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JOINT STATEMENT MARKING THE
INTERNATIONAL DAY FOR THE
ELIMINATION OF VIOLENCE AGAINST WOMEN

Delivered by Ambassador Steffen Kongstad at the Permanent Council
Vienna, 29 November 2018

CHECK AGAINST DELIVERY

Mr. Chair,

I am speaking on behalf of Canada, Iceland, Liechtenstein, Mongolia, Switzerland and Norway.

Violence against women and girls remains one of the most widespread and persistent human rights violations globally. The realisation of women's and girls' human rights is a driver of democracy, sustainable development, and peace. On 25 November, the International Day for the Elimination of Violence against Women reminds us that we must enhance our efforts to reach this goal.

Violence against women stems from outdated social norms, discriminatory practices, and repressive attitudes. It takes many forms, including sexual violence, human trafficking, domestic violence, intimate partner violence, threats and harassment, both online and offline. Harmful practices such as child, early, and forced marriage, and female genital mutilation and cutting are also forms of violence against women.

Violence prevents women and girls from living full lives and from fully participating in society. We must hold perpetrators accountable, and put an end to impunity. As long as the systematic discrimination of women and girls remains embedded in the social fabric of our societies, we cannot effectively prevent and respond to violence against them. As staunch supporters of women's and girls' rights, we will work to promote gender equality and the empowerment of women and girls.

The human, social and economic costs of violence against women and girls are substantial. UN Women has stated that research estimates the cost of violence against women to be around two percent of the global gross domestic product. Such violence

has enormous costs for the health, safety and well-being of women and girls. Our societies will gain economically from its elimination.

Violence against women occurs in every country, across the lines of culture and socio-economic status, in homes, at schools and universities, on the streets, on the Internet and at work. Women and girls who experience multiple and intersecting forms of discrimination, are particularly at risk. Our policies must ensure that we leave no one behind.

Social media has provided a new arena for violence to thrive, particularly against women, in the form of threats, abuse, and hate speech. Whilst protecting the freedom of expression, we must find effective ways of addressing this issue.

Fully engaging men and boys, as partners and stakeholders is essential to achieving gender equality and ending violence against women and girls. Men and boys bear a particular responsibility to take a clear stand against violence directed at women and girls.

An essential part of addressing violence against women is to ensure their full participation in the labour market, putting women and men on equal footing. This involves transforming gender roles and fostering respect and economic opportunities for women and girls in all areas of work. This contributes to gender equality, the empowerment of women and girls, and to ending discrimination and violence against them.

Mr Chair,

Violence against women and girls, in all its forms, is discriminatory, deplorable and completely unacceptable. We must prevent, combat, and eliminate it. As stakeholders and agents of change, women and girls must be included in decision-making and given a voice to influence laws and policies in this area.

The Istanbul Convention is a comprehensive and far-reaching instrument to address violence against women. It may serve as inspiration for advancing OSCE commitments. Still, commitments make little difference if not implemented. The support to implementation offered by the field operations, ODIHR, and the Gender Section is necessary and important.

Only with clear political will and by strong laws, strong health and protective services, and comprehensive prevention programs, can we put an end to violence against all women and girls. It is imperative that the OSCE and all participating states make all efforts to achieve this objective. To this end, the Chairmanship's proposal for a Ministerial Council decision on violence against women is an opportunity for us to take a step together.

Thank you