



2019 Gender Lunch – Gender and Youth

5 July 2019, Luxembourg

Summary of discussions



The Lunch was opened by Special Representative on Gender Issues, **Dr. Hedy Fry, the longest serving female Member of Parliament in the history of Canada**. In her opening speech, she called for more attention to be paid to Youth, women and girls. She also welcomed more specific approaches on issues such as how climate change is affecting them and on engaging Youth in decision-making. She believes that an inclusive process that brings men and women together to address gender equality and other current challenges is the only way to make progress.

Mr. George Tsereteli, President of the OSCE PA, reiterated OSCE PA support for gender equality and for the work of the Special Representative. He believes in the importance of creating equal conditions for women and men. He stressed that attention must be directed to human resources, wages and reproductive health in the framework of the Sustainable Development Goals strategy. On the problem of climate change, he informed the delegates about his recent visit to Norway.

Mr. Dan Biancalana, Chairman of the Committee on equality between women and men in the Chamber of Deputies of the Grand Duchy of Luxembourg, stressed the essential character of education in the promotion of gender equality and in avoiding gender stereotypes.

Ms. Augusta Featherston, ODIHR's Youth Focal Point and Democratic Governance Officer, explored the intersection of youth, gender and new technologies, linking this area to engagement in public and political life. She drew on recent research revealing differences between the experience of young women and men in their use of technology. Additionally, she presented relevant key findings from the Youth Progress Index, specifically data relevant to political participation which shows that many countries are better at providing for the basic needs of young people than ensuring they are included in decision-making. Finally, she offered good practice recommendations to support youth engagement based on ODIHR's work.

Ms. Nora Dieschbourg, a 17 years old Youth activist from the Luxembourg Tech School initiative, assessed that a lack of participation from young people is probably due to the perceived distance to the political process. Many young people feel like they do not need to bother with it at all until they reach voting age. She presented her personal positive experience in participating to the work of the Luxembourgish Youth Parliament, a youth organization that writes resolutions every year and then presents them to the national parliament. Concerning young women and girls who would like to enroll and pursue careers in science, technology, engineering or math (STEM), it is crucial to have representation and role models. But these are not just for girls or young women to identify with, boys and young men need to get used to seeing women succeed. She called on all participants to support or build organizations, mentoring programmes and to implement relevant labor laws that make reaching gender equality goals possible.

Questions for the Lunch discussion: *"How can parliamentarians enhance the participation of youth, including young women and girls, in policies and programs that affect them? What types of initiatives could support the involvement of young men and boys in efforts to achieve gender equality? What tools should parliamentarians use to mitigate the disproportionate impacts conflict and migration have on youth, including young women and girls? How can parliaments encourage young women and girls to enroll and pursue careers in science, technology, engineering or math (STEM)?"*

During the discussion of the questions, the following points emerged:

- Opening the meetings of the parliaments and organizing democracy workshops in this framework is helping some countries to bridge the democratic gap between politics and youth.
- Visits of pupils to the parliament and of parliamentarians to school classes could be generalized for all children.
- The practice of having Youth Parliaments or the holding of simulations of parliamentary activities should be broadly promoted.
- Internship programmes in parliaments and in MPs offices could be further developed.
- The role of education and civic education is of utmost importance, particularly considering that education in History can be perceived as discriminatory to women.