



## United States Mission to the OSCE

### **Statement in Commemoration of International Women's Day**

As delivered by Chargé d' Affaires Kyle Scott  
to the Permanent Council, Vienna  
March 8, 2007

Thank you, Mr. Chairman.

Today is International Women's Day. It is an opportunity to remind ourselves why equality of opportunity between women and men is so important, and why it has become a focus of the work of our organization .

Women are essential agents in bringing about change, and are an often overlooked resource in the preservation of human security, in overcoming transnational dangers, and managing threats arising from tyranny, trafficking, poverty, and disease.

The participation of women in the political process is essential for a free and representative government. Therefore, we welcome the various programs that our organization has taken to support enhanced participation of women. ODIHR has provided legislative assistance to several States – most recently Macedonia, Albania, and Azerbaijan – to ensure that laws on equal opportunity are in compliance with international standards. ODIHR has also had long-term programs on increasing participation of women in democracy by fostering women's participation in electoral processes, by developing civil society coalitions, and by promoting national expertise on women's issues. ODIHR also ensures that gender issues are part of its election observations. Only when women participate fully in the political process can real democracy flourish.

Also in our economic dimension there are key elements which touch on women's participation. Urban and rural poverty around the world often indicate a missed opportunity for women's participation, and a failure to use human capital which curbs economic development. If women are deprived of economic opportunity, then development is crippled. Women often face discrimination in education and in the workplace. Our Office of the Economic and Environmental Coordinator supports the development of Small and Medium Enterprises (SMEs) activities and conducts seminars for women entrepreneurs and should be praised for those activities.

Gender-based violence is also regrettably a feature of virtually every armed conflict. Refugees are particularly prone to suffering from gender-based violence. Many women are also victims of domestic violence, and no ethnic or socio-economic or geographical group is immune to this scourge. The OSCE has useful resources and activities in these areas that

deserve our support, including ODIHR's training programs for law enforcement and NGOs on the issue of domestic violence.

These are just examples of the type of activities that the OSCE can and should conduct, and which my country supports. We are prepared to work with others to strengthen these programs, and to look at other ways the OSCE can promote equality of opportunity between women and men.

Thank you, Mr. Chairman.