

WORKING SESSION 5:

Tolerance and non-discrimination I, including

- Address by the OSCE Special Representative/Senior Adviser on Gender Issues
- Equal opportunity for women and men in all spheres of life, including through implementation of the OSCE Gender Action Plan for the Promotion of Gender Equality
- Prevention of violence against women and children

Statement of Austria

Madame/Mr. Chairperson/man,

Austria fully aligns herself with the statement made by Finland on behalf of the European Union and the statement made by Slovenia on behalf of Croatia and Austria in this working session. I would like to add a few remarks from a national perspective.

2015 is an important and decisive year for gender equality and women's empowerment. It is the 20th anniversary of the Beijing Declaration and Platform for Action, which has – building on the Vienna Declaration and Program of Action - confirmed that women's rights are human rights. It remains the global normative framework and road map for realizing gender equality, the empowerment of women and the human rights of women and girls.

We have also agreed on a new Agenda 2030, which sets out universally valid sustainable development goals for the next 15 years. These goals clearly confirm the common ambition to eliminate all forms of discrimination of women and girls and give them the opportunity to fully live up to their potentials.

This new political impetus at a global level should reinvigorate and streamline our efforts to promote women's and girls' rights also within the OSCE region and within the organisation itself.

Women's rights and gender equality have been an important focus for Austria for many years. Let me point out that Austria pursues a dual strategy, namely the interplay of gender mainstreaming on the one hand and of the promotion of women on the other. We are convinced that working together with civil society partners from NGOs is of the utmost importance in this regard. Let me provide you with three concrete examples to contribute to today's discussions:

Gender stereotypes are often an underlying cause and starting point for discrimination against women and girls. They create barriers for women and girls for the realization of their rights, potentials and wishes. Austria is therefore committed tackling gender stereotypes in order to diversify women's and girls' as well as men's and boys' educational and career choices through gender-sensitive vocational orientation and educational guidance and through strengthening gender-theory-based competence of teachers and educators.

A comprehensive National Action Plan on the Protection of Women against Violence was adopted in 2014 as a central concern of the Austrian Government. Political coordination of policy measures on the prevention of violence, the protection and support of victims, new means concerning investigation, criminal prosecution and procedural law, as well as measures for European and international cooperation are and will continue to be part of Austria's implementation efforts.

Mentoring and training programs to encourage women to stand for elections on all political levels as well as awareness raising and trainings in gender competence for university bodies and decision-makers will be continued. Effective implementation of policies and measures promoting women's share in management and board positions in Austrian companies remain a priority of initiatives on local, regional and federal level.

Finally Austria would like to provide the following recommendations:

Austria supports a more systematic approach towards gender issues in the OSCE, including capacity building, benchmarking, monitoring, measuring and evaluating progress. The current Gender Action Plan in our view provides insufficient guidance to this end and the adoption of an Addendum updating this framework to current needs and standards has therefore Austria's full support. An effective institutional mechanism for gender equality will be necessary for a consistent implementation of existing commitments.

Austria encourages all Participating States to ratify and implement the "Convention on preventing and combating violence against women and domestic violence" (Istanbul Convention) and to support its independent expert body responsible for monitoring the implementation.

Thank you!