



STATEMENT OF THE HOLY SEE

2018 Human Dimension Implementation Meeting

Working Session 15: Tolerance and non-discrimination II (continued), including ensuring equal opportunity for women and men in all spheres of life, including through the implementation of the OSCE Action Plan for the Promotion of Gender Equality, and prevention of violence against women

Warsaw, 19 September 2018

Mr./Mme Moderator,

This year marks the 30th Anniversary of the Apostolic Letter *Mulieris Dignitatem* – the seminal and inspiring document of Pope John Paul II dedicated to the dignity and vocation of women.¹ While it is worth noting that much has been accomplished in different international fora during the last three decades, discrimination and violence continue to be an all-too-present reality for women, also in the OSCE region.

Our Delegation is grateful to the Italian OSCE Chairmanship for having devoted this year's 2nd Supplementary Human Dimension Meeting to the topic of preventing violence against women, and would like to echo two issues that were presented during that meeting by various civil society organizations:

- 1) The hyper- or over-sexualized culture that has become pervasive in our societies, in the media, in entertainment, in social media, is deeply destructive to women and girls – and must be challenged. Such a culture, which not only

¹ Pope John Paul II, Apostolic Letter on the Dignity and Vocation of Women on the Occasion of the Marian Year – *Mulieres Dignitatem*, 15 August 1988.

distorts the dignity of women and human sexuality, but advances an acceptance for such distortions, represents a tragic relapse into a view of women that should have been surpassed long ago. Women are not property, women are not sexual objects, and women should not have to accept that men regard them as such, or have to conform to such a distorted vision.

- 2) A particular form of violence directed against women that should be given further attention is that suffered by girls, including very young girls, again because of their sex. In this regard, it is also troubling that even in the OSCE region abortions of unborn girls, for the sole reason that they are girls and not boys, do in fact occur. This disturbing phenomenon must not be ignored.

The Delegation of the Holy wishes to make the following recommendations:

- that OSCE participating States advance efforts within the Organization to use an adequate and clear language regarding “gender equality” which complies with the common, ordinary and generally accepted understanding of the expression.
- that the Office of Democratic Institutions and Human Rights, in its next publication on violence against women or discrimination against women, devote particular attention to the harmful impact that today’s hyper-sexualized culture has on women, especially on young women and girls.

The Holy See would like to reiterate its strong support for those efforts made to protect women and girls from any form of violence and exploitation, and to ensure their access and participation in every sphere of society.

Thank you, Mr./Mme Moderator.