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**STATEMENT BY
MR. DMITRY POLYANSKIY, PERMANENT REPRESENTATIVE OF THE
RUSSIAN FEDERATION, AT THE 1556th MEETING OF THE
OSCE PERMANENT COUNCIL**

5 March 2026

In connection with International Women's Day

Mr. Chairperson,

This coming Sunday, the whole of progressive humanity will celebrate the 8 March holiday – International Women's Day. In our country there is a special attitude towards International Women's Day. On this day we traditionally pay tribute to generations of outstanding female representatives of the women's movement striving for women to be given equal rights in society. It was they who gave the impetus for fundamental transformations in society, inspiring everyone to fight for peace, work and fairness.

Soviet Russia became the first State in the world to officially proclaim equal rights for men and women in 1917. This was subsequently reflected in the first Soviet Constitution from 1918. In the Soviet Union, and later on in Russia as well, the State assumed responsibility for the day-to-day care of families, mothers and children. Soviet women were among the first to be granted, on an equal footing with men, the opportunity to participate in public life and public office, to receive an education, and to vote and stand for office.

In modern Russia, everything is being done to ensure that women feel that their interests are always at the forefront of the State's attention. An important factor for women in our country is commitment to traditional family values, including having and raising children. At the same time, they are also focused on work and career growth. For that reason, a professional career is nowadays an important part of life for women, as is the family. The State creates the legal and practical conditions for such self-fulfilment. Social guarantees are provided for in various areas, including employment, education, healthcare and family relations. Women are granted maternity leave with the payment of State social allowances and childcare leave until their child reaches the age of three, with retention of their job for the duration of their leave; they are provided with guarantees of admission to employment. On 1 September 2025, amendments went into effect substantially raising the level of maternity benefits for women who are full-time students at secondary specialized and higher educational establishments, institutions providing further professional training and scientific organizations. Among the legally enshrined social guarantees for women are the right to receive maternity capital payments and entitlements for families with children (for example, preferential mortgages for young families and families with children when buying a home of their own).

According to the latest nationwide census, over half of women in Russia (59 per cent) have a higher vocational education (including graduates of advanced programmes) – something that has traditionally been the case. Current data from the Ministry of Education of the Russian Federation indicates that women account for 51 per cent of students enrolled in bachelor, specialist and master’s degree programmes.

Among graduates, the share of women is also above 50 per cent in most cases. We may cite the following data from the Ministry of Science and Higher Education of the Russian Federation (disaggregated by educational level): women account for 52 per cent of mid-level professionals; for 55 per cent of holders of bachelor, specialist and master’s degrees; for 47 per cent of postgraduate students; and for 68 per cent of medical residency graduates.

Women have long been involved in Russian academia on an equal footing with men. There are 127,600 women among the country’s academic faculty staff with teaching duties. Women make up 29 per cent and 44 per cent, respectively, of researchers with Doctor of Sciences and Candidate of Sciences degrees. In terms of women’s representation in university leadership positions (rectors and presidents), our country is among the top ten European countries, as confirmed by, *inter alia*, Eurostat data.

Russia has been and continues to be among the countries advocating the expansion of women’s rights. A National Action Strategy for Women is being implemented. Programmes in the field of education and dealing with the creation of favourable conditions for combining career and motherhood are in high demand. In 2025, more than 124,000 women participated in such programmes. The activities of the Council of the Eurasian Women’s Forum (EWF) are dedicated to the development of these areas, among others. Such flagship initiatives as the “Woman Leader” programme and programmes being implemented under the “Women’s Alliance in Artificial Intelligence” and “Women’s Leadership: Mothers with Many Children” projects are being launched in 2026. The “Women for a Healthy Society” and “Woman Scientist: Young Medicine” and “Support Leaders: Women in Exports” competitions will be held. As far as the EWF Council is concerned, the year 2026 will be one of active development and preparations for the Fifth Eurasian Women’s Forum. Moreover, in January 2026, our country, which the West so dreams of seeing isolated, also took part in the events of the Second Women Parliamentary Forum of the Parliamentary Assembly of the Mediterranean, which was held in Abu Dhabi.

Mr. Chairperson,

In this room we often have to listen to anti-Russian narratives about the situation in and around Ukraine, including with regard to the “violation” of women’s rights. One gets the impression that the speakers are seeking to outdo one another in making blanket accusations, weeping crocodile tears, coming up with absurd fabrications and attempting to demonize Russia. They seek to accuse our country of every possible wrong, including war crimes, torture, violence, you name it. Such assertions have no basis in fact and are often refuted, but this does not stop the Russophobes. At the same time, the real state of affairs in Ukraine scarcely interests any of its so-called friends. The Western handlers of the authorities in Kyiv prefer to turn a blind eye to the rampant arbitrariness of these and to the atrocities committed by the Ukrainian armed forces. However, as the saying goes, facts are stubborn things.

