

Your Excellency,
Dear colleagues,
Ladies and gentlemen,

At the outset, I would like to thank you for contributing to fruitful discussions and exchange of views in the past two days on how to enhance the fulfillment of gender-related commitments in the OSCE area. Current review of the implementation of the 2004 OSCE Action Plan for the Promotion of Gender Equality through sharing experiences and lessons learned was more than needed after 10 years of its implementation and we should consider establishing a regular yearly practice.

Let me recall that at the OSCE Istanbul Summit in 1999 heads of states or governments declared that the full and equal exercise by women of their human rights is essential to achieve a more peaceful, prosperous and democratic OSCE area. We consider putting the topic of equality between men and women again very high on the OSCE agenda.

In numerous other OSCE documents we confirmed our determination to ensure equal rights of men and women, and accordingly to take all necessary measures to promote equally effective participation of men and women in political, economic, social and cultural life, making gender equality an integral part of our policies. In the light of upcoming Serbian Chairmanship, we are ready to put our efforts to enhance existing OSCE Commitments related to gender equality in order to achieve its fulfillment.

Ladies and Gentlemen,

Equality between men and women should be an integral part of our policies both at the level of our states and within the Organization. As we have heard during this conference, ten years after the adoption of the 2004 OSCE Action Plan, we are still witnessing serious gaps in its implementation. To identify these gaps is the first step in addressing them. On the other hand, numerous examples of good practices could help overcome existing deficiencies.

Mainstreaming a gender perspective is the process of assessing the implications for women and men of any planned action, including legislation, policies or programs in all areas and at all levels. It is a common duty of all 57 participating States to lay solid institutional and legal ground for women to express and realize their abilities on an equal footing, giving them the opportunity to choose by themselves and for themselves. For example, how can we know if women are able to assume high positions in decision-making throughout security structures if such opportunities are not offered to them?

From our own experience in Serbia, adoption of the National Action Plan on Women, Peace and Security is an important policy tool contributing to more systematic engagement of women in all areas relating to security. That is why throughout political-military dimension of the OSCE we are among the proponents of involvement of women and recognition of their role in different segments of this dimension, but also of their inclusion in all phases of the conflict cycle.

Some of those experiences from my country you had the opportunity

to hear at this Conference directly from several participants from Serbia. Let me just note at this point that, through broad interest and participation of representatives from state structures, National Parliament, independent institutions, think-thanks and NGOs from Serbia, we are also sending messages on high importance we attach to this topic today, but also throughout our Chairmanship in 2015 and beyond.

Concerted and diversified Serbian representation is also very illustrative for another important aspect of the OSCE Action Plan. It is inclusiveness. The Action Plan was adopted by ministers, but it can be implemented only in close cooperation of state officials with parliamentarians, independent institutions for human rights and civil society. Participation of young generation is of utmost importance. Therefore, we have to work systematically on awareness raising through education and inclusion of youth in all relevant deliberations. I would also like to stress the role of the media in this regard.

Position of Romani women was highlighted throughout the Conference by many participants. I would like to use this opportunity to assure you that Roma and Sinti problems will be highly on the agenda of Serbian CiO. And not only Roma women, young people and children, but also other vulnerable groups that feel discriminated.

Speaking about vulnerability, one naturally comes to the problem of violence against woman. My Swiss colleague ambassador Greminger has just elaborated extensively on possible ways of combating this gender based crime. We also believe that recently adopted Council of Europe Istanbul Convention gives additional impetus to the OSCE to consider adopting relevant documents that would complement the Convention.

Ladies and Gentlemen,

Analysis of assessment and exchange of information among participating States are important tools for our co-operation within the OSCE. It is of particular importance in the area of economic empowerment of women, and in addressing problems such as inadequate social protection, unequal payment and gray economy.

Statistics are more precise and comprehensive when it comes to political participation of women. In Serbia, we reached 30 % threshold of women participation in the National Assembly and we are pretty high on the list among other OSCE participating states. Trend is positive in the OSCE area, in general, comparing the times when Action Plan of our Organization was drafted. However, situation with participation of women in political and public life could be much better. There were number of important recommendations we have heard on this conference on how to raise the threshold, particularly with respect to political participation of women in political arena at the local level.

While there are number of other international organizations dealing with gender empowerment, we heard during these two days many arguments why OSCE is well placed to promote, advance and address the issues of gender equality from the perspective of security and stability in our area. Indeed, its cross-dimensional approach to security opens opportunity for incorporating gender perspective in each and every activity of the Organization, particularly those relating to projects of the OSCE field presences.

There is plenty of room for improving gender mainstreaming both at the national level, but in our Organization, as well. Diversified mandates of

existing structures in dealing with gender are additional added value of the OSCE. We agree with proposals of participants that there is a need to strengthen institutional mechanisms of the OSCE and to raise profile of gender mainstreaming, including through Helsinki+40 process. We will support all additional efforts undertaken by our Swiss colleagues and we stand ready to continue in that direction during our consecutive Chairmanships.

At the end, let me thank the Gender Unit of the Secretariat headed by Ambassador Beham, Ms. June Zeitlin, Special Representative of the Chairmanship-in-Office, and ODIHR for excellent organization of this Conference and for all their efforts to raise visibility and importance of gender issue within the Organization and beyond.