

**OSCE Human Dimension Implementation Meeting
Warsaw, 24 September 2013**

Statement of the Republic of Serbia

***Tuesday, 24 September 2013, Working session 3: Tolerance and non-discrimination II
(Prevention of violence against women and children)***

Madam Moderator,

The Republic of Serbia adopted the Law on Gender Equality in 2009, which, together with the Anti-Discrimination Law from the same year, regulated prohibition of direct and indirect sex or gender-based discrimination in the field of employment, social services, health care, education, culture and sports, in politics and in public life. In 2010, the Republic of Serbia adopted the Law on Prevention of Harassment at Work, which also includes sexual harassment. For a longer period of time, it has been working on amendments to the Criminal Code, Criminal Procedure Code, and regulating the issue of dealing with violence against women and domestic violence. Amendments to the Labour Law from this year improved protection of pregnant women and new mothers from termination of employment agreements. In the Law on Amendments to the Criminal Code, adopted in January 2013, a criminal offense committed out of hatred for personal characteristics of the victim, such as gender, is envisaged as an aggravating circumstance for sentencing. Also, the Law on Special Measures for Prevention of Sex Crimes against Minors was adopted in April 2013. In addition the Government of the Republic of Serbia adopted a set of policy and operational documents regulating the issue of gender equality and improvement of the status of women that are at the stage of full implementation.

The Republic of Serbia signed the Council of Europe Convention on Preventing and Combating Violence against Women and Domestic Violence on 4 April 2012. The Convention ratification

procedure is under way. The competent ministries fulfilled their obligations under the General Protocol on Procedures and Cooperation of Institutions, Authorities and Organisations in Situations of Domestic and Partner Relationship Violence against Women from November 2011, and adopted its own special protocols. The Ministry of Labour, Employment and Social Policy adopted a Special Protocol for actions of social care centres – guardianship authorities in cases of domestic and partner relationship violence and women on March 2013, which, together with the completion of the procedure of ratification of the stated Council of Europe Convention, fulfilled both tasks committed to in the campaign of the UN Commission on the status of women which was, on behalf of the Republic of Serbia, signed by the Serbian Deputy Prime Minister and the Minister for Labour, Employment and Social Policy on 28 February 2013. The Ministry of the Interior also adopted its Special Protocol for actions of police officers in cases of domestic and partner relationship violence against women in February 2013. Together with the UNICEF, the Ministry of Education, Science and Technological Development established a special organisation unit for the protection from violence, and there are emergency telephone numbers held by civil society organizations and public institutions, where violations of rights, discrimination or violence can be reported to.

Madam Moderator,

Involvement of the Republic of Serbia in preventing and combating violence against women and domestic violence is considered to be one of our central tasks. Only in 2012, 140 social care centres in the Republic of Serbia provided assistance to about 9 500 victims of physical, psychological, sexual and economic violence. In 96 percent of cases, violence took place in the family. We have put a lot of effort – training members of competent authorities in the Judicial Academy, adopting programs for working with perpetrators of violence, amending relevant laws and other acts, organising public media campaigns, working in schools and cooperating with the civil society. Nevertheless, we still come across cases of serious injuries, even murders motivated merely by the fact that the victim is a woman. For this reason, we are committed to

proceed with the steps leading to eradication of violence against women and domestic violence and to resolving this serious problem.

The catalogue of the teacher training program, issued in the Republic of Serbia every two years, contains trainings on violence prevention and gender equality topics. About 70 professional training programs is dedicated to the issues of discrimination, working with the students from marginalised groups, gender or sex-based issues, or working with the students with learning or developmental disabilities. Since 2009 within the activities of the Decade of Roma, the Ministry of Health has engaged 75 women as health mediators in 59 health care centres, who have visited and incorporated in the health care system 40 381 Roma women, who as a matter of fact account for about 1/3 of Roma women, according to the results of the last census from 2011. Activities of this type are maintained further on, and 87.66 percent of Roma women are covered by health insurance today.

The Republic of Serbia will continue to make efforts to further improve the status of women and protection of women's rights in order to achieve the highest prescribed standards in the field of human rights, and to fulfil assumed international obligations.

Finally, let me express gratitude to Ms. June Zeitlin, Special Representative of the OSCE Chairperson-in-Office on Gender Issues, for valuable recommendations issued upon country visits (initial and follow-up) to Serbia. Projects on gender equality developed by the OSCE Mission to Serbia and Gender Section are of great significance, as well.

Thank you Madam Moderator