



ADDRESS BY

DR. HEDY FRY

**SPECIAL REPRESENTATIVE ON GENDER ISSUES
TO THE OSCE PARLIAMENTARY ASSEMBLY**

17TH WINTER MEETING

23–24 FEBRUARY 2018

VIENNA, AUSTRIA

CHECK AGAINST DELIVERY

INTRODUCTION

President Tsereteli,

Colleagues,

Thank you for this opportunity to discuss the gender aspects of our work. Having served as the OSCE's Special Representative on Gender Issues since 2010, I can say that it has been a privilege to work with all of you over the years to promote gender equality within both the OSCE PA and throughout the OSCE region.

The purpose of my address today is to share some initial ideas for the 2018 gender report. But before I do so, I would like to update you on some developments relevant to my mandate.

2016 ANNUAL PROGRESS REPORT ON THE IMPLEMENTATION OF THE OSCE 2004 GENDER ACTION PLAN

I welcome the *2016 Annual Progress Report on the Implementation of the OSCE 2004 Action Plan on the Promotion of Gender Equality*, which the Secretary General presented to the Permanent Council in 2017.¹ I would like to commend the efforts of the Senior Adviser on Gender Issues and her team in the OSCE's Gender Section in compiling the report, and in helping to monitor the integration of gender perspectives into all aspects of the OSCE's activities. The 2016 progress report identified many positive steps that have been taken throughout the OSCE's structures and institutions regarding gender equality, and I am certain that the Gender Section is responsible for much that has been achieved in that regard.

Enhanced training on gender mainstreaming within the OSCE's Secretariat, the appointment of Gender Focal Points in executive structures, and the development of a Road Map to guide implementation of the 2004 Gender Action Plan are just a few examples of last year's achievements.

I was pleased that the 2016 Progress Report reflects a move towards results-based reporting. I agree with the Secretary General's statement that it is difficult to measure progress without clear benchmarks, and I look forward to a more rigorous assessment of the OSCE's activities in the future.

Despite these and other positive trends, the 2016 Progress Report also included some troubling findings. Most notably, I am concerned about the overall decrease in the percentage of women in senior positions throughout the OSCE. According to the report, men held 72% of the senior management positions across the OSCE's Secretariat, institutions and field operations, including heads and deputy heads of missions. It is deeply disappointing to me that women, who make up 50% of the population, hold only 28% of the senior and decision-making positions in the OSCE, an organization founded on the principles of comprehensive security, peace and prosperity for all.

The remarkably low levels of women employed in the OSCE's politico-military dimension, in its field missions and in its Special Monitoring Mission are also problematic.

¹ Organization for Security and Cooperation in Europe (OSCE), "[Annual Progress Report on the Implementation of the OSCE 2004 Gender Action Plan on the Promotion of Gender Equality – 2016](#)," 2 October 2017.

These findings point to a clear recruitment problem that may be linked to the number of female candidates being put forward for secondment by OSCE participating States. According to the 2016 Progress Report, four out of 10 participating States do not use a gender policy to direct their recruitment processes for OSCE positions.² I urge Parliamentary Assembly members to encourage their governments to nominate more female candidates to leadership positions in the OSCE and to enhance the participation of women working in the security sector.

ENGAGING MEN AND BOYS

Increased attention is also being paid to the role of men in promoting gender equality. For example, the OSCE Mission in Kosovo has launched a project designed to increase awareness of gender issues among men, particularly youth, and to motivate behavioural change. A related initiative, known as the “MenEngage Network of Ambassadors,” held events over the past year to inspire male delegates and OSCE staff to get involved in advocating gender equality and exchanging best practices.

Male engagement is about moving beyond the symbolic involvement of men as quiet spectators on the side lines. It’s about challenging the structures, beliefs and practices that sustain gender inequality. It’s about recognizing that gender equality is not “a woman’s issue.” It’s about being an advocate who will “walk the talk.” By taking the approach that men are stakeholders and co-beneficiaries in advancing gender equality, initiatives like the MenEngage Network are helping to break down the barriers that prevent women’s full and equal participation in all aspects of society.

