



PERMANENT DELEGATION OF NORWAY  
TO THE OSCE

STATEMENT ON WOMEN'S ECONOMIC EMPOWERMENT

Delivered by Ambassador Robert Kvile at the Concluding Meeting  
of the Economic and Environmental Forum,  
Prague, 9 September 2021

CHECK AGAINST DELIVERY

Excellencies, distinguished participants, ladies, and gentlemen,

Let me join others in thanking the Swedish Chair-in-Office and the OSCE Coordinator for Economic and Environmental Activities for organising this meeting despite the challenging circumstances. Our appreciation also goes to the Czech Government for once again being our gracious host, and to the speakers for their insightful introductory remarks today.

Madame Chair,

It is highly appropriate that women's economic empowerment is the topic for this year's Economic and Environmental Forum. Economic empowerment of women is crucial for realising women's rights and achieving gender equality. It includes women's ability to participate equally in markets, access to decent work, and control over one's own time, life, and body. It also means increased choice, agency, and meaningful participation in economic decision-making at all levels. Furthermore, increased empowerment of women translates directly to economic growth, sustainability, and prosperity, and thus leads to enhanced security in our region.

During the ongoing pandemic, women have disproportionately suffered the socio-economic consequences. As we are trying to regain footing, these issues, along with inclusiveness and sustainability, need to be at the very top of our domestic strategies for economic recovery.

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Colleagues,

We need gender-responsive policies and legislative measures that promotes and ensures the equal participation and economic empowerment of women. This is even more important as we are trying to regain sound economic growth after the pandemic.

Madame chair,

Women's empowerment is good economics. When women do not participate in the labour market, society loses out on labour, tax revenue, and purchasing power. The increased participation of women in the Norwegian labour force has been more important to our economy than our oil sector. Yet, there is still room for improvement also in Norway, where a gender imbalance in the labour force persists. Nearly 40 percent of employed women in Norway work part-time, while only 15 percent of employed men do the same. Furthermore, women are overrepresented in low-paying jobs and underrepresented in high-level, highly paid positions. Only ten percent of the CEOs of the 200 largest companies in the country are women.

We are fully aware that women in many OSCE participating States are struggling even more to achieve the economic power they should be entitled to. Therefore, we need to share experiences and best practices. We hope that this meeting will help shed light on how we can strengthen women's economic role to the best of our societies. We are hopeful that the process towards the Stockholm ministerial meeting can lead to new and updated commitments in this regard.

Finally, Madame chair, allow me to express our appreciation that Switzerland together with Austria later today are organising a side event on smart cities. This topic is a priority for Norway and the Norwegian Embassy in Prague. In November, we will arrange a smart city conference in cooperation with the mayor of Prague, our fifth conference of this kind with cities in the Czech Republic.

Thank you.