



EUROPEAN UNION

**OSCE Permanent Council Nr 977  
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**EU statement in response to the address by the Special  
Representative of the OSCE Chairperson-in-Office on  
Gender Issues, Ms. June Zeitlin**

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The European Union warmly welcomes the Special Representative of the Chairperson-in-Office on Gender Issues, Ms. June Zeitlin back to the Permanent Council and thanks her for her comprehensive report. We feel that our discussion today is particularly timely as we have just marked the 16 days of activism campaign against gender violence.

The EU continues to strongly support efforts to promote gender equality within the OSCE. Equality between women and men is a major objective for us. It is one of the founding values of the EU and a fundamental right reflected in the EU Charter of Fundamental Rights. Furthermore, gender equality is highlighted in the EU Strategic Framework and Action Plan on Human Rights and Democracy. The adoption in 2008 of the EU guidelines on violence against women and girls is a mark of the EU's clear political will to treat the subject of women's rights as a priority and to take long-term action in that field.

We would like to express our support to Ms. Zeitlin for her valuable work in highlighting pertinent gender issues where our efforts need to be intensified. In particular, we welcome that she continues to place focus on the importance of preventing and combating violence against women. Arguably, violence against women is the most widespread human rights violation of our time. It is a phenomenon that affects all societies and takes many gruesome forms. We therefore concur with Ms. Zeitlin that combating discrimination and violence against women remains a crucial endeavour within the OSCE area. In this regard, the EU would like to recall the Istanbul

Convention of the Council of Europe on preventing and combating violence against women and domestic violence.

The EU is deeply committed to combating discrimination and violence against women. This commitment is also reflected in the EU's Strategic Framework and Action Plan on Human Rights and Democracy, which underlines the need to combat gender-based violence.

In order to effectively prevent and combat violence against women, it is crucial to acquire a comprehensive understanding of the real extent and nature of such violence. The EU has undertaken efforts to this effect. In March 2014, the European Union Agency for Fundamental Rights (FRA) will release the results of its survey on violence against women, which will be the first EU-wide survey to record the nature and extent of violence against women in the 28 EU member states. The study is based on interviews with 42 000 women within the 28 member states. We look forward to sharing the results of this major study with all of you and we hope that other participating States will be ready to collect and share data on their countries and information on their own responses.

As we all recall, preventing violence against women is one of the priority areas of the 2004 OSCE Action Plan for the Promotion of Gender Equality. As next year will mark the 10th anniversary of the Action Plan, we will have an excellent opportunity to take stock of our efforts and to explore ways of addressing remaining challenges also in this regard. We would like to reiterate the EU's willingness to actively engage in this work.

Furthermore, we would like to underline the need to fully implement MC.DEC/15/05 on Preventing and Combating Violence against Women, which calls on the participating States to take all necessary measures to promote and protect the full enjoyment of the human rights of women and to prevent and combat all forms of gender-based violence against women and girls. We look forward to the event following today's Permanent Council, focussing on the OSCE efforts, in particular the important work of the field operations, in this regard.

The EU would also like to take this opportunity to express our firm support to other focus areas of the Special Representative, namely political and economic empowerment of women as well as issues related to Women, Peace and Security. We note the adoption of UNSCRs 2106 and 2122 on Women, Peace and Security in 2013 and we believe the momentum behind this topic should be harnessed by OSCE structures, especially in regard to the conflict cycle. We should aim for progress across our region during 2014, including the adoption of an OSCE-wide action plan that could subsequently be highlighted to the United Nations Security Council during its High-level Review of UNSCR 1325 implementation, to be convened in 2015.

In conclusion, we would like to once again thank the Special Representative of the Chairperson-in-Office on Gender Issues, Ms. June Zeitlin for her work in promoting gender equality within the OSCE and for drawing our attention to issues where efforts need to be strengthened.

The Candidate Countries the former Yugoslav Republic of MACEDONIA\*, MONTENEGRO\* and ICELAND+, the Countries of the Stabilisation and Association Process and potential candidates ALBANIA and BOSNIA and HERZEGOVINA, and the EFTA country LIECHTENSTEIN, member of the European Economic Area, as well as the Republic of MOLDOVA, GEORGIA, ANDORRA and SAN MARINO, align themselves with this statement.

\* The former Yugoslav Republic of Macedonia and Montenegro continue to be part of the Stabilisation and Association Process.

+ Iceland continues to be a member of the EFTA and of the European Economic Area.