



United States Mission to the OSCE

Response to State Secretary for Family Affairs, Senior Citizens, Women and Youth of the Federal Ministry of Germany, Mr. Ralf Kleindiek

As delivered by Ambassador Daniel B. Baer
to the Permanent Council, Vienna
March 10, 2016

We would like to thank State Secretary Kleindiek for his presentation today. As he mentioned, this week marked International Women's Day, which is an opportunity to reflect on efforts to promote gender equality and implement our related OSCE commitments, as well as the goals of UN Security Council Resolution 1325 and subsequent UN Security Council Resolutions, both at home and here in the OSCE.

The United States recognizes the influential role the empowerment of women can play in advancing international security, and is committed to continuing implementation of UNSCR 1325.

This is an issue that the United States – from President Obama and Secretary Kerry to leaders at USAID and the Department of Defense – cares about deeply and actively works to promote as central to U.S. foreign policy.

The concept is both simple and powerful: that we are all safer, that our efforts at peacebuilding are stronger, that constitutions and peace agreements are more inclusive, just, and lasting when women have a say in how societies rebuild peace and both prevent and recover from conflict.

But today, more than 15 years after the passage of UNSCR 1325 and more than 20 years since the adoption of the Beijing Platform for Action, we must also be humble about our collective track record on implementation.

Here in the OSCE, men still far outnumber women in senior posts and as heads of field missions. Nor are enough women included in diplomatic efforts to resolve protracted and ongoing conflicts. Last year's annual report on implementation of the 2004 Gender Action Plan showed that the number of women among senior management staff in OSCE structures actually decreased from the year before. This is a discouraging trend and so we echo the State Secretary as we continue to call on the Secretary General to prioritize diversity and inclusion at all levels of the Organization to realize the OSCE's commitments to gender equality.

As you mentioned, State Secretary Kleindiek, women can be particularly vulnerable to the effects of conflict, as we have seen in Syria, Iraq, and elsewhere. The current migration and refugee crisis exposes women and children to increased risk of harm and gender-based violence during their trek, particularly sexual assault and human trafficking. We believe the

OSCE can and should do more to address these issues. In this context, we support the project for migration-related law enforcement training proposed by the OSCE Special Representative for Combatting Trafficking of Human Beings Madina Jarbussynova.

Thank you also, State Secretary, for your invitation to the meeting in Berlin later this year.

The United States is making the case for the importance of the Women, Peace, and Security agenda through its leadership on the issue. We include gender considerations in how we approach peace processes, conflict prevention, the protection of civilians, and humanitarian assistance. We are supporting women's participation in conflict prevention and stabilization programs. We are also investing in better training, integrating gender considerations into our strategic planning, and increasingly requiring gender analyses in our resource planning.

The United States military is making significant and groundbreaking strides in increasing the representation of women in peace and security. Today, there are over 200,000 women serving in uniform, making up 15 percent of the total active duty force. Almost 10 percent of general officers are female, compared to just 5 percent of Fortune 500 CEOs.

In December, Secretary of Defense Carter announced that beginning in January of this year, all occupations and positions in the military will be open to women, including infantry, armor, reconnaissance, and special operations.

The United States continues to support implementation of the 2004 OSCE Gender Action Plan. We believe this remains a strong basis for our work. We also remain open to the possibility of adopting an addendum to further strengthen our commitment to gender equality and to promoting implementation of UNSCR 1325.

Thank you, Mr. Chair.