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Gender Section

Promoting Security and Stability through Good Governance: A Gender Mainstreamed Perspective

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Excellencies,
Ladies and Gentlemen,

Allow me first to sincerely thank the organizers of the Forum for inviting me to speak at this meeting. It is a great pleasure and honor for me to be here.

From the proceedings over the past two days, it is clear that good governance in the public and private sector, as well as strong democratic institutions are essential for economic growth and long term stability. The more accountable and transparent administrations are, the more likely they will allow wide participation, and thereby ensure that concerns can be voiced and that information is made publicly available to all. Stable states with transparent policies attract foreign and domestic investment that enables governments to reduce poverty and inequality, increase social integration and enhance long-term stability.

It seems that by its very nature good governance is *inclusive governance – gender-inclusive governance*. But how do we achieve inclusive governance? I suggest that the approach is twofold – we must both empower women through targeted policy, while we at the same time create an environment conducive to widespread inclusion. We must simultaneously remove barriers and reform systems.

So, I will reflect on what the OSCE can do to improve on good governance systems through the widespread inclusion of women in a meaningful reform as a means for enhancing growth and transparency and reduce corrupt activities through ensuring wider participation and diversity of views.

However, addressing the inclusivity of economic and government systems is not a process without challenges. The nexus between gender and good governance is a complex spectrum of issues around participation, access, and empowerment, each with its own set of problems. Further, long-term cultural barriers and policy practices have created a range of obstacles and challenges that cut across these complexities.

The first challenge is that many see good governance as gender neutral, which is not the case. Women have historically remained on the margins of participation in governance and economic systems, lacking capital, information and avenue to participation. Further, women are more likely to be removed from those accountability measures which encourage instructions to respond to their rights, preferences, and needs. Accountability, however, is one of the cornerstones of enforcing good governance policies. So, while in some cases women are actively harmed by their governments through regressive laws, statutes and regulations, in most cases they are just passively ignored.

Corruption is also a gendered concept. Non-inclusive systems often lead to corruption which has the potential to greatly reduce public revenues, often resulting in lower levels of spending on basic services such as education, health care, family benefits and other social services, which predominantly affects women's and children's welfare.

Corruption also increases the obstacles for women entrepreneurs, by distorting access to credit and making it more difficult for women to obtain the necessary licenses and permits. – The lack of access to capital for women has also another aspect: it results in increased dependency and vulnerability to violence, human trafficking, exploitation and other negative phenomena related to organized crime.

Corruption in the water and energy sectors may reduce access to clean water and affordable household energy, which will particularly impact poor women, who often bear the burden of seeking water and fuel for their families.

In this context, hard sector issues are even more unlikely to be seen as gender issues, for example anti-corruption measures, money laundering or border management. But they are much gendered, and we know that the increased involvement of women could make a significant contribution to enhancing the overall "good". For example, studies show that a more equal presence of men and women border police officials leads to increased public trust and trade. Or a female victim of trafficking is more likely to respond to a female police officer or interrogator, and incidences of sexual or other harassment by law enforcement agents would be significantly reduced through equal representation of men and women. In general, research says that public systems are enhanced through a greater gender balance as a precursor to increased transparency and public trust.

The second challenge we face in gender mainstreaming governance systems is that there is a likelihood to think of women as victims only. It is true that poor women are especially at risk, they are susceptible to gender-specific accountability failures on top of the general failure of corrupt or bad governments to account to their citizens.

However, women are more than victims and can be important actors in promoting good governance and driving change. Gender and corruption is only a recent issue in anti-corruption research, but there is evidence that gender-inclusive policies have a positive effect on good governance. A pair of studies by the World Bank, for example, found that a greater representation of women in parliament is associated with lower levels of corruption. Transparency International's Global Corruption Barometer, an annul survey of more than 60.000 households in some more than 60 countries, has consistently found that women are less likely than men to pay bribes. The research has lead to the conclusion that there is a worldwide "gender difference in tolerance for corruption", proving that increasing the presence of women in government should be valued for its own sake, instead of the traditional rationale based on normative principles. This argument can move us beyond victimhood and allow us to consider how women can be empowered as strong agents in the fight against corruption.

The third challenge we face is that many of the drivers of exclusion have deep cultural, political, social, and institutional roots. Contexts affect the shape and success of any single mechanism for any specific group of women across multiple places. For example, research shows in many cases that social systems have made women less aware of their entitlements, less likely to demand accountability and less prone to be part of the powerful corruption networks implicated in the schemes. At the same time, women are often more affected, when these abuses manifest in low quality education, poorer health care and decline of other essential services. The underlying social relations that have thus far determined women's access or restriction from participation are in may cases the result of long-term and complex social and cultural constraints.

What are the solutions? Given these wide-ranging challenges, what can we do to enhance women's experience in pro-good governance systems, while also increasing the overall stability and prosperity of society? I think that this should be achieved through a two-tiered approach which prioritizes targeted women's empowerment strategies on the one hand, and inclusive planning and monitoring systems on the other.

Therefore, the OSCE should advocate for stronger targeted action to increase women's access to decision-making spheres. The 2004 Gender Action Plan and MC.DEC 07/09 call for the involvement of women at all levels of decision-making. The full implementation of these documents means addressing the root causes of exclusion and shaping pro-active policies for empowerment. Possible specific areas of action include:

- improving access to information, education and training
- awareness-raising and capacity-building initiatives to empower women on their rights
- awareness-raising and capacity-building on how to prevent violations of good governance
- working with partners to implement effective complaint-mechanisms (such as whistleblower protections and citizens complaint centres)

- enhancing participation of women in local decision-making processes through gender-inclusive election systems.

Improving gender analysis and reporting are other key elements. Involving women's civil society actors may be one way to enhance our practices on data collection and monitoring. Additionally, the OSCE must not only advocate for sex-disaggregated data and enhance the capacities of national level partners to do so as well, but also ensure that the data are monitored and reported to the right systems – specifically to the national, regional and international anticorruption mechanisms. And monitoring mechanisms themselves must be made more gender responsive by including more women, by identifying the kinds of corruption that primarily affect women and by implementing accountability measures that address these dimensions.

In contributing to public sector integrity, the OSCE can and should assist participating States in developing gender-sensitive codes of conduct and gender mainstreamed ethics training as only two examples of the tools at our disposal. By their very construction, codes of conduct can raise awareness about the consequences of corruption and appeal to personal and moral responsibilities in helping to cultivate a sense of professional values and honesty.

Finally, establishing good governance for women relies on accountability relationships. It is our highest goal that government agencies are accountable for serving men and women equally. To address gender is not only the responsibility of those structures and ministries which traditionally deal with women's issues, but the government as a whole. Gender-sensitive administrations require the capacity to serve all people and they require adequate resources to promote and implant fair and transparent policies, systems and operations. Changes taking all these elements into account will lead to more inclusive governance, a reduction in corruption and a greater possibility for society to reach its full potential.