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MISSIONI PERMANENTI  
TAR-REPUBBLIKA TA' MALTA  
GHALL-ORGANIZZAZZJONI GHAS-SIGURTÀ  
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PERMANENT MISSION  
OF THE REPUBLIC OF MALTA  
TO THE ORGANIZATION FOR SECURITY AND  
COOPERATION IN EUROPE

## 29th OSCE Economic and Environmental Forum

“Promoting comprehensive security, stability and sustainable development in the OSCE area through women’s economic empowerment”

First Preparatory Meeting  
15-16 February 2021, Vienna

Mr. Moderator,

Malta aligns itself with the statement made by Portugal on behalf of the European Union and wishes to add the following points in its national capacity. We thank the Swedish Chairpersonship and the Coordinator of Economic and Environmental Activities and his team, for addressing this topic at the First Preparatory Meeting. The discussion has provided a timely opportunity, against the current challenging backdrop of the pandemic, to share good practices on women’s participation and economic empowerment.

Equal economic participation requires effective incentives and mechanisms to protect women from discrimination and other impediments, and for their sustainable participation in the labour market. Malta has developed policies that have contributed to a substantial increase in women’s employment. They include facilitating the reconciliation of work and family responsibilities, establishing structures to investigate complaints of unequal pay, and raising awareness among key stakeholders in the public and private sectors.

The National Commission for the Promotion of Equality awards the Equality Mark Certificate to companies that have fostered gender equality in their policies and practices. To address the under-representation of women, the National Commission has also launched a Directory of Professional Women to promote better visibility and opportunities for women in various fields, for them to be considered for appointment on boards, committees, and representations, as well as assume decision-making positions in the labour market.

Within the political sphere, a Bill has been presented to Parliament to amend the Constitution of Malta and to introduce a temporary positive measure to ensure the *de facto* equality between men and women in politics. Parliament has just recently approved the Second Reading of the proposed legal changes that intend to increase the under-represented gender by a maximum of 40%. The implementation of the proposed measures will be instrumental towards the strengthening of a democratic society with the equal participation of women and men in the highest national decision-making institution.

From a regional perspective, the OSCE has played an active role in promoting gender equality. Awareness raising at regional, national and local levels is essential for better and deeper understanding of the concept of gender equality in the economic sphere. Nevertheless, progress remains uneven, as structural barriers and discriminatory measures persist.

The COVID-19 pandemic has exacerbated the situation of women who are not only facing economic hardships as a result, but also the additional burden in lockdown of unpaid care and household duties due to closure of schools and childcare. The current global health crisis serves as a call for further action to strengthen policies in the gender equality field.

In that context, my Delegation wishes to make some recommendations that include:

- Eradicating legislation that contributes to discrimination in wages, pensions and access to top managerial posts. There is also need for stronger measures to address harassment in an appropriate manner, to completely ensure that women feel safe at their workplace;
- Activating measures related to work-life balance and shared parental care, such as extended paternity leave, to encourage mothers with young children to continue pursuing their career, and;
- Strengthening policy coupled with a change in perceptions, particularly on the role of women in the STEM sector and the role of men in parental care. Forward looking measures are rendered irrelevant without a change in mindset on women's economic participation.

Mr Moderator,

In conclusion, my Delegation wishes to underscore Malta's commitment to further enhance opportunities for women in the economic domain, as well as to continue working with the OSCE on this subject.

Thank you for your attention.