



## EUROPEAN UNION

### OSCE Permanent Council No. 1556 Vienna, 5 March 2026

#### EU statement on the International Women's Day

We would like to thank the Swiss Chairpersonship for marking the *International Women's Day* at the Permanent Council today and Ms. Erika Schläppi for her intervention. We also express our gratitude to ambassador Gjermeni and her team for dedicating this week's meeting of the Human Dimension Committee to *Gender equality and Political representation*.

*International Women's Day* is more than just a day. It is an opportunity to reflect on the progress made in promoting women's and girls' rights and gender equality – progress essential for sustainable democracy, economic development, security, stability, and peace. This year's theme: *Rights. Justice. Action. For ALL Women and Girls* is closely connected to OSCE's commitments in this field. Gender equality is a human right.

Following a long period of development towards increased gender equality, the world is now facing backsliding in this area, threatening hard-won gains and challenging commitments to the rights of women and girls. These negative developments go hand in hand with global democratic backsliding, the undermining of human rights more broadly, and the presence of intense and prolonged armed conflicts. Within the OSCE region, women and girls continue to be the targets of discrimination, stereotyping and sexual and gender-based violence.

In light of this, the implementation of international obligations and of the OSCE commitments is essential. The CEDAW Convention is a pivotal human rights instrument and a promoter and protector of gender equality globally. We use this opportunity to reiterate our call on all States who have not yet done so to accede to the CEDAW Convention and its Optional Protocol. All OSCE participating States have committed in

various Ministerial Council Decisions and in the 2004 OSCE Action Plan to gender equality, including to advancing women's full, equal and meaningful participation in political and public life, to preventing gender-based violence in all circumstances, to prosecuting violence against women and protecting victims, to taking concrete measures to address barriers and facilitate equal opportunities for women on labour markets, to collecting and analysing data on gender equality, and to engaging men and boys as allies and beneficiaries for gender equality. Furthermore, for the protection of women and girls in conflicts and improved participation of women in the security sector, participating States have also committed to implementing the *Women, Peace and Security Agenda*. As a concrete instrument for action, we welcome the OSCE-wide Roadmap for WPS, which already 30 participating States have pledged to.

We extend our gratitude to the Gender Unit, autonomous institutions and field missions for their efforts to improve gender equality within the OSCE area and take comfort in the assurance that gender equality is, and will remain, the Secretary General's top priority.

Mr. Chair,

Gender equality is a fundamental value of the EU and integral to the EU's strategic priorities. The EU has made significant progress over the last decades as a result of equality legislation, and gender mainstreaming into all other policies. Despite progress, we still face significant challenges. The EU remains committed to supporting women's and youth' equal, full, effective and meaningful participation, in all their diversity and in all spheres of public and political life, as per the EU Action Plan on Human Rights and Democracy 2020-2027. This year, the EU Commission is launching its Gender Equality Strategy (2026–2030) to further drive forward its gender equality agenda and safeguard the rights of all women and girls. The Strategy ensures internal-external coherence of our actions, because our commitment to gender equality does not stop at our borders.

In our efforts to achieve gender equality and leave no one behind, we must recognise that gender inequality can be compounded by multiple and intersecting forms of discrimination. The EU will continue to strongly oppose and step up action to combat all forms of discrimination, with specific attention to multiple and intersecting forms of discrimination, including on grounds of sex, race, ethnic or social origin, religion or belief, political or any other opinion, disability, age, sexual orientation and gender identity.

The EU will support an ambitious and transformative approach to address the root causes and risk factors of gender inequality, discrimination and violence against women and girls.

Mr. Chair,

Despite the severe, multi-faceted challenges posed by the Russia's aggression, Ukraine has made targeted, measurable progress in specific areas of gender equality, such as women's military participation, and legal reforms. In order to further accelerate gender-responsive reforms, and in support of Ukraine's EU accession path, the EU and UN Women Ukraine have recently signed a project agreement to establish the Gender Equality Facility. We take this moment to honour the extraordinary courage and resilience of the women of Ukraine—whether serving on the front lines or sustaining and supporting their communities—who stand in defence of their nation's sovereignty, freedom, and our shared values.

*Albania, Andorra, Bosnia and Herzegovina, Georgia, Iceland, Liechtenstein, Republic of Moldova, Montenegro, North Macedonia, Norway, Serbia, San Marino and Ukraine align themselves with this statement.*