



EUROPEAN UNION

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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 thank the Secretary-General for 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 ODIHR, HCNM and RFoM.

We strongly support the efforts to promote gender equality in the OSCE region. Gender equality 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 new EU Action Plan on Human Rights and Democracy (2015 -2019).

We welcome the continued efforts to mainstream a gender perspective in all structures, policies, programmes, projects and activities of the OSCE. 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; in politico-military, economic and environmental and in the human dimension.

This year's Annual Evaluation Report on the Implementation of the 2004 OSCE Action Plan for the Promotion of Gender Equality reflects the 10th year of implementation of the Action Plan. In July 2014 the Gender Review Conference was

held in Vienna and gender issues were addressed thoroughly. We would like to see concrete improvements in the area of promoting gender equality and believe the Review Conference provides a good source for ideas. The Conference last year addressed both achievements in the implementation of the Action Plan as well as gap areas identified by conference participants.

Violence against women is in the focus of the thematic chapter of this year's report. Violence against women and girls, including sexual and gender based violence, is one of the most pervasive human rights violations in the OSCE region. It can be particularly pervasive during periods of crisis, transition, conflict and post-conflict reconstruction. Violence against women is a major obstacle to women's participation in all aspects of society. The OSCE Ministerial Council Decision 7/14 taken in Basel in December 2014 marks an important step to tackle the issue in the OSCE area. Violence against women needs to be followed up with concrete actions by OSCE executive structures and participating States.

We note with concern that this year's report is the first one where we have seen a decline in the implementation of Pillar One of the Gender Action Plan. There are fewer women nominated to different positions and there has been a decrease of women among senior staff management in OSCE structures. The main concern is still the low number of women who head OSCE institutions and field operations. Women held only 13% Head of Mission positions during the reporting period. The OSCE executive structures and participating States need to identify and appoint women to senior management positions.

OSCE Ministerial Council Decision 8/14 taken in Basel in December 2014 tasks the OSCE participating States to elaborate an Addendum to the OSCE 2004 Action Plan on the Promotion of Gender Equality and to bring it to the Permanent Council for adoption in 2015. We see the Addendum as a high priority and it is crucial to adopt a timely decision on it this year. We aim to achieve an explicit and strong Addendum based on a clear human rights perspective and enhancing existing OSCE commitments. The Addendum would provide guidance for both OSCE executive structures and participating States on how to move forwards with gender equality commitments and how to take into account international and regional developments

since the Gender Action Plan was passed ten years ago. Twenty years after the adoption of the Beijing platform for action, we think that such an addendum would be particularly timely.

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 joint FSC-PC meeting on October 7 and the Security Day on November 23. We also appreciate the engagement of the MenEngage network. We wish to thank the Secretary-General, the Senior Advisor on Gender Issues and their teams 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*, ICELAND+ and ALBANIA*, the Country of the Stabilisation and Association Process and Potential Candidate BOSNIA and HERZEGOVINA, and the EFTA country LIECHTENSTEIN, member of the European Economic Area, as well as UKRAINE, the REPUBLIC OF MOLDOVA, 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.

+ Iceland continues to be a member of the EFTA and of the European Economic Area.