



## **JOINT STATEMENT ON THE OCCASION OF THE INTERNATIONAL DAY FOR THE ELIMINATION OF SEXUAL VIOLENCE IN CONFLICT**

As delivered by Ambassador Ellen Svendsen at the Permanent Council, Vienna,  
25th June 2026

Thank you, Mr Chair.

I am delivering this statement on behalf of Canada, Iceland, Liechtenstein, Ukraine, the United Kingdom, and my own country Norway.

On 19 June we marked the International Day for the Elimination of Sexual Violence in Conflict. We pay tribute to survivors and to those around the world working tirelessly to prevent and respond to conflict-related sexual violence.

Mr Chair, the global picture remains deeply concerning. Recent UN reporting has shown a sharp rise in verified cases of conflict-related sexual violence, marked by increasing brutality which disproportionately affects women and girls, while continuing to impact men and boys.

Such violence is not incidental to conflict. It is used deliberately as a tactic of war, terror, and repression, with devastating consequences for individuals, communities, and long-term stability.

These trends are compounded by shrinking humanitarian access, reduced funding for survivor services, and persistent stigma that prevents reporting and denies justice. Escalating and protracted conflicts continue to create conditions in which the risks of sexual violence grow.

Mr Chair, in Ukraine, UN reporting, successive Moscow Mechanism reports, ODIHR Interim Reports and other independent monitoring continues to document conflict-related sexual violence linked to Russia's ongoing aggression, including in detention settings where it has been used as a form of torture and ill-treatment. Survivors include women, men, and detainees subjected to serious abuses. These cases underscore the use of sexual violence to intimidate, punish, and extract information, and highlight the urgent need for accountability and survivor support.

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Sexual violence in conflict is a violation of international humanitarian and human rights law, and a threat to international peace and security. It must stop. Perpetrators must be brought to justice. Survivors must be supported.

We emphasise the importance of a survivor-centred approach in all prevention and response efforts. This means placing the safety, dignity, rights and needs of survivors at the heart of action, ensuring access to justice, protection, and essential services, including psychosocial support.

Efforts to prevent and respond to conflict-related sexual violence should also fully address the needs of children affected, including child survivors, children born of such violence and those affected indirectly. Children experience conflict-related sexual violence in distinct ways, and responses must be child-sensitive, survivor-centred and integrated into existing systems. Addressing their needs is essential to breaking cycles of violence, stigma and exclusion.

Accountability is central. Without justice, there is no deterrence. Without accountability, cycles of violence continue. We must strengthen national and international mechanisms to investigate and prosecute these crimes, and ensure that survivors have access to redress and reparations.

The OSCE has a vital role to play. Its comprehensive approach to security, its field operations, and its autonomous institutions contribute to prevention, monitoring, and accountability efforts. The OSCE's work on gender equality and on combating sexual and gender-based violence in armed conflict remains essential, and should continue to be prioritised by participating States.

Mr Chair, addressing conflict-related sexual violence must form part of broader international efforts: to uphold the Women, Peace and Security agenda; to tackle gender inequality and discrimination; and to ensure the meaningful participation of women in peace processes and decision-making at all levels.

As we mark this International Day, we reaffirm our collective responsibility. We must act together through multilateral cooperation to prevent these crimes, to support survivors, and to end impunity.

Thank you, Mr Chair.