



EUROPEAN UNION

OSCE Permanent Council No. 1414 Vienna, 9 March 2023

EU statement on the International Women's Day

1. The European Union warmly welcomes the Deputy President of North Macedonia in charge of good governance policies, Ms. Slavica Grkovska, and the Special Representative of the OSCE Chairperson-in-Office on Gender, Ms. Liliana Palihovici to the Permanent Council and thanks them for their presentations.
2. International Women's Day is a good opportunity to reflect on the importance of gender equality for our societies. The EU is committed to support women's and girls' equal, full, effective and meaningful participation, in all their diversity, including in all spheres of public and political life, and promote whole-of-society efforts to engage men and boys as allies and beneficiaries for gender equality in eliminating all gender inequalities, addressing discriminatory laws and social norms and combating gender stereotypes.
3. Gender equality is a core principle of the EU and at the heart of human rights. The EU has made significant progress over the last decades as a result of equality legislation, gender mainstreaming and integration of the gender perspective into all other policies. Encouraging trends are the higher number of women in the labour market and their progress in securing better education and training. However, gender gaps remain and in the labour market women are still over-represented in lower paid sectors and under-represented in decision-making positions.
4. The EC Gender Equality Strategy presents policy objectives and actions to make significant progress by 2025 towards a gender-equal Europe. While the Strategy focuses on actions within the EU, it is coherent with the EU's external policy on gender equality and women's empowerment.

5. The EU is concerned about the worldwide backlash against women's and girls' full and equal enjoyment of human rights and the declining security and safety for women and girls. We condemn the increasing reprisals, violence, threats and attacks against women and girls, both offline and online, in particular targeting women human rights defenders, women journalists, women peacebuilders, women-led organisations, politically active women, women trade unionists, women and girls forced into displacement and migration, and all other women and girls in conflict and crisis-affected settings.
6. The severe impact of Russia's war of aggression against Ukraine on all women and girls is of grave concern, from heightened trafficking and sexual and gender-based violence to the loss of crucial livelihoods and rising poverty levels. Female journalists, soldiers, NGO representatives and politicians carry on their important work under war-time conditions and contribute to putting an end to this war. We express our solidarity with the Ukrainian women. They are showing resilience and courage, in uniform and in civilian roles, defending their country and democracy in the face of Russia's brutal war of aggression. The EU is steadfast in its continued support to Ukraine and its people and is firmly committed to holding to account all commanders, perpetrators and accomplices of war crimes and other most serious crimes committed in connection with Russia's war of aggression against Ukraine.
7. Gender equality is directly related to the OSCE's comprehensive concept of security and an inherent part of our common commitments. All OSCE participating States have committed themselves to gender equality, as well as to advancing women's full, equal and meaningful participation in political and public life. We stress the importance of these commitments and call for their full implementation.
8. As sexual and gender-based violence continues to be a serious obstacle to achieving equality, its elimination is a cornerstone in the efforts to achieve gender equal societies. Yesterday, in the joint meeting of the Permanent Council and the Forum for Security Cooperation, the EU highlighted the necessity of implementing the Women Peace and Security agenda for the protection of all women and girls in fragile and conflict-affected contexts, to help prevent all forms of sexual and gender-based violence and for attaining sustainable peace and security.
9. We also welcome the efforts by the autonomous institutions, field missions and the Secretariat to improve the gender balance within our organisation, and to enable and inclusive work environment for all. The Gender Parity Strategy Progress Report

is a good tool for this. Systematic gender mainstreaming into the monitoring and evaluation of all OSCE activities is also essential.

10. The EU appreciates the North Macedonia Chairpersonship's strong engagement in gender equality and its objective to strengthen the implementation of the Women, Peace and Security agenda.

The Candidate Countries NORTH MACEDONIA*, MONTENEGRO*, SERBIA*, ALBANIA*, UKRAINE, the REPUBLIC OF MOLDOVA, and BOSNIA and HERZEGOVINA*, the Potential Candidate Country GEORGIA, and the EFTA countries ICELAND and LIECHTENSTEIN, members of the European Economic Area, as well as ANDORRA, MONACO and SAN MARINO align themselves with this statement.

* North Macedonia, Montenegro, Serbia, Albania and Bosnia and Herzegovina continue to be part of the Stabilisation and Association Process.