

## HDIM 2013

### **Working Session 3: Tolerance and non-discrimination II (continued):**

- Equality of opportunity for women and men, including: Implementation of the OSCE Action Plan for the Promotion of Gender Equality;
- Prevention of violence against women and children

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Working session 3 focused on the equality of opportunity for women and men, including the implementation of the OSCE Action Plan for the Promotion of Gender Equality as well as on prevention of violence against women and children. Ambassador Janez Lenarčič, Director of ODIHR, highlighted in his introductory remarks the commitments that participating States have made to gender equality. Some progress has been achieved in the representation of women in the security sector and in the development of a comprehensive legislative framework relating to gender equality, yet much more remains to be done.

The Moderator, Ms. June Zeitlin, Special Representative of the OSCE Chairperson-in-Office on Gender Issues, referred to violence against women as one of the most widespread human rights violations which occurs in every country in the OSCE region. Ms. Zeitlin recommended that participating States share their experience and lessons learned in order to find innovative and effective approaches. She also urged participating States to familiarize themselves with the Council of Europe Convention on preventing and combating violence against women and domestic violence.

The first Introducer, Dr. Gulnara Ibraeva, Expert on Gender Equality and Associate Professor at the American University of Central Asia, noted the important role of civil society in achieving gender equality. Lack of resources and Islamization often hinder women from having a leadership role. Therefore there is a need for increased financial support for local gender programmes, especially in post-conflict countries. The second Introducer, Ms. Olga Kostina, Member of Civic Chamber of the Russian Federation, Head of Human Rights Movement “Resistance”, recommended the elaboration and then distribution through participating States of a road map with best practices for protecting children. Ms. Kostina stressed the need to create a safe environment at home for future citizens.

Ambassador Miroslava Beham, OSCE Senior Adviser on Gender Issues, gave an overview of upcoming events and activities organized by the OSCE Gender Section. Ambassador Beham noted positively the increase in the share of women in senior positions and the augmented awareness-raising related to UNSCR 1325 (2000) on Women, Peace and Security in the last 12 months. The 10<sup>th</sup> anniversary of the OSCE Action Plan for the Promotion of Gender Equality in 2014 provides a strategic opportunity to revisit commitments in the form of an addendum to the Action Plan for the Promotion of Gender Equality as well as through the integration of a review mechanism. Furthermore, a National Gender Focal Points Network is being developed by the Gender Section to address the lack of systemized data and co-ordination related to gender issues in the OSCE.

In the debate that followed, it was widely stated that women and children still faced discrimination and violence. 45 interventions were made of which 23 by non-governmental organizations and 1 international organization. In addition, 7 participating States made use of their right of reply in response to prior interventions.

Several participants highlighted best practices to ensure gender equality in the legal, social, economic and cultural sphere and underlined the need to enhance the active participation of women

in politics in all stages of the decision-making processes as a necessary precondition for development and sustained peace. Many delegations discussed the importance of economic rights related to gender equality and that enabling women to earn their own living is one of the most effective ways of empowerment. Some delegations mentioned the important role of OSCE Field Operations in facilitating compliance with gender commitments, *inter alia* through the recruitment of specific Gender Advisers. One delegation mentioned the Mentor Project for Women in the OSCE.

Many speakers stressed the importance of combating violence against women and children. A number of participants referred to the Council of Europe's Istanbul Convention in this respect. Moreover, the need for public bodies to co-operate with civil society and share best practices was stressed. A number of participants shared their best practices in combating violence against women. One NGO highlighted the need to protect women detainees as they were a group particularly vulnerable to violence and harassment. Furthermore, several speakers stressed the importance of combating practices that harm women and girls, including forced marriage, female genital mutilation, and honour killings. One delegation expressed concern about the abuse, sale and trafficking of children after adoption.

A large number of delegations expressed support for the development of an OSCE-wide action plan on UNSCR 1325 as well as to include women in all levels of OSCE activities. Several participants pointed out the need to pay attention to gender issues throughout the conflict cycle and to effectively address the issue of preventing sexual violence in conflicts. It was stressed that all parties to armed conflict must comply with their obligations under international humanitarian law.

#### **Recommendations to the participating States:**

- Step up national and regional efforts to eradicate all forms of violence against women and girls and in this context become a party to the Council of Europe Convention on preventing and combating violence against women and domestic violence;
- Adopt specific laws against domestic violence and spousal rape and establish adequate networks for victim assistance as well as rehabilitation measures;
- Effectively protect children from all forms of violence and abuse, i.e. through effective legislation and prevention programmes;
- Enhance efforts to improve the participation of women in political and public life and in decision-making at all levels, including introducing special measures to address discriminatory practices and involve men and boys in gender equality promotion activities;
- Adopt as soon as possible an OSCE system-wide Action Plan on Women, Peace and Security;
- Co-operate in combating sexual violence in conflicts and address the prevention of sexual violence within the OSCE's work on the Conflict Cycle and Mediation;
- Share best practices and experiences to improve economic opportunities for women.

#### **Recommendations to OSCE institutions, executive structures and field operations:**

- Develop a plan to advance the implementation of the OSCE 2004 Gender Action Plan, for instance in the form of an addendum to the Gender Action Plan;
- Mainstream gender issues in all OSCE policies and activities and take concrete steps to ensure that field operations have the capacity to implement the OSCE gender commitments;

- Foster an increased exchange amongst participating States on their experiences with the implementation of UN Resolution 1325 in order to strengthen coherence and co-ordination within the OSCE region.