



## **Supplementary Human Dimension Meeting**

### **COUNTERING VIOLENCE AGAINST WOMEN – EVERYONE’S RESPONSIBILITY**

**2-3 July 2018  
Hofburg, Vienna**

#### **ANNOTATED AGENDA**

<b>Introduction and Aims of the Meeting</b>
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Violence against women is a persistent challenge, in the OSCE region and globally. It is endemic in every society and stems from deep-rooted notions of women’s unequal status. As an extreme form of discrimination and a human rights violation, the persistence and breadth of violence against women is a crucial security issue. Allowed to persist, violence against women perpetuates discrimination, results in instability and hinders development. Protecting and upholding the rights of women lies at the core of the fight against any form of discrimination and gender-based violence.

Indeed, by hampering the ability of women to enjoy their rights, gender-based violence represents a major hindrance on the road to their empowerment and fulfilment. On the contrary, promoting the empowerment of women, based on the recognition of their political, economic and social rights, can help to prevent and counter violence against them.

There is also a clear link between combatting violence against women and fostering developments. Eliminate all forms of violence against all women and girls in the public and private spheres, including trafficking and sexual and other types of exploitation, is one of the targets described by the UN 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development, goal n. 5.

OSCE participating States have committed to preventing and addressing violence against Women in numerous documents. Ministerial Council Decisions 15/05 and 7/14 on Preventing and Combating Violence against Women outline priority areas for intervention. The Ljubljana Ministerial Council Decision 15/05 urges the OSCE participating States ‘To adopt and implement legislation that criminalizes gender-based violence and establishes adequate legal protection’. It also underlines that ‘violence against women and girls often remains unreported and unrecorded and is therefore not adequately reflected in statistics’, and encourages participating States ‘to support efforts to raise awareness; to make significant additional efforts to collect, analyse and disseminate comparable data’.<sup>1</sup> In the Basel Ministerial Council Decision 7/14 , the OSCE participating States unanimously declared to be ‘Deeply concerned by the persistence of violence against women as one of the most pervasive human rights violations in the OSCE area, manifested as physical, sexual, and psychological violence’ and reiterate ‘the particular need to take more vigorous measures in

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<sup>1</sup> OSCE, ‘Ministerial Council Decision No. 15/05 on preventing and combating violence against women’, <https://www.osce.org/mc/17451>

preventing and combating violence against women, to which gender inequality can be among the major contributing factors'.<sup>2</sup>

A partial explanation of the failure to prevent and respond to violence against women lies in the lack of prioritization of this form of violence in political agendas. The prevention and response needs to be embedded across all national systems and OSCE participating States need to share their good examples on the topic. Resources need to be invested, especially for capacity-building and training to support survivors as this requires very specific training and skill sets. Women's organizations need to be involved in the development and implementation of policies, projects and activities to combat violence against women. Every member of the society has a role to play in preventing and countering this violence.

The two OSCE-wide Gender Equality Review Conferences, organized in 2014 and in 2017 further elaborated on practical actions that need to be taken to implement the existing commitments. Such actions include: strengthening of the legal and policy framework in the participating States, the development of an OSCE-wide action plan regarding violence against women, as well as state support to capacity building programs for the judiciary, public prosecutors and law enforcement. Another central recommendation was that men who are OSCE officials should serve as role models in promoting non-violent masculinities, recognizing the important role men and boys play in combating violence against women and their responsibility in this field.

This Supplementary Human Dimension Meeting will offer a platform to a variety of actors, including OSCE participating States, OSCE institutions and executive structures, international organizations, civil society organizations, practitioners and academics, to take stock of OSCE human dimension commitments in the sphere of violence against women, and to discuss how to strengthen state and multi-agency responses, monitor and assess progress, and promote efforts for preventing and countering this problem in the OSCE area. It will provide a much needed opportunity to look into concrete actions to support the implementation of OSCE commitments and national frameworks to combat violence against women, including measures to empower women as a way to reduce their vulnerability to all forms of violence.

