



PERMANENT DELEGATION OF NORWAY TO THE OSCE

GENDER EQUALITY REVIEW CONFERENCE OPENING STATEMENT

As delivered by Ambassador Robert Kvile
Vienna, 10 July 2014

Madame Moderator,

The tenth anniversary of the Gender Action Plan is an excellent opportunity to take stock of implementation as well as to take a fresh look at our commitments with a view to strengthening and supplementing them. We welcome this initiative from the Swiss chairmanship to consider ways of taking our work forward. This should include ensuring that our institutional structures are adequate to match the tasks we expect from them.

Madame Moderator,

Gender equality is not only about creating a better world for women, but also for men and society in general. Men and boys also have gender, and they face social roles and expectations that can limit their choices. Gender equality is therefore about changing cultures and traditions, to the extent that they limit individuals in choosing how to live their lives. Men and boys have to be trained in gender sensitivity, as well as women and girls. This is part of gender mainstreaming. We must ensure a distinct youth perspective in our efforts, since boys and girls are still socialized very differently in many participating States.

Madame Moderator,

To employ a gender perspective in crisis management and follow up UN Security Council Resolution 1325 and related resolutions, both men and women have to be trained and sensitized. It is not enough to count the number of women in the crisis teams or at the negotiating table. Gender issues must be taken into account in the whole planning process. Gender mainstreaming also means that competent individuals, with their different background and experience, can cooperate to better understand, handle and prevent conflict wherever it occurs.

Last year, the Norwegian Parliament decided to make our compulsory military service gender neutral from 2015. We believe that we will do better in military operations when we can recruit from a diverse group of people, with different skills, perspectives and gender. In certain conflict and post-conflict areas, for instance in Afghanistan, the dialogue between women is very important for ensuring peace, stabilization and nation building.

Madame Moderator,

To apply a gender perspective in business, financial institutions and other arenas of economic decision-making means to challenge prevailing top management cultures. To achieve this, we have found it necessary to use both incentives and legal measures. When private limited companies and wholly state-owned companies elect boards of governors they are required to have at least 40% of each gender. This has led to an increase of women in the boardrooms. Private enterprises over a certain size are also required to report annually on what they do to promote gender equality.

Encouraging women to take leadership positions would have little effect if it were not backed up by government policies that make it possible for women, and men, to combine a career with family life. Paid parental leave, including earmarked weeks for the father, available kindergartens at an affordable price, the right to stay at home with sick children a number of days each year per parent, these are concrete measures that enable families to make their own choices and enable women to pursue their own careers. A higher percentage of women in the workforce means higher generation of wealth, more taxes paid and therefore better public services and welfare.

Madame Moderator,

Norway's family policy has also enabled women to take greater part in political life. There are no gender quotas in our election laws. But political parties can themselves choose to apply quotas when preparing the lists of candidates. Many political parties throughout the world have done so, with success. In Norway we now have 40 % women in Parliament.

Madame Moderator,

Gender based violence is a persistent problem in the OSCE area, as shown recently in the study from the EU Fundamental Rights Agency, among others. Assisting victims of violence, treating perpetrators and training prosecutors and judges are excellent measures that should be undertaken by all participating States. But, again, we have to address the root causes. Why is gender based violence tolerated and ignored in many countries? Many governments hesitate to question traditional male roles and stereotypes. But if we do not, we will never make progress. We must ensure that our OSCE commitments and action plan are fully updated and operational on this issue.

Madame Moderator,

Let us combine our overarching perspectives and exchange of concrete experience in this conference. We must aim to move forward in Basel, and, more importantly, in practical policies in our own countries. We are ready to support the chairmanship in achieving this.

Thank you, Madame Moderator