



United States Mission to the OSCE

Session 11: Gender Aspects of Security (II)

As prepared for delivery by Gael Strack, Executive Director
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to the OSCE Human Dimension Implementation Meeting
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Mr./Madam Moderator,

The OSCE is a security organization. Here at the annual Human Dimension Implementation Meeting, we are discussing respect for human rights and fundamental freedoms, a major component of OSCE's comprehensive definition of security. Other OSCE activities focus on conflict prevention, crisis management and resolution, and post-conflict reconstruction. Decision-makers from OSCE participating States are also involved in conflict situations outside of the OSCE region itself. It is crucial that women are included at all stages of conflict-related work both by the OSCE and by participating States.

OSCE and the participating States should ensure that non-combatants' views, including those of women, are taken into account when making policy decisions concerning peace processes. Talking and negotiating only with men and the former combatants is not as likely to result in a lasting peace. Often, conflict damages all parts of society. Understanding exactly what damage is and how to fix it cannot be done without women.

Women's economic interests in post-conflict situations also need to be taken into account. Establishing equitable inheritance laws, for example, helps ensure that a widow or sister may inherit the land left by a dead male combatant relative. In other cases, trying to include women in the process of providing demobilization payments made to ex-combatants is useful to ensuring that the money is used to help families, which are usually in the primary care of women.

For the same reason, the OSCE should ensure women's involvement in OSCE conflict-related programs, particularly in the field. OSCE staff dealing with conflict management and reconstruction should be trained to identify and include women partners.

It is also crucial that the OSCE and participating States ensure the physical safety and security of civilians, including women and children, in crisis and conflict situations. Deplorably, the threat to the safety of civilians sometimes comes from the very peacekeepers who are assigned to protect them. It is reprehensible that persons charged with the responsibility to protect civilians in a destabilized region or to promote the rule of law would encourage human trafficking or sexual exploitation of the very population they were sent to protect. Such behavior by persons serving on peacekeeping missions weakens the rule of law, strengthens criminal networks, and undermines the mission's own purpose and effectiveness. The vast majority of peacekeepers are

honorable men and women performing vital tasks, usually under difficult circumstances. However, the misdeeds of the few can tarnish the reputation of the whole and are totally unacceptable.

Moderator, in response to these concerns, the Ljubljana Ministerial meeting adopted a decision to ensure the highest standards of conduct and accountability of persons serving on peacekeeping forces and other international missions. OSCE countries pledged to step up efforts to prevent military and civilian personnel deployed abroad from engaging in trafficking in human beings or in exploiting victims of trafficking. Countries with deployed military and civilian personnel have also agreed to work cooperatively with authorities in countries hosting such missions, in efforts to combat trafficking in human beings. We must ensure that our countries live up to these commitments.

Thank You.