

OSCE PA Report shows that gender balance is still a problem in the OSCE

The Gender Unit at the OSCE PA International Secretariat has just published its fourth report on the Gender Balance in the OSCE Area, and the conclusions on developments are very discouraging. Special Representative on the Gender Issue, Mrs. Tone Tingsgaard says: "The disappointing conclusions of this thorough Report show that there is an urgent need to improve the situation within the OSCE. There are certainly competent, willing and qualified women available for OSCE positions – including at the leadership level. It is now time that the OSCE learns how to find, encourage and employ women at the higher levels".

The Report concludes that, compared with two years ago, the representation of women in the OSCE has decreased steadily in the higher-level positions and within the field missions. The Report shows that the Organisation's Gender Action Plan from 2000, which committed participating States to positive action to promote the nomination and appointment of women candidates in the OSCE, has not been implemented. The Report finds it particularly disappointing that OSCE statistics show how female candidates have fewer chances of gaining employment within the Organisation than men, especially when it comes to senior positions. This applies to the OSCE Secretariat, the Office of the High Commissioner on National Minorities (HCNM) and in particular the Office of Democratic Institutions and Human Rights (ODIHR) and the OSCE Field Missions. The Report goes on to say that despite the expressed commitment to increase the number of women employed in senior positions, the Permanent Council, responsible for generating candidates, has been unable to recruit more female candidates for such positions. The Report regrets that the OSCE has not addressed the issue of gender equality effectively despite continuing criticisms. Mrs. Tingsgaard says: "Action is urgently needed, particularly since a number of the high-level administrative positions in the OSCE Secretariat, including that of Secretary General, will become vacant within the next year. This is a unique

chance to promote women candidates to positions within the OSCE's leadership".

The Report also concludes that there is a problem of gender inequality within the OSCE Parliamentary Assembly. Although the number of women participating in the Assembly's meetings has increased slightly, the overall percentage is still low. Currently, the OSCE PA Bureau includes nine men and three women. The Report illustrates several National Parliamentary Delegations have none or very few women as Members – a problem closely linked to the overall lack of women in parliaments. The report shows significant regional differences in this respect.

During the upcoming Annual Session in Edinburgh, the issue of gender equality will be discussed in a separate meeting, held as a working breakfast on 5 July at 8:00. In addition, Mrs. Tingsgaard, Special Representative on the Gender Issue will deliver her report to the Plenary Meeting on 5 July.

The Report was prepared by Research Fellow Stefanie Freyberg under supervision of Programme Officer Tina Schøn. The Report is available at the Assembly's webpage:

<http://oscepa.org/index.aspx?articleid=+469>

