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EUROPEAN UNION

**OSCE Permanent Council No. 1236
Vienna, 18 July 2019**

**EU Statement in response to the Secretary-General's
Annual Progress Report on the Implementation of the
OSCE 2004 Gender Action Plan on the Promotion of
Gender Equality**

The European Union would like to thank the Secretary-General and the Senior Gender Adviser for their Annual Progress Report on the Implementation of the 2004 OSCE Action Plan on the Promotion of Gender Equality. We commend you for the actions you have taken to address gender equality in the OSCE. Gender equality is not only at the core of human rights, but it is also an essential part of comprehensive security and it contributes to sustainable peace. Your Report provides a comprehensive assessment of the progress the OSCE has made. We welcome this. But it also highlights how far we still have to go to achieve gender parity and systematic gender mainstreaming across all of the OSCE's programmes and activities.

The EU promotes and supports work towards gender equality in all policy areas including our foreign and security policy and in all activities including conflict-prevention, crisis management and peacebuilding. In November 2018, the EU adopted a new Strategic Approach to Women, Peace and Security and we have just adopted our first ever Action Plan implementing this agenda.

Secretary-General, we welcome that gender equality is included as a pillar of the OSCE 'fit for purpose' agenda and that you recognise it is essential to achieving the

Organisation's goals. The report provides some positive examples of gender focused programmatic activity and the integration of gender perspectives into programmes. But, progress is still patchy. We therefore support your use of gender markers to assess the level of gender mainstreaming across OSCE projects and as a useful tool for ensuring gender mainstreaming is factored into all projects. We are disappointed that in 2018 a majority of projects demonstrated limited or no gender mainstreaming at all. We hope this tool will enable action to redress this balance in future projects. We would also like to see this practice extended to include all UB projects.

As the Gender Evaluation Progress Report states, strong leadership across the OSCE is needed when it comes to gender mainstreaming. We agree that managers should take responsibility and be accountable for gender mainstreaming. In this respect, we recall the findings of the OIO evaluation on the Executive Gender Coaching Programme and their suggestion to also train mid-level managers who tend to stay longer in the Organisation to enhance sustainability.

Achieving gender parity in the organisation, including at senior levels, is an important step to achieving gender equality. In this respect, it is concerning to see there was a drop in gender parity in senior management positions from 2017, with women only accounting for 28% of senior management last year. We therefore appreciate the gender parity strategy that you launched yesterday and the goal of achieving gender parity by 2026 – and hopefully sooner. We encourage more efforts to ensure gender parity panels, particularly in the politico-military and the economic and environmental dimensions; as stressed, for instance, in the report of the Secretary General 72% of speakers in the second dimension were reported as male.

It is important to also recognise and address the roles of men and boys in the promotion of gender equality and in this regard, we welcome the contribution of the OSCE's 'Men-Engage Network' and urge all participating States to contribute to its work.

Secretary-General, on the serious issues of sexual harassment and sexual exploitation we appreciate you making clear your 'zero tolerance' approach to this. We recognise actions have already been taken, such as a DHR initiative to

participate in a UN-led Safe Space Survey, and ODIHR's increased efforts to address concerns in election observation missions, as well as a more recent initiative on preventing sexual exploitation and abuse. This issue should remain a priority. Survivors must be at the heart of this policy in order to guarantee their relief and recovery.

We are pleased that we adopted a Ministerial Council Decision on Preventing and Combatting Violence against Women in 2018. This decision provides a collective commitment to address the shocking prevalence of gender-based violence against women and girls that continues to persist, as evidenced in the OSCE's Well-Being and Safety of Women Survey in South East and Eastern Europe. Not only does this impair enjoyment of human rights, but it also prevents women from reaching and contributing their full potential. And as evidence shows, an increased prevalence of such violence is an early warning of conflict and emergency situations.

As we look ahead to the coming year and some important anniversaries, it is essential that we make tangible progress on gender issues, including on the Women, Peace and Security agenda. UNSCR 1325 is at the core of the OSCE's work and our comprehensive approach to security, including in all phases of the conflict cycle. To this end, we reiterate the call for an OSCE-wide Action Plan on Women, Peace and Security, and we stand ready to exchange good practices in this regard. The EU will continue to work together with relevant international and regional organisations, including the OSCE. As the largest regional security organisation under Chapter VIII of the UN Charter, the OSCE has an important contribution to make and as you highlight in the Report: 'gender equality and women's empowerment are integral and indispensable to the concept of comprehensive security.'

In conclusion, we reiterate our appreciation for the progress made in implementation of the Gender Action Plan and support the recommendations in the Report. We recognise the important work that the understaffed Gender Unit does and that it is important that you have sufficient resources for this essential area of work. Collectively, we can achieve gender equality and strengthen peace and security in the OSCE area.

The Candidate Countries REPUBLIC OF NORTH MACEDONIA*, MONTENEGRO*, SERBIA* and ALBANIA*, the Country of the Stabilisation and Association Process and Potential Candidate BOSNIA and HERZEGOVINA, and the EFTA countries ICELAND and LIECHTENSTEIN, members of the European Economic Area, as well as UKRAINE, the REPUBLIC OF MOLDOVA, ARMENIA, GEORGIA, ANDORRA and SAN MARINO align themselves with this statement.

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