

Human Dimension Implementation Meeting – Warsaw, 6 October
WORKING SESSION 16: Tolerance and non-discrimination
Statement by Ambassador Mariin Ratnik, the head of the Estonian delegation

Ms./Mr. Moderator,

As we celebrate the twentieth anniversary of the restoration of Estonia's independence this year, it's important to recall that when Estonia re-established its independence, we knew we wanted to create a democratic country based on rule of law and respect for human rights.

Equality between men and women has today become a firmly accepted value and considered as an integral part of this goal. Gender mainstreaming is considered a fundamental strategy to reach this goal. We fully share the OSCE's commitment to that goal, as reflected in the OSCE Action Plan for Promotion of Gender Equality and call to OSCE and participating states to take further steps for gender mainstreaming within OSCE.

We also welcome the Secretary General's Annual Evaluation Report on the implementation of the Action Plan and commend the initiatives of the Gender Section of the OSCE Secretariat and the ODIHR, such as the updated OSCE tool box for the promotion of Gender Equality; and OSCE focal points for gender issues.

In line with the 2004 Gender Equality Act Estonia has continued to work to mainstream gender in all our actions – from education to employment and to pursue gender equality through specific means, as, for example in innovative awareness raising campaigns for young people, job seekers and other specific groups. We are not there yet – and thus we need to address the most crucial aspect of gender discrimination: the mindset and awareness on gender equality of women and men, girls and boys.

Therefore we positively note the male involvement initiatives to promote gender equality. For too long it has been felt that the issue of gender equality is principally a "women's issue". It is not, and we call for the implementation of and further initiatives in the OSCE on the role of men in gender equality.

It is a profound source of concern for Estonia to notice that while women are welcome to protest against the corrupt regimes, they are not always welcome to participate in the political process. Thus the importance of the implementation of the United Nations Security Council Resolution No 1325, recognising the women's contribution to conflict prevention, peacekeeping, conflict resolution and peace-building cannot be underestimated and we welcome the upcoming conference in Sarajevo on this subject. However, there is still some way to go to fulfil the commitments of the UNSCR 1325.

We encourage the OSCE and all participating States to incorporate the commitments of UNSCR 1325, its follow-up resolutions and OSCE Ministerial Council Decision

14/05 in their respective policies, including by adopting national plans as well as by requesting women's participation at all stages of the OSCE's efforts in the field of peace building and democratization.

Estonia, as a member of UN Women Executive Board, and Commission on Status of Women (CSW) will continue to provide its strong support to achieving the goal of gender equality through multilateral cooperation.

Thus, our recommendations with regard to promoting gender equality are:

- 1) mainstreaming of gender issues in OSCE policies and activities;
- 2) further involvement of men in gender equality promotion activities;
- 3) incorporating the commitments of UNSCR 1325, including by adopting action plans for the implementation of UNSCR 1325.

Thank you.