

THIRTIETH MEETING OF THE OSCE MINISTERIAL COUNCIL

(Skopje, 1 December 2023)

Joint Statement on Women, Peace and Security

I have the honour to make this Women, Peace and Security (WPS) statement on behalf of the following 43 participating States: Albania, Andorra, Austria, Belgium, Bosnia and Herzegovina, Bulgaria, Canada, Croatia, Cyprus, Czechia, Denmark, Estonia, Finland, France, Georgia, Germany, Greece, Iceland, Ireland, Italy, Latvia, Liechtenstein, Lithuania, Luxembourg, Malta, Moldova, Monaco, Montenegro, the Netherlands, North Macedonia, Norway, Portugal, Romania, San Marino, Serbia, Slovakia, Slovenia, Spain, Switzerland, Ukraine, the United Kingdom, the United States of America and my own country Sweden.

Firstly, we reiterate our commitment to the Women, Peace and Security agenda – which celebrated its 23rd anniversary this year – as a cornerstone to achieving comprehensive and sustainable peace and security in the OSCE area. The OSCE, as a regional security organisation, has – and will continue to – play a crucial role in implementing the WPS agenda. The continued broad support for the WPS agenda amongst participating States, and our ability to leverage the OSCE as a platform, was well-illustrated this year. The CiO North-Macedonia's Conference on Gender Equality and Women's Empowerment in Tetovo served as an important forum to share recommendations and commitments related to enhancing gender mainstreaming in the OSCE and across all dimensions. Our three FSC Chairs, furthermore, undertook tireless efforts to uphold the focus on UNSCR-1325's central role in the FSC mandate. These successes

demonstrate our ability to place WPS where it belongs: at the top of our, and the OSCE's, agenda.

As we reflect on this past year, the importance and urgency of implementing the WPS agenda in our region remains clear. The international community has long recognised the significance of incorporating gender perspectives in conflict prevention, conflict resolution and post-conflict rehabilitation. Understanding and integrating these perspectives is essential in addressing the disproportionate impact of conflict on women and girls, in all their diversity. This is happening in a context of a general rollback in women's rights, and concerted efforts by hostile actors to weaponize gender as part of attempts to weaken the international rules-based system and destabilise democracies. By mainstreaming gender in military, political, humanitarian, and diplomatic planning, we can increase the effectiveness of conflict prevention efforts and respond more effectively to these realities, leading to improved outcomes during and following conflict.

Since Russia's war of aggression against Ukraine, Ukrainian women have been indispensable in courageously defending their country's territorial integrity, sovereignty and independence. They have also played a crucial role in rebuilding their country's future, while facing greater risks of gender-based violence and conflict-related sexual violence. Besides, Ukraine's efforts to revise its National Action Plan during wartime demonstrate not only its commitment to the 1325 agenda, but also the crucial role of the WPS agenda in responding to the gendered dimensions of conflict.

We must address the underrepresentation of women in the political, public and security sector, particularly in leadership positions. Women's

full, equal and meaningful inclusion in security forces ensures a greater diversity of views, which is linked to greater innovation and effectiveness within any organization. It is also well established that women's meaningful participation in peace processes results in more inclusive peace agreements that are effective and last longer. Therefore, it is crucial that structural barriers and underlying causes of underrepresentation are removed, keeping in mind the intersectional aspects.

Allow me to emphasise that we cannot solve today's global challenges without the full participation of women – not without women soldiers, police officers, human rights defenders, and not without women peacebuilders and their networks. Nor can we attain gender equality without the support, engagement, and accountability of men. Only together can we build a more equal world. We must remember that gender equality is not to the benefit of some, but to the shared benefit of all.

We reaffirm our support for the development of an OSCE-wide Action Plan on Women, Peace and Security for the implementation of UN Security Council Resolution 1325 and its follow-up resolutions. In 2020 we made recommendations ranging from the development of NAPs on Women, Peace and Security to encouraging and supporting sharing of experiences and best practices as regards the full, equal and meaningful participation of women in conflict prevention, conflict resolution and post-conflict rehabilitation. I will attach the 2020 statement to the written version of this statement and I encourage participating States to review these recommendations and where possible implement them.

In conclusion, we underline our commitment to sustained efforts towards our shared goals of ensuring the full, equal, meaningful, and safe participation of women, including in all activities of the OSCE.

Thank you.