



**DELEGATION OF CANADA TO THE OSCE
STATEMENT BY AMBASSADOR ISABELLE POUPART
IN RESPONSE TO THE RIGHT HONOURABLE BARONESS ANELAY OF ST JOHN'S
ADDRESS ON PREVENTING SEXUAL VIOLENCE IN CONFLICT
1110th MEETING OF THE PERMANENT COUNCIL
21 JULY 2016**

Mr. Chairperson,

I have the pleasure of making this statement on behalf of Iceland, Liechtenstein, Mongolia, Norway, Switzerland and Canada.

We warmly welcome to the Permanent Council The Right Honourable Baroness Anelay, Minister of State for the Foreign and Commonwealth Office and the Department for International Development, and we thank her for her remarks.

Minister, we fully share your concerns with regards to the severe and pervasive impact that sexual violence in conflict has on women, girls, men and boys in many countries and societies around the world. We appreciate the UK's initiative and leadership on this issue, including through the Global Summit you hosted in 2014, and we are pleased to contribute to international action and dialogue to prevent and respond to this violence.

Your presence at the Permanent Council today provides us with a useful opportunity and needed momentum to address this issue in the OSCE context, where we indeed agree with you that there is scope for participating States to increase their cooperation both inside and outside the OSCE region.

Minister,

We know that sexual violence is perpetrated against women, men and children in conflict situations around the world. We also know that it is primarily women and girls who are targeted for rape, enslavement, forced marriage and human trafficking, including, most egregiously, by extremist groups such as ISIL and Boko Haram. We unreservedly condemn these practices and will continue to seek to prevent such violence, assist survivors and hold those responsible to account.

In this context, we fully support the work of the UN Special Representative for Sexual Violence in Conflict, Ms. Zainab Bangura. Like you, we also believe that civil society is an important partner in this endeavour, from grass root organisations who support prevention, mitigation and response to sexual violence to support the health and well-being of survivors to international partners like Justice Rapid Response who are strengthening the ability of countries to bring perpetrators to account.

We agree that we must do more to increase the ability of security forces to prevent and respond to sexual violence. We also believe that they must lead by example. Here we must not be silent about sexual violence by armed forces including peacekeepers, which causes serious harm to vulnerable they are mandated to protect populations and threatens the effectiveness and credibility of UN and other international peace operations. Every effort must be made to support the implementation of the UN's zero tolerance policy on Sexual Exploitation and Abuse.

Minister,

We must not forget that sexual violence in all its forms has lifelong consequences, including disempowering women economically, socially and politically. The unequal treatment of women and girls is one of the main reasons they are unable to realize their basic human rights and is a contributing factor to violence against them. Consequently, ensuring women's full and active participation in all peace and security initiatives is a prerequisite for sustainable peace and security and we must continue to promote gender equality and its full integration in the OSCE's comprehensive approach to security. In this context, we welcome your address yesterday on this topic at the OSCE Forum for Security and Co-operation and we continue to see a role for the OSCE in fostering the implementation of UN Security Council resolutions on Women, Peace and Security.

We share your view that the inclusion of a reference to "international and regional initiatives to combat sexual violence, in particular in armed conflict" in OSCE Ministerial Decision 7/14 adopted in Basel was a positive step by participating States in acknowledging the issue. Despite our strong general commitments on combating violence against women in the OSCE region, we believe there is much space left to bolster our commitments and action in this regard and we look forward to the opportunity provided by tomorrow's conference to advance this issue.

Finally, we thank you for bringing to our attention the need to fight the stigma that victims of sexual violence have to face. The response to this challenge must go beyond the immediate support to victims and into shaping broader societal attitudes, including through engaging men and boys as allies for advancing gender equality. Here the OSCE has a wide array of tools it can bring to bear in support of the efforts of participating States. These tools include the 2004 OSCE Action Plan for the Promotion of Gender Equality, the various Ministerial Council Decisions addressing Violence Against Women, the Guidelines produced by the Gender Section of the Secretariat and by ODIHR, as well as the work of the Special Representative on Combating Trafficking in Human Beings. As we saw during our Ambassadorial trip to BiH, field missions can also be key partners to help bring these tools to bear in support of national efforts.

In concluding and to contribute to our dialogue, we would like to ask you if there are particular actions that can be taken to address the issue of child, early and forced marriage and the role that stigma can play in motivating families to marry off their daughters who are at risk of violence or who have been raped?

Thank you.