



**Organization for Security and Co-operation in Europe
Office of the Secretary General**

Security Council Open Debate on Women, Peace and Security

25 October 2016

Statement delivered by Ambassador Paul Bekkers, Director of the Office of the Secretary General, on behalf of the Secretary General of the Organization for Security and Cooperation in Europe (OSCE)

Mr President, distinguished members of the Council,

I am very honoured to be here.

One of the greatest challenges of modern times is the normalization of violence at all levels – local, regional, national and international. This poses a real threat to the lives of women and children. Indeed, attacks on women and girls as well as the horror of sexual slavery are sometimes part of the strategy of combatants and violent extremist groups. We have heard several dreadful examples of this in the morning.

Mr President, we believe with you that this must stop. And UNSC resolution 1325 is part of the solution. Thank you for bringing us together today and thanks to the Secretary General and the Executive Director of UN Women for their reports.

These mentioned progress has been made, yes, but it is disappointing that implementation is lagging behind.

And while indeed there is growing awareness, there is also a huge lack of funding for implementation initiatives for UNSCR 1325. Our support for implementation must go beyond rhetoric. We need to walk the talk.

The Women, Peace and Security agenda plays a central role in the work of the Organization for Security and Co-operation in Europe, the largest regional security organization under Chapter VIII of the UN Charter.

Our efforts to prevent conflicts and resolve disputes peacefully are underpinned by our strong commitment to gender equality. Gender equality is a fundamental principle that cuts across the full gamut of security issues that the OSCE addresses.

Mr. President, members of the Security Council,

The OSCE acknowledges the clear evidence that participation of women in all phases of the conflict cycle – from conflict prevention, crisis management, conflict resolution and post-conflict rehabilitation and reconciliation – is critical to the success and sustainability of peace processes and peace building. Much of the evidence has been shared by several delegations today.

There is a long way to go, but allow me to share a few of our achievements thus far. And at this point, I would like to thank – and refer to – the German representative for his remarks as Chair of the OSCE.

1. Of the 63 existing National Action Plans on UNSCR 1325, 28 are from the OSCE region alone and several more are in the making, and we continue to work with our participating States to improve their plans or develop new ones.

2. Within the Organization, we have established a network of 60 Gender Focal Points covering our 17 field operations, three Institutions and our Secretariat to support 1325 implementation by OSCE participating States and to develop our own internal compliance.

3. Reducing sexual and gender-based violence in conflict also means addressing violence against women and domestic violence in times of peace, so this is another focus of the OSCE's work. For example, in July, we organized a conference on combating violence against women to exchange good practices and promote the ratification of the Istanbul Convention.

4. The OSCE also recognizes the important role women can play in preventing radicalization and violent extremism. Next month, we will convene a conference on “Gender Mainstreaming in Operational Responses to Violent Extremism and Radicalization that Lead to Terrorism” that will bring together policymakers, experts and activists from across the OSCE region.

Mr. President, let me stress, that in everything we do, we strive to strengthen our co-operation and engagement with other international organizations and civil society organizations. For example, we have developed close co-operation with UN Women in Ukraine on the implementation of the new Ukrainian National Action Plan.

Yet despite our achievements, we still have a long way to go. We are aware that we need to look inward as well. We need to create a better gender balance in the OSCE structures, in particular in the politico-military dimension.

Mr President, before I conclude, allow me to commend the Spanish initiative to set up the Women, Peace and Security National Focal Point Network. We look forward to engage in this forum.

Rest assured that the OSCE remains committed to the full implementation of UNSC resolution 1325. To counter the normalization of violence while promoting peace and security, eradicate gender-based violence and improve the participation of women. We rely on your support and at the same time, we strive to do this in close co-operation with all of you.

Thank you, Mr President.