



## EUROPEAN UNION

### OSCE Permanent Council No. 1285 Vienna, 15 October 2020

## EU Statement on the International Day of the Girl Child

On 11 October, the world celebrated the International Day of the Girl Child under the theme “My voice, Our equal Future”. This year’s campaign focuses on three main topics: a life free of gender-based violence; access to education for girls, entitling them choosing their own future; and girls taking the lead in accelerating social change.

The COVID-19 pandemic has had a negative impact on the fight for a life free of gender-based and domestic violence, which has unfortunately increased during these times of lockdown. Girls and young women are regrettably the victims of this. We all committed to strengthen our efforts when it comes to preventing and combating violence against women, and thus girls, following the 2018 OSCE Ministerial Council Decision on this matter.

We are equally committed to a survivor-centered approach, ensuring that prevention and response are non-discriminatory and specific, and respect the rights and prioritize needs of survivors, including groups that are particularly vulnerable or may be specifically targeted, notably in the context of their health, education and participation.

Facilitating girls and young women to learn new skills towards the futures they choose is the second topic highlighted this year. Education is a fundamental right every child should benefit from. Unfortunately, too often, conflict hinders children,

especially girls and young women, to go to school because their school is destroyed or the violence simply prevents them from getting there. Access to and protection of schools should be a priority. The OSCE concept of “comprehensive security” benefits from girls and young women developing the skills they want to learn. Strong involvement of women in every aspect of our security model will make this concept more robust.

Finally, girls and young women are leaders in accelerating social change. Illustration of this leadership can be found every day, everywhere. Greta Thunberg has become the face of the global climate change movement, because she started a “school strike” in Sweden which expanded throughout the world and inspired many others. In Belarus, young women are courageously participating in the protests calling for violence and repression to cease, as well as for free and fair elections.

The EU welcomes these strong and independent girls and women and looks forward to their essential contribution to making our societies better.

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, 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.