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**OSCE Permanent Council N° 1205
Vienna, 29 November 2018**

**EU statement on the International Day for the Elimination
of Violence against Women**

On 25th November, we marked the International Day for the Elimination of Violence against Women. This also marked the beginning of 16 days of activism in addressing violence against women, focusing on education. On this occasion we reaffirm our commitment to ending violence against women and girls.

Around the world, 35% of women and girls will experience some form of physical or sexual violence in their lifetime. They are targeted in all spheres of life, including at home, online, in their communities, at work or in education, as well as in conflict. More than 700 million women today were married as children, 250 million of them before the age of 15. The lifetime prevalence of Intimate Partner Violence among 15-19 year old girls is almost 30%, and at least 200 million women and girls today have undergone female genital mutilation. We have also seen the effects of on-line violence towards women, particularly those involved in public and political activities, such as journalists and media workers, politicians, civil society activists and human rights defenders.

Ending gender-based violence is a matter of utmost urgency. To achieve this we need to change attitudes towards gender-based stereotypes, empower and protect women and girls, and ensure that from the start, all girls receive a quality education. It also means holding perpetrators to account. The survivors of sexual and gender-based violence must receive justice for what has happened to them. There must be no culture of impunity. We must tackle the stigma of sexual violence and address how we can better support children born following acts of rape.

To this end, the EU has undertaken substantial actions. These include supporting more than 1.5 million girls and women with services for protection and care related to female genital mutilation. 3000 communities, representing 8.5 million people, have publicly announced that they are abandoning this practice. In partnership with the United Nations, we have launched a global, multi-year initiative focused on eliminating all forms of violence against women and girls that protects and gives voice to those women and girls silenced by their societies. We are also leading the global Call to Action on Protection from Gender-Based Violence in Emergencies initiative that brings together nearly 80 aid actors to foster accountability for addressing gender-based violence.

We welcome that the elimination of all forms of violence against women and girls remains high on the OSCE agenda. Everyone has the right to live free of violence and there is much work to be done. We need to enhance implementation of our commitments from the 2004 OSCE Action Plan for the Promotion of Gender Equality, and to address gaps in our commitments and new and emerging trends. To this end, we strongly support the Chairmanship's very good draft OSCE Ministerial Council Decision on preventing and combating violence against women, with many substantial elements, and we urge all participating States to work to reach consensus on this decision.

We also welcome Vienna-based initiatives to raise awareness, such as the staging of the documentary play 'Seven' by the OSCE's MenEngage Network, and the very moving photo exhibition of survivors of domestic violence presented by Canada and Belarus.

In line with the 2004 Action Plan for the Promotion of Gender Equality, we encourage the OSCE to continue mainstreaming a gender perspective throughout its executive structures, both internally, and across its activities, projects and programmes. The cross-dimensional nature of the 'women, peace and security' agenda is crucial to ensuring that women play a role in the OSCE's comprehensive approach to security. We also need to continue to focus efforts on implementation of

the UN Security Council Resolution 1325 and its subsequent resolutions.

More broadly, we encourage all participating States to ratify and implement the UN Convention on the Elimination of All Forms of Discrimination against Women and to ratify the Council of Europe's Istanbul Convention on preventing and combating violence against women and domestic violence.

In closing, we affirm that attitudes can change, that we must address gender-based discrimination of any kind, and that collectively and independently we must urgently end violence of all forms against women and girls. Eliminating violence against women and girls is at the heart of the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development and the evidence from interventions to date shows it is achievable. It is a first step towards global peace and security, a precondition for the promotion, protection and fulfilment of human rights, gender equality, democracy, and economic growth. In the words of the SDGs, we must 'leave no one behind'.

The Candidate Countries the FORMER YUGOSLAV REPUBLIC OF MACEDONIA*, MONTENEGRO*, SERBIA* and ALBANIA*, the Country of the Stabilisation and Association Process and Potential Candidate BOSNIA and HERZEGOVINA, as well as the REPUBLIC OF MOLDOVA, GEORGIA, ANDORRA and SAN MARINO align themselves with this statement.

* The Former Yugoslav Republic of Macedonia, Montenegro, Serbia and Albania continue to be part of the Stabilisation and Association Process.