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AT THE 1178th MEETING OF THE
OSCE PERMANENT COUNCIL**

8 March 2018

On International Women's Day

Mr. Chairperson,

I should like to begin my statement by congratulating our esteemed women on International Women's Day and wishing them happiness and success in their work.

We thank the Special Representative of the OSCE Chairperson-in-Office on Gender Issues Ms. Melanne Verwee for her substantive presentation. We also note the work of the Gender Section at the OSCE Secretariat headed by Ms. Amarsanaa Darisuren.

International Women's Day is celebrated all around the world. This date honours women's achievements regardless of national borders or ethnic, linguistic, cultural, economic, political and other divides. The international women's movement, which developed with the holding of the four world conferences on women, has given a powerful impetus to global efforts in the struggle to give women equal rights and opportunities. The OSCE is making an important contribution to this process.

In Russia, International Women's Day is a special date. It is not simply an occasion to congratulate women or honour their achievements in the workplace. It is also an opportunity to affirm our respect for women not only as equal members of society but also as loving mothers and wives, guardians of hearth and home, and defenders of family values and cultural traditions handed down from generation to generation. It is this attitude to women and this understanding of women's important social role that we should inculcate in our children.

International Women's Day draws attention to women's problems, including problems related to motherhood, women's health, education, professional training, and extending opportunities for participation in all areas of life, including government.

The OSCE has a robust toolkit for promoting gender equality, including the 2004 Action Plan for the Promotion of Gender Equality. But problems remain. We believe that today it is most important to focus on ensuring conditions so that women and men can fully

realize their potential. In the labour market we need to remove discriminatory restrictions and practices. The task of States is to give women the opportunity to balance family and professional life. Combating gender-based violence in all its forms and manifestations is also an imperative.

We have said before that achieving gender equality is a very important task but its implementation within the OSCE or in participating States should not focus on figures alone. Promoting women and men in any professional area should be determined by their knowledge, experience and commitment, and gender mainstreaming in OSCE programme and project activity should be based on the principles of reasonableness and necessity.

In today's world, participation of women in conflict prevention and resolution and in ensuring sustainable peace is ever more relevant. Russia is ready to make its contribution to these efforts. At the same time, we wish to emphasize that in implementing the goals and tasks of United Nations Security Council resolution 1325, the United Nations should unquestionably play the leading role, and we should not try to duplicate its efforts. It is important that efforts to elaborate comprehensive approaches in this area take into account the specific nature of each conflict situation, and inclusion of gender aspects should not become an end in itself. We should also remember that the primary responsibility for protection of women at all stages of armed conflict belongs to national governments.

We most certainly recognize the role of women as strong and competent professionals in preventing and combating the terrorist threat. But here too, gender should not and cannot be the criterion for selecting specialists.

Today, many overlook the need to give more attention to the economic and social rights of women, which have worsened considerably as a result of the economic crisis. We need to work towards correcting imbalances and focus the OSCE on facilitating promotion of rights and opportunities for women and men in the political, economic, social and cultural spheres.

Thank you for your attention.