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**Joint Statement on the occasion  
of the International Women's Day**

**Delivered by Ambassador Susanne Schütz,  
Permanent Representative of Germany to the OSCE,  
during 1464th OSCE Permanent Council meeting on Thursday 7<sup>th</sup> March 2024**

Madam Chair,  
Dear colleagues,

I have the honour of delivering this statement on behalf of the following 45 participating states: Albania, Andorra, Austria, Belgium, Bosnia and Herzegovina, Bulgaria, Canada, Croatia, Cyprus, Czechia, Estonia, Denmark, Finland, France, Georgia, , Greece, Iceland, Ireland, Italy, Latvia, Liechtenstein, Lithuania, Luxembourg, Malta, Moldova, Monaco, Montenegro, Netherlands, North Macedonia, Norway, Poland, Portugal, Romania, San Marino, Serbia, Slovakia, Slovenia, Spain, Sweden, Switzerland, Türkiye, Ukraine, United Kingdom, the United States and my own country Germany as well as members of the Women's ambassador's network, OSCE Men for Gender Equality network, and the Women in the First-Dimension network.

We warmly welcome Special Representative of the Chairperson-in-Office Ms. Liliana Palihovici to the Permanent Council and thank you for your insightful statement. We also welcome the Chairpersonship of Malta's and the Secretary General's strong engagement in promoting gender equality. We look forward to participating in the Chair's Gender-related events this year and an opportunity to review our commitments in light of the 20<sup>th</sup> anniversary of the OSCE Gender Action Plan.

Firstly, we, as OSCE participating States, have committed to addressing the disproportionate impact of gender-based violence on women and girls, including conflict-related sexual violence, in our region. These issues are well-documented by several international reports on Russia's war of aggression against Ukraine including Moscow Mechanism and ODIHR reporting, as well as international reports covering conflicts across the OSCE region. The OSCE is making efforts to address these violations of international humanitarian and human rights law, many of which may amount to the most serious international crimes, as well as human rights abuses, and to respond to the needs of survivors, including through extra-budgetary projects such as WIN.

Madam Chair,

This year we observe the 20th anniversary of the *2004 OSCE Action Plan for the Promotion of Gender Equality*. In it, we committed to consistent gender mainstreaming, promoting a safe and gender-sensitive working environment and management culture for OSCE staff, sharing best practices to promote gender equality in participating States, achieving continuous improvement in the gender equal ratio of all staff levels and submitting more women candidates for seconded positions within the OSCE, as well as highlighting the importance of empowering women's rights organizations and peacebuilders in conflict prevention, reduction and resolution efforts for more effective and sustainable peace. Since then, we have come a long way. The OSCE's efforts to support participating States in strengthening mechanisms to prevent and respond to gender-based violence, including violence against women and girls, particularly when the violence results in death, are increasingly vital and we invite participating States to draw on the OSCE's support.

We fully support the OSCE Secretariat's Gender Issues Programme, which was founded in 2000, to help participating States advance gender equality through training and capacity building and has continued to grow and evolve. Thanks to its work, OSCE executive structures have also significantly upgraded their internal gender mainstreaming policies and architecture: this includes adding gender markers to ensure gender is considered in all OSCE project activities. The Gender Issues Programme has also advanced numerous

OSCE economic empowerment initiatives, helped participating States improve laws on gender equality, and raised awareness of gender-based violence. The Programme supported participating States' implementation of the Women, Peace, and Security Agenda.

We also highly appreciate ODIHR's work and expertise in this regard, not least through the CHANGE project, which seeks to advance women's political participation and gender equality in politics, including through support to national Parliaments. We also acknowledge ODIHR's ongoing efforts to combat trafficking in human beings and its work to support Roma and Sinti women in line with the 2004 Action Plan.

We welcome the project for the Safety of Female Journalists Online by the Representative on Freedom of the Media as well as the important gender equality work performed by HCNM and the field missions.

This year's International Women's Day with the theme "Invest in women: Accelerate progress" aims to shed light on the annual deficit in spending on gender-equality measures to achieve gender equality by 2030. Through the WIN project and ODIHR's CHANGE project, participating States have pledged EUR 4.3 million and 1.08 million respectively to achieve gender equality in all three OSCE dimensions. These projects also provide crucial support for the activities of women's associations across the OSCE region, which continue to suffer from severe underinvestment.

Madam Chair,

We firmly believe that our Organization should reflect the people in the region it represents, including women in all their diversity. While we can celebrate the achievement of gender balance when looking at the OSCE's workforce as a whole, we still fall short of full, equal and meaningful representation of women at all levels of the OSCE workforce. This is driven by an insufficient number of women candidates being put forward for seconded senior staff positions. This is our responsibility, as participating States.

It is our commitment. We, therefore, reiterate our Secretary General's call from last year for participating States to put forward more women candidates for these positions. Women's full, equal and meaningful representation at all levels can only be achieved if we work together.

Madam Chair,

As we mark 20 years since the 2004 OSCE Gender Action Plan, we should redouble our efforts to achieve gender equality in all three dimensions. In the first dimension we should reinvigorate efforts to implement the Women, Peace, and Security Agenda through a region-wide action plan. We also remind and encourage participating States to submit the Women, Peace and Security Annex to the Code of Conduct questionnaire, which supports more effective implementation through data collection. In the second and third dimensions, we need to bolster efforts to ensure that women, in all their diversity, can participate fully, equally, meaningfully and safely in all spheres of economic, political, and social life. We must accelerate the scaling up of evidence-based and survivor-led approaches to tackle all forms of gender-based violence as we work to prevent gender-based violence from occurring in the first place.

Now is the time to deliver on our commitments.

The peace and welfare of the world requires the participation of women in all their diversity on equal terms in all fields.

Thank you, Madam Chair.