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United States Mission to the OSCE

International Women's Day

As delivered by Ambassador Michael Carpenter
to the Permanent Council, Vienna
March 9, 2023

Deputy Prime Minister Grkovska, Special Representative Palihovici, I warmly welcome you to the Permanent Council today and thank you for your insightful remarks in honor of International Women's Day.

Madam Deputy Prime Minister, the United States supports your efforts to tackle corruption, including the gender-related aspects. As you know and as you have said, women are often impacted disproportionately by corruption due to continued unequal access to power relations between men and women.

I would also like to thank you for bringing up the example of Katherine Johnson as a role model of determination, courage, and perseverance. And forgive me for digressing just for a moment into a personal anecdote, but I can't help but recall one of my personal role models, my own grandmother, who was born in Poland before World War I and whose role model was Marie Skłodowska Curie, who was the first woman to win a Nobel Prize - and not only that, but the first person to win the Nobel Prize twice in two different disciplines. And my grandmother became the first woman to enroll in the University of Poznan Medical School, where she was often ridiculed by her male colleagues, but she persevered. And in 1939, when the Nazis invaded, she ended up joining the underground home army and fighting the Nazi occupiers, and then, after World War II, pursuing a successful career as a radiologist, following in the footsteps of her role model. I cite this because it's an example of the fact that pioneer women role models serve as examples not just to girls and women, but to boys and men as well, and across generations. So thank you for bringing that up.

To both of you, dear Special Representative Palihovici and Deputy Prime Minister Grkovska, we agree with you that advancing the WPS agenda and gender equality at the OSCE is imperative and of course this is a subject that the Secretary General has championed ever since she has been here and before as well. As President Biden recognized in establishing the White House Gender Policy Council: "Advancing gender equity and equality is a matter of human rights, justice, and fairness. It is also a strategic imperative that reduces poverty and promotes economic growth, increases access to education, improves health outcomes, advances political stability, and fosters democracy."

In Ukraine, women at all levels have been integral to the humanitarian and security response to Russia's full-scale invasion. This includes fighting on the front lines, as we discussed yesterday, delivering humanitarian aid and essential services, and working to document and

publicize Russia's atrocities. Unfortunately, countless civilian women and girls, as well as men and boys, have been subjected to heinous crimes by Russia's forces in Ukraine. It's clear Russia is using rape and other forms of sexual violence as part of its military strategy in Ukraine. Nevertheless, women across Ukraine have shown incredible leadership, bravery, resilience, and fortitude in standing up to defend Ukraine's independence and democracy and to support their communities. Your work will also contribute to international efforts to ensure justice and accountability for victims of these crimes.

I would like to close my statement with a tribute to four courageous women from the OSCE area who have been strong advocates for justice, peace, and equality and just yesterday received the International Women of Courage award from Secretary Blinken. These recipients included Yulia Paievska, "Taira," a Ukrainian veteran and volunteer medic, whom many of you heard speak here last November when she appeared at an OSCE side event. It includes Poland's Bianka Zalewska, who received the award for her work as a humanitarian and journalist documenting Russia's atrocities in Ukraine. It includes Mongolia's Brigadier General Bolor Ganbold, who has been a pathbreaker for women in Mongolia's armed forces by serving in key UN peacekeeping efforts. And, last but not least, for decades, Kazakhstan's Bakhytzhana Toregozhina has been a leading voice for the eradication of torture and over time has successfully pressed for the release of political prisoners. These are four extraordinary women whose work directly promotes the WPS agenda and deserves our recognition.

Thank you very much for being here today.

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