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EU Statement on OSCE Code of Conduct on Politico-Military Aspects of Security: Impact of Armed Conflict on Women and Girls

Mr Chair, the EU and its Member States thank you for focusing today's discussion on the impact of conflicts on women and girls, which regrettably remains an issue which we have to keep addressing. We also thank the distinguished panellists for their presentations, providing further impetus to our deliberations in this Forum on this matter.

We recognise the scale of the impact of conflict on women and girls. The just published report by the UN Secretary-General recorded 9,788 cases of conflict-related sexual violence, more than double the previous year's figure, with women and girls the primary targets. And we are all aware those figures barely scratch the surface of this enormous problem. Furthermore, in conflict-affected countries the rate of intimate partner violence is 14 per cent higher than the global average.

The EU and its Member States stress that increasing gender mainstreaming and enabling greater inclusivity and women's participation at all leadership levels remains an absolute priority. Integrating women's voices and a gender perspective into all stages of policy design and implementation yields more effective results in both combat and peacekeeping scenarios. As women remained underrepresented in peace processes, accounting for only seven per cent of negotiators and 14 per cent of mediators in formal peace processes in 2024, the European Union will continue supporting women's full, equal 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.

Russia's war of aggression against Ukraine, and other conflicts and wars around the world, underscore the need to pay particular attention to the situation of women and girls in wars and conflicts. We commend the participation of Ukrainian women at all levels and across all functions, engaging in a strong all of society response in the

rightful self-defence of Ukraine against Russia's war of aggression. At the same time, the ongoing sexual and gender-based violence, systematically employed as a tactic of war by the Russian forces, as documented by several reports including the Moscow Mechanism and ODIHR's interim reports, reinforces the absolute necessity in strengthening mechanisms to prevent and respond to this appalling crime. The EU and its Member States strongly condemn these illegal and brutal actions and reiterate its steadfast commitment to upholding international human rights law, international humanitarian law and to ending impunity for such international crimes. We will do our utmost, including within the OSCE context, to ensure that perpetrators are held to account, and survivors provided with support and justice. We commend the tireless efforts and contributions of civil society and human rights defenders to this end.

The significant role of women in political-military processes, peacebuilding and security structures has been recognised by participating States in the OSCE Action Plan for the promotion of Gender Equality from 2004 and in three further OSCE ministerial decisions 3/11, 14/05 and 7/09 and we call for the effective implementation of these MC decisions. These are commitments that we all have agreed on and we must move forward to ensure that they are properly implemented in practice.

The Women, Peace and Security agenda represents an essential framework for ensuring full, equal and meaningful representation and leadership of women in the security sector. The OSCE-wide Roadmap on Women, Peace and Security that was launched last year represents a meaningful effort towards its implementation with options for concrete, tangible actions that participating States can undertake on a voluntary basis.

We also acknowledge the guidance on voluntary reporting on WPS under the Code of Conduct on Politico-Military Aspects of Security, which helps to improve the exchange of data and best practices on WPS amongst participating States.

We commend the ODIHR, the field missions and the Secretariat for their continuous engagement in the implementation of the OSCE commitments in this regard and underline the importance of a strong cooperation between key stakeholder and civil society organisations in implementing gender equality and WPS commitments. Let us continue with these efforts, including with the Code of Conduct as one of our guiding principles.

Thank you.

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