That is why I was pleased that the 2016 OSCE Conference on Combating Violence Against Women called for men and boys to be engaged as allies in the fight against gender-based violence.³

VIOLENCE AGAINST WOMEN

In 2017, the global community witnessed a momentous shift towards changing the attitudes and behaviours that tolerate gender-based violence. Around the world, millions of courageous women used social media and other platforms to share their stories of abuse, sexual violence and harassment. The rise of such hashtag campaigns as #metoo, #timesup and #orangetheworld exposed the sheer magnitude of the sexual harassment and other forms of violence that women worldwide face every day.

According to World Health Organization statistics for 2017, 35% of women worldwide have experienced physical or sexual violence in their lifetime.⁴ That percentage represents one in three women. As UN Women explains, “[w]hether at home, on the streets, or during war, violence against women and girls is a human rights violation of pandemic proportions that takes place in public and private spaces.”⁵ It can take many forms, including intimate partner violence, sexual violence and harassment, human trafficking, female genital mutilation, and early and forced marriage.⁶ In addition

² OSCE, [2016 Annual Progress Report on the Implementation of the OSCE 2004 Action Plan on the Promotion of Gender Equality](#), September 2017, p. 35.

³ OSCE, [“Combating violence against women in the OSCE region,” Gender Section](#), August 2017.

⁴ World Health Organization, [“Violence Against Women,”](#) November 2017.

⁵ UN Women, [In Focus: Leave No One Behind – End Violence Against Women and Girls.](#)

⁶ UN Women, [“Violence Against Women,” Infographic.](#)

to physical dimension, violence can be economic or psychological, and can cross all geographical, cultural and class boundaries.⁷ The result is that gender-based violence is one of the most pervasive human rights violations in the OSCE area.

We know that the promotion and protection of equal rights and opportunities for women and men are essential to peace, sustainable democracy and economic development, and – therefore – to security and stability in the OSCE region. We know that combating and preventing violence against women is part of a comprehensive approach to security that encompasses the politico-military, the economic and environmental, and the human rights dimensions. We know that these facts have been acknowledged in Ministerial Council Decisions in 2005 and in 2014.

THE 2017 MINISTERIAL COUNCIL

Yet, against the backdrop of an unprecedented global outcry condemning normalized violence against women, the 2017 Ministerial Council failed to adopt two draft decisions on gender equality during its negotiations: “increasing the participation of women in the security sector”; and “combating and preventing violence against women.”

Unfortunately, some participating States attempted to restrict the scope, or to weaken the text, of the draft documents, and no consensus could be reached.

As parliamentarians, we must be tireless in our efforts to create the real change that is required to protect the rights of our citizens and to respect international commitments. As the OSCE Secretary General himself states in the 2016 progress report, “we have much more work to do to achieve full gender equality throughout the OSCE and to mainstream gender perspectives in all of our work.”⁸ I believe that the members of the OSCE PA should strive to attain this goal and to hold our governments to account.

THE WOMEN, PEACE, AND SECURITY AGENDA

The UN Security Council has recognized issues regarding the protection and rights of women as peace and security issues. This link was first established by the Security Council’s October 2000 landmark Resolution 1325, which was then built on – and expanded by – subsequent resolutions. Together, this body of resolutions on “women, peace and security” emphasizes the imperative of women’s involvement in efforts to prevent, resolve, rebuild and recover from conflict.

Violence against women is exacerbated before conflict, during conflict, and can continue into the post-conflict period. As a result, conflict-related sexual violence has been deemed a global security threat.⁹

The 2018 gender report will examine the various ways in which the OSCE could improve efforts designed to eliminate violence against women by enhancing their participation throughout the

⁷ OSCE, [“Combating violence against women in the OSCE region,”](#) *Gender Section*, August 2017, p. 4.

⁸ OSCE, [2016 Annual Progress Report on the Implementation of the OSCE 2004 Action Plan on the Promotion of Gender Equality](#), September 2017, p. 1.

⁹ Rachel Vogelstein, [“Women’s Participation in Peace and Security Processes,”](#) *Council on Foreign Relations*, 26 October 2017.

conflict cycle. Today, I will focus on three phases: conflict prevention and resolution; conflict management; and post-conflict rehabilitation.

CONFLICT PREVENTION AND RESOLUTION

The women, peace and security agenda reflects the growing body of evidence demonstrating that including women in peace processes helps to reduce conflict and advance stability.¹⁰ During the 2017 OSCE PA Annual Session in Minsk, I put forward a Supplementary Item on *Promoting Gender Inclusive and Responsive Mediation* that was adopted by the Parliamentary Assembly.

