



PERMANENT DELEGATION OF NORWAY
TO THE OSCE

STATEMENT ON THE IMPLEMENTATION OF
THE OSCE 2004 ACTION PLAN ON THE PROMOTION OF GENDER EQUALITY

Delivered by Minister Counsellor Henning Hj. Johansen at the Permanent Council
Vienna, 22 July 2021

Mr. Chair,

We thank the Secretary General for her presentation of the annual progress report on the Implementation of the OSCE 2004 Action Plan on the Promotion of Gender Equality (suitably enough in this meeting number 1325 of the Permanent Council).

As the report for 2020 rightly points out, the ongoing pandemic has had a detrimental effect on gender equality and women's rights and has caused a surge in gender-based violence in our region. We appreciate that the report highlights how the Executive Structures of the OSCE have supported the participating States and contributed to mitigate the gendered challenges that the pandemic has posed.

Many years of hard-fought progress on women's rights and gender equality is being reversed by the still ongoing pandemic. It will take time to regain what's been lost. Just as the health crisis and its consequences have not been indifferent to aspects of gender, neither should we be in our efforts to rebuild our societies. On the contrary, women and girls must be placed at the centre of our efforts. We need the OSCE to play its part.

Mr. Chair,

We support the recommendations presented in the report and value the progress that has been made to promote gender equality in the OSCE. Some important steps have been taken, for instance in reviewing progress in the OSCE area, strengthening internal mechanisms, and improving knowledge and skills on gender equality among staff.

While all progress is good, and the Action Plan has played an important role, it is hardly the most ambitious and should have been implemented long ago. We should not forget that 17 years after its adoption, the Gender Action Plan is yet to be fully implemented by all States. Considering the setbacks caused by the pandemic, this work is now even

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more crucial than in the previous 16 years. In this regard, it is important that gender is mainstreamed in all OSCE activities. The progress over the past four years does not, however, give cause for optimism. Six out of ten projects have only limited gender mainstreaming. We expect and encourage progress in this area. Gender is after all something that is relevant in all of the OSCE's undertakings.

We welcome that the share of women in the OSCE leadership has increased from 29 to 42 percent. Nonetheless, it only serves to reach *one* of the *interim* targets of the OSCE Gender Parity Strategy. Whilst it might be an encouraging step on the way to gender parity, much is left to be done. Among seconded staff, only one out of four are women. Of the seconded and international contracted staff working in the field, even fewer are women. Only one in five OSCE field operations is led by a woman. The participating States must not forget their responsibility in promoting qualified women candidates.

Gender parity is, however, not sufficient to reach gender equality. Equality goes beyond mere numbers. It requires a conducive working environment, both physically and psychologically with no acceptance of sexual harassment. In addition to raising awareness, we must give sufficient resources to those parts of our organisation dealing with investigations of such matters. Further, it requires that we adapt our values and our mindsets, and develop inclusive processes and incentives that benefit women as much as they do men. We should do all we can to recruit more women, but the lack of gender parity is not the only reason we are not doing better. Most managers in the OSCE are men, and men must do more to bring gender equality forward.

We do not doubt that many OSCE staff and mission members, as well as managers, see the value of gender equality and gender mainstreaming, but we also know that many do not. The OSCE must ensure that everyone understands that gender mainstreaming contributes to achieving the mission and larger objectives of the OSCE. Together we must strive to make the OSCE a better place for all, and ensure that every effort takes everyone's needs into consideration. Then we can begin to see more concrete advances on gender equality within the OSCE.

Thank you.