



EUROPEAN UNION

**OSCE Permanent Council N°1121
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**EU Statement on the occasion of the International Day for
the Elimination of Violence against Women**

Every time we mark the International Day for the Elimination of Violence against Women, we acknowledge a failure of our societies. Women and girls are targeted – at home, online, in their communities or at their working place – all over the world. The European Union makes no exception: on the contrary, we are witnessing a worrying trend that defies achievements we used to take for granted. The figures are alarming: one in three women in the European Union has experienced some form of gender-based violence in their lives. Violence against women is violence against the entire society: the entire society has to react, starting with men.

As policy-makers, we bear a great responsibility to protect women and raise awareness: the European Union has put forward targeted projects within our borders and all around the world, including through the new EU Gender Action Plan 2016-2020. For instance, we are supporting young women who say “no” to forced marriage, and we are working with families and local leaders who renounce female genital mutilation. We are helping to spread the message that violence against women is a sign of weakness for men, not of strength.

There can be no room for complacency. Perpetrators deprive girls and women of their right to study, to work, to choose their partner or to leave them, depriving them of their fundamental freedoms.

Violence against women, including domestic violence, is often underreported and under discussed, and the taboo needs to be broken. In the OSCE, this issue needs to remain high on our agenda. In July we had a useful conference on Combating Violence against Women in the OSCE Region – Bringing Security Home. Last week

we had a Gender Symposium on Combating Femicide. Both conferences addressed the problem throughout the OSCE area and provided useful insights. In line with the '2004 Action Plan for the Promotion of Gender Equality', we encourage the OSCE to continue mainstreaming a gender perspective throughout its executive structures and within its activities, projects and programmes. The cross-dimensional nature of the 'women, peace and security' agenda is crucial to ensuring that women play an active role in the OSCE's comprehensive approach to security. It is clear that more needs to be done – by the OSCE, but even more so by the participating States – in the implementation of UNSC resolution 1325 and subsequent resolutions.

At a broader level, we encourage all Participating states to ratify and implement the UN Convention on the Elimination of All Forms of Discrimination against Women and to ratify the Council of Europe's Istanbul Convention on preventing and combating violence against women and domestic violence. We welcome the adoption by the UNGA of a resolution on domestic violence on 21 November on an initiative by France and the Netherlands.

The Candidate Countries the FORMER YUGOSLAV REPUBLIC OF MACEDONIA*, MONTENEGRO*, SERBIA* and ALBANIA*, the Country of the Stabilisation and Association Process and Potential Candidate BOSNIA and HERZEGOVINA, and the EFTA country ICELAND, member of the European Economic Area, as well as UKRAINE, the REPUBLIC OF MOLDOVA, GEORGIA, 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.