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June Zeitlin
Special Representative of the OSCE Chairperson-in-Office on Gender Issues
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I am pleased to appear before you today to address the Permanent Council and to report on my activities during this past year as the Special Representative of the OSCE Chairperson-in-Office on Gender Issues. I am deeply grateful to the Ukrainian Chair-in-Office for this opportunity to serve the OSCE as Special Representative. I want to especially thank Ambassador Prokopchuk for his support of my efforts to promote women's rights and gender equality in the OSCE region during the Ukrainian chairmanship. I also want to note with appreciation that the incoming Chairperson-in-Office has indicated that gender equality will be one of Switzerland's priorities.

I thought it might be useful to begin by reiterating the broad mandate of the role of the Special Representative on Gender Issues. Among other activities, the work of the Special Representative is to encourage participating States to give the highest possible political priority to fulfilling their OSCE commitments, including relevant Ministerial and Permanent Council decisions related to gender equality. The Special Representative is also encouraged to facilitate the sharing of information and best practices with a view to overcoming existing challenges, thus helping to improve implementation of international standards on gender equality across the OSCE region and within the Organization.

An important aspect of the mandate of the Special Representative is visiting countries to highlight gender equality issues and provide support for the implementation of the Gender Action Plan. I have found these visits very useful for gaining a better understanding of the national context and also very inspiring to see the creativity and innovation of the policy and programs undertaken to improve the lives of women and their families. As I reported to the Permanent Council last year, I had an opportunity to visit countries in the Balkans and Central Asia. This year I made visits to the Caucuses, to Armenia and Georgia, and to Southern Europe, to Greece and Spain.

In my work as Special Representative I have focused on a few key issues where, by shining a spotlight and highlighting the critical needs and possible solutions, I think more progress can be made. I have done this through country visits, presentations at OSCE meetings and events, and discussions with participating states. By acting as a catalyst and facilitator, I have tried to elevate attention to critical issues and help mobilize political will to effectively address these gender equality issues. The principal issue I have focused on is violence against women, particularly domestic violence. I have also addressed the need for increased representation of women in decision making, particularly in public life. In my country visits, I have discussed the implementation of Security Council Resolution 1325, and this year, I have tried to look specifically at the economic and social impact of the global financial crises on women. In all of my work, I have made a special effort to discuss the double discrimination faced by vulnerable women, particularly Roma women, racial minorities and LGBT people.

As I mentioned, I have had the privilege this year of making visits to Armenia, Georgia, Greece and Spain. I want to extend a special thanks to the Ambassadors and their colleagues here in Vienna as well as the Ministries of Foreign Affairs for the very gracious assistance and support they provided. During these visits, I had the opportunity to meet with officials from various government agencies, members of Parliaments and representatives of women's NGOs. I also want to thank the Head of Mission in Armenia and his staff for their generous hospitality and support during my visit. Finally, I want to note that I have come here directly from a visit to Switzerland where the Senior Advisor on Gender Issues and I discussed important gender equality issues, focusing on 1325 and the economic empowerment of women.

In addition, I have participated as an international expert in other OSCE activities on gender equality. For example, earlier this year I was one of the keynote speakers at the Ninth "Kiev Dialogue" on "Gender Politics: successes-failures-prospects." I participated in the meeting of the gender focal points and also addressed the Human Dimension Committee in May, where a discussion took place on women in combat. At the HDIM in Warsaw, I moderated the main session on Equality of opportunity for women and men, which included the implementation of the OSCE Action Plan for the Promotion of Gender Equality and prevention of violence against women and children. I also addressed a power breakfast on "Cash and Politics: How women's access to resources influence their political success," and attended several side events on violence against women. I want to turn now to the key issues I have addressed during this year.

Violence against Women

MCDec.15/05 calls on the OSCE and participating States to take steps to address violence against women, which remains one of the most widespread violations of women's human rights around the world. It affects women in every country, rich and poor, urban and rural, and every racial and ethnic group. What is different is how each society responds to the epidemic of gender-based violence, in terms of the allocation of human and financial resources as well as its political will to condemn and punish those who perpetrate such violence. Many, but not all, of the OSCE participating States have adopted legislation to respond to gender-based violence. While the extent of implementation, degree of funding, and range of services does vary among countries, most have some type of system in place to provide help to the victims, punish the perpetrators, train police and educate the public.