Working in collaboration with Mr. Ilkka Kanerva, the OSCE Special Representative on Mediation, the resolution explained that mediation is widely recognized as one of the most effective means of preventing, managing and resolving conflict, and that women play a vital role in helping to forge lasting peace. Research clearly demonstrates that peace processes with significant participation by women are more likely to succeed.¹¹ In fact, according to one study, peace agreements are 20% more likely to last at least two years, and are 35% more likely to last 15 years, when women fully participate.¹²

Despite these realities, women's voices remain largely absent from mediation and negotiation. As I pointed out in Minsk, between 1992 and 2011, women made up only 2.4% of chief mediators and 9% of negotiators in peace processes.¹³ When few peace negotiators or mediators are women, gender issues are not adequately considered in peace processes.

Far too often, the role of women in preventing and resolving conflict is focused on women as victims, rather than empowering them. Women must be recognized as important actors in conflict prevention and resolution processes. Inclusive mediation is not only about the number of women involved in peace processes. Importantly, it is also about enlarging the influence of women in decision making.

Sustainable peace needs women's leadership. Such leadership requires enhanced funding to increase mentorship and training opportunities for women. The OSCE has a long history of successful mediation, and is well-placed to promote gender inclusive and responsive mediation efforts.

As well, the 2018 gender report will look at the recommendations in the resolution on gender and mediation that I put forward – and that was adopted – in Minsk. The goal is to identify the steps – if any – that have been taken to address this issue.

PEACEKEEPING AND CONFLICT MANAGEMENT

¹⁰ Ibid.

¹¹ UN Women, "[Preventing Conflict, Transforming Justice, and Securing the Peace](#)," *A Global Study on the Implementation of United Nations Security Council resolution 1325*, 2015.

¹² Laurel Stone, "Annex II, *Quantitative Analysis of Women's participation in Peace Processes*" in Marie O'Reilly, Andrea Ó Súilleabháin, and Thania Paffenholz, *Reimagining Peacemaking: Women's Roles in Peace Processes*, New York: International Peace Institute, June 2015.

¹³ UN Women, "[Facts and figures: Peace and security](#)."

Conflict affects men and women, and boys and girls, differently.¹⁴ In 2015, I reported that women and girls are disproportionately affected by sexual and gender-based violence in situations of conflict or crises. As Michael Georg Link – former director of ODIHR – reiterated one year later, “addressing sexual violence has to be at the centre of conflict-resolution efforts.”¹⁵

Women and girls from minority groups are especially vulnerable to conflict-related sexual violence. While men are disproportionately killed in conflict, women and children make up the majority of refugees and displaced people.¹⁶ In the context of mass migration, as well as the collapse of protective political, legal, economic and social systems, women and children who are affected by conflict, displacement or violent extremism are at risk of falling prey to traffickers.¹⁷ Today, as the OSCE region deals with mass migration flows, this discussion is more important than ever.

According to the *Global Study on the Implementation of UN Security Council Resolution 1325*, “[t]here is no doubt that women’s presence raises awareness of women’s issues in theatres of action, helps prevent sexual exploitation and abuse of the local population, and improves operational effectiveness.”¹⁸ There is a strong link between women’s participation in peace operations and military deployments, and the effectiveness of those missions.¹⁹

Female peacekeepers and armed forces members are better suited to deal with victims of conflict-related sexual violence and exploitation, who have been traumatized by their experiences and find it difficult to trust authority. In this way, female soldiers have more access to local populations and intelligence. Both men and women are more likely to report sexual and gender-based violence when they speak to women officers, for example.²⁰

However, women are currently deployed at remarkably low levels in peacekeeping operations.²¹ As of 31 December 2017, 7.6% of military observers and staff officers of UN peacekeeping missions were women. The overall representation of women among military troops was 4%, and women constituted 11.3% of all police officers.²²

¹⁴ Joyce Kaufman, “Women and children, war and peace: political agency in times of conflict,” *International Affairs*, Vol. 92, No. 6, November 2016, pp. 1499–1504.

¹⁵ OSCE, “[OSCE human rights chief calls for greater efforts to prevent sexual violence in conflict and to support victims](#),” *News release*, 17 June 2016.

¹⁶ Mayra Buvinic et al., “[Violent Conflict and Gender Inequality: An Overview](#),” *World Bank Research Observer*, Vol. 28, Iss. 1, February 2013, pp. 110–138.

