



## United States Mission to the OSCE

### **International Day of the Girl Child**

As delivered by Chargé d'Affaires Katherine Brucker,  
to the Permanent Council, Vienna  
October 19, 2023

On October 11th, the United States joined the international community to commemorate the International Day of the Girl. This was a moment to celebrate the leadership of girls around the globe, to recognize the barriers that continue to limit their full participation in the lives of their communities, and to advocate for policies for their empowerment.

The United States reaffirms our commitment to advancing the rights and empowerment of girls and young women in all their diversity. We are committed to ensuring that girls can pursue their dreams free from discrimination, violence, or intimidation and to advancing the safety, education, health, and wellbeing of girls everywhere. Sadly, children in and outside of the OSCE area continue to face dangers from gender-based violence, conflict and war, and humanitarian disasters. These dangers are even more acute for girls.

Russia's war of aggression against Ukraine has taken a horrific toll on Ukraine's children, including its girls. Russia has forcibly separated many thousands of children from their parents and transferred them elsewhere, often providing no information on their whereabouts. Russia has taken many of these children under the guise of "protecting their safety." Safety that would have been guaranteed had Russia never started its senseless war.

Since the beginning of Russia's full-scale invasion, according to UN data, Russia's bombs and missiles have killed or maimed at least 1,700 children. Children like 10-year-old Dasha who was killed in her apartment in Kryvyi Rih along with her mother when a Russian ballistic missile hit it just after nine in the morning on July 31st. Or, like Yuliia and Anna, 14-year-old twins who were killed by a Russian missile that hit a pizzeria in Kramatorsk on June 29th – two girls who were outside on a balmy summer's eve, their bright futures cut short by Russia's war.

We support Ukraine's heroic work to ensure girls and boys have access to education even while Russia carries out its savage war. Education builds resilience and helps transform communities and countries. As we look to the Youth, Peace and Security and the Women, Peace, and Security agendas, we know that education is the right of all children and that educating girls now will contribute to greater equality and empower them to become leaders in the future. This is true in Ukraine, as it is throughout the OSCE area. We must collectively redouble our efforts to ensure

girls across the OSCE region are empowered to achieve their full potential to become leaders in their communities and countries.

On October 11th, the Department of State, in partnership with the U.S. Agency for International Development, launched the Girls' Civic and Political Participation Strategy. The strategy details U.S. government commitments to address the barriers to participation faced by adolescent girls in particular and to increase their access to civic education and leadership development opportunities. A priority action outlined in the strategy is to promote the rights and empowerment of girls and young women in multilateral fora, and we look forward to joining OSCE participating States to make this a reality.

The United States stands firm in our commitment to elevate the voices and human rights of all girls and invest in a future that promotes their rights, leadership and well-being.

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