**Day 1**                      **2 July**

[13:00 – 14:45 – side events]

15:00 – 16:00              **OPENING SESSION**

*Opening remarks:*

**Ambassador Alessandro Azzoni**, Chairperson of the Permanent Council

**Ms. Ingibjorg Solrun Gisladdottir**, Director of the OSCE Office for Democratic Institutions and Human Rights (ODIHR)

**Ms. Amarsanaa Darisuren**, OSCE Senior Adviser on Gender Issues

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<sup>2</sup> OSCE, 'Ministerial Council Decision No. 7/14 on preventing and combating violence against women', [www.osce.org/cio/130721](http://www.osce.org/cio/130721)

### ***Keynote addresses***

**Ms. Purna Sen**, UN Women’s Director of Policy Division

**Ms. Simona Lanzoni**, Second Vice-President, Group of Experts on Action against Violence against Women and Domestic Violence (GREVIO), Council of Europe

### ***Technical Information***

**Ms. Katarzyna Gardapkhadze**, First Deputy Director of the OSCE Office for Democratic Institutions and Human Rights (ODIHR)

**Moderator: Ms. Ingibjorg Solrun Gisladdottir**, Director of the OSCE Office for Democratic Institutions and Human Rights (ODIHR)

16:00 – 18:00

### **SESSION I: Addressing Violence against Women – the Responsibility of the State**

#### ***Introducers:***

**Ms. Sigríður Björk Guðjónsdóttir**, Chief of Police, Metropolitan Police in Iceland

**Ms. Tijana Milosevic**, Head of the Department for Appeals and Complaints in the Office of the Commissioner for the Protection of Equality, Serbia

**Dr. Ethel Brooks**, Associate Professor of Women’s and Gender Studies and Sociology at Rutgers University

#### ***Moderator:***

**Ms. Christie J. Edwards**, Deputy Head, Tolerance and Non-Discrimination (ODIHR)

According to the CEDAW Committee’s General Recommendation 35<sup>3</sup>, states are obliged to ‘pursue by all appropriate means and without delay a policy of eliminating discrimination against women, including gender-based violence against women’.

The Council of Europe Convention on Combating Violence Against Women and Domestic Violence (*Istanbul Convention*)<sup>4</sup> provides the most updated and comprehensive framework, and has to date been signed by 45 OSCE participating States and ratified by 32. The pace of the ratifications has rapidly increased since 2017, with nine new ratifications in the OSCE region. At the same time, there were also unsuccessful attempts to ratify the document in several other OSCE participating States. It is crucial to remember that MC.DEC/7/14 specifically calls on participating States to consider ratifying the Istanbul Convention.

Although little data is available—and great variation in how psychological violence is measured across countries and cultures—existing evidence shows high prevalence rates.

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<sup>3</sup> Committee on the Elimination of Discrimination against Women, General recommendation No. 35 on gender-based violence against women,

[http://tbinternet.ohchr.org/Treaties/CEDAW/Shared%20Documents/1\\_Global/CEDAW\\_C\\_GC\\_35\\_8267\\_E.pdf](http://tbinternet.ohchr.org/Treaties/CEDAW/Shared%20Documents/1_Global/CEDAW_C_GC_35_8267_E.pdf)

<sup>4</sup> Council of Europe Convention on preventing and combating violence against women and domestic violence, <https://rm.coe.int/CoERMPublicCommonSearchServices/DisplayDCTMContent?documentId=090000168046031c>

Forty-three per cent of women in the 28 European Union Member States have experienced some form of psychological violence by an intimate partner in their lifetime<sup>5</sup> Around 120 million girls worldwide (slightly more than 1 in 10) have experienced forced intercourse or other forced sexual acts at some point in their lives. By far the most common perpetrators of sexual violence against girls are current or former husbands, partners or boyfriends<sup>6</sup> •One in 10 women in the European Union report having experienced cyber-harassment since the age of 15 (including having received unwanted, offensive sexually explicit emails or SMS messages, or offensive, inappropriate advances on social networking sites). The risk is highest among young women between 18 and 29 years of age<sup>7</sup>.