¹⁷ United Nations [UN], “[Report of the Secretary on Conflict-Related Sexual Violence](#),” 15 April 2017, S/2017/249, p. 6.

¹⁸ UN Women, [Preventing Conflict, Transforming Justice, Securing the Peace: A Global Study on the Implementation of United Nations Security Council Resolution 1325](#), 2015, p. 135.

¹⁹ Government of Canada, “[Gender Equality: A Foundation for Peace](#),” *Canada’s National Action Plan 2017-2022 – For the Implementation of the UN Security Council Resolutions on Women, Peace, and Security*, 30 November 2017.

²⁰ UN Women, “[Progress of the World of Women: In Pursuit of Justice](#),” 2011, p. 59 ff.²¹ UN Security Council, [Report of the Secretary-General on women and peace and security](#), S/2017/861, 16 October 2017, p. 8.

²¹ UN Security Council, [Report of the Secretary-General on women and peace and security](#), S/2017/861, 16 October 2017, p. 8.

²² UN Department of Peacekeeping Operations, “[Operational Imbalance and Women Peacekeepers: Addressing the Gender Imbalance](#),” 31 December 2017.

Increasingly, sexual abuse and exploitation perpetrated by peacekeepers is being reported. In 2016, 145 new allegations of sexual exploitation and abuse were made against UN staff.²³ Those allegations involved at least 311 victims, nearly all of whom were women and girls.²⁴ Because some states do not have laws that are sufficiently robust to handle cases of sexual exploitation and abuse, accountability often falls short.

Prevention is key in addressing the problem of sexual abuse and exploitation by peacekeepers. Targeted training of peacekeepers and mission staff must occur. It is incumbent upon all OSCE participating States to prioritize raising awareness among their armed forces and personnel of the importance of proper conduct and respect for human rights when they are deployed to UN and OSCE missions.

In November 2017, as part of its commitment to advance gender equality and women's empowerment around the world, Canada launched the Elsie Initiative on Women in Peace Operations. The initiative is named after Elsie MacGill, a Canadian women's rights pioneer and the first Canadian woman to receive a degree in electrical engineering. It will support a systematic approach to deploy more women in peace operations by launching a global fund to support the development of women peacekeepers, and providing technical assistance support for troop contributing countries.²⁵

The Elsie Initiative builds on Canada's feminist foreign policy and new National Action Plan for the Implementation of UN Security Council Resolutions on Women, Peace and Security. There is an opportunity for the OSCE to undertake similar initiatives designed to build the capacity of women in the security sector. By doing so, participating States throughout the OSCE region can better harness women's resilience, determination and innovative solutions for ending conflict.

PEACEBUILDING AND THE POST-CONFLICT PERIOD

I would also like to briefly touch on some gender considerations in the post-conflict period, as studies demonstrate that sexual and gender-based violence persists in such situations. The end of formal conflict does not necessarily end the physical, emotional, psychological and economic effects of conflict, and nor does it end the recurring risk of sexual violence.²⁶ Survivors of sexual and gender-based violence must have access to justice, whether in the form of fair trials, rehabilitation or compensation. Timeliness, in particular, plays a significant role in reparations. Yet, a 2016 OSCE report found that survivors of conflict-related sexual violence in Bosnia and Herzegovina are still waiting for their perpetrators to be brought to justice.²⁷

²³ UN Security Council, [Report of the Secretary-General on women and peace and security](#), S/2017/861, 16 October 2017, pp. 9–10.

²⁴ Ibid.

²⁵ Justin Trudeau, Prime Minister of Canada, "[The Elsie Initiative on Women in Peace Operations](#)," *News Release*, 15 November 2017.

²⁶ Diana Amnéus, "[Insufficient legal protection and access to justice for post-conflict sexual violence](#)," *Development Dialogue*, No. 55, March 2011, pp. 67–89.

²⁷ OSCE, "[Towards Justice for Survivors of Conflict-Related Sexual Violence in Bosnia and Herzegovina: Progress before Courts in BiH 2014-2016](#)," *Mission to Bosnia and Herzegovina*.

