



United States Mission to the OSCE

Response to the Annual Report by the OSCE Secretary General, H.E. Helga Schmid on Implementation of the 2004 OSCE Action Plan on Gender Equality

As delivered by Ambassador Michael Carpenter
to the Permanent Council, Vienna
July 13, 2023

Secretary General, dear Helga, thank you for your comprehensive report on the OSCE's efforts to advance gender equality both within its structures and amongst participating States.

Your report demonstrates a strong commitment to promoting gender equality. Under your strong leadership, the Secretariat, independent Institutions, and field operations are mainstreaming gender equality and gender-sensitive methodologies throughout their work. This is often carried out in challenging circumstances due to Russia's full-scale war against Ukraine and the ongoing lack of consensus on the key measures needed to ensure the proper functioning of this Organization.

Workplace integrity and a safe and inclusive working environment are also critical to the successful promotion of gender equality. We welcome the adoption of the Staff Instruction on the Prevention of Sexual Exploitation and Abuse. We also note that the revised Staff Instruction on a Professional Working Environment addresses sexual harassment and has been extended to include complaints by non-staff personnel. We encourage the OSCE to consider new and innovative approaches to ensure its projects and engagements are free from all forms of harassment.

In the OSCE region, there have been some encouraging developments that will advance the human rights and safety of women and gender equality. For example, the recent amendments to North Macedonia's criminal code that qualify threats and attacks on journalists as attacks on officials performing public interest tasks can help protect women journalists. Estonia recently legalized same-sex marriage. The European Union continues to advance approaches to close the historical gender-specific wage gap prevalent in many countries in the OSCE region.

Sadly, attaining true gender equality is still not a reality in many parts of the world, including among some participating States. As illustrated by the World Economic Forum's 2023 Global Gender Gap Report, gender equality is uneven in the OSCE area. Further, the WEF estimates it will take 131 years to reach equality at the current pace of change.

The United States has long been a champion in advancing the Women, Peace and Security agenda. In response to women leaving the workforce both in the United States and globally, most recently as a consequence of the COVID-19 pandemic, the United States released its

first-ever Strategy on Global Women's Economic Security. This Strategy lays out a vision in which women and girls around the world are able to fully, meaningfully, and equally contribute to and benefit from economic growth and global prosperity.

We are also supporting women's empowerment at the OSCE. This year - and I am proud to say this - to date, 50 percent of our nominations to seconded positions were women. We continue to support Extra-Budgetary projects such as Women & Men Innovating & Networking for Gender Equality (WIN for Women and Men), for which we just contributed an additional 500,000 euros to help Ukraine's civil society women leaders strengthen and advance accountability efforts in response to Russia's brutal war. I urge other delegations to join us in supporting this worthwhile project.

Additionally, we are proud to support the Mission to Moldova's project that provides services to survivors of gender-based violence on both sides of the Nistru River. We are equally pleased to continue our longstanding support to the Program Office in Dushanbe's project to finance 14 Women's Resource Centers in rural areas of Tajikistan, combating gender-based violence.

I also commend the recent informal discussion with women leaders from Ukraine who eloquently spoke about their efforts to deliver much needed humanitarian assistance, provide services to survivors of Russia's forces' extensive use of conflict-related sexual violence, and strengthen Ukraine's National Action Plan on UN Security Council Resolution 1325.

Mr. Chair, in closing, I would like to extend my appreciation to the Secretary General and the staff of the OSCE for their efforts to promote gender equality. I also want to use the occasion today to recognize you for your efforts to advance gender equality at the OSCE. The United States looks forward to the upcoming Chair's Conference on Gender Equality in Tetevo on September 5 and 6. This is a valuable opportunity to take stock of where we are, and to look forward to the 20th anniversary of the OSCE Action Plan on Gender Equality. It is, as you say, about the people.

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