

Report by Mrs. Alexandra Ochirova, Member of the Civic Chamber of the Russian Federation, at the 15th annual OSCE session on performance of liabilities in the area of human dimension entitled "Some of today's issues of women's status in the modern Russian society"

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As women are a natural and integral part of mankind, the issue of their status and place in the society has always been on the agenda of human civilization. At some point of civilization development in each country, this issue was developed as a problem of its stability, freedom, and equal conditions of development for everyone. What has woman contributed to civilization, what is her role in the modern society and in establishment of the value system, especially today when there is every reason to speak of more complicated social links and risks and challenges of modern reality?

We must be ready to understand that one cannot discuss a sexless subject of the historic process in an abstract manner and that woman, which implements many of the tasks that are put forward by the state and the society, is the bearer of human life and brings spirituality and sense to entire generations as she gives them life. In addition, her presence in human civilization during the entire history is related to the concepts of safety, peace, and responsibility.

On the other hand, among the problems that woman has to face even in countries that have long existed as democracies are lawlessness and poverty, discrimination and violence, permanent feeling of fear for the life of her children.

Women's status in modern Russia and the terms of their involvement in all areas of public life and in the political process are one of the most pressing issues for the Russian civil society. It should be noted that, traditionally, in Russia all social problems have always had a "woman's face." Today there is the new concept of "family poverty" and the "feminization of poverty." Please note that the crisis is making the situation of women on the labor market worse even despite special government measures taken to support women and their families. In general, it is well known that although equal rights for men and women are stated in the Russian constitution, gender inequality is most noticeable in the area of public decision making, law, and social policy.

One can mention numerous examples of the difficulties that women are facing in the Russian society, namely, Russian women make the majority among the unemployed but two thirds of them have higher education, and their salary is from 50 to 70% of men's salaries; in many Russian families women are exposed to violence and gender discrimination.

However, it should be noted that in the social policy of Russia the priority national projects are taking more and more consideration of issues of women's health and maternal and child care. For example, special programs entitled "Birth certificate" and "Mother's capital" have been implemented in the country successfully, and one of their purposes is to improve the quality of care, and the other one is to modernize the institutions of childbirth. In the past 5 years, a total of 786.1 billion rubles were earmarked for implementation of the "Health" project, of which 90 billion were for improvement of care for mothers and children.

A particularly important aspect of the problem is the participation of women in the making of vitally important public decisions. As you know, a lot of discussion in a large number of countries comes to the conclusion that the effectiveness of political processes and social policy depends on the involvement of women. As far as I know, most countries in the OSCE have a policy of quotas with a view to increasing women's participation in power structures, and, according to the experience of Norway where such measures have led to an increase of the percentage of women in the higher echelons of power up to 40%, such a course requires state regulation and public support. Many countries have managed to increase the proportion of women in Parliament up to 30%. And while old gender stereotypes fix the inadequate allocation of roles between men and women, the new modern approaches to the problem require balancing the representation of both genders in government, which should lead to the desired results of better life quality, peace, and stability.

In the modern type of society there is a need to change the quality of management in respect of both national and global problems. Therefore, the alignment of the gender balance should be a priority, because can there be a democratic society without women and not for life? By the way, most recently a woman has been elected Chairman of Parliament's Upper Chamber in the Russian Federation. Furthermore, women are fairly well represented in public office as middle managers, especially at the municipal level where their share is often more than 50%.

Nowadays, in an age when humanity is concerned about finding the imperatives and strategies for sustainable development of modern civilization, women make up a large part of humanity, and should have access to the decision making process. Moreover, according to the experience of countries where they have such access, decisions have a more sound character and important social perspectives. And it is safe to say that today, gender equality and partnership between men and women contribute to the national security as they create opportunities for sustainable development and influence the statement of serving human life and enhancing human capital as top priority tasks.

Sociability and stability, self-preservation and ability to bind everything together, and responsibility are only a small part of the positive identity of women. It has seemed that the emergence of new paradigms of development and a new philosophy of the world must put an end to violent civilization, but the issue of domestic violence against women and even children is still harsh reality in many countries including Russia. Eradicating this problem is a priority for countries where there are similar phenomena, as it is not just a question of image and the culture of the country but also evidence of the crisis that draws us to the collapse of civilization.

Morals and ethics need to take real power in government and human decisions, and the woman is able by her nature to unite morality and politics. This is the only approach that takes account of the moral and professional capacity of women and is able to provide an opportunity for sustainable development. And this is the only partnership that can ensure social cohesion as the main European policy goal-setting and the subsequent quality of life improvement and a sense of confidence in the future.