



EUROPEAN UNION

**OSCE Permanent Council No 1110
Vienna, 21 July 2016**

**EU statement on the Secretary-General's Annual
Evaluation Report on the Implementation of the 2004 OSCE
Action Plan for the Promotion of Gender Equality**

The European Union and its Member States would like to thank the Secretary-General for the presentation of the Annual Evaluation Report on the Implementation of the 2004 OSCE Action Plan for the Promotion of Gender Equality.

We welcome the efforts undertaken by the Secretary-General during the reporting period. We also highly value the contributions made by various OSCE structures, in particular the Secretariat's Gender Section and the gender focal points in field operations, as well as the autonomous institutions ODIHR, HCNM and RFoM.

The year 2015 brought us significant developments for gender equality at the global level. The new Sustainable Development Goals for 2030 were adopted at the UN at the highest level, with a stand-alone goal on gender equality and the empowerment of women and girls. The UNSCR 2242 on women, peace and security calls on regional organizations to work on the inclusion of women in peace and security issues. Gender mainstreaming and promotion of gender equality is already making a positive impact on OSCE's policies and programmes and we welcome continued efforts in this regard. However, noting that around half of the OSCE's projects have reported limited gender aspects, it remains important to further mainstream gender equality commitments throughout the Organization including at the highest levels and in senior management decision-making.

We strongly support the efforts to promote gender equality in the OSCE region. This is a major objective for us. Equality is one of the founding values of the EU and a fundamental right reflected in the EU Charter of Fundamental Rights. Moreover, we committed ourselves to promoting gender equality in the EU Action Plan on Human Rights and Democracy 2015-2019. We continue to support the adoption of an

addendum to strengthen the Action Plan for the Promotion of Gender Equality, adopted in 2004, as tasked by the Basel Ministerial Council in 2014.

We see gender mainstreaming as a key strategy to achieve gender equality. We stress the importance of addressing gender equality and empowerment of women as a cross-dimensional topic.

According to this year's Annual Evaluation Report, in 2015 there was a slight increase in the number of women in senior management positions as well as in the recruitment of women to professional positions. However, the overall low number of women who head OSCE structures – especially in roles related to conflict prevention and resolution - remains a concern. Conflict resolution and peace processes are more likely to succeed if women meaningfully participate in them and we therefore encourage further efforts to improve the gender balance in senior OSCE positions, from both the Secretariat and participating States.

We welcome the thematic chapter in this year's Annual Evaluation Report that focuses on mentor networks and other type of networks for women as a tool to empower women and increase their participation in different spheres of life. This year's Report contains some very interesting examples of mentor networks in different participating States. We would be interested in hearing whether there are concrete examples of improved participation and inclusion for women as a result of these networks.

We note with concern that any reporting on progress on the implementation of the Gender Action Plan is challenging due to the lack of monitoring and reporting mechanisms and would appreciate more information on how this will be addressed.

Internal accountability within OSCE structures regarding the implementation of the Gender Action Plan also needs further strengthening. We support the implementation of a gender marker system in the Unified Budget in order to better measure implementation.

As we highlighted in our response to Baroness Anelay's intervention this morning, we remain concerned about violence against women and girls, including sexual and gender based violence, in the OSCE area. Violence against women is a serious human rights violation. The OSCE Ministerial Council Decision 7/14 adopted in Basel

in December 2014 marks an important step to tackle the issue in the OSCE area and we welcome follow-up with concrete actions by OSCE executive structures and participating States.

In conclusion, we reaffirm our strong commitment to the OSCE's work on advancing gender equality. We look forward to the upcoming events on gender including the Conference on Combating Violence against Women in the OSCE Region – Bringing Security Home to be held tomorrow here in Hofburg. We also wish to reiterate our appreciation for the engagement of the OSCE MenEngage network, given the crucial role of men in advancing gender equality. We wish to thank the Secretary-General, the Head of the OSCE Gender Unit and their teams, as well as the autonomous institutions and the field operations for all their efforts undertaken so far and look forward to working further on these issues.

The Candidate Countries the FORMER YUGOSLAV REPUBLIC OF 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, GEORGIA, ANDORRA and SAN MARINO align themselves with this statement.

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