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PC.DEL/749/19
26 June 2019

ENGLISH only



EUROPEAN UNION

**OSCE Permanent Council No. 1233
Vienna, 20 June 2019**

EU Statement on occasion of the International Day for the Elimination of Sexual Violence in Conflict

On the occasion of the International Day for the Elimination of Sexual Violence in Conflict on 19 June 2019, the European Union and the United Nations joined voices to call on the international community to accelerate its efforts to eliminate the scourge of all forms of sexual violence, including as a strategy and tactic of war and terror.

Sexual violence in conflict against any person constitutes a flagrant and unacceptable violation of human rights and international humanitarian law. Such violence has devastating physical, psychological and social consequences, which impedes sustainable peace and security, social cohesion and economic development. The European Union would like to reaffirm its strongest support for zero tolerance to any form of sexual violence.

The use of sexual violence in conflict seriously undermines peace-building and reconciliation efforts, as it has a long-lasting effect on local communities and wider societies. More needs to be done to ensure that the elimination of sexual violence is mainstreamed through all relevant peace-building related activity. Therefore, prevention of sexual violence in conflict should be one of the priority areas of focus of the OSCE's work on gender and the Women, Peace and Security Agenda.

The international community must continue to challenge negative attitudes that condone or justify sexual violence as well as stigma directed towards the survivors. All survivors and witnesses must be guaranteed access to comprehensive psychological and sexual and reproductive health care services. We expect all states to conduct effective investigations of those crimes, bring perpetrators to justice, ensure accountability for past crimes, and provide all victims with safe and unhindered access to justice and adequate redress and reparations.

The EU will continue working with international partners and civil society to ensure the respect for fundamental freedoms and human rights in peacebuilding efforts worldwide. We cannot be passive witnesses of crimes that have such deep and long-term consequences on human beings, communities and entire societies. We will continue investing in raising awareness, while building more equal, educated and respectful societies within and outside our borders. This will remain at the core of the EU institutions and with partners around the world.

To assist in combating sexual violence in conflict we need measures to ensure adequate information, fact-finding and proper documentation on this grave violation of human rights and International Humanitarian Law. A recent example is the OSCE-led survey on “Well-being and Safety of Women”, financed also by the European Union.

We want to recall the adoption of last year’s Ministerial Decision no. 4/18 which strengthens the OSCE commitments on preventing and combating violence against women. We also wish to recall the Ministerial Council Decision No. 14/04 on the 2004 OSCE Action Plan for the Promotion of Gender Equality and Ministerial Council Decisions No. 15/05 and No. 7/14. We need to increase awareness of the gaps in the implementation of OSCE commitments in the field of preventing and combating all forms of violence against women.

We feel there is more that can and should be done and restate our support for the adoption of an OSCE-Wide Action Plan on Women, Peace and Security. The implementation of the UN Security Council Resolution 1325 and subsequent

related resolutions is highly relevant for the OSCE, not least with regard to preventing sexual violence in conflict. We recall in this context UNSCR 2242, which underlines the important role of regional organisations to implement fully the relevant provisions of the Resolution.

We would like to see us all collectively continue to build on, and strengthen, what is already in place. It remains unacceptable that most incidents of conflict-related sexual violence, including rape, are not brought to justice. Together we must continue taking practical steps towards effective prevention and protection from conflict-related sexual violence.

The Candidate Countries REPUBLIC OF NORTH MACEDONIA*, MONTENEGRO*, SERBIA* and ALBANIA*, the Country of the Stabilisation and Association Process and Potential Candidate BOSNIA and HERZEGOVINA, as well as UKRAINE, the REPUBLIC OF MOLDOVA, GEORGIA, ANDORRA and SAN MARINO align themselves with this statement.

* Republic of North Macedonia, Montenegro, Serbia and Albania continue to be part of the Stabilisation and Association Process.