It has been argued that “no society has ever successfully transitioned from being a conflict-ridden society to a developing society unless women were a part of the mainstream.”²⁸ With this in mind, post-conflict periods can provide opportunities to transform society, and can facilitate the involvement of new political actors and institutions, as well as the adoption of new norms.²⁹ For example, many post-conflict countries – particularly those where the conflict has ended through a negotiated settlement – have adopted gender quotas. These quotas have the potential to increase the representation of women in politics in countries where female representation before and during conflict had been low.³⁰

Efforts to increase female representation in the post-conflict phase have important implications for peace. For example, an OSCE study of conflict-affected states found that the risk of relapse into war was nearly non-existent when at least 35% of the post-conflict legislature was female,³¹ which is a striking example of the positive – and lasting – impact that women’s political participation can have on peace and security.

The collection of gender disaggregated data in post-conflict settings can influence the effectiveness of recovery efforts. Canada’s 1325 National Action Plan relies on research that found that “[i]n post-conflict environments, up to 40% of households are headed by women.”³² As such, women are highly attuned to their community’s reconstruction needs. The Nation Action Plan incorporates evidence that shows:

With access to income generation and economic security as a result of just peace agreement outcomes, women tend to be quicker to invest in child welfare and education, to build food security, and to rebuild rural economies, greatly contributing to longer term stability.”³³

I look forward to examining gender in post-conflict periods in greater detail when I present the 2018 gender report in Berlin during the Annual Session this summer, and to discussing the ways in which the OSCE and the Parliamentary Assembly can support women’s meaningful participation in peacebuilding initiatives.³⁴

CONCLUSION

²⁸ Rachel Vogelstein, [“Women’s Participation in Peace and Security Processes,”](#) *Council on Foreign Relations*, 26 October 2017.

²⁹ Aili Mari Tripp, [“Where do African women have more power? Surprise — in countries emerging from war,”](#) *Washington Post*, 15 July 2016.

³⁰ In Rwanda, a country where sexual violence was pervasive during the genocide, female representation in parliament is 61.3%, the highest female representation of any country. See: Interparliamentary Union, [“World classification of the percentage of women in national parliaments,”](#) 1 December 2017.

³¹ OSCE, [“In Pursuit of Peace and Security: How Gender Makes a Difference,”](#) 13 November 2015.

³² Carl Bruch, Carroll Muffett, Sandra S. Nichols (Eds.), *Governance, Natural Resources and Post-Conflict Peacebuilding* ed. Routledge, 2016.

³³ UN Women, [Preventing Conflict, Transforming Justice, Securing the Peace: A Global Study on the Implementation of United Nations Security Council Resolution 1325](#), 2015, p. 135.

³⁴ See Sarah Shair-Rosenfield and Reed Wood, “Governing Well after War: How Improving Female Representation Prolongs Post-Conflict Peace,” *The Journal of Politics*, Vol. 79, No. 3, 2017, pp. 995–1009; and Jacqueline Demeritt, Angela Nichols and Eliza Kelly, “Female Participation and Civil War Relapse,” *Civil Wars*, Vol. 16, No. 3, 2014, pp. 346–368.

The women, peace and security agenda is cross-cutting. It is relevant to combating violence against women, to promoting gender equality, to protecting human rights, and to supporting humanitarian relief, development assistance, diplomatic action and peace support operations. Yet, in the words of the Executive Director of UN Women, there is a “crippling gap between the ambition” of the commitments enshrined in the women, peace and security agenda, “and actual political and financial support.”³⁵

To date, 31 of the 57 OSCE countries have adopted National Action Plans on Resolution 1325.³⁶ I encourage OSCE parliamentarians to put pressure on their national governments to ensure that a National Action Plan exists, and to dedicate adequate resources to implementing that plan.

Legislators from OSCE countries are in a position to hasten both the political will and the financial support that is needed to prevent and combat gender-based violence in all stages of the conflict cycle. By doing so, we can help end the scourge of violence against women.

Thank you for your attention.

³⁵ UN Women, “[Preventing Conflict, Transforming Justice, and Securing the Peace](#),” *A Global Study on the Implementation of United Nations Security Council resolution 1325*, 2015.

³⁶ OSCE, “[Statement delivered by Amarsanaa Darisureen, Senior Adviser on Gender Issues](#),” *Security Council Open Debate on Women, Peace, and Security*, 27 October 2017. P.42. See also Government of Canada, “[Gender Equality: A Foundation for Peace](#),” *Canada’s National Action Plan 2017-2022 for the Implementation of the UN Security Council Resolutions on Women, Peace and Security*, November 2017.