



**Statement by Ms. Ljiljana Lončar, Advisor to the Deputy Prime Minister, Minister of Construction, Transportation and Infrastructure and President of Coordination Body for Gender Equality, Republic of Serbia**

Working session 15: Tolerance and non-discrimination II  
Warsaw, 19 September 2018

The Republic of Serbia is committed to advance gender equality as a prerequisite for sustainable development, peace and security, to ensure equal opportunities for women and man and to leave no one behind.

In the continuous effort to ensure sustainable progress and to enhance impact of Government policies, programs, measures and activities in advancing gender equality, Government of Republic of Serbia has established **Coordination body for Gender Equality** in 2014. This national, multisectoral mechanism is reflecting Serbia's high political commitment to tackle gender inequality as it is led by the Deputy Prime Minister and the Minister of Construction, Transportation and Infrastructure and is coordinating all government efforts towards achieving full equality of women and man.

The Coordination body for Gender Equality has been coordinating and monitoring the implementation of the **National Strategy for Gender Equality 2016-2018 and its first Action plan 2016-2018** that has been developed in cooperation with all relevant governmental institution, local self-government and civil society. Strategic orientation and activities envisaged in the action plan are aiming to change gender stereotypes patriarchal norms and improve culture of gender equality; to advance gender equality by implementing equal opportunity policy and measures; and to introduce gender mainstreaming in the policy adoption, implementation and monitoring process at all level of governance.

Evaluation and initial reports are showing particularly good results in political representation of women and in decision making. Currently Serbia has women Prime Minister and Deputy Prime Minister, women President of the National Assembly, Governness of the National Bank of Serbia, women president of the Constitutional Court. In parliament the representation of women of 34,4% is higher than the European average which is 25,6%. Also we have more women ambassadors: 16% comparing to European average of 13%. We have relatively high representation of women members of Government, 23%. We still need to improve the representation of women at the local level as only 7% are mayors comparing to European average of 13,4%. Even though we now that only numbers are not enough to achieve real gender equality it is certainty step forward and women holding high political and power positions are slowly changing the traditional stereotypes on women in Serbia.

Also, Serbia has **mainstreamed gender into its national budget** in a systematic and sustainable manner. Political endorsement for Gender Responsive Budgeting (GRB) introduction have been ensured from the highest political level: from the Deputy Prime Minister and Minister of Finance office. GRB has been introduced in planning, execution and reporting on the budget at all level of governments with amendments to the Budget System Law in 2015. GRB implies a step by step reform process in the area of public finances by 2020, by which all the budgetary users should have gender responsive budgets. It has transformational potential to reduce gender inequalities and enable equal access of both sexes to public goods and services. So far over 900 public servants were encompassed by the GRB capacity building programs at the national, provincial and local level. In 2018, 40 institutions at national level and 18 at provincial level are to apply GRB in their budgets for 2019 according to the Annual Plan for GRB introduction.

The Republic of Serbia, is the first country outside of European Union that has introduced and calculated **Gender Equality Index** with the support of the European Institute for Gender Equality, in 2016. This instrument which is measuring gender equality in six domains (money, work, knowledge, health, time and power) and two subdomains (increasing inequalities and violence against women) is showing that Serbia is half way through gender equality, as it scored estimated **40.60** points out of possible 100. Serbia is above the average when it comes to power, 43% compared to 39,7 % (European average) but below the average when it comes to work. We are using this tool to introduce measures that will overcome gender gaps in domains of greater inequality, and are currently preparing the second Index with the new, improved methodology.

The Deputy Prime Minister and President of Coordination Body for Gender Equality has initiated preparation of the **Draft Law on Gender Equality**, which is expected to be adopted by the end of the year. This Law ought to further strengthen Gender Equality Mechanisms at all levels and their cooperation.

The European Commission has approved an **IPA funds- gender component** prepared by the Coordination Body for Gender Equality in cooperation with the Ministry for European Integration and UN Women, with the support of the EU Delegation in Serbia. The project "Key steps towards gender equality in Serbia" has started and is aimed at inclusion of a gender perspective in strategic planning and programming of EU funds, development of administrative and technical capacities and support to women's economic empowerment.

In order to strengthen the coordinated state response to violence against women, the Coordination Body for Gender Equality, UN agencies and line ministries have been **implementing "Integrated Response to Violence Against Women II"** project with the support of Swedish International Development Agency (SIDA). In line with both Istanbul Convention and Convention on Elimination of All forms of Discrimination against Women (CEDAW), the project **aim is** to strengthen institutional framework and effective response to the violence against women; to prevent gender based violence in schools; to support social services to victims and work with perpetrators. As a result of the project support, following key results have been accomplished:

- On 2 July 2018 Serbia has submitted its first State Report on the Istanbul Convention implementation to GREVIO, the independent expert body responsible for monitoring its implementation. Serbia has ratified the Council of Europe Convention on Preventing and

Combating Violence against Women and Domestic Violence (Istanbul Convention), in October 2013. The process, led by the Coordination body for Gender Equality, included coordination of data collection and information gathering, as well as report drafting with active participation of 250 state authorities at all levels of governments. The whole monitoring process will be completed in January 2020.

- In order to align its normative framework with standard envisaged by Istanbul Convention and to enable its full implementation, Serbia has adopted **the Law on Combatting Family Violence** that has entered into force in June 2017. Until June 2018, the police and prosecutors office issued more than 23,000 emergency measures. Also, Serbia has **amended the Criminal Code** and it is now stipulating sexual harassment, stalking, genital mutilation and forced marriages as criminal offences.

Serbia has adopted and is implementing National Action Plan for the implementation of the **United Nations Security Council Resolution 1325 – “Women, Peace and Security”** in Republic of Serbia 2016-2020. It highlights the importance of the women security and safety, with special focus on vulnerable groups of women at the local level.

### **Final remarks**

We are facing rapid changes in the current world of constant and broadening emergencies and disasters and forceful migrations, so that we cannot see anymore a clear division between state of emergency and peaceful leaving. Challenges are greater and stronger and achieved level of human rights and democratic values have been questioned and undermined almost daily. Gender equality is the vital component of developing sustainable peace and security, very essence of mutual trust and cooperation, of changing the way we do things.

With that in mind we all need, in close cooperation, to strengthen our gender-mainstreamed response to emerging challenges by:

- focusing strongly on prevention of violence and development of peaceful resolution skills from very early age;
- redeveloping, fostering and spreading the culture of tolerance, mutual understanding, cooperation, inclusion and promotion of non aggressive standards of living;
- calling on responsibility of leaders in every field (from politics to culture) to promote non aggressive communication and peaceful resolutions of any type of conflict;
- devote ourselves to leaving no one behind, to building inclusive equal societies not for marginalized and most vulnerable but with them, as we all have a voice.

At the end I would like to express our **great appreciation to the Mission of OSCE in Serbia**, for continues support and partnership in advancing gender equality in Serbia.