



**Statement by H.E. Helga Hauksdóttir,  
Ambassador and Permanent Representative of Iceland,  
at the 1060 Meeting of the OSCE Forum for Security and Cooperation,  
Vienna, 25 October 2023.**

*I thank you, Madame Chair,*

Iceland thanks the distinguished Speakers for their valuable presentations and insightful remarks. We also express our gratitude to the Canadian FSC Chairpersonship for convening this meeting on Women, Peace, and Security.

Iceland is a country without armed forces, so our experience with implementing the WPS agenda is different in nature. Nevertheless, as a country with gender equality and the WPS agenda as a top priority, we would like to share a couple of thoughts.

Women's participation in peacebuilding and conflict resolution is essential and their contribution to shaping the future of their country and society is valuable to us all. It is not enough to have one woman at the table or in the room. It is not just a matter of equality and human rights; it also delivers better results.

To break the longstanding barriers to women's equal participation in matters of peace and security, it is imperative to eliminate both direct and indirect discrimination, tackle root causes, such as gender stereotypes, harmful gender

norms and violence against women, and create safe and enabling environments for all women. Gender mainstreaming is in this respect an invaluable tool.

Wars and conflict have a disproportionate impact on women and girls, and Russia's illegal, unprovoked and brutal war of aggression against Ukraine is no exception. We commend the bravery and resilience demonstrated by the people of Ukraine, including Ukrainian women, and recognise their important contributions and roles in the political, peacebuilding, military, and humanitarian response.

*Madame Chair,*

Equally important to women's active participation, is to engage men and boys to take on the joint responsibility we all carry for advancing gender equality. To get them on board, the Barbershop concept and toolbox was developed by Iceland in partnership with UN Women in 2014. Since then, over 20 Barbershop workshops worldwide have been held. Iceland is honoured to bring the Barbershop concept to Vienna by hosting the Barbershop Conference for Military Advisors and FSC Delegates at the OSCE next week, on 31 October, in good co-operation with several delegations.

Advancing gender equality must be kept high on the agenda in all countries. It is especially important now, as we witness a frightening reversal in generational gains in women and girls' rights in many parts of the world. We owe it to the generations of today and tomorrow to urgently redouble our efforts.

We need everyone on board to realise gender equality, and every person can make a difference, in their personal as well as professional lives. This is ongoing work that requires our dedication and can never be considered finished once and for all.

*Madame Chair,*

Iceland strives to be both a strong and a credible advocate of the message contained in Resolution 1325: that gender equality and women's meaningful participation goes hand in hand with stability and peace.

Iceland's fourth National Action Plan on Women, Peace and Security is currently being prepared, and will integrate the lessons learned and proposals put forward in an independent evaluation report of the third NAP. Some key points raised in the evaluation report were the need for further awareness-raising, education, and training.

On a final note, I'd like to briefly mention the Women's Day Off, that first took place 48 years ago yesterday, when Icelandic women went on a one-day strike to highlight unfair differences in salaries for women and men. This event is considered one of the most important actions taken by women in Iceland to advance gender equality. Yesterday, Icelandic women did it again, and went on a one-day strike, at work and at home, to highlight women's contributions in the labour market and the household, that still today remains largely unrecognised and undervalued. Despite all progress, gender equality still needs work and the joint efforts of women and men.

*I thank you.*