaken by the Albanian Government in the area of the rule of law, reform of the judicial system and the fight against corruption and organized crime, which should facilitate and speed up its progress. We therefore also hope that these endeavours will be successful and that Albania can be awarded candidate status in the summer.

Thank you, Mr. Chairperson.