

**80<sup>th</sup> Joint Meeting of the  
Forum for Security Co-operation – Permanent Council  
UNSCR 1325, Women, Peace and Security  
Remarks by  
Secretary General Helga Schmid  
10 March 2021**

Mesdames Chairs, dear Courtney, dear Ulrika,  
Dear Ambassadors,

I am very grateful for this opportunity to address today's Joint Meeting of the Forum for Security Co-operation and the Permanent Council on a topic that – as you know – is very dear to my heart: the promotion of women's meaningful involvement in matters of peace and security.

Because far too often, **women still do not have equal access** to the fora where important decisions in security policy are being made. I know that quite well, as I myself in my previous life have often been the only woman at the negotiation table. Although we do know that peace agreements carry a higher risk of falling apart when women are not included in the negotiation process. The evidence is absolutely empirical. So ensuring women's equal participation in matters of peace and security **will benefit us all**.

Of course, we certainly have made progress in recent decades – and the Chair has rightly said that women are taking leadership positions also in the OSCE. But by no means has gender equality been achieved throughout the ranks of diplomacy, in the security sector, or in the whole of our societies.

Our efforts are now **more important than ever**. COVID-19 has affected everyone, but it has disproportionately affected women: women have been more likely to lose their jobs during the pandemic, and they carry more of the burden for the unpaid care within families. Many countries also report a worrying surge in domestic violence.

So, in short, the pandemic has increased existing gender inequalities and risks undoing much of the progress we have made. We cannot afford to further lose this momentum.

With its comprehensive approach to security and all the tools and instruments at its disposal, the OSCE is well equipped to make an important contribution. The participating States committed the OSCE to promote the implementation of UNSCR 1325 in the 2004 OSCE Action Plan for the Promotion of Gender Equality. This commitment to the Women, Peace and

Security agenda has been reiterated in the Ministerial Council decisions on Small Arms and Light Weapons, on Preventing and Countering Violent Extremism and Radicalism that Lead to Terrorism, and on Preventing and Combating Violence against Women. This gives us a solid basis to continue building on.

Allow me to mention a few of the key ways we do this:

The OSCE provides a valuable **platform** for participating States to share information and good practices. We support **voluntary information exchange on Resolution 1325** through the annual questionnaire on the Code of Conduct on Politico-Military Aspects of Security.

The OSCE **supports participating States** in implementing their National Action Plans on Security Council Resolution 1325 by providing concrete recommendations and operational tools.

And – and this is very important – we also invest in **capacity building**. This includes training for women working in the police, in border management and in mediation, as well as for young professionals in arms control and disarmament. In the past three years, over 270 young women from across the OSCE region and also from our Partners for Co-operation have participated in our **Scholarship for Peace and Security**, which is a joint initiative with UNODA, to deepen their knowledge of conflict prevention, arms control and disarmament. This expanding network of female specialists is helping to close both the gender and but also generation gaps in these critical areas of work.

Networks can be an incredibly useful tool for advancing gender equality and the Women, Peace and Security Agenda. In recent years, at least five networks of women mediators aimed at increasing women’s participation in peace mediation efforts have emerged in the OSCE area. And as these networks are relatively new, we – both participating States and the OSCE – should support and promote them.

Here in the OSCE, we also have networks supporting gender equality, and I would like to thank them for their very valuable work. Both the “Women in the First Dimension” Network and the OSCE MenEngage Network play a pivotal role in generating support for women’s rights and gender equality.

The Women, Peace and Security Agenda is truly **cross-dimensional**. It requires well-coordinated action. So our work in this area showcases the added value of the OSCE’s comprehensive approach to security. And of course the **politico-military dimension** is vital in this regard.

To conclude, let me say that the **FSC** contributes to the 2004 OSCE Action Plan for the Promotion of Gender Equality through gender-mainstreaming its activities, policies, projects and programmes. Discussing how to deepen these efforts to mainstream gender would further benefit the Forum’s work. This could significantly strengthen the OSCE’s efforts to close the

gender gap and our support for conflict prevention and post-conflict reconstruction. By increasing the meaningful inclusion of women in all phases of the conflict cycle, we will help to make peace processes more sustainable. Let us continue on this path.

Thank you very much.