The Secretary General's report highlights the wide-range of programs that OSCE has supported to develop and review legislation, train key stakeholders, support social services for victims and other programs to combat violence against women. For example, the OSCE Mission in Kosovo has supported training of police, medical personnel, and other actors on the implementation of the new violence against women legislation, and also supports a program to visit the homes of girls considered likely to drop out of school to talk about issues including violence against women. The OSCE Office in Tajikistan provided support to train police and also supported Women's Resources Centers, which help victims of gender violence by providing legal aid and other social services. The Project Coordinator in Ukraine provided support to draft amendments for the law on domestic violence prevention, supported an awareness campaign on violence against women, and worked with others on a handbook on strategies to deal with perpetrators of violence. Additionally, the Centre in Ashgabat supported a seminar on

domestic violence practices and lessons learned based on law enforcement experiences in other OSCE participating States, and supported an organization that runs a family issues hotline. These represent just a few of the many activities supported by OSCE field missions to prevent violence against women and provide services to women and their children.

During my country visits, I had an opportunity to learn more in depth about each country's approach to dealing with domestic violence and to meet with government officials, parliamentarians and women's NGOs involved in setting and implementing the policies as well as providing services. I want to begin with Spain as they have one of the most comprehensive and effective programs that I have encountered anywhere. It is unquestionably a model that we can all learn from in terms of its reform of the justice system, including special domestic violence courts that are required to act quickly to provide protection to the woman and her children and punish the perpetrator (including requiring perpetrators to wear GPS bracelets so their whereabouts can be tracked). These courts also have the capacity to help her access services and financial support, as well as deal with other legal issues such as divorce and child custody. The services provided include free legal assistance and access to shelters, as well as information about these and other services available through a new phone application. In addition, they have undertaken extensive public education campaigns with very creative and vivid messages and graphics. Despite the economic difficulties, Spain has maintained a domestic violence program, which has been heralded as a model by the international community, and has continued funding this wide-range of prevention, prosecution, and social service programs. The Greek government has also made violence against women a priority, as evidenced by the comprehensive national action plan and strategy on domestic violence. Greece has undertaken a number of efforts to prevent violence against women and assist victims through establishing a 24-hour helpline available in several languages, creating shelters and counseling centers, and training police. They have also supported an extensive public awareness effort, with specific outreach to minority populations; this was carried out in conjunction with the worldwide 16 Days of Activism Against Gender Violence campaign.

In Georgia I also learned about their extensive efforts to address violence against women. Georgia has adopted a comprehensive domestic violence law, a National Action Plan, and a National Referral Mechanism aimed at preventing domestic violence and providing social services to victims. Since a 2012 reform of the Criminal Code, which makes domestic violence a separate crime, statistics show that the number of investigations and protection orders issued has increased dramatically. Additionally, Georgia is carrying out public awareness programs to combat the cultural stereotypes about gender-based violence, which they believe lead to a reluctance to report such crimes. Armenia has also developed a National Action Plan requiring better monitoring of domestic violence, increased public education efforts to raise awareness, and expanded provision of services for victims of violence. However, Armenia has yet to pass legislation making domestic violence a specific crime.

More details about how each country is dealing with violence against women and other gender equality issues will be available in my upcoming country reports.

Political Participation

MCDec.7/09 commits OSCE and participating States to take steps to increase women's political participation, particularly addressing the under-representation of women in government decision-making bodies. According to the most recent data from the Inter-Parliamentary Union (IPU), women make up, on average, 23.6% of parliaments in OSCE participating States. There is much variation, however, among participating States. Only 16 countries in the OSCE region have reached 30% average representation of women in Parliament, while in 11 States women make up less than 15% of members of Parliament. Appendix A shows the representation of women in national legislatures in all OSCE participating states.

It should be noted that much research has been carried out on the effectiveness of various approaches to increasing representation of women in decision making by the IPU, UN Women and UNDP, other national and international donors and institutions and of course by ODHIR. We know what types of policies are most successful in increasing women's political representation. There are many good experiences and best practices that could be shared among OSCE participating States to advance this OSCE commitment. I hope next year to engage with the Parliamentary Assembly on this topic.

