

**Second day of the Twenty-Fifth Meeting**  
MC(25) Journal No. 2, Agenda item 7

**DECISION No. 4/18  
PREVENTING AND COMBATING VIOLENCE AGAINST WOMEN**

The Ministerial Council,

Reaffirming that the promotion and protection of equal rights and opportunities for all are essential to democracy and economic development and therefore to security, stability and sustainable peace in the OSCE area,

Determined to ensure the full and equal enjoyment by women and girls of human rights and fundamental freedoms,

Reaffirming all relevant OSCE commitments, including Ministerial Council Decision No. 14/04 on the 2004 OSCE Action Plan for the Promotion of Gender Equality and Ministerial Council Decisions No. 15/05 and No. 7/14 on preventing and combating violence against women,

Taking note of the holding of the second Gender Equality Review Conference, conducted in Vienna in June 2017, which, *inter alia*, discussed progress and gaps in the implementation of OSCE commitments in the field of preventing and combating violence against women,

Reaffirming the United Nations Declaration on the Elimination of Violence against Women and recalling that OSCE commitments on human rights and gender equality are inspired by the international human rights framework, including the Convention on the Elimination of all Forms of Discrimination against Women, the Beijing Declaration and Platform for Action, and UN Security Council resolution 1325 on women and peace and security,

Mindful of the importance of preventing and combating violence against women and girls for the implementation of the relevant Sustainable Development Goals of the United Nations 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development,

Recognizing that inequality between men and women is a root cause of violence against women and girls, and that, in particular, discrimination and economic inequalities, including lack of economic independence, can increase women's vulnerability to violence,

Deeply concerned by the persistence of violence against women and girls in all its forms as one of the most pervasive impediments to their full enjoyment of all human rights and to women's full, equal and effective participation in political, economic, and public life,

Noting that violence against women and girls can cause death or physical, sexual, psychological, economic, political and social harm or suffering to girls and women of all ages, and results directly or indirectly in shorter- and longer-term societal, political and economic costs,

Noting also that violence against women and girls takes many forms, which can include: domestic violence; sexual violence; harmful practices; trafficking in human beings, sexual and other types of exploitation; and sexual harassment,

Recognizing that women and girls may suffer many different kinds of discrimination, sometimes in combination, which exposes them to increased risk of violence, and that such combinations can lead to further discrimination,

Also recognizing the important roles played by the armed forces, law enforcement agencies, judicial systems and other legal professionals, in addressing all forms of violence against women and girls,

Recognizing further that abuse, threats, and harassment, including sexual harassment, have become increasingly common, especially through digital technologies, and may silence women's and girls' voices in the public sphere,

Mindful that women engaged in professional activities with public exposure and/or in the interest of society, are more likely to be exposed to specific forms of violence or abuse, threats, and harassment, in relation to their work,

Considering that adolescence is an important phase in the social development of a person, and recognizing that this phase is often affected by persistent inequalities, negative attitudes, behaviours, and gender stereotypes that can put girls and young women at heightened risk of discrimination and violence,

Recognizing the importance of actively engaging men and boys in efforts towards elimination of discrimination and all forms of violence against women and girls, including by addressing the root causes of gender inequality and violence and by raising awareness about the impact of negative attitudes, behaviours, and gender stereotypes that can underlie and perpetuate discrimination and violence,

Noting the efforts of the OSCE MenEngage Network<sup>1</sup> in raising awareness about the important role that men and boys can play in the elimination of discrimination and all forms of violence against women and girls,

Recognizing that sexual harassment in public and private spaces, in particular in the workplace and in educational institutions, has a damaging impact on women and girls' full

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1 The OSCE MenEngage Network is not an affiliated network of the MenEngage Alliance. The OSCE MenEngage Network is a closed network within OSCE.

enjoyment of human rights and equal opportunities, thus impairing their ability to remain and/or advance in the workplace and in educational institutions,

Acknowledging the role of civil society as an important partner of government, including at the local level, in preventing and combating violence against women and girls,

Taking note of the OSCE Parliamentary Assembly's work to combat violence against women,

Calls on the participating States to:

