



United States Mission to the OSCE

International Women's Day

As delivered by Ambassador Daniel B. Baer
to the Permanent Council, Vienna
March 12, 2015

March 8, 2015, marked the 104th observance of International Women's Day. We observe the day by taking time to reflect on progress, to call for change, and to commemorate acts of courage and determination by women who have made a difference in their communities and countries.

President Obama has made advancing the status of women and girls a central element of U.S. foreign policy, as reflected in the 2011 National Action Plan on Women, Peace, and Security, and the 2015 National Security Strategy. Today, I would like to highlight one aspect of this effort: enhancing the role of women in countering violent extremism.

One of the outcomes of the President's February 18 Summit on Countering Violent Extremism was a recommendation to strengthen the role of women in countering and preventing violent extremism. While it's true that women and girls can suffer disproportionately in conflict, they are also often on the front lines, offering solutions and working diligently to stem the crisis at hand. They can be valuable partners, leaders, and agents of peace and reconciliation. We can and must support and empower them in this work. Women must be heard if communities are going to move past violence and victimization, and work toward a shared future that rejects conflict and promotes dignity.

We would like to salute Ms. Arbana Xharra, the editor-in-chief of the Kosovo newspaper Zeri. She was recognized on March 6 with the Secretary of State's International Woman of Courage Award for her role in reporting on corruption in Kosovo's institutions, as well as religious extremism in Kosovo and the financial and operational links some Imams in Kosovo have fostered with foreign terrorist organizations. Ms. Xharra's work shows the transformative role women can play, and it reinforces the fact that when women have a seat at the table on security issues, societies can be made safer.

The OSCE has a role to play in this effort to enhance the role of women in countering violent extremism. In 2005, we all committed to encourage the equal participation of women and women's organizations in conflict prevention, conflict resolution, and post-conflict rehabilitation. In 2011 and 2012, ODIHR and the Secretariat held expert roundtables on women and terrorist radicalization.

During the 2014 OSCE - Global Counterterrorism Forum (GCTF) International Workshop on Advancing Women's Roles in Countering Violent Extremism and Radicalization that Lead to Terrorism, U.S. Deputy Assistant Secretary of State Eileen O'Connor stressed that OSCE participating States have a particularly important role to play in engaging women in the effort

to halt the flow of foreign fighters to Daesh. We must continue the conversation on this issue, including at the upcoming Security Days on May 21 and 22 that will include a discussion of the role of women in countering violent extremism. After all, no country or society can move forward if it leaves half its population behind. And when women and men are active and equal partners in building security, we are all safer.

Thank you, Madam Chair.