This year OSCE missions and offices have carried out numerous efforts to support women in politics and increase their presence. The Mission to Serbia supported the creation of the Serbian Women's Parliamentary Network earlier this year. The Presence in Albania helped to make reporting during elections more gender-sensitive and gender-balanced by training journalists prior to the Albanian elections. The Mission to Bosnia and Herzegovina supported Roma women, encouraged their participation in political life and helped in their efforts to advocate for gender-balance on the Romani Advisory Board to the BiH Council of Ministers. There are now five women on the eleven-member board. ODIHR has also worked extensively on promoting the representation of women in decision-making bodies. This past year, ODHIR launched a website focused on the promotion of women's participation in politics. Additionally, ODHIR, as part of its "Women in Political Parties" project, worked with political party leaders in Albania, Georgia, Kazakhstan, Kyrgyzstan and Moldova to discuss increasing women's participation in politics and provide capacity-building trainings for women in politics and women candidates. ODHIR also continued work on a project aimed at identifying the different types of parliamentary bodies that women participate in. The *Comparative Study of Structures for Women MPs in the OSCE Region*, the report based on this research, was published earlier this year.

I also focused on the representation of women in Parliament during my country visits this year. Spain was the only country I visited with more than 30% women in Parliament, with 35% women in both chambers. A quota law in Spain requires that the electoral lists be balanced by sex (no less than 40% or more than 60% of one sex). Despite challenges to this law, the Spanish Constitutional Court upheld it, and the country has sustained the quota over many years. Additionally, women are well represented in other branches and levels of government. In Greece's Parliament, women make up 21% of its members. While this is an improvement from years past, I learned that The General Secretariat on Gender Equality,

in collaboration with civil society, would soon be launching a 50/50 campaign to encourage people to vote for women in the upcoming EU Parliament and local elections scheduled to take place next year in an effort to increase women's representation in these decision-making bodies.

Neither Georgia nor Armenia has quota laws in place, but both countries have begun to take steps to try to increase women's representation in Parliament. In Georgia, the electoral law provides financial incentives to parties with a certain percentage of women on their electoral list. Currently, political parties can receive 10% extra funding for having electoral lists with 20% women. This program has achieved limited results, however, as only 12% of Georgian Parliamentarians are women. They plan now to reform the program allowing parties with 3 women out of every 10 candidates on party lists to receive 30% extra funding. Armenian electoral law requires a certain percentage of women on party lists as well, though there is no monetary incentive. During the most recent elections in Armenia in 2012, it was required that women make up 20% of the candidates on party lists. This 20% requirement is an increase from years past. Despite the law, parties have not met this requirement, and there has been little increase in the representation of women in Parliament. Currently, 10.7% of parliamentarians in Armenia are women. The OSCE Office in Yerevan has worked this year to support Armenia in its efforts to increase women's representation by identifying the challenges and barriers to women's participation in public life and conducting seminars for women candidates.

Impact of the Financial Crisis on Women and Women's Economic Empowerment

MCDec.10/11 on Women's Economic Empowerment calls on the OSCE and participating States to advance equal opportunities for women in the economic sphere. This includes assisting women develop skills needed for successful employment or entrepreneurial activities. As the Secretary-General's report notes, insufficient attention has been focused on gender equality in the second dimension. Given the financial crisis experienced, to some extent, by almost every country in the world, more attention is needed to the social and economic impact on women and their families. I have given this topic priority in my country visits this year.

In my visits to Greece and Spain, I focused on how the economic and social crisis has specifically affected women, and what actions have been taken in response. Unquestionably, the economic crisis in both countries has been challenging for all, both men and women, as unemployment has risen, wages and benefits were reduced and social services were less available. I was interested in exploring in the ways in which women's experiences were different, both in terms of the impact of the crisis and the outcomes. In Spain, the youth unemployment rate is very high but it is even higher for young women than that of men of the same age. Some attribute this to persistent gender stereotypes about women's traditional role in the family. In addition, women who are working are much more likely to work in part-time or lower paying informal positions. Spain, despite the crisis, is trying to improve equality between men and women in the workplace by requiring large companies to develop equality plans. While efforts are being made to address the effects of the crisis on women and the discrimination women face in employment settings, it would be important to make the differential impact of the crisis on women more visible so that appropriate policy solutions could be devised.

