

**Statement**  
**delivered by Col. Stephen Howard**  
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**Aspects of Security**  
**in collaboration with**  
**FSC Chair's Coordinator on matters relating to United Nations**  
**Security Council Resolution 1325.**

**FSC No.1139**  
***Security Dialogue: The OSCE Code of Conduct on Politico-***  
***Military Aspects of Security: Impact of Armed Conflict on***  
***Women and Girls.***

10 June 2026

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Chair,

It is my pleasure to take the floor in my capacity as FSC Chair's Coordinator on the Code of Conduct on Politico-Military Aspects of Security and to have collaborated with the FSC Chair's Coordinator on matters related to Women Peace and Security (WPS).

Today's Security Dialogue on "the Impact of Armed Conflict on Women and Girls" has clearly shown that the topic is timely and needed for our discussion in the FSC.

In every corner of the world touched by conflict, women and girls are confronted by a web of unjust forces - displacement, the destruction of schools, heightened insecurity, discriminatory social norms, and the persistent risk of conflict-driven gender-based violence. These forces do more than disrupt daily life. They cement unequal economic access and, too often, silence women's voices at the very moment when their leadership is most needed.

The impact of armed conflict on women and girls, whether physical, sexual or psychological, perpetrated by state and non-state actors, is a clear violation of International Humanitarian Law. Human rights whether those of civilians or soldiers, male or female, are inviolable and

non-negotiable. Article 37 of the Code states that “the armed forces may not be used to limit the peaceful and lawful exercise of their human and civil rights by persons as individuals or as representatives of groups or to deprive them of their national, religious, cultural, linguistic or ethnic identity”.

In the context of armed conflicts, as set out in article 31 of the Code, “armed forces personnel vested with command authority must ensure that its exercise is in accordance with relevant national as well as international laws and are made aware that they can be held individually accountable under those laws for the unlawful exercise of such authority and that orders contrary to national and international law must not be given”.

Chair,

If we are serious about peace, sustainable and inclusive peace, then we must be serious on economic and political empowerment of women and girls. This means adopting recovery policies that guarantee safe access to education, decent work and representation at the decision-making levels. It also means ensuring accountability for gender-based violence in peace and in conflict situations.

The Code of Conduct questionnaire, and its voluntary reporting which contains the Indicative List of Issues Pertaining to WPS can inform participating States of how to further enhance the social and economic empowerment of women and girls in conflict-affected areas.

It is now time for all participating States to live up to their commitments as enshrined in the Code of Conduct, which along with OSCE commitments on gender equality, women's participation in peace processes, and human security, enable us to invest in women's leadership for a more democratic and inclusive society. Let us work together to dismantle the structural barriers that limit women and girls rights and potential. We must all work towards a future where women and girls are protected from the horrors of armed conflict—it is our legal and moral obligation.

Thank you.