



ENGLISH only

Engagement of men and boys is essential for the elimination of violence against women

Statement by Ambassador Andrej Benedejčič, Permanent Representative of Slovenia, on the occasion of the International Day for the Elimination of Violence against Women, at the 116th Meeting of the OSCE Permanent Council, Vienna, 30 November 2017

Mr. Chairperson,

I would like to start my statement with some good news and inform the Permanent Council that last month witnessed the launch of the new global Women, Peace and Security Index. Developed by the Georgetown Institute for Women, Peace and Security and the Peace Research Institute of Oslo it is structured around three basic dimensions of women's well-being: inclusion, justice and security. It looks at everything from women's education and financial inclusion, to cell phone use, discrimination and violence. I think it is therefore important to point out that, according to this index, out of twelve best countries in the world for women to live in eleven are OSCE participating States.

It goes without saying that while the results of this index should be a source of pride for this Organization, they must not become an excuse for complacency. This is especially true when discussing violence against women, which represents a grave violation of human rights. Its scale is also concerning. In 2012, for example, the number of women and girls killed by a family member or an intimate partner worldwide was four times higher than the total number of people killed by terrorism. Violence against women also carries with it high costs for the societies at large and has measurable economic consequences.

In addition to what has been already stated on behalf of the European Union, I would therefore like to make several additional comments, also in my capacity as the Chair of the OSCE MenEngage Network. This is because violence against women is perpetrated by men. Engaging men and boys on this issue is therefore crucial. I am emphasizing the word "boys" on purpose here, because part of the solution is also systematic work in fixing their knowledge. According to some studies, if left unaddressed unconscious gender bias is already ingrained by 8 years of age. Also, if a boy has not hit a girl by the time he turns 18 years old, he will never strike a woman as a man.

I would therefore like to use this opportunity to highlight the special MenEngage expert meeting that took place at the OSCE last Friday. It was devoted to a discussion of strategies to effectively engage men and a presentation of good practices from other organizations. Since I took an active part in the event, I would like to share a couple of observations. One is the need for inclusion. Men must understand that they have an intrinsic interest in promoting gender equality, because the costs of violent masculinity are simply too high, not only for women, but also for themselves. The second observation is the need for accountability. In this connection, I think it would be good to increase the visibility of the OSCE MenEngage Network, also on the web, following the example that has been so successfully established by the International Gender Champions initiative.

In light of the Ministerial Council Meeting next week, I also cannot but refer to the draft Decision on Preventing and Combating Violence against Women that is currently on the table. I urge colleagues to include in the tasking for participating States a call to further increase the engagement and participation of men and boys in the prevention and elimination of all forms of violence against women and girls. I also think we should task the OSCE executive structures to create and facilitate fora and platforms for the exchange of good practices, including on engagement of men and boys. In light of our own good experience with the OSCE MenEngage Network, I believe it would be only appropriate to assist participating States, upon their request, in their efforts to establish their own MenEngage networks. And, finally, it is important for the OSCE Secretariat to be in a position to enhance cooperation with other international organizations with a view to promoting good practices and exchanging lessons learned.

Mr. Chairperson,

Since I started my statement with good news, I would also like to end it on a positive note. First, I would like to commend the Austrian OSCE Chairmanship for having promoted women's rights throughout the year. This topic must remain a priority for the OSCE in the knowledge that security is inextricably linked to gender equality. Second, I would like to tip my hat to the Secretariat and its Gender Section for supporting the work of the OSCE MenEngage Network and taking an active part in this year's Vienna-wide initiatives to promote equal opportunities. Let me therefore also congratulate the OSCE Secretary General for deciding to become an International Gender Champion last week. And, finally, I would like to say to all of my female colleagues around the table that when considering your future postings please bear in mind that, according to the index that I cited at the beginning of my intervention, out of 153 surveyed countries Slovenia is the fourth best in the world for women to live in.

Thank you.