In Greece, similar challenges can be seen for women with regards to employment, as there are very high rates of unemployment for both women and men. The average salary differential between women and men is 22%, significantly above the EU average. Additionally, due to cuts in social services funding, government funding for childcare has decreased which puts further financial strains on families. Some civil society representatives expressed deep concern that one result of the economic and social crisis and the lack of employment is that women, especially young women, are returning to more traditional family roles. Since there are few positions available now in the public sector, Greece is developing a major initiative to train and assist women to become entrepreneurs. Greece will be assuming the EU Presidency in January 2014 and the government has reached out to civil society for input. As a result, Greece plans to make issues around women and the economic crisis a priority during its EU presidency.

OSCE Field Operations and the Secretariat have supported only a few programs aimed at women's economic empowerment. The Office in Baku helped women entrepreneurs by supporting advice centers, which gave women information about laws and regulations relating to business. The OCEEA organized a workshop for Afghan, Tajik and Azerbaijani women to help them learn about managing their small enterprises or handicraft businesses. Attention to these issues could be enhanced in the future.

Women, Peace and Security

This year, the Secretary General's Annual Evaluation Report on the Implementation of the 2004 OSCE Action Plan for the Promotion of Gender Equality focused on women, peace and security and the implementation of Security Council Resolution 1325. This reflects the extensive work the Secretariat and participating States have dedicated to making progress on the implementation of 1325. Given their focus, I have only touched briefly on 1325 in my activities.

I do want to note, however, that Georgia has adopted a comprehensive action plan on the implementation of Security Council Resolution 1325. Now the focus has shifted to the implementation of the plan by the government. While Armenia has not yet developed an action plan on 1325, several NGOs have recently come together to develop a report, which is still in draft form. This could form the basis of discussions with the government about the development of a 1325 action plan. Spain has developed a national action plan on the implementation of Security Council Resolution 1325 and has supported training programs for government and civil society in addressing sexual violence in conflict regions.

I have learned a great deal from my country visits and believe the OSCE and its participating States have made real progress on many of these issues and have much to share and learn from one another. At the same time, as the Secretary General in his Annual Evaluation Report notes, more needs to be done, particularly with regards to women, peace and security and to the implementation of OSCE commitments related to violence against women. In my recommendations I will not address actions related to women, peace and security as these have been amply covered. I will focus on OSCE commitments related to violence against women, women's participation in decision making and women's economic empowerment.

Based on my work this year, I would recommend specific actions in the following areas:

Violence against Women

For participating States:

For States lacking legislation on domestic violence: Enact legislation to make domestic violence a crime, adopt comprehensive policies to provide needed services for victims and their children, and provide training for police, prosecutors and judges, and health and social service providers.

For States with domestic violence legislation: Strengthen implementation of domestic violence laws so that adequate services are provided throughout the country, including for rural and minority populations, provide training for police, prosecutors and judges, punish perpetrators and undertake public education and prevention activities.

For States that are members of the Council of Europe: The Council of Europe has recently adopted a comprehensive Convention on Preventing and Combating Violence Against Women and Domestic Violence (Istanbul Convention). It opened for signature in May 2011 and to date, 32 member states have signed the Convention including the eight that have ratified it.

States should sign the Convention and begin the ratification process.

For all States: Increase consultation and partnerships with civil society organizations, including grass roots community groups, service providers, women's NGOs and anti-violence organizations.

For OSCE institutions, executive structures and field operations:

- Support initiatives to provide domestic violence services in rural or other underserved areas and to underserved populations, support training of officials in justice ministries and law enforcement, undertake public education campaigns and bring stakeholders together from various government ministries along with civil society representatives to coordinate efforts to respond to and prevent domestic violence.
- In 2014, convene a meeting of experts and practitioners from OSCE participating States with government officials to exchange learning and to showcase best practices in the field.

Political Participation

For OSCE institutions, executive structures and field operations:

- OSCE /ODIHR could bring together representatives of those countries with over 30% representation with other participating States and partner countries to share their experiences and effective approaches for increasing women's political representation.

