



Delegation of Canada
to the OSCE

Délégation du Canada
auprès de l'OSCE

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The empowerment of women and girls and the achievement of gender equality is a fundamental pursuit for Canada's government. They are at the heart of our new Feminist International Assistance Policy because we believe they are the most effective ways to eliminate poverty, achieve sustainable development, and create lasting peace and security.

When women and girls are valued and empowered, have control over their own lives and bodies, and are able to participate meaningfully as decision makers in their homes and societies, we see overwhelming evidence of the positive effect this has on a state. When they have control over decisions regarding their sexuality and reproductive lives, maternal and child mortality and morbidity decrease and families prosper. When given comprehensive sexuality education and not forced to marry at a young age, girls are more able to become economically productive members of their societies, thus enhancing the prosperity of all.

It should be clear by now that advancing gender equality is not only about women and girls – it is critical that we engage men and boys as allies and stakeholders in this effort. Societal change cannot, and will not, be achieved by focusing on women and girls alone.

Empowering women and girls and achieving gender equality also means eliminating violence against them. Such violence, and harmful practices such as child, early, and forced marriage and female genital mutilation/cutting are violations of women's and girls' human rights, and a barrier to the full achievement of gender equality. The unequal treatment of women and girls and their inability to enjoy their human rights is also contributing factor in the violence against them. As OSCE participating States, we must do more to break this cycle.

Canada recognizes that violence against women and girls is a persistent reality in our own country, which disproportionately affects Indigenous women and girls. Our Government is committed to advancing reconciliation with Indigenous peoples. The National Inquiry into Missing and Murdered Indigenous Women and Girls is an important step on the path to end these unacceptable rates of violence. While the Inquiry Commission undertakes its work, the Canadian government is also taking immediate action together with Indigenous and other organizations to end violence against Indigenous women and girls.

Within the OSCE organization, work needs to continue to achieve greater gender balance, and we look forward to the Secretary General's efforts in this regard. As the participation of women in conflict prevention, conflict resolution, and post conflict state-building is essential for sustainable peace and for building more equal and stable societies, we would also like to see the OSCE continue to assist participating States in implementing UNSC Resolution 1325 and other relevant UNSC resolutions. Canada is working diligently to finalize our second National Action Plan on Women, Peace, and Security, placing gender equality, women's empowerment, and the promotion and protection of women's and girls' human rights at the core of peace and

security efforts. In conclusion, Canada would like to put forward the following three recommendations for this working session:

- 1) That participating States, the OSCE, and its institutions adopt a multi-disciplinary and multi-sectoral approach in addressing violence against women and girls, including those belonging to vulnerable groups, that employs legislative and non-legislative measures to prevent such violence, to provide support to victims, and to hold perpetrators accountable for their actions;
- 2) That participating States work towards the full implementation of the United Nations resolutions on women, peace and security, and reflect this commitment in future OSCE decisions;
- 3) That participating States review the 2004 OSCE Action Plan for the Promotion of Gender Equality with a view to its update, noting in the process the relevance of the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development in this area.