

**Human Dimension Review Meeting
6 October 2010, Working Session 8- Tolerance and non-discrimination II
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Excellencies,

Dear colleagues,

First of all, let me warmly welcome Ms. Wendy Patten. I would like to applaud the OSCE Chairmanship for the excellent initiative of appointing her as Personal Representative for Gender equality. It is my hope that participating States and executive structures will make the best use of having such an outstanding personality lending a strong political voice to promote gender equality.

Just a few weeks ago the OSCE Secretary General presented to the Permanent Council his Annual Evaluation Report on the implementation of the 2004 Gender Action Plan. The report identifies many accomplishments that should be celebrated: The share of women in higher management positions in OSCE structures has increased to one third, and 46 per cent of all professional posts are occupied by women. Also, a number of participating States reformed legal and policy frameworks to enhance participation of women in political and public life and to prevent discrimination and violence against women. This year, twice as many projects implemented by our field missions compared to last year have included a gender component; and a gender perspective is increasingly becoming an integral element of OSCE documents, policies and programmes.

The report also highlighted many of the remaining challenges that still need to be addressed. The Gender Action Plan commits also participating States to promote gender equality within their own borders. The review conference and the summit should be used for a broader and open discussion, notably on the most significant obstacles to gender equality. In this regard, I would like to suggest that participating States focus their review on the following four fields, all of them deriving from commitments agreed upon in Ministerial Council Decisions.

First, the low representation of women in public and political decision making processes as evidenced by their low percentage across the OSCE in parliaments, governments and boards

of the economy and the finance. There are parliaments in our region with alarmingly low figures, such as national parliaments formed by 6 per cent of women and 94 per cent of men.

Second, the persistence of violence against women with varying degrees across the OSCE, both in peace time and in armed conflict settings. Violence against women is present in all OSCE countries. As you know, the governmental response is in certain countries still very unsatisfactory. Firm actions are still necessary at the legislative, the policy and the programmatic levels.

Third, the low economic participation and inclusion of women as unfortunately evidenced by the higher poverty rates among women across the OSCE, their low representation on economic decision making spheres, boards and financial committees, not to talk about the gender pay gap. The estimated earned income of women in comparison to that of men is not equal in any of our participating States. Currently, the gender pay gap – the average difference in gross hourly earnings between women and men across the economy as a whole – stands at 18% for the EU, with considerable differences between countries and sectors. According to a study conducted under the Swedish EU Presidency in 2009, eliminating gender gaps in employment in the EU member states could lead to a 15% - 45% increase in Gross Domestic Product (GDP). Interesting food for thoughts.

Fourth, the implementation of the United Nations Security Council Resolution 1325 and MC DEC. 14/05 on Women in conflict prevention, crisis management and post-conflict rehabilitation still remains a challenge. Ten years since the approval of Resolution 1325, only 22 countries worldwide developed a National Action Plan to advance the implementation of the resolution. Among these 22 countries, 13 are OSCE countries, this is still a small group out of the 56 pS who all adopted a solemn decision to integrate women's views, needs and contributions to prevent conflicts, and when they occur, to protect women and girls from savage devastation and respond to their needs when decisions are being taken about building peace.

Excellencies,

Dear colleagues,

On another more immediate issue relating to the inclusiveness of women and their participation in decision making in the OSCE, allow me to come back to one point. The OSCE counts actually no woman as Head of Mission, only one woman as Head of Institution and very few female Deputy Heads of Mission. Furthermore, since OSCE field operations were first established, there have been a total of 112 Heads of Mission appointed. Of these, only four have been women. I wish to make a special appeal to participating States and to current and future OSCE Chairmanships to consider the gravity of this situation. It is only through our joint efforts and dedication that these figures can be improved.

Let me conclude underlying the importance of the review of the OSCE commitments to promote gender equality in full openness and will to talk the talk and walk the walk. Ensuring equal rights and opportunities for men and women in all participating States is not just a matter of agreed commitments on non-negotiable human rights, it goes beyond that. Ensuring equal rights and opportunities for all is about bringing more effectiveness, peace, greater inclusiveness and more lasting benefits for all parts of our societies.

My office stands ready to support you in this important undertaking.

Thank you for your attention.