

## **Statement by Austria**

### **Human Dimension Implementation Meeting 2017**

**21 September 2017**

WORKING SESSION 16 on Tolerance and Non-Discrimination, including:

#### **Equality of Opportunity for Women and Men, Implementation of the OSCE Action Plan for the Promotion of Gender Equality, and Prevention of Violence against Women and Children**

In addition to the EU statement, to which Austria fully aligns herself, I would like to make a few remarks in my national capacity.

The promotion of gender equality is one of the main priorities of the Austrian Chairmanship 2017. Together with the Gender Section of the OSCE Secretariat and ODIHR, we organised the Second Gender Equality Review Conference on June 12 and 13 of this year, which allowed us to take stock of the implementation of the OSCE Gender Action Plan and to identify challenges, gaps and possible ways forward. The conference has shown, that despite some positive developments, overall progress remains slow and uneven across the OSCE region.

Equal rights for women and men and the protection of their human rights are essential to peace, sustainable democracy, economic development and therefore to security and stability in the OSCE region. Unfortunately widespread discrimination against women continues to undermine their effective participation in political and public life at all levels.

Preventing and combating violence against women must be a priority for all of us across our entire region. Gender based violence is an extreme form of discrimination and a human rights violation, which has grave and long lasting consequences not only for the concerned individual, but for the community and society as a whole.

Political will is essential in order to move forward in this area and to ensure equality between men and women across the entire OSCE region. Our goal must be to create and sustain societies in which men and women are equal in all areas.

A report containing all recommendations coming out of the Gender Equality Review Conference will soon be shared with participating states and civil society.

The Austrian Chairmanship is planning to follow-up on some of these recommendations and hopes for the support of all participating states in order to allow progress in this important field before the end of this year.

Finally, in addition to the recommendations expressed in the EU statement, we would like to add the following two suggestions:

- We reiterate our call on all participating states to ratify and implement the Istanbul Convention;
- The OSCE could engage in a wide-ranging campaign against gender stereotypes (in order to change people's minds and attitudes).

Thank you for your attention.