

## **Gender Plan for Future Actions within the OSCE Parliamentary Assembly**

*Presented by Mrs Tone Tingsgaard, Special Representative on the Gender Issue, at the Assembly's 13<sup>th</sup> Annual Session in Edinburgh, July 2004*

The OSCE adopted a Gender Action Plan in 2000. The OSCE PA Gender Balance Report compiled by the Gender Unit of the OSCE Parliamentary Assembly International Secretariat for this session shows that since then no progress has been made and that the gender situation within the OSCE is getting worse. The OSCE is currently working on an updated action plan. As a complement, I would like to present a Gender Plan for Future Action for the OSCE PA.

At the OSCE PA Winter meeting in Vienna a questionnaire was distributed to the delegates in the Assembly. From the answers given and from the Gender Balance Report I would like to point at some relevant factors

1. A clear majority of respondents to the questionnaire distributed earlier this year expressed dissatisfaction with the current level of women on their delegations (75% of women, and 56% of men).<sup>1</sup> This is an area **where** real impact can be made. As a part of the *Strategy Paper*, it is therefore intended to create a network of women and Heads of Delegation within the Assembly who can work in their respective countries to raise the number of women selected for the OSCE PA delegations.
2. While the overall number of women in the OSCE PA Delegations is low, it has increased slightly in recent years. In 2001, 17 percent of the MPs who participated in the Annual Session were women, and last year the figure grew to 21,4 percent. During the same period of time, the number of elected officers (Members of the Bureau and Officers of the three General Committees) who were women remained constant at approximately 30 percent. This shows that the efforts to promote women to leadership positions within the Assembly have been quite successful in spite of the fact that there are relatively few female Members.
3. From the very beginning of the process of getting a job in the OSCE, women seem to be disadvantaged; in a survey conducted recently, one staff member reported that she had been surprised to have been selected because she had been told that “the OSCE is a conservative organisation. ... You will have no chance against all the male candidates”.<sup>3</sup>
4. If we move to the actual *process* of hiring, we unfortunately find evidence that this may be true: the *Gender Balance Report* tells us that while 23% of those invited to job-interviews for professional-level jobs in 2003 were women, women composed only half of that ratio (12%) of those actually selected.<sup>4</sup> Having made it to the point of interviews, women once again seem to be at a disadvantage.
5. Perhaps even more unfortunate is the situation which women seem to be faced with once inside of the Organisation. In the recent survey of seconded mission members, 60% of women respondents said that they do not consider the OSCE to be a good place to work.<sup>5</sup>

Thus women firstly are discouraged from even approaching the door to the OSCE, secondly are turned away at the door in that they have less chance of getting hired to

professional-level posts than men, and thirdly, have a difficult experience once inside the OSCE.

**Now to the proposed actions:**

***Measures to be taken directed at the OSCE:***

- The OSCE Secretariat and the participating States should take positive action to promote the recruitment of women candidates within the OSCE bodies and Institutions, especially at higher levels. If governments cannot find suitable candidates, national OSCE PA Delegations can assist their respective Governments in identifying qualified female candidates.
- Parliamentary Delegations to the OSCE should monitor the work of their Permanent National Delegations to the OSCE in Vienna to ensure that they are doing everything possible to promote gender balance in all OSCE activities and Institutions. In this regard, OSCE PA Delegations could request regular reports from their Permanent National Delegations in Vienna on actions and developments improving the gender balance situation in the OSCE.
- OSCE PA Delegations should insist that their Delegations to the OSCE veto all appointments to senior positions unless qualified women are nominated and considered for such positions and until the efforts to correct the gender imbalance move in a positive direction.
- OSCE PA Delegations should encourage their Governments to support an increase in the OSCE budget for the Office of the Gender Advisor in the OSCE Secretariat in Vienna.
- The OSCE must improve the mainstreaming of the gender perspective in reports, resolutions and all other documents. Gender neutral often means gender blind. The OSCE PA International Secretariat will continue to monitor this.
- The OSCE PA International Secretariat will continue to report to the Assembly on the gender situation within the OSCE in order to promote awareness.

***Measures to be taken directed at the OSCE PA:***

- Parliaments in the OSCE area are strongly urged to take positive action in order to obtain gender balance in their national delegations to the OSCE PA.
- The goal is for **all** Delegations to include substantial representation of women by 2006. Failing this, a quota system must be discussed.
- Heads of national OSCE PA Delegations should take positive action to promote the nomination and appointment of women candidates in the OSCE PA's field related activities.

- The President of the OSCE PA, in consultation with the International Secretariat, will continue to encourage women to head OSCE PA field visits and election monitoring missions.
- The OSCE PA will seek to increase the number of women in the Bureau and on the General Committees.
- The Special Representative on the Gender Issue will promote an understanding that all OSCE PA reports and resolutions be gender mainstreamed and that a gender perspective be included in the work of all three committees and in the activities of the ad hoc Committees.
- ***In order to further improve gender awareness and representation within the OSCE PA, the Special Representative on the Gender Issue will create a network for Heads of Delegations in order to foster discussion on how to further improve the gender balance in the OSCE and the OSCE PA.***
- ***The OSCE PA Special Representative on the Gender Issue will also introduce and implement Gender Awareness programmes for Parliaments, Parliamentarians and Officials.***

***Measures to be taken directed at the Secretariat:***

- National Delegations have a decisive responsibility in nominating and encouraging women to apply for senior positions when such positions become vacant in the International Secretariat in order for the Standing Committee and the Bureau to further improve the gender balance within the Secretariat.
- The Secretary General has a decisive responsibility in continuing to ensure that the good and equal working environment that exists in the International Secretariat between men and women will be maintained.

The Parliamentary Assembly of the Council of Europe has taken the important step of including in its Rules of Procedure that a delegation's credentials can be challenged if there is not an adequate representation of each sex on the delegation.<sup>6</sup> This is a demand put upon national parliaments; we can at least put a similar demand upon internal operations within the OSCE PA. As such, the *Strategy Paper* calls for a **substantial** number of women in all of our monitoring missions, ad hoc committees, and field visits. However, national and international politics are not the only areas in which women have trouble gaining an adequate say. The *Gender Balance Report* demonstrates this fact very clearly. Even in the OSCE, an organisation devoted to upholding and promoting human rights, the situation in some respects is very poor. **This has to be changed if OSCE is to be taken seriously in its strive for human rights and democracy.**

- <sup>1</sup> *OSCE PA Gender Balance Report*, July 2004, p. 40
- <sup>2</sup> *OSCE PA Gender Balance Report*, July 2004, p. 42
- <sup>3</sup> *OSCE PA Gender Balance Report*, July 2004, p. 6
- <sup>4</sup> *OSCE PA Gender Balance Report*, July 2004, p. 27
- <sup>5</sup> *OSCE PA Gender Balance Report*, July 2004, p. 6
- <sup>6</sup> *OSCE PA Gender Balance Report*, July 2004, p. 17