



EUROPEAN UNION

OSCE Permanent Council No.1499 Vienna, 28 November 2024

EU Statement on the occasion of the International Day for the Elimination of Violence against Women

1. On 25 November, we mark the International Day for the Elimination of Violence against Women – a day that, unfortunately, continues to be highly relevant, as violence against women and girls remains an appalling reality for one in three women globally.
2. The growing evidence of gender-based violence in connection with Russia's war of aggression against Ukraine, including as a tactic of war by the Russian Armed Forces, is of grave concern. This has been documented extensively by the reports of the Moscow Mechanism and the UN Independent Commission of Inquiry on Ukraine. The EU reiterates its steadfast commitment to upholding international human rights law and international humanitarian law, and to ending impunity for international crimes, not least when rape is used as a weapon of war.

Madame Chair,

3. Violence against women and girls remains one of the most prevalent and pervasive human rights violations in the world and continues to be a serious obstacle to achieving equality, development, and peace.
4. The EU therefore stresses the importance of the full implementation of all OSCE commitments and recommendations for the elimination of violence against women and girls. We call on participating States to conduct effective investigations into these crimes, bring perpetrators to justice, ensure accountability, and provide all victims with safe and

unhindered access to justice and adequate redress. Prevention, protection, and prosecution should be the driving forces of all our efforts.

5. To protect women and girls in conflict situations, we must also strengthen our efforts to implement UN Security Council Resolution 1325 and the Women, Peace and Security (WPS) agenda as a whole. We look forward to the OSCE-wide Roadmap on WPS currently being developed by the incoming Finnish CiO.
6. The EU strongly condemns all forms of reprisals, violence, threats and attacks, both offline and online, against all women and girls, in particular the ultimate expression of gender-based violence; the killing of women or girls because of their gender. The EU also condemns all threats and attacks targeting women human rights defenders, women journalists, women peacebuilders, women-led organisations, women activists, politicians and trade unionists, which constitute a particular threat against democracy and gender equality.
7. Civil society, including women's rights organisations and social movements, play a crucial role and needs to be meaningfully engaged in efforts to prevent and eliminate violence against women and girls.
8. Furthermore, financial freedom is key. Women's economic empowerment is a matter of human rights and is crucial for women to take control of their lives, take charge of their finances, and be able to leave destructive relationships.
9. Men and boys must also be actively engaged in efforts towards elimination of all forms of violence against women and girls, including by addressing the root causes of violence and by raising awareness about the impact of negative attitudes, behaviours, and gender stereotypes that can underlie and perpetuate violence.
10. Women and girls facing multiple and intersecting forms of discrimination are particularly at risk of gender-based violence, including sexual violence. As LGBTI persons are at particular risk, more needs to be done to offer them support, protection and safe spaces.

11. The European Union reaffirms its position of zero tolerance towards sexual and gender-based violence. To this end, the EU recently adopted the Directive on combating violence against women, criminalising physical and psychological violence, including sexual violence, both offline and online. Female genital mutilation, forced marriage, and the most widespread forms of cyber violence will also be criminalised as stand-alone offenses.
12. The EU's accession to the Istanbul Convention further shows our commitment to stepping up actions against gender-based violence.

The Candidate Countries NORTH MACEDONIA*, MONTENEGRO*, ALBANIA*, UKRAINE, the REPUBLIC OF MOLDOVA, BOSNIA and HERZEGOVINA*, and GEORGIA, as well as ANDORRA and SAN MARINO align themselves with this statement.

* North Macedonia, Montenegro, Albania, and Bosnia and Herzegovina continue to be part of the Stabilisation and Association Process.