



PERMANENT REPRESENTATION OF THE REPUBLIC OF SLOVENIA
TO THE UN, OSCE AND OTHER INTERNATIONAL ORGANIZATIONS

The gender balance in OSCE panels needs to be improved

Statement by Ambassador Andrej Benedejčič, Permanent Representative of the Republic of Slovenia and Chairperson of the OSCE MenEngage Network, on the Secretary General's 2018 Annual Progress Report on the Implementation of the 2004 OSCE Action Plan on the Promotion of Gender Equality, at the 1236th Meeting of the OSCE Permanent Council, Vienna, 18 July 2019

Secretary General,

I would like to thank you for your report. As you have stated on a number of occasions gender equality is a key feature of your Fit-for-Purpose Agenda for the OSCE. I am therefore pleased that you are taking additional efforts for its advancement by introducing the Gender Parity Strategy. As the Chair of the OSCE MenEngage Network I also welcome the emphasis you have decided to place on the role of men and boys in promoting the rights of women and girls. In this connection, let me also thank the Head of the EU Delegation for expressing support for the work of the Network in his statement.

Speaking in my MenEngage function, I would like to say that what I really appreciate about your report is its frankness. I think it speaks volumes about you personally and your leadership style in general that you have decided to gather concrete, hard data about the actual state of affairs in the organization when it comes to gender equality. I was especially struck by the numbers you have collected on the composition of panels in OSCE. I think the figures are sobering, especially in the politico-military dimension. This is something we need to acknowledge and talk about. After all, panellists are public speakers and public speakers are role models. We should therefore be collectively engaged in making sure that hard security is not perceived as a male issue and soft security as a female one. They are interrelated, which is what the OSCE concept of comprehensive security is all about. I am therefore looking forward to tomorrow's event on the issue of gender parity in OSCE panels, which I will be moderating. I think that now that we have identified the extent of the challenge we can formulate some possible solutions as well.

Let me also say that the sobering assessment that more progress needs to be made in the promotion of gender equality applies to the participating States, too. This was one of the conclusions of the recent OSCE conference "Commitment – data – action!" on combating violence against women and girls, which I took an active part in. In fact, the discussion in the session that I moderated highlighted the fact that women's rights are not taken for granted among high-ranking officials in a number of participating States. This represents a challenge, which we need to tackle together.

Let me conclude by commending the Senior Gender Adviser and members of her able team for their important work. The data they have gathered and which you, Secretary General, included in your report help us all understand better the existing situation and the measures that need to be taken. I would therefore like to assure you of the continued support of the members of the MenEngage Network in your efforts to promote a culture of respect and accountability at the OSCE.

Thank you.