



PERMANENT DELEGATION OF NORWAY  
TO THE OSCE

JOINT STATEMENT ON THE OCCASION OF THE  
INTERNATIONAL DAY FOR THE ELIMINATION OF VIOLENCE AGAINST  
WOMEN

Delivered by Ambassador Steffen Kongstad at the Permanent Council  
Vienna, 30 November 2017

CHECK AGAINST DELIVERY

Mr. Chair,

I am speaking on behalf of Andorra, 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, in itself, an objective we must strive to achieve; furthermore, it is a driver of democracy, sustainable development, and peace. On the International Day for the Elimination of Violence against Women, observed on 25 November, we are reminded 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Violence against women stems from outdated social norms, discriminatory practices, and repressive attitudes.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, and harmful practices such as child, early, and forced marriage, and female genital mutilation and cutting. It prevents women and girls from living full lives and from fully participating in society. 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, our countries will work to promote gender equality and the empowerment of women and girls.

The human and socio-economic costs of violence against women and girls are substantial. Last year, UN Women stated that research estimates the cost of violence against women to be around two percent of the global gross domestic product, approximately the size of the economy of Canada. As such, not only does such violence have enormous and unconscionable costs for the health, safety and well-being of women and girls, but our societies will also gain economically from the elimination of violence against women and girls.

Violence against women and girls occurs in the family, at the workplace, in school and universities, in the streets, in politics, on social media platforms, and throughout public and private life. In the digital age, it occurs everywhere, at any time. Women and girls from marginalised and minority groups, and those who experience multiple and intersecting forms of discrimination, are often particularly at risk. This increased vulnerability lowers their ability to assert their rights. 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. Online violence is relentless and wide-reaching: it can come at any time of the day and re-offend victims continually. Whilst ensuring the protection of 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. Given that men still tend to have more power in society, 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. It must be prevented, combated, and eliminated. As stakeholders and agents of change, women and girls must be included in decision making and given a voice to engage with, and influence, laws and policies in this area. Only with clear political will and by strong laws, 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 take all necessary efforts to achieve this objective. In this regard, we would like to encourage all states to support the Chairmanship's draft decision on preventing and combating violence against women.

Thank you.