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WORKING SESSION 3:

Tolerance and non-discrimination II (continued):

Gender equality/Prevention of violence against women and children

Statement by Austria

Mr. /Madam Moderator,

Austria fully aligns herself with the statement made on behalf of the European Union and thanks the Special Representative of the CiO on Gender Issues Ms June Zeitlin and Ambassador Miroslava Beham, senior adviser on Gender Issues for their valuable work.

Violence against women and children is a flagrant violation of human rights and the human dignity of those becoming victims. Its still widespread occurrence is a shame to every society. Therefore, preventing violence against women and children, in all its forms and under all circumstances, needs to be a top priority for all of us. Austria, at the national level, has strengthened since the mid-1990s its legal protection to address violence against women and to assist victims. The "Protection Against Violence Act" adopted in 1996 and fully revised in 2009, created the statutory prerequisites for fast and efficient protection of victims of domestic violence, authorising the police to evict a person inflicting violence on a partner or family member from the domicile and to impose a barring order.

Just recently, Austria ratified the Council of Europe Convention on preventing and combating violence against women and domestic violence. It is a comprehensive legal instrument addressing prevention, protection of victims and prosecution of perpetrators. We encourage other states to become a party, too.

Violence against women is also an expression of deep-rooted gender stereotypes and discrimination against women and girls. Discussing the two issues together today, we must reiterate that addressing violence and discrimination against women must go hand with strengthening the role of women in society. Their full and equal participation in all political process has to be further promoted on all levels – nationally, regionally and internationally.

In the OSCE- Framework, Austria together with Finland, Turkey and Kazakhstan, has proposed a draft text for an OSCE Wide Action Plan on Women, Peace and Security to assist participating States to implement UN Security Council Resolution 1325 (2000) in the context of the OSCE's wider policy objectives of enhancing security and stability in the OSCE region. The OSCE Wide Action Plan on Women, Peace and Security should also advance a concerted and accelerated approach to the development of national implementation measures relating to Women, Peace and Security by participating States.

Austria, although not in armed conflict, has benefited from the development of a National Action Plan on the Implementation of UN Security Council Resolution 1325. The Austrian National Action Plan reflects the commitment of the Austrian Federal Government to implementing Resolution 1325 in the context of Austria's humanitarian, diplomatic, peacekeeping and development activities and includes stakeholders from the civil society. The most important objectives of the National Action Plan are inter alia to strengthen the participation of women in peace promotion and conflict resolving activities as well as preventing gender-specific violence.

Austria would like to offer the following recommendations:

- Step up national and regional efforts to eradicate all forms of violence against women and girls and in this context become a party to the Council of Europe Convention on preventing and combating violence against women and domestic violence.
- Effectively protect children from all forms of violence and abuse, i.a. through effective legislation and prevention programmes, including particularly children living in institutional settings or otherwise deprived of their liberty.
- Systemize and exchange best practices concerning the development of National Action Plans or other national measures for the implementation of UN Security Council Resolution 1325 (2000).
- Adopt as soon as possible an OSCE system-wide Action Plan on Woman, Peace and Security.