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EU statement in response to the Secretary General's Annual Evaluation Report on the Implementation of the 2004 Action Plan for the promotion of Gender Equality

The European Union thanks the Secretary General for this excellent report to the Permanent Council.

As 2010 marks the 10th anniversary of the adoption of the UN SC Resolution 1325 on "Women, Peace and Security" and the 5th anniversary of the Ministerial Council Decision 14/05 on women in conflict prevention, crisis management and post-conflict rehabilitation, it is of the utmost importance that we strive to ensure gender equality in all aspects of human rights, to fight violence against women and to enhance women's participation in international peace and security.

Women's equal participation in decision-making at all levels is key to better advance human rights, to address specific needs and concerns of women and to make use of all human resources. The Decision N° 7/09 adopted by Athens' Ministerial Council constitutes an important document on Women's participation in political and public life, essential to achieve a more peaceful, prosperous, and democratic OSCE area.

The report reveals a committed approach to the task of implementing the requirements of the Action Plan. The European Union strongly supports the

efforts taken during the reporting period to promote gender equality and highly values the contributions made by many parts of the organization, in particular the Secretariat's Gender Section and the gender focal points in the field missions, as well as the ODIHR, the HCNM and the RFoM.

Nevertheless, the report also shows some challenges and shortcomings. Further efforts should be made to fully implement the commitments articulated in the Gender Action Plan.

The European Union encourages the implementation of gender-oriented activities, policies, projects and programmes in the three dimensions of the OSCE. The European Union shares the assessment that within the Organization, and in the policies, programmes and activities, special consideration should be given to incorporate gender issues into the first and second dimensions in a substantial and sustainable way. Besides, the EU is of the view that gender mainstreaming and women empowerment should be taken into consideration in the activities developed with the Partners for Co-Operation.

As for statistics on the recruitment to the different OSCE structures, the European Union notes that there has been a slight improvement in the representation of women in the organization, namely in higher management positions. Nevertheless, women are still under-represented in senior and policy-making positions. The European Union fully subscribes to the report's observation that it is alarming to note the almost total lack of women at the level of Head of Mission and Deputy Head of Mission as well as Head of Institution.

Therefore, the European Union encourages all participating States, the OSCE Chairmanship in Office and the OSCE Secretariat to nominate more women to higher positions in the organization. We strongly support the recommendations to hire women managers, seconded as well as contracted, evenly to all structures. Furthermore, the European Union calls for a higher percentage of women in the

interview panels, namely in the case of field operations and for senior management positions.

The EU is ready to consider the recommendation for the creation of posts for gender adviser, in large field operations, in replacement of gender focal points. Furthermore, the EU welcomes the appointment of the CiO Special Representative for Gender Equality and commends the Chairmanship for this initiative. The EU thinks that it is important that the various offices and mechanisms within the OSCE dealing with gender equality operate in a cohesive and effective manner.

In conclusion, the EU reaffirms its commitment to the implementation of the 2004 Action Plan for the promotion of equality between women and men. We congratulate the Secretary General and his team for the efforts undertaken and reiterate our support to achieve this common goal.

The candidate countries TURKEY, CROATIA*, the FORMER YUGOSLAV REPUBLIC OF MACEDONIA* and ICELAND, the countries of the Stabilisation and Association Process and potential candidate countries ALBANIA, BOSNIA AND HERZEGOVINA, MONTENEGRO and SERBIA, the European Free Trade Association countries and members of the European Economic Area LIECHTENSTEIN and NORWAY, as well as the REPUBLIC OF MOLDOVA, AZERBAIJAN, GEORGIA, ANDORRA and SAN MARINO align themselves with this statement.

*Croatia and the Former Yugoslav Republic of Macedonia continue to be part of the Stabilisation and Association Process.

** Iceland continues to be a member of the EFTA and the European Economic Area.