



## EUROPEAN UNION

### OSCE Permanent Council No. 1346 Vienna, 25 November 2021

#### **EU statement on the International Day for the Elimination of Violence against Women**

1. On 25 November, we mark the International Day for the Elimination of Violence against Women, which also kicks off *16 Days of Activism against Gender-based Violence*. This campaign celebrates its 30<sup>th</sup> anniversary this year and still remains very much needed.
2. Violence against women and girls continues to persist in every country and takes many different forms, including online. At last week's Human Dimension Seminar in Warsaw on this topic, we heard that one in three women and girls worldwide experience violence at some point in their life. As HR/VP Borrell stated: "Violence against women and girls is a violation of human rights, and has no place in the EU, or anywhere else in the world."
3. The EU remains fully engaged in promoting gender equality and women's empowerment and reaffirms its ongoing commitment to eliminating all forms of violence against women and girls. In this respect, the Council of the European Union has adopted decisions to sign the Council of Europe Convention on preventing and combating violence against women and domestic violence, the Istanbul Convention.
4. The consequences of the COVID-19 pandemic continue to be particularly devastating for women and girls. That is why the EU Commission was one the champions of the Action Coalition against gender-based violence at the Generation Equality Forum which took place this year. That is also why the joint EU-UN Spotlight Initiative, the world's largest targeted effort to end all forms of

violence against women and girls, scaled up its actions to respond to the exacerbated challenges rising from the pandemic. The Initiative responds to all forms of violence against women and girls, with a particular focus on domestic and family violence, sexual and gender-based violence and harmful practices, femicide, trafficking in human beings and sexual and economic exploitation. We call on all partners to join this highly effective partnership.

5. We welcome the OSCE's focus on digital violence against women for its *16 Days of Activism* campaign. Countering online violence and harassment must be an integral part of any strategy preventing and combating violence against women and girls. Women in political and public life are at risk of being double victims of online harassment: because of their job and because they are women. Cyber violence is not a separate phenomenon, it should be seen as a continuation of offline violence. The European Commission Gender Equality Strategy 2020-2025 recognizes that online violence targeting women has become pervasive, creating a barrier to women's participation in public life. Bullying, harassment and abuse on social media have far-reaching effects on women's and girls' daily lives. To protect safety online, the European Commission proposed the Digital Services Act to clarify online platforms' responsibilities with regard to user-disseminated content.
6. Our goal is clear: we must end all forms of violence against women and girls. The 2004 OSCE Action Plan for the Promotion of Gender Equality and Ministerial Council Decisions taken in Ljubljana (2005), Basel (2014) and Milan (2018) on Preventing and Combatting Violence against Women are strong commitments that help us to address the shocking prevalence of sexual and gender-based violence against women and girls, impeding women and girls from reaching their full potential. The Milan Decision also recognises the importance of engaging men and boys in addressing the root causes of gender inequality and violence as well as raising awareness about the impact of negative attitudes, behaviours and gender stereotypes.
7. Implementation remains a key challenge for the full elimination of violence against women and girls. To bridge the implementation gap, the OSCE has strong tools available, such as the OSCE WIN project, which promotes gender equality across all three OSCE dimensions of security. Furthermore, the OSCE-led survey on *Well-being and Safety of Women* shows the value of disaggregated data collection and efficient monitoring mechanisms. The "How to use survey data to prevent and

combat violence against women and girls” Guide is a practical tool for participating States to use.

8. Change is possible, but it requires commitment and determination. The EU will continue to work tirelessly to investigate and punish all acts of violence, ensure support for victims, address the root causes and reinforce the legal framework.

The Candidate Countries the 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 country LIECHTENSTEIN, member of the European Economic Area, as well as UKRAINE, the REPUBLIC OF MOLDOVA, GEORGIA, ANDORRA 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.