



**Permanent Representation of the  
Kingdom of Belgium to the OSCE**

**- 29<sup>th</sup> Meeting of the Economic and Environmental Forum -**

**Statement by Belgium - Session 1  
- Promoting women's economic empowerment in the post pandemic period  
for sustainable development and economic recovery -**

**- Prague, 9 September 2021 -**

Thank you Ambassador,

On this concluding session of the 29<sup>th</sup> Economic and Environmental Forum, I would like to extend my appreciation to the Swedish Chairpersonship for their efforts to discuss women's economic empowerment this year. I would like to thank the speakers for their thoughtful interventions and wish to add the experience of Belgium during this session.

During the 2<sup>nd</sup> preparatory meeting of the Economic and Environmental Forum earlier this year, Prof. dr. Liesbet Stevens of the Belgian Institute for the Equality of women and men gave us more insight for the need and awareness for gender mainstreaming in national post-COVID recovery strategies. Prof. Stevens reiterated that women were affected disproportionately by the COVID-pandemic and stressed the need for an integrated approach to create more resilience.

Belgium recognizes that gender mainstreaming is critical to *Build Back Better* and has prioritized women's empowerment in the national post-COVID recovery strategy. Our

government has identified several aspects where improvements are necessary in the fields of employment, education, energy security and digital transformation.

As part of our effort to have an inclusive and balanced recovery plan, Belgium will assure that many related project will have a tangible impact on women's empowerment and gender equality. Policy research of Belgium's post-COVID recovery plan has shown that 70% of all post-COVID recovery project will have a moderate to very positive effect on gender equality. These planned projects are mainstreamed throughout the different thematic axis of the recovery strategy.

Among others, Belgium will target the digital divide, combat discrimination in the workplace and stimulate women in specific sectors such as STEM. This will become progressively important as the economic recovery plan will demand an increase in workforce in male-dominated industries such as STEM/ICT, construction or energy.

Mr. Chair, women's economic empowerment and gender equality remain a priority for us all. In conclusion, I would like to thank you and the Swedish Chairpersonship once again and we are looking forward working together with you leading up to the Ministerial Council in Stockholm.