



## EUROPEAN UNION

### OSCE Permanent Council No. 1325 Vienna, 22 July 2021

#### **EU Statement on the Annual Progress Report on the Implementation of the OSCE 2004 Action Plan on the Promotion of Gender Equality**

**FINAL (580 words)**

1. The European Union thanks Secretary General Helga Schmid for her insightful presentation on the Annual Progress Report on the Implementation of the 2004 OSCE Action Plan on the Promotion of Gender Equality. Implementing our OSCE commitments on gender equality is vital for reaching progress on our commitments on human rights and comprehensive security.
2. The overview of last year's activities towards gender equality throughout the OSCE summarizes our achievements, but it also underlines where more needs to be done. It is unacceptable that in 2021 women and girls in all their diversity continue to face gender discrimination, stereotyping, and gender-based violence, preventing them from reaching their full potential and fulfilling their aspirations and realization of their human rights.
3. The COVID-19 pandemic continues to negatively affect our efforts to achieve gender equality. Women and girls are disproportionately harder affected by the COVID-19 pandemic, which aggravates existing economic disparities, and increases levels of gender based violence, particularly domestic violence. We thank the different OSCE structures and institutions for their immediate contributions to mitigate this situation.
4. All OSCE structures and institutions continue to strive for a change of gender dynamics in the organisational culture. The gender balance at the top of the

organisation improved significantly. In order to consolidate this in the long run, we now need to focus on the mid-career level, where women remain under represented. Also, the seconded staff category, particularly in the field, including Heads of Missions, is still predominantly made up of men. We acknowledge that participating States have a role to play here, and the EU strives to do its part.

5. We strongly commend the Organisation's efforts to foster a gender-sensitive and inclusive working environment through increased standards of integrity, expectations of professional and respectful behaviour and the "zero-tolerance approach" towards harassment, sexual harassment and discrimination. Failing to address these issues is unacceptable and harms both the victims and the organisation. Awareness raising activities and learning opportunities clearly make a difference. We also welcome and support staff driven initiatives such as the Women's Advisory Group and OSCE Men for Gender Equality, which clearly shows that gender equality is an important topic for those working for the OSCE.
6. The report clearly showcases the will of participating States to actively implement the Women, Peace & Security agenda. We welcome the OSCE structures strong support to the participating States in this field. We will continue our efforts and support towards ensuring women's full, equal and meaningful participation in conflict prevention and resolution.
7. Gender mainstreaming into the monitoring and evaluation of all OSCE activities, programmes and projects is essential. Activities in all three dimensions benefit from such an approach.
8. Gender equality is a core principle of the European Union. It is our common vision and mind-set and we stand ready to work tirelessly, inside the European Union and with our international partners, to make it a reality.
9. In conclusion, we appreciate the progress made within the Organisation in implementing the commitments in the OSCE Gender Action Plan and we encourage all to continue with full implementation of the commitments. .. We thank the Gender Section in the Secretariat and the Gender Focal Points for their dedication and commitment to advancing gender equality in the OSCE from policy to practice. Finally, we also thank the Swedish Chairpersonship for keeping gender equality and

Women, Peace & Security at the centre of our work, which is the only way to achieve comprehensive security in our region.

The Candidate Countries REPUBLIC of NORTH MACEDONIA\*, MONTENEGRO\*, SERBIA\* and ALBANIA\*, the Country of the Stabilisation and Association Process and Potential Candidate BOSNIA and HERZEGOVINA, and the EFTA countries ICELAND and LIECHTENSTEIN, members of the European Economic Area, as well as UKRAINE, the REPUBLIC OF MOLDOVA, GEORGIA, ANDORRA, MONACO and SAN MARINO align themselves with this statement.

\* Republic of North Macedonia, Montenegro, Serbia and Albania continue to be part of the Stabilisation and Association Process.