



**Statement of Ms. Eva Dröfn Hassell Guðmundsdóttir, Temporary Officer, at the Closing Session of the Human Dimension Seminar, Warsaw, 17 November 2021.**

**Thank you, Madame Moderator.**

Gender-based violence is one of the most widespread human rights violations in the world. Women and girls are at risk within their own homes, in crisis affected situations, and both online and offline.

This is truly a shadow pandemic which affects all societies. Therefore, we welcome the opportunity to highlight these important issues today.

Ending violence against women and girls remains a priority for Iceland both domestically and internationally.

Iceland is a proud co-leader in the Action Coalition on Gender-Based Violence in UN Women's Generation Equality Forum. And in this context, Iceland has emphasized the need for States to implement and ratify international and regional agreements on gender equality.

This includes the Istanbul Convention, which Iceland ratified in 2018.

Following the ratification, the Icelandic government has introduced new plans and legislations aiming to end sexual and gender-based violence and sexual harassment.

Cross-sectoral preventive policies also play a key role, with measures to strengthen capacities within the educational system at all levels and raise awareness across our society.

Furthermore, the increase in online gender-based violence has been met by legislative changes on sexual and privacy violations by reforming the General Penal Code.

The changes we have made have drastically improved procedures of investigations and led to a more open discussion about all forms of gender-based violence.

The increase in violence against women globally is alarming and unfortunately, the pandemic has further enabled those who have successfully rolled back previous victories on women's rights and freedoms in recent years.

We must do our utmost to safeguard these hard-won gains for gender equality, and I would like to use this opportunity to encourage those participating States who have yet to sign or ratify the Istanbul Convention, **to make it a priority to do so.**

Iceland places gender equality and women's empowerment at the core of our Foreign Policy and Strategy for Development Cooperation. This includes the Women, Peace and Security agenda, which we are committed to both at home and in international fora.

Iceland was among the first countries to develop a National Action Plan on Women, Peace and Security in 2008 and we also work with our development cooperation partners to develop such strategies.

The promotion of gender equality and the elimination of gender-based violence are integral aspects for achieving sustainable peace. National Action Plans are an important tool to realize this vision and fulfill the objectives of the related UN Security Council resolutions.

It is important to apply a multistakeholder approach when developing National Action Plans on Women, Peace and Security – to ensure inclusion and results that benefit us all.

One of the key pillars of this agenda is women's participation at all levels of decision making, of which gender-based violence remains a serious impediment to.

We must continue to promote and protect human rights and freedom for all, including women's right to a life free from violence and discrimination.

**Thank you, Madame Moderator.**