



## United States Mission to the OSCE

# Forum for Security Cooperation Security Dialogue on Women, Peace and Security

As delivered by Ambassador Michael R. Carpenter  
Vienna, March 6, 2024

I want to extend a warm welcome to all of our distinguished panelists, particularly to my friend and colleague Assistant Secretary Celeste Wallander, who came all the way from Washington, DC, to be with us today. And thank you for the discussions, and for your answers to the various questions, which I found fascinating and certainly will feed into our conversations in the coming weeks.

The four pillars of the unanimously adopted UN Security Council Resolution on Women, Peace and Security are participation, protection, prevention, and relief and recovery. What I find striking is that in the conduct of Russia's war of aggression against Ukraine, we can see how Ukraine is systematically working to uphold all four of those pillars, whereas Russia strives to undermine them. So let me elaborate a little bit.

First, Ukraine has prioritized, as we have just heard, women's **participation** in order to defend its internationally recognized borders against Russia's brutal, illegal invasion and occupation. Ukraine abolished restrictions on women's roles in the military, and more than 60,000 Ukrainian women subsequently answered their country's call to arms, as we heard, over 6,000 of whom are currently engaged in front-line combat operations. These numbers correspond to a 40 percent jump in women's representation and participation in Ukraine's armed forces.

Second, Russia's military attacks resulted in widespread violence against Ukrainian women and girls, the very group that UNSCR 1325 commits us all to **protect**. Let's recall that the OSCE's Moscow Mechanism missions documented in detail Russia's abhorrent crimes, including sexual violence, on Ukrainian territory. The UN's Independent International Commission of Inquiry also documented myriad cases of conflict-related sexual violence perpetrated by Russia's military personnel, the most common form of which has been rape, including gang rape of women and girls. This obviously goes far, far beyond "failure to protect" – we are speaking about the deliberate commission of rape and other human rights abuses. Meanwhile, to further illustrate the stark contrast between the aggressor and the victim, let us recall that Ukraine has been bolstering its WPS commitments, notably by ratifying the Council of Europe Convention on Preventing and Combating Violence against Women and Domestic Violence and updating its UNSCR 1325 action plan. Obviously, we don't see that on the other side.

Third, Ukraine also has underlined the principle that **prevention** is the best form of protection through its participation with UN Women and the UN Human Rights Monitoring Mission in Ukraine to develop its own Strategy for Prevention of and Response to Conflict Related Sexual Violence.

Finally, given Russia's reckless obsession with continuing its disastrous war against Ukraine, **relief and recovery** will obviously take time. That will be an ongoing process. Nevertheless, it's never too soon to begin. Addressing the needs of the survivors of sexual violence in de-occupied territories is a necessary first step on what will, unfortunately, be a long road.

Mr. Chair,

It is regrettable that we are marking the 20th anniversary of the 2004 OSCE Action Plan for the Promotion of Gender Equality during a time of war and conflict in the OSCE region. As such, we would do well to remember that many of the actions that we take to implement our UNSCR 1325 commitments both strengthen the pillars of its mandate and serve to promote stability, security, and cooperation in the OSCE region.

In Ukraine and elsewhere, the United States promotes the full, equal, and meaningful participation of women in the security and peacemaking sector. In the area of small arms and light weapons, our weapons removal and abatement programs, we support women's participation by training them to mark arms and weapons, to manage weapons and munitions storage facilities, and to become explosive ordnance disposal experts.

Furthermore, the United States also advocates for women to be represented in delegations to multilateral processes for weapons of mass destruction, as well as small arms, light weapons, and stockpiles of conventional ammunition. Women's participation and leadership in international security and peacemaking processes is proven to make outcomes more durable and effective.

The United States also is committed to preventing and responding to gender-based violence, including conflict-related sexual violence, globally. In this regard, we are dedicated to supporting Ukraine's efforts. The U.S. Agency for International Development has enabled UNICEF to provide around 971,000 Ukrainian women and children with services to prevent, respond to and mitigate the risk of gender-based violence as of October 2023. Additionally, through U.S. Department of State partners, we have provided legal and protection services to vulnerable individuals in Ukraine and its refugees in neighboring countries. The United States also funds a wide range of other services including child protection, mental health and psychological support, the establishment of child-, women-, and girl-friendly spaces, and trafficking-in-persons prevention and response. At the OSCE, the United States is committed to supporting the OSCE's Special Project Unit in Ukraine and the WIN project's efforts to advance Women, Peace, and Security in Ukraine through capacity building and the networking of women's organizations.

Mr. Chair,

In a peaceful world, we would be sitting here discussing our various approaches to implementing UNSCR 1325's mandate and encouraging all participating States to cooperate in achieving that shared goal, but, regrettably, that's not the world we live in. We live in a world where Russia actively seeks to undermine the UN Charter and the Helsinki Final Act. So it's up to the rest of us to take up the challenge together. Meaningful progress demands from us the resolve and determination that, frankly, our Ukrainian colleagues have shown time and again over these past two years of brutal war.

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