



OSCE Parliamentary Assembly President Christine Muttonen (MP, Austria)

Remarks to the Special meeting of the OSCE Economic and Environmental Committee

“Participation of Women in Economic and Environmental Decision-making”

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Vienna

Ladies and gentlemen,

I would like to welcome you all to this special meeting of the Economic and Environmental Committee. It’s a pleasure for me to be here with you today as the subject is very dear to me.

As a woman and the only second female President of the OSCE Parliamentary Assembly, I believe that the OSCE and the women of the OSCE area have real potential. Yet, it has to be fully realized.

Today, on the occasion of International Women’s Day, we are here to talk about a seemingly anachronistic – a seemingly outdated – issue.

There is no reason why women should not be found in the highest positions, be it in business, politics, institutions or diplomacy. No question, progress has already been achieved, but despite this, we still face female underrepresentation in almost all levels of public life.

The OSCE is an organization that aims to guarantee security and there cannot be security without the involvement of women. Women represent half of the world’s population and excluding them from productive and social life is not only discriminatory but also highly counterproductive. One of the top priorities for the OSCE PA is to make sure that parliamentarians are aware of the need for balanced participation of women.

We are committed to closing the gender gap in our organization, in our parliaments and throughout society. Women’s economic empowerment is a central contributing factor to improving gender equality and to reducing poverty. And, ladies and gentlemen, women’s empowerment is also a critical tool to ensure the comprehensive stability and security of the OSCE area and the world.

The OSCE Parliamentary Assembly strongly believes in women’s full representation as a fundamental part of the economic, social and general development of our societies. For this reason we have a very active Special Representative on Gender Issues, Hedy Fry from Canada.

She monitors the situation, advises fellow members of parliament and regularly highlights the issue. In fact, she was one of our keynote speakers just two weeks ago at the OSCE PA Winter Meeting.

The Parliamentary Assembly also publishes an Annual Report on gender issues, drafted by the Special Representative and discussed with the representatives of the participating States, helping them to assess their achievements and identify room for improvement. The Special Representative also monitors the gender balance in OSCE institutions and field missions.

During our last Annual Session, the OSCE PA approved the Tbilisi Declaration, which restated the commitment to implement the UN Women, Peace and Security agenda. The Security Council Resolution 1325 and its subsequent resolutions stress women's essential role in conflict prevention, resolution and recovery, as well during negotiations.

Furthermore the PA called for a gender-sensitive approach to human security issues, but also for the increase of the role of women in the OSCE structure.

We all know that the empowerment of women is crucial for all levels: for conflict management, for negotiations on climate change, on economic development, for political talks and for confidence building measures.

And we all know the women are – along with children – the ones most vulnerable to poverty, climate change and political instability. Yet, the realities of gender inequality do not allow the most affected part of the world's population to speak out loudly and be part of the solution. Only with their inclusive involvement can the process be complete, decisive and sustainable.

There is still a lot of work to do to achieve the full inclusion of women in security, economic and social spheres. In this unique forum for dialogue, the Parliamentary Assembly of the OSCE, we will continue to discuss solutions and develop strategies.

This is why I am organizing a conference on OSCE security policy – from a female perspective – here in Vienna.

It will be about a pan-European security architecture; about the strength and weaknesses of current OSCE missions, and about the role of women in the fight against violence-prone extremism and terrorism.

Ladies and gentlemen, gender equality remains a challenge that needs to be addressed.

And be assured we will keep on doing so, not only on international women's day, but every day.