1. Ensure access to justice, effective investigation, prosecution of perpetrators, as well as provide, while respecting their rights and privacy, adequate protection, rehabilitation and reintegration support for victims of all forms of violence against women and girls;
2. Take action, including through awareness-raising and capacity-building for the armed forces, law enforcement agencies, judicial systems and other legal professionals, on preventing and combating all forms of violence against women and girls;
3. Adopt measures, as appropriate, to encourage education on gender equality, human rights and non-violent behaviour thus contributing to the prevention of all forms of violence against women and girls, which can include: harmful practices, sexual violence, domestic violence, as well as sexual harassment;
4. Organize awareness-raising campaigns on the risks of specific forms of violence facing women and girls, including through digital technologies, and on their rights and the support available for victims of such violence;
5. Take action to address violence, abuse, threats, and harassment, including through digital technologies, directed at women;
6. Take measures, in consultation with companies that work on information and communication technologies (ICT), to address specific forms of violence faced by women and girls through digital technologies;
7. Encourage all relevant actors, including those involved in the political process, to contribute to preventing and combating all forms of violence against women, including those engaged in professional activities with public exposure and/or in the interest of society, by, *inter alia*, raising the issue in public debates, and developing awareness-raising initiatives and other appropriate measures, also considering the chilling impact of such violence on young women;
8. Incorporate initiatives into relevant national level policies and strategies to promote the engagement of men and boys in preventing and combating violence against women and girls, including by implementing awareness-raising activities focusing on the positive, equitable and non-violent roles men and boys can play in this regard, and by recognizing and addressing negative attitudes, behaviours, and gender stereotypes that perpetuate such violence;

9. Take measures to combat sexual harassment in public and private spaces, including in the workplace and in educational institutions, and encourage public and private employers to apply such measures;

10. Take measures to provide equal access to quality education for all girls; and strengthen the economic empowerment and economic independence of women, including by ensuring non-discriminatory employment policies and practices, providing equal access to education and training, equal remuneration for equal work, and equal access to and control over economic resources;

11. Encourage the involvement of civil society in preventing and combating violence against women and girls;

Tasks the relevant OSCE executive structures, in accordance with their mandates, to:

12. Assist participating States, upon their request, in improving their legal and policy framework and in implementing measures for preventing and combating all forms of violence against women and girls;

13. Continue co-operation with relevant international and regional organizations to collect sex-disaggregated data and statistics on the occurrence of all forms of violence against women and girls in the OSCE area;

14. Provide support to the participating States and civil society organizations for the exchange of good practices in preventing and combating all forms of violence against women and girls, including through the engagement of men and boys;

15. Support participating States, upon their request, in developing and reviewing legislation, policies, and measures to combat sexual harassment in private and public spaces, including in the workplace and educational institutions;

16. Continue to ensure full implementation of, and to review the need for strengthening and/or increasing training on, the OSCE Code of Conduct for the OSCE staff/mission members as well as the OSCE policy on the professional working environment, stressing a zero tolerance approach to sexual harassment, including through efforts by senior management.

17. Encourages the participating States and relevant OSCE executive structures to consider engaging in joint activities with the OSCE Parliamentary Assembly and its Special Representative on Gender Issues.

MC.DEC/4/18  
7 December 2018  
Attachment

Original: ENGLISH

**INTERPRETATIVE STATEMENT UNDER  
PARAGRAPH IV.1(A)6 OF THE RULES OF PROCEDURE  
OF THE ORGANIZATION FOR SECURITY AND  
CO-OPERATION IN EUROPE**

By the delegation of Canada (also on behalf of Albania, Austria-European Union, the former Yugoslav Republic of Macedonia, Georgia, Iceland, Montenegro, Norway, Serbia, Switzerland, Ukraine and the United States of America):

“Thank you, Mr. Chairperson.

In connection with the adoption of the decision, I would like to make the following interpretative statement under paragraph IV.1(A)6 of the OSCE Rules of Procedure on behalf of Albania, the European Union and its Member States, Georgia, Iceland, the former Yugoslav Republic of Macedonia, Montenegro, Norway, Serbia, Switzerland, Ukraine, the United States, and Canada.

We have joined consensus on this decision because we are committed to eliminating all forms of violence against women and girls, one of the most pervasive impediments to the full enjoyment of their human rights. We welcome that the document refers to all forms of violence against women and girls, but regret that we were unable to include a specific reference to intimate partner violence that affects so many.

We would have liked to have seen a stronger decision that explicitly discussed some of the trends we see today in the OSCE region. Over the past several years, we have seen a growing number of attacks, threats, abuse, and harassment, including sexual harassment, targeted at women as they speak out as journalists, bloggers, politicians, civil society activists, or human rights defenders, often carried out through digital technologies. We must do more to prevent and eliminate these appalling acts, and we look to the OSCE’s institutions and field operations to support our efforts to eliminate them.

We also regret that it was not possible to reach consensus on language regarding preventing violence, including sexual violence, against women and girls in conflict situations. We must ensure there is no impunity for perpetrators.

We request that this interpretative statement be attached to the decision adopted and be included in the journal of the day.

Thank you, Mr. Chairperson.”