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and the Permanent Council of the OSCE

Security dialogue
„Women, Peace and Security and the Conflict Cycle“

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Statement by Ambassador Gesa Bräutigam,
Permanent Representative of Germany to the OSCE,
on behalf of the Women Ambassadors' Network, members of
Women in the 1st dimension and OSCE Men for Gender Equality

Secretary-General,
Chairs,
Distinguished panellists,
Dear colleagues,

I have the honour to deliver this statement on behalf of three informal networks: the Women Ambassadors and Permanent Representatives to the OSCE of Albania, Andorra, Bulgaria, Canada, Cyprus, the EU, France, Georgia, Germany, Iceland, Ireland, Latvia, Liechtenstein, Malta, Moldova, Norway, San Marino, Slovenia, Sweden, and Türkiye, as well as members of the Women in the 1st Dimension and members of the OSCE Men for Gender Equality. These groups are united by their commitment to the full and effective implementation of the Women, Peace and Security agenda, on national as well as on OSCE levels.

On today's International Women's Day – while we continue witnessing Russia's unprovoked, unjustified and illegal war of aggression against Ukraine – we want to raise our voice together and join others in highlighting the importance of women's full, equal and meaningful participation in all matters of peace and security, including at all the stages of the conflict

cycle. We therefore welcome the high importance the chairpersonships of North Macedonia and Bosnia and Herzegovina are according to this topic with this Joint FSC-PC session.

Mr. Chair,

Let me start by thanking the distinguished speakers for their very insightful presentations, which have given us a comprehensive picture of how women are affected by conflict and crises and what role they play during early warning and conflict prevention, in times of crisis management and with regard to post-conflict rehabilitation.

Studies have shown that women and girls not only have a different experience of violent conflicts, they are also key actors in stabilisation and peacebuilding efforts. Yet, women's voices and agency are still too often forgotten, marginalized or silenced. Let's face facts: Failing to recognise women's important role in all phases of the peacebuilding process is to the detriment of everyone. We cannot afford to disregard half of the population when building stability and security. Women's full, equal and meaningful participation in decision-making and leadership roles during all phases of the conflict cycle is not only a matter of equality and non-discrimination, it is a prerequisite for sustainable, legitimate, and lasting results.

It is clear to see: Gender equality is in the interest of everyone, it concerns us all. This is why, in order to contribute to the resolution of conflicts and to prevent future suffering of civilians and exacerbated gender inequalities, we need to support an inclusive, gender-responsive and multidimensional approach in all stages of the conflict cycle. Equality is also not possible without engaging men and boys. The root cause of gender-based violence is inequitable gender relations and attitudes. We need everyone's engagement to change these attitudes, break existing gender stereotypes and make men and boys agents of change. Only by including all parts of society can we realize our full potential to restore and safeguard peace and security in our region.

Mr. Chair,

The Women, Peace and Security agenda provides a strong framework for this important endeavour and the OSCE, as a regional security organization, plays a crucial role in its implementation. It is important to remember that promoting gender equality and implementing the WPS agenda in the OSCE's activities is a commitment agreed to by all participating States. Let us make sure that, within the OSCE, we live up to our commitments to advance the WPS agenda and the SDG goal of gender equality. This would not only ensure equal rights for all, but also strengthen the effectiveness of our organization, as well as security, prosperity, and resilience within the OSCE region.

There has already been tangible progress with regard to achieving these goals. We commend the invaluable work by Secretary General Helga Maria Schmid and her efforts to ensure gender mainstreaming in all three dimensions of the OSCE in line with its comprehensive security approach. The Networking Platform for Women Leaders, the secretariat's and ODIHR's work

in Ukraine and practical instruments like the “Toolkit on Inclusion of Women and Effective Peace Processes” are excellent examples of ways to strengthen women as agents for peace. However, a lot of work still lies ahead of us on the road to gender equality and non-discrimination, which we need to tackle together.

Mr. Chair,

In these difficult times, the WPS agenda remains more relevant than ever. Even in times of war, gender equality and WPS have to remain front and centre of our efforts. The latest reports and testimonies about the perpetration of sexual and gender-based violence and their use as a weapon of war against civilians are very concerning. Conflict-related sexual violence is never acceptable and may amount to war crimes. We strongly emphasize that all OSCE participating States have an obligation under International Humanitarian Law to protect civilians against sexual violence, and in the OSCE they have committed to combat all forms of violence against women and girls. We call for enhanced preventative efforts, prosecution of those responsible and an end to impunity. Survivors must also have access to comprehensive, gender-responsive and human rights-oriented care, support, and protection.

Let me also stress this: Ukrainian women remain an inspiration for their bravery and resilience, in their roles in political, military, and humanitarian response, within civil society organizations, and as human rights defenders, leaders and caretakers.

Mr. Chair,
dear colleagues,

Let me underline the undeniable truth: Sustainable peace and stability are not possible without the full, equal and meaningful participation and representation of women in all their diversity and at all levels of decision-making and leadership. The Women Ambassadors Network, Women in the 1st dimension and OSCE Men for Gender Equality will continue to promote all efforts in this direction, including with a view to the conflict cycle and the OSCE’s work in this area. Together, we stand for the human rights, safety, empowerment and leadership of women and girls. We stand for accountability and respect for international law and our shared OSCE principles and commitments. Now is the time to deliver on our commitments. We have to fight for gender equality each and every day. Every day is women’s day.

I thank you.