Effective response to violence against women requires also taking into account that gender inequality is not experienced the same way by all women. For instance, Roma and Sinti women often experience multiple forms of discrimination based on race and gender that sometime results in violence against these women. The intersectional approach to the prevention of violence against women requires acknowledgment of this diversity of experience.

Efforts to prevent and combat violence against women include strengthening legal and policy frameworks. A security sector that is gender balanced and diverse can better meet the needs of the community it serves and improving the capacity to effectively respond to violence against women.

Questions to be addressed:

- Is legislation countering violence against women being ratified and implemented in the OSCE region? How to improve laws and policies and their implementation in the OSCE region to more effectively address gender-based violence?
- What are the State responses, including by the law enforcement, that can effectively respond to violence against women and address the needs of women victim of violence?
- What should be done to address intersectional vulnerabilities to violence, such as those of Roma women and women with disabilities?
- What is the nexus between violence against women in the security sector and the capacity of police to effectively respond to violence against women?
- How can participating States ensure that all women and girls victims of violence will be provided with full, equal and timely access to justice and effective remedies; medical and social assistance, including emergency assistance; confidential counselling; and shelter?

18:00

Reception hosted by the Italian OSCE Chairmanship at Volksgarten

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<sup>5</sup> European Union Agency for Fundamental Rights (2014). Violence against women: an EU-wide survey, p. 71

<sup>6</sup> UNICEF (2014). Hidden in Plain Sight: A Statistical Analysis of Violence against Children, p. 167

<sup>7</sup> [10] See European Union Agency for Fundamental Rights (2014). Violence against women: an EU-wide survey, p. 104

**Day 2** **3 July**

10:30 – 12:30 **SESSION II: Countering Violence against Women in Public Space**

**Introducers:** **Ms. Zeina Hilal Programme**, Officer for the Gender Partnership Programme, Inter-Parliamentary Union

**Ms. Maria D’Amico**, PANGEA ONLUS

**Dr. Majda Halilovic**, Head of Research and Policy for the Atlantic Initiative in Bosnia and Herzegovina

**Moderator:** **Mr. Marcin Walecki**, Head, Democratization Department (ODIHR)

A historic step taken to effectively counter violence against women is the recognition that it is a public and not only a private matter. Article 4 of the Istanbul Convention prescribes that Parties shall take the necessary legislative and other measures to promote and protect the right for everyone, particularly women, to live free from violence in both the public and the private sphere<sup>8</sup>.

Addressing violence against women in the public space cannot disregard violence against women in the political sphere. Traditionally a largely hidden phenomenon, violence against women in politics is a real concern which poses a threat to the legitimacy of democracies. Violence against politically active women cuts across all political sectors; it targets women — both in person and online — regardless of their political role, age, class or background, and makes it more difficult to build sustainable, resilient democracies that would benefit from politics built on inclusion and equality.

A study by the Inter-Parliamentary Union (IPU) reveals that sexism, harassment and violence against women members of Parliament are global problems. It shows troubling levels of psychological, sexual and physical violence, clearly demonstrating that the problem is much more widespread and under-reported than we realize. According to the conceptual work done by the international campaign #NotTheCost, Stopping Violence against Women in Politics, three characteristics distinguish violence against women in politics:

- It targets women in the public sphere because of their gender,
- In its very form it can be gendered, as exemplified by sexist threats and sexual violence,
- Its impact is to discourage women – in particular from being or becoming active in politics.

Lack of awareness of victims’ needs may also lead to a weak response by the justice system, making more difficult for women to seek judicial remedies.

As the Istanbul Convention stresses, it is important to take “the necessary measures to promote changes in the social and cultural patterns of behavior of women and men with a view to eradicating prejudices, customs, traditions and all other practices which are based on the idea of the inferiority of women or on stereotyped roles for women and men.”<sup>9</sup>

This session will shed light on different aspects of violence against women in the public sphere, from women’s access to justice, through violence against women in politics, to public representations of women which can result in normalization and replication of violence against women.