Economic Empowerment of Women

Encourage participating States to focus more attention on the differing social and economic impact of the economic crisis on women and men in order to develop effective programs and solutions that address their aimed at addressing their specific needs.

Encourage additional focus on supporting programs aimed at building women's skills and capacity in the economic sphere, particularly in areas of conflict.

In conclusion, I want to emphasize the importance of giving high priority to gender equality issues. We have seen too often what happens when gender equality is not an explicit agenda item---these issues become invisible and progress is stalled. To that end, it is important to note that 2014 will mark the 10th anniversary of the adoption of the 2004 Gender Action Plan. I fully agree with the Secretary General that next year provides a strategic opportunity to assess the implementation of the Gender Action Plan as well as the gender-related OSCE commitments across all three dimensions. It is the ideal time for participating States and OSCE structures to engage in an in-depth dialogue developing implementation strategies and new initiatives to improve progress overall in the work of the OSCE and participating States. I would also suggest that in 2014, the OSCE begin a cycle of examining one of the gender equality commitments annually, to exchange best practices and build political will for greater implementation. I would urge that we begin next year with violence against women, which as I have already noted, is an issue in every OSCE participating State and there is much experience to share. I look forward to working together to advance the implementation of OSCE's commitments and thereby making gender equality a reality for women and men throughout OSCE region.

Thank you.

Appendix A

Country	Percent of Women in First Chamber (or only chamber if unicameral)	Percent of Women in Second Chamber (if applicable)	Average Percentage of Women in Parliament
Albania	17.9%		17.9%
Andorra	50.0%		50.0%
Armenia	10.7%		10.7%
Austria	33.3%	29.0%	31.2%
Azerbaijan	16.0%		16.0%
Belarus	26.6%	35.1%	30.9%
Belgium	38.0%	40.9%	39.4%
Bosnia and Herzegovina	21.4%	13.3%	17.4%
Bulgaria	24.6%		24.6%
Canada	24.7%	37.9%	31.3%
Croatia	23.8%		23.8%
Cyprus	10.7%		10.7%
Czech Republic	19.5%	17.3%	18.4%
Denmark	39.1%		39.1%
Estonia	20.8%		20.8%
Finland	42.5%		42.5%
France	26.9%	22.2%	24.5%
Georgia	12.0%		12.0%
Germany	36.5%	27.5%	32.0%
Greece	21.0%		21.0%
Holy See			
Hungary	8.8%		8.8%
Iceland	39.7%		39.7%
Ireland	15.7%	30.0%	22.8%
Italy	31.4%	29.0%	30.2%
Kazakhstan	24.3%	4.3%	14.3%
Kyrgyzstan	23.3%		23.3%
Latvia	23.0%		23.0%
Liechtenstein	20.0%		20.0%
Lithuania	24.1%		24.1%
Luxembourg	23.3%		23.3%
Malta	14.3%		14.3%
Moldova	19.8%		19.8%

Monaco	20.8%		20.8%
Mongolia	14.9%		14.9%
Montenegro	16.1%		16.1%
Netherlands	38.7%	36.0%	37.3%
Norway	39.6%		39.6%
Poland	23.7%	13.0%	18.4%
Portugal	28.7%		28.7%
Romania	13.4%	7.4%	10.4%
Russian Federation	13.6%	8.0%	10.8%
San Marino	18.3%		18.3%
Serbia	33.2%		33.2%
Slovakia	18.7%		18.7%
Slovenia	33.2%	7.5%	19.9%
Spain	36.0%	34.2%	35.1%
Sweden	44.7%		44.7%
Switzerland	29.0%	19.6%	24.3%
Tajikistan	19.1%	14.7%	16.9%
The former Yugoslav Republic of Macedonia	34.2%		34.2%
Turkey	14.4%		14.4%
Turkmenistan	16.8%		16.8%
Ukraine	9.4%		9.4%
United Kingdom	22.5%	22.6%	22.6%
United States	17.8%	20.0%	18.9%
Uzbekistan	22.0%	15.0%	18.5%
Average = 23.6%			

*Numbers have been rounded to the nearest 10th of a percent

**Data collected from IPU Parline Database, 7 December 2013