



United States Mission to the OSCE

Response to Presentation by the Secretary General of the Annual Evaluation Report on Implementation of the 2004 OSCE Action Plan for the Implementation of Gender Equality

As delivered by Ambassador Daniel B. Baer
to the Permanent Council, Vienna
September 3, 2015

The United States thanks the Secretary General for this comprehensive report. We support efforts to integrate a gender perspective into OSCE policies, programs, projects, and activities in all three dimensions.

We are very concerned to hear that the overall gender balance in the OSCE has taken a turn for the worse in 2014, breaking the upward trend of the previous three years.

The report indicates that fewer women have been nominated to positions overall, and that there was a decrease last year in the number of women among senior management staff in OSCE structures. For example, the number of women holding senior management positions decreased from thirty-five percent to twenty-three percent, and the number of female deputy heads of mission has decreased significantly. This is a discouraging trend, and we call on the Secretary General to reassert the OSCE's commitments to gender equality, and prioritize diversity and inclusion at all levels of the Organization.

In addition, we, the participating States, must also do our share as the Secretary General highlighted this morning. We must ensure that our recruiting strategies – including those for seconded positions – align with our OSCE commitments. According to the report, although five head of mission positions were open in 2014, no women – not one – were nominated by participating States. We are pleased that this has changed recently, and we welcome the recent appointment of Nina Suomalainen to head the OSCE Mission to Skopje.

We place a high value on the work of the OSCE Senior Adviser on Gender Issues, Ambassador Miroslava Beham to ensure equality of opportunity for women within the OSCE and to monitor gender mainstreaming throughout the OSCE's activities. This work complements the work of the Special Representative of the OSCE Chairmanship on Gender Issues, Ambassador Melanne Verveer, including country visits, engagement with civil society, and offering advice and support to participating States on improving implementation of relevant commitments.

We appreciate the section of the report that discusses combating violence against women, which illustrates countries' experiences and best practices. As participating States, we have taken on commitments to stop violence against women, most recently at the 2014 Ministerial in Basel. We must all increase our efforts to implement our commitments to ensure that we have strong legislation and policies in place.

The United States continues to support measures aimed at correcting the underlying injustice of inequality and discrimination against women. The barriers to the full participation of women in the economic, social, and political arenas in the OSCE region, be they overt or concealed, written or unwritten, must be demolished in order to maximize the peace, security, and prosperity of all nations.

I would like to thank in particular the new Russian Ambassador for participating in this morning's debate, as well as the new colleagues from Switzerland, Germany, Slovenia and elsewhere. And if I can jump the queue, and I am sure Ambassador Atlason will reiterate this invitation, on behalf of all of us who participate in the MenEngage Network, I would say you would be welcome as partners in that network. We hope that you will join those of us who have been engaged in that in the past. Welcome!

Thank you, Mr. Chair.