



United States Mission to the OSCE

Statement on International Women's Day

As delivered by Ambassador Ian Kelly
to the Permanent Council, Vienna
March 7, 2013

March 8 marks the 102nd anniversary of International Women's Day. In the early years, the day honored the women's rights movement, including advocating for the right to vote and to hold public office as well as for ending discrimination in the workplace. Today we reflect on progress and celebrate acts of courage and determination by women who have made a difference in their communities and countries. There is still much work to be done, but we must acknowledge that the trend is toward improved gender equality.

The theme for this year's UN International Women's Day is "A promise is a promise: Time for action to end violence against women." Violence against women is a critical issue both globally and in the OSCE space. The Secretariat's Gender Section's recent launch of the MenAware Network highlighted that men can be effective advocates to end violence against women. We call on participating States to continue to work to implement MC.DEC/15/05 on Preventing and Combating Violence against Women.

We welcome Special Representative of the Chairperson-in-Office on Gender Issues June Zeitlin's reminder that plenty of work remains for participating States on the prevention of violence against women. We urge June to continue to hold all of us to task on these commitments, draw attention to our shortcomings, and recommend concrete ways that the OSCE can address these issues more effectively.

The U.S. Government is marking this day in a number of ways. A high-level delegation led by Ambassador Susan Rice and senior officials from the White House also spent this week in New York participating in the 57th UN Commission on the Status of Women meetings to discuss the challenges of violence against women worldwide.

On March 8, Secretary Kerry and First Lady Michelle Obama will present the International Women of Courage Awards to 10 honorees from around the globe. One of the award recipients comes from the OSCE area: Elena Milashina, a journalist and human rights activist from Russia.

Regarded as one of the most experienced and influential investigative journalists in Russia, Elena Milashina has spent her career shining light on events others shy away from. From drug trafficking to terrorist attacks and even the killings of fellow journalists, Ms. Milashina has covered controversial subjects with passion, fairness, and dedication. She is an ardent

opponent of the extrajudicial kidnappings and torture that plague areas of the Russian Federation and an outspoken activist against xenophobia and racism. She has received overt and thinly-veiled threats and bears the scars of both physical and verbal attacks. Ms. Milashina has persevered in the face of these challenges, demonstrating the critical role journalism can play in promoting human rights.

A growing body of evidence shows that investment in women's employment, health, and education is correlated with a range of positive outcomes including greater economic growth. In addition, when women are engaged in the peacemaking processes, they can offer unique contributions to resolving conflicts and restoring peace. Engaging women as political and social actors can change policy choices and make institutions more representative and effective.

International Women's Day is an opportunity to reflect upon the significant gains made by women, to recognize those who made those gains possible, and to reaffirm that their legacy is working to make a world that protects the rights, security, and dignity of women everywhere.

Thank you, Mr. Chairman.