

**ADDRESS BY OSCE HEAD OF CENTRE TO THE INTERNATIONAL WOMEN'S
POLICE CONFERENCE : 12 NOVEMBER, BISHKEK**

Distinguished Minister, distinguished guests and participants,

OSCE is grateful to be invited to participate in and to support this important conference. We hope the Conference will reinforce and strengthen the contribution of women in policing not only in Kyrgyzstan but also among other participating nations.

In Kyrgyzstan the starting point is favourable since **national Legislation** already confers equal rights and opportunities for Women and Men. The challenge however, as in all countries, is to convert these rights into practice. This process entails not only a strong legislative bedrock but also an **administrative culture and conditions conducive for women's employment, promotion and influence.**

At the outset, let us be clear. Women and men alike can undertake **all policing duties.** This includes the full range of operational roles and positions of higher managerial responsibility. Women should be welcomed and made to feel welcome in these roles. Women should not be stereo-typed or relegated to duties in some way considered "right" for women, such as secretarial and customer relations.

Yet, in this regard, as in many countries, the intention of equality is not always matched by practice. From my own long military and public service career in Great Britain, I have observed the gradual – and still incomplete – **removal of obstacles** in equal rights and opportunities for women and men. Bringing about such change requires **drive and direction** from both political leadership and senior management. It rarely happens of its own accord.

Gender equality and equal opportunity do not seek to deny the specific needs of women. **Recruitment, retention and career development** need to be flexibly adapted to take account of a woman's right to have children and be able to care for them. Employment conditions must encourage the retention of women in service, not drive them out.

I am unsure of the research literature – others here will however know - but my own experience and instinct tell me, frankly speaking, that women are generally more trusted than men in positions of influence. This applies to Policing as well. If I am right in saying this, then women are a strong force for raising **public trust and confidence** in the Police. I put to participants today how often are women selected to conduct enquiries and investigations into reports of **public complaints or serious misconduct** by the Police, either in Kyrgyzstan or elsewhere ? I would also participants how often do women as compared with men get tempted by the lure of **corruption** ? These questions, Minister, which maybe have no definite answer, are very relevant in Kyrgyzstan as you and the Government seek to strengthen the social partnership between the Police and the Public.

In conclusion, I hope this international conference will generate fruitful **peer-discussion and concrete advice** on how to enable women to play their full potential role within policing. I hope this conference might also strengthen various forms of **networking** within and outside the country to advance the interests of women police.

Thank you for your kind attention.