



EUROPEAN UNION

OSCE 87th Joint FSC - PC Meeting Vienna, 8 March 2023

EU Statement on Women, Peace and Security and the Conflict Cycle

The European Union and its Member States commend the OSCE Chair of North Macedonia and the FSC Chair of Bosnia and Herzegovina for dedicating this joint meeting today, on the International Women's Day, to discuss Women, Peace and Security and the Conflict Cycle – a topic of key importance, especially with view to Russia's ongoing war of aggression against Ukraine. We welcome the OSCE Secretary General's leadership in advancing the WPS agenda. We welcome the distinguished Speakers and thank them for their insightful presentations on different aspects of these cross-cutting issues.

Chairs, sustainable peace and security is not possible without women. To be effective, the work towards lasting peace and stability in our region must take into account the entirety of societies during all stages of the conflict cycle. This is what the Women, Peace and Security Agenda – United Nations Security Council Resolution 1325 and its follow-up resolutions - are about. We must live up to our commitments in this regard – on a national level as well as within the OSCE and other multilateral fora.

Russia's war of aggression against Ukraine clearly shows the fatal consequences of violation of international law and our OSCE fundamental commitments. The need to address the situation of women and girls in conflict has again become abundantly clear and urgent. Reports, such as those presented under the Moscow Mechanism outline horrendous cruelties of widespread conflict-related sexual and gender-based violence against women and girls committed by Russian forces. We condemn this in the strongest terms and call for strengthening international support and protection for

women refugees and displaced women in conflict and post-conflict situations. While we need to address women's specific needs and vulnerabilities in this regard, it is equally important to support and empower women and girls as agents of peace and security.

The Russian war of aggression against Ukraine is also a reminder for all of us to address decisively all forms of conflict-related sexual and gender-based violence anywhere in the world, and to be mindful of other repercussions in crisis situations, for example the risks of increased human trafficking. The EU reiterates its steadfast commitment to uphold international human rights law and international humanitarian law, and to end impunity for international crimes, including conflict-related sexual violence.

When implementing the Women Peace and Security Agenda we must remember that the full, equal and meaningful participation of women is critical in order to achieve secure, democratic, and prosperous societies.

Decision-making built on principles of inclusivity provides us with better and broader perspectives. Let us look at one example: Participation of women in peace operations, where military and civilian objectives often overlap, has shown to increase access to various parts of societies and act as a link to improve civil-military cooperation. Inclusiveness and improved access to different groups in society, including civil society, also increase information gathering and analysis capabilities. Decisions based on a broader knowledge of society, enhance their legitimacy within the entire population. Women in armed and security forces also improve understanding of what is needed to protect women and girls against gender-specific risks and effects of armed conflict. Women in armed forces also serve as role models by inspiring local women to stand up for their human rights, fundamental freedoms and their participation in peace processes.

Chairs, we would like to take the opportunity to recall our commitments and stress the important role that the OSCE as regional security organisation and with regard to its comprehensive approach to security plays in promoting and supporting the implementation of the WPS agenda. In line with the 1999 Istanbul Document, the EU remains committed to making gender equality an integral part of our policies, both at the level of participating States and within the Organisation. The 2004 Ministerial

Council in Sofia adopted the OSCE Action Plan for the promotion of Gender Equality, which is yet to be fully implemented. We also recall our unwavering support for the proposed OSCE-wide Action Plan on Women, Peace and Security, which seeks to foster the further implementation of relevant UN Security Council Resolutions. Along this line, the EU and its 27 MS have endorsed the update of the guidance on voluntary reporting on WPS under the Code of Conduct, which will improve the exchange of data and best practices amongst participating States.

We recall the Ministerial Council Decision No. 3/11 on the Conflict Cycle, outlining the OSCE's capabilities in early warning, early action, dialogue facilitation, conflict resolution, mediation support and post-conflict rehabilitation across all three dimensions. We reiterate our call for strengthening the full, equal and meaningful participation and leadership of women in conflict prevention and resolution throughout the conflict cycle.

We stress the need for continued close engagement and cooperation between the OSCE participating States, Partners for Cooperation, the OSCE Secretariat, the field operations and the autonomous institutions, at all stages of the implementation of the WPS Agenda and throughout the whole implementation and evaluation process.

The EU also underlines the importance of a strong cooperation with civil society organisations in implementing gender equality and WPS commitments. Civil society organisations, women-led organisations, women human rights defenders and women peacebuilders play a vital role as agents of change.

The EU policy framework on Women, Peace and Security sets forth policy objectives and actions towards a gender-equal Europe by 2025. It formulates key actions for the coming years and commits to ensure an equality perspective in all EU policy areas, including Foreign and Security policy with a particular attention herein to the EU Action Plan on Women, Peace and Security.

Chairs, the full implementation of the Women, Peace and Security Agenda remains a strong priority for the EU in the OSCE. As the Russian aggression against Ukraine shows us – there is much work to be done. The EU remains ready to work tirelessly with our partners to achieve sustainable peace and security in our region.

Thank you

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

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