



**PERMANENT DELEGATION OF NORWAY  
TO THE OSCE**

**STATEMENT MARKING THE INTERNATIONAL DAY OF THE GIRL**

Delivered by Minister Counsellor Henning Hj Johansen at the Permanent Council  
Vienna, 15 October 2020

CHECK AGAINST DELIVERY

Mr Chair,

I deliver this statement on behalf of Andorra, Iceland, Liechtenstein, Switzerland, the United Kingdom and my own country Norway.

The International Day of the Girl Child 11 October each year focuses on promoting girls' empowerment and the fulfilment of their human rights.

25 years ago, in 1995, countries of the world came together around the Beijing declaration and Platform for Action, the global agenda for advancing the rights and empowerment of women and girls everywhere. The Beijing Declaration was the first to specifically point to girls' rights. The girl child has the right to live free from violence, to attend and complete school, to choose when and with whom she should marry, and to receive equal pay for equal work.

However, the job is not done. Also across our region, statistics show that child marriage, preference for sons and gender-based violence occur. The pandemic further increases the occurrence of some harmful practices, putting girls' opportunities and human rights in danger. In communities that as a whole are disadvantaged, girls are even more marginalized and vulnerable.

In times of crisis, it is mostly girls who are sent into early marriages or trafficked for sex, not boys. The UN expects 13 million additional child marriages in this decade as a

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result of the economic consequences of the pandemic. To victims of domestic violence, infection control measures may mean being locked up with their abuser while safe houses are closed down. We call on all participating States to include measures domestic violence in their COVID- 19 response.

However, lasting solutions to gender inequality will require changes to social norms.

Passing laws is important, but it is not enough. There must be efforts to change minds. Programmes should address the subordinate position of women and girls, their human rights, and how to elevate their status and access to opportunities. We especially urge participating States to invest in the young, to give them the resources and skills necessary to lead their generation in a new direction.

We highly appreciate the assistance that the Gender Section, through the different Executive Structures, can provide to participating States in the area of gender equality. We will also look to the next Secretary General to continue efforts to enable the full implementation of gender- mainstreaming in the OSCE. We as participating States must contribute to make sure gender mainstreaming in the OSCE is real. Gender equality must not become a goal that is “everyone’s problem, but no one’s responsibility”.