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<sup>8</sup> <https://www.coe.int/en/web/istanbul-convention/text-of-the-convention>

<sup>9</sup> <https://www.coe.int/en/web/istanbul-convention/text-of-the-convention>

Questions to be addressed:

- How to tackle gender based stereotypes as root causes of violence against women and a source of its ‘normalization’?
- How to counter violence against women in political and public life, online and offline?
- How to enhance access to justice and effective support mechanisms for women?
- How can all segments of society including civil society, state institutions, private sector and media work together to prevent and address violence against women?

12:30 – 14:30 Lunch break (Light reception hosted by the Italian Chairmanship at Hofburg)

[13:00 – 14:30 – side events]

14:30 – 16:30 **SESSION III: Protection from violence and empowerment of women at work and at home**

**Introducers:** **Ms. Iluta Lace**, Manager, MARTA Centre

**Ms. Jamilya Kaparova**, Head of Ensan Diamon, Kyrgyzstan

**Ms. Luisanna Porcu**, Italian National Association D.i.R.E

**Moderator:** **Ms. Jennifer Croft**, Deputy Head, Human Rights Department (ODIHR)

As violence against women stems from deep rooted inequality and discrimination in the society, victims often do not report their experiences because of societal stigmas deriving from overall acceptance towards violence. Those who publicly come forth are often re-victimized, blamed for conduct which led to violence, and left alone coping with the trauma. They also often experience barriers in their access to justice, including gender bias and harmful stereotypes in court proceedings and judgments.

Regardless of the form of violence experienced, the empowerment of women victims, in parallel with the effective prosecution of perpetrators and the protection from retaliation, is a necessary precondition to raise awareness on violence against women and prevent its occurrence. Empowering women victims of violence requires a coordinated community response that includes healthcare facilities, law enforcement agencies, civil society and educational facilities supported by sound and effective public policy. Shifting norms from blaming women victims to making their experiences part of the responses to violence are the necessary cornerstones for empowering the women.

As recently publicly uncovered with the #metoo campaign, violence against women is also based on the power, privileges and entitlements of perpetrators. The more women victims can speak of their experiences of violence, the greater their power and ability to use legal and other means available to confront the perpetrators will be.

In recommendation 35, the CEDAW Committee recommends the adoption and implementation of effective legislative and other appropriate preventive measures to address the underlying causes of gender-based violence against women, as well as to promote women’s empowerment, agency and voice.<sup>10</sup> Therefore, a special attention should be paid to

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[http://tbinternet.ohchr.org/Treaties/CEDAW/Shared%20Documents/1\\_Global/CEDAW\\_C\\_GC\\_35\\_8267\\_E.pdf](http://tbinternet.ohchr.org/Treaties/CEDAW/Shared%20Documents/1_Global/CEDAW_C_GC_35_8267_E.pdf)

women's empowerment, as a prerequisite to ensure their wellbeing and independence and reduce their vulnerability to violence.

This session will cover issues related to the protection of victims from violence, good practices and examples of mechanisms from the OSCE region as well as experiences of women's empowerment as a key solution.

Questions to be addressed:

- What are the emerging challenges regarding the protection of women victims of violence which the OSCE should address?
- What are good practices in OSCE's cooperation with other regional and international organizations in ensuring the protection of women victim of violence?
- What measures should participating States take to empower women victim of violence and strengthen their economic independence with a view to reducing women's vulnerability?
- How to assure the victim's ability to voice her needs and participate in developing a program for her protection?

16:30 – 17:30

### **CLOSING SESSION**

Rapports from the working sessions

Comments from the floor

*Closing remarks:*

**Ms. Ingibjorg Solrun Gisladdottir**, Director of the OSCE Office for Democratic Institutions and Human Rights (ODIHR)

**Ambassador Alessandro Azzoni**, Chairperson of the Permanent Council

17.30

Closing of the meeting