



Organization for Security and Co-operation in Europe

HDIM Warsaw, 28 September 2012

Working Session 9

**Special Representative of the OSCE
Chairperson-in-Office on Gender Issues**

I am pleased to have the opportunity to speak today and to serve as the Special Representative of the OSCE Chairperson-in Office on Gender Issues.

In that capacity I am pleased to have worked over the past year with participating states, several OSCE field missions, the Senior Advisor on Gender Issues, and ODIHR, and particularly its gender team.

I have had the opportunity to engage in OSCE activities integrating gender in all three dimensions—the politico-military, economic and environmental and human dimensions. These activities are based on and help implement the 2004 Action Plan for the Promotion of Gender Equality as well as the four Ministerial Council decisions on gender commitments on conflict prevention, violence against women, women's political participation and women's economic participation.

One of the mandates of the Chairperson-in-Office to me was to help facilitate better coordination between the various gender structures across OSCE and ODIHR. I am pleased to note today that not only is there excellent and ongoing coordination among the gender units but also it is leading to stronger results. A good example is the discussion of issues relating to Roma and Sinti women which took place yesterday. This session built not only on the longstanding work of

ODIHR but also on the recent meeting organized by the gender section on Minority Women as Agents of Change.

One of my primary areas of focus this year has been on the issue of violence against women. I am pleased that OSCE Office of the Secretary General Gender Section, ODIHR /OSCE, along with the Council of Europe and UN Women, joined together in a side event this afternoon to discuss one of the most widespread violations of women's human rights.

I have discussed violence against women and the need for a comprehensive response in meetings with participating states, country visits and other for a. I have also undertaken research on the laws in various OSCE participating states and can report that many countries have passed legislation or adopted national action plans to protect victims of violence against women, provide services to women and their children, and to train police and health and social service professionals, among others.

Among OSCE participating states there is a substantial body of experience on a range of models and approaches for addressing domestic violence. Some of the challenges going forward are to strengthen the laws and national policies, particularly where specific legislation is absent, and in every country to strengthen implementation. Therefore, I would like to recommend that OSCE and participating states seek more opportunities through meetings, workshops or country visits to exchange experiences and best practices in this area. I would also recommend that OSCE participating states that are members of the Council of Europe consider signing and ratifying its new Convention on preventing and combating violence against women and domestic violence that was adopted last year. Already many OSCE participating states have signed and ratified the Convention. It provides a very comprehensive approach based on research and experience that can serve as an international norm for every country to aspire to. It also provides for an ongoing monitoring mechanism.

I also had the opportunity to participate in a meeting on national human rights institutions (NHRI) and gender equality in Central Asia organized by ODIHR/OSCE as part of a project to prepare a handbook for participating states on this topic. While most participating states have a national human rights institution, we have learned that they address gender equality in various ways. In some places, the NHRI has principal responsibility for gender equality and in other countries, there are multiple institutions addressing gender equality. What is particularly important is that the project identified the type of functions and activities that are critical to addressing gender discrimination and promoting gender equality. This material will be made available later this year and I hope will stimulate interest in further exchanges and implementation.

Finally, I would like to mention the political participation of women in the OSCE region. As noted earlier, the OSCE has a Ministerial Council decision, adopted in 2009, in response to concern about the under-representation of women in decision-making in governmental bodies. While women are represented in OSCE countries overall 23%, which is above the global average of 20%, there is wide variation among participating states. For example, 13 of the 31 countries that have achieved at least 30% representation of women in Parliament are from the OSCE region. At the same time, in four participating states, women less than 10% of members of Parliament. I would like to recommend that exchanges of best practices be encouraged to assist interested states in promoting effective approaches to increasing the representation of women in decision-making.