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OSCE Human Dimension Implementation Meeting Warsaw, 16 - 27 September 2019

EU statement – Working Session 8: Tolerance and non-discrimination I, including: Equal opportunity for women and men; Implementation of the OSCE Action Plan for the Promotion of Gender Equality; Violence against women

Mr. Moderator,

I am delighted to speak on behalf of the European Union and its Member States. I would like to deliver our key messages and recommendations on today's topic.

Gender equality is at the core of the EU's values and is enshrined in its legal and political framework. It is essential to comprehensive security and contributes to sustainable peace. We remain committed to efforts to promote gender equality, as well as efforts to promote the empowerment of women and girls and their protection as a priority across all areas of action. Gender Equality is vital to achieving the Sustainable Development Goals and we commend the OSCE's role in supporting participating states in their efforts.

We remain committed to the promotion, protection and fulfilment of all human rights and to the full and effective implementation of the Beijing Platform for Action and the Programme of Action of the International Conference on Population and Development and the outcomes of their review conferences and remain committed to sexual and reproductive health and rights (SRHR), in this context. As we mark 25 years since the International Conference on Population and Development, we must ensure that all women and girls have access to sexual and reproductive health services.

Violence against women and girls is one of the most widespread, persistent and devastating human rights violations in the world. We welcome last year's Ministerial Decision on Preventing and Combatting Violence Against Women which provides collective commitment to address the prevalence of gender-based violence.



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Rape and other forms of sexual violence continue to be used as weapons of war. It is of utmost importance that we tackle conflict related sexual violence (CRSV). UNSCR 2467 recognises the needs for a survivor-centred approach and the needs of children born from CRSV. We also recognise that sexual and reproductive health and rights are central to peace and security, as well as the prevention of and response to conflict-related sexual violence. We would like, in this context, to commend the efforts such as those by Nobel Peace Prize laureates Nadia Murad and Dr. Denis Mukwege to create a voluntary fund dedicated to survivors and victims of sexual violence, which is a first step to respond to survivors and victims' specific medical, psychological and social needs.

We condemn the sexual and gender-based violence, intimidation and harassment, online and offline that female journalists encounter when carrying out their work. We therefore welcome the Ministerial Decision on the safety of journalists, which underlines the importance of addressing the distinct risks that female journalists experience. In July 2019, the UK and Canada hosted the first ever-global Conference on Media Freedom. Many Governments signed the Global pledge committing to forming a new coalition to protect media freedom.

The intimidation and harassment experienced by female journalists is mirrored in the threats, intimidation and harassment faced by female politicians. It is essential to address this, if we are to increase women's political participation.

In an effort to address some of these issues, the International Women MPs Conference 2018 brought together over 100 elected female MPs from across the globe including 25 from OSCE participating countries. Participants celebrated achievements, discussed how to strengthen visibility, and further empower women parliamentarians to continue to drive change nationally and internationally.

We must also note the importance of increasing female participation in decision-making. We know that female participation in peace processes increases the longevity of the peace. Peace agreements that result from negotiations involving women are 35 percent more likely to last for at least fifteen years. Despite their critical contributions to conflict resolution and post conflict stabilisation, women continue to be excluded in peace processes. States involved in conflict mediation should ensure women and underrepresented groups are



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meaningfully represented at all stages of the peace process. In the run up to the 20th Anniversary of UNSCR 1325 on Women, Peace and Security in 2020, we welcome the OSCE's contribution to the development and adoption of the national action plans (NAPs) for Albania and Armenia.

Furthermore, increasing female participation in the labour market not only boosts women's economic independence, it also sets a direct path towards gender equality, poverty eradication and inclusive economic growth. To reach the Europe 2020 Strategy targets of 75% employment rates for both women and men, the participation of women from all underrepresented groups must increase. Across the EU and the OSCE, we continue to see significant variations in pay between men and women. We must also ensure that all girls have access to at least 12 years of quality education, in order to give them the same opportunities to fulfil their potential as boys.

We welcome the sustained work of the OSCE Gender Section and the OSCE Office for Democratic Institutions and Human Rights (ODIHR) in mainstreaming gender across the OSCE. The importance of involving men in the struggle to end gender inequality is vital. We are pleased to see that OSCE Ambassadors are making extra efforts to engage men in promoting Gender Equality and the efforts of the MenEngage network in raising awareness about the important role that men and boys can have in eliminating discrimination and violence against women.

We appreciate the OSCE's zero tolerance approach to sexual harassment and sexual exploitation and recognise that actions have already been taken such as the DHR initiative to participate in an UN-led Safe Space Survey.

We would like to propose the following recommendations to the OSCE, along with its participating States:

- We call on OSCE participating States and the OSCE institutions to continue their efforts towards the achievement of gender equality;



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- We reiterate the call for an OSCE-wide Action Plan on Women, Peace and Security, and we stand ready to support this work by sharing best practices; as the EU has just adopted its first action plan.
- We call on the OSCE to use gender markers in all of their projects, to effectively mainstream gender concerns.
- We welcome the efforts already underway to tackle Sexual Harassment and exploitation and urge the OSCE to keep the issue a high priority.

Thank you.

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, ARMENIA, and GEORGIA align themselves with this statement.

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