According to the Ukrainian military departments themselves, at least 43,500 women were serving in the Ukrainian armed forces as at January 2026. Out of the total number of servicewomen, around 5,500 are directly involved in front-line combat operations. There has been a significant increase in the proportion of women in the officer corps (their share currently being approximately 21 per cent). However, military experts estimate that the real number of mobilized women in Ukraine may be as high as 200,000, if not higher. Given the shortage of male soldiers in the Ukrainian armed forces, the growing number of desertions and the fact that Ukrainian men have little enthusiasm for going off to fight, there is increasing talk in

Ukraine about a potential general mobilization of women. All the more so since it is women who nowadays most frequently protect Ukrainian men from being abducted by the jackbooted draft officers and who therefore greatly hinder these in their “work”. Adviser posts are being introduced in the Ukrainian armed forces to provide advice on “gender equality” to brigade commanders. Ivan Tymochko, head of the Council of Reservists of the Land Forces of the Armed Forces of Ukraine, has argued that women should undergo military training on an equal footing with men, noting that the Ukrainian armed forces’ regulations “do not distinguish between soldiers according to sex”. He said that women should join the ranks of the Ukrainian armed forces, rather than “hiding behind men’s backs”. Such is the real attitude towards women in Ukraine.

For propaganda purposes, female soldiers in the Ukrainian armed forces tend to be idealistically portrayed in Ukraine as heroines fighting for their country’s “freedom”. An appealing picture, but one that is hardly grounded in reality. There are accounts of women being forcibly sent into battle as part of assault troops. Of women being abused and beaten. According to statements by Ukrainian civil society organizations, sexual harassment and violence are a serious problem within the Ukrainian armed forces’ units. The lies and hatred cultivated in Ukrainian society are leading to a surge in domestic violence too.

Violence against women remains a large-scale and widespread problem not only in Ukraine but also in Europe, as reported by the European Union Agency for Fundamental Rights. The statistics indicate that, on average, one in three women in the European Union have at some point in their life experienced some form of violence (including physical and sexual violence and also femicide) at home, at work, in public places and in cyberspace. Moreover, the victims often face obstacles in receiving protection and obtaining access to justice. Even US human rights activists are criticizing the so-called Roadmap for Women’s Rights drawn up in the European Union in 2025 for not being inclusive enough, especially as regards women with disabilities.

Let us give an account of the situation in some countries.

We may start with the country in which our Organization has its headquarters. Austria is one of the top three EU countries in terms of the level of violence against women and it is the only country in the European Union where the number of female victims of murder rises every year relative to the number of male victims. In 2024, 27 women were killed, in 2023 the figure was 42. One in three women (35 per cent) have experienced physical and/or sexual violence from the age of 15. One in five women (22 per cent) have experienced stalking. However, only 17 per cent of victims contact the police. One in three women or girls have experienced online violence, and the rate is even higher among 15- to 18-year-olds (two in three).

Germany faces an acute problem of domestic violence. According to the country’s Federal Criminal Police Office, thousands of women experience violence at the hands of their partners (including ex-partners). In a number of cases, victims have died. Human rights defenders criticize the shortage of shelters and the lack of accessible assistance for women survivors of violence.

Finland remains a country with a relatively high level of violence against women. According to the latest Eurostat data, almost one in three Finnish women aged between 18 and 74 years have been victims of physical violence by an intimate partner. Half of all women have experienced psychological violence. Specialized United Nations bodies have raised concerns about this. For example, in May 2024, the United Nations Committee against Torture recommended the Finnish authorities to ensure that all cases of violence against women, especially those involving actions or omissions by State authorities or other entities, be thoroughly investigated. The authorities were urged to take the measures necessary to address the barriers that may prevent women from reporting acts of violence against them and thereby facilitate the lodging of complaints by victims. In addition, there is also the problem of sex-based labour market segregation in Finland, where women continue to face a wage gap relative to men.

In the Netherlands, according to the concluding observations of the United Nations Committee on the Elimination of Discrimination against Women on that country's seventh periodic report, there is an increasingly hostile environment for women human rights defenders, and also for asylum-seeking, refugee and migrant women. The lack of accountability for misinformation and fake news aimed at discrediting advocacy for women's rights and gender equality is highlighted.

In the corresponding report for Lithuania it is pointed out that gender-based violence against women and girls, including online harassment and cyberviolence, remains highly under-reported in the media and insufficiently addressed, which limits prevention, protection and accountability. Women and girls, including migrant women and girls, continue to face an increased risk of trafficking.

It is time that most Western OSCE participating States recognized that they do not really have anything to "brag about" when it comes to achieving equality between men and women, including equal political representation, as was already discussed this week at the meeting of the Human Dimension Committee of the OSCE Permanent Council.

It is also worth mentioning that, according to election observation reports issued by the Office for Democratic Institutions and Human Rights (whose "independent" assessments are so eagerly touted at the OSCE) for the year 2025 alone, there are serious, often long-standing problems with women's representation in public and political life in such countries as Canada, Czechia, Germany, Poland, Portugal and Romania.

Mr. Chairperson,

In our view, a key prerequisite for genuine equality is for women to be able to unfold their economic potential, achieve personal development and build their professional skills. The notorious practice of imposing gender quotas will not solve the problem. It is important to create conditions for the empowerment of women and to accord due attention to social and economic rights; traditional spiritual and moral values; protection of the family, motherhood and childhood; protection of, and support for, large and/or low-income families; and the occupational retraining of unemployed women and men. It is time that these pressing problems be addressed not by paying lip service to them, but in practice, that is, by knuckling down to work.

In closing, I should like to take this opportunity to congratulate all female colleagues present here on the upcoming holiday. I wish them the best of health, prosperity all round, the joy of self-fulfilment and further professional accomplishments.

Thank you for your attention.