



PERMANENT DELEGATION OF NORWAY  
TO THE OSCE

STATEMENT ON THE INTERNATIONAL DAY FOR THE ELIMINATION OF  
SEXUAL VIOLENCE IN CONFLICT

Delivered by Ambassador Steffen Kongstad at the Permanent Council  
Vienna, 21 June 2018

CHECK AGAINST DELIVERY

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

Mr. Chair,

Every single day, sexual violence is used as a weapon or a tactic of war. Domestic violence increases as tensions grow. The chaos of conflict prepares the ground for further abuse.

All civilians – women, men, girls and boys – are exposed in conflict, but women and girls are always especially so. They often targeted specifically for strategic reasons. When the conflict is settled, women are often held responsible for loss of honour, and both they and their children are subjected to more degrading treatment.

Sexual violence is often seen as an inevitable, if regrettable, consequence of conflict. This unacceptable attitude encourages impunity for perpetrators and silences survivors. This must be changed.

Mr. Chair,

Our response to conflict-related sexual violence needs to be as varied as its causes. If the use of sexual violence by armed forces is intentional, this needs to be addressed head-on. If its use is not intentionally directed but occurs nonetheless, we should offer capacity building, technical support, and other forms of support to address the matter.

Everyone working to prevent the outbreak of conflict or to attain reconciliation, needs to understand the different needs and situations of those involved. Sexual violence is an obstacle to women's capacity to participate in processes that concern their rights, freedoms and opportunities. We need to ensure that women meaningfully participate in and are consulted on policymaking addressing the use of sexual violence in conflict and

accountability for these crimes. That is one of the many reasons why it is absolutely necessary to mainstream the gender perspective in all aspects of the OSCE's work.

However, mainstreaming gender is about more than protecting and empowering women. It is about understanding that everyone is affected differently by conflict depending on their role in society. We are pleased to see that this year, the UN chose to focus on the fates of the children born as a result of sexual violence. All perspectives must be included when we wish to prevent conflict.

Together with the UN, Norway is developing a whole-of-mission handbook for UN operations on how to prevent and respond to conflict-related sexual violence.

Irrespective of cause and context, we cannot accept impunity. States have a duty to prevent as well as investigate and prosecute. The perpetrators must be held responsible, and their leaders – military or civilian – must be held to account. Conflict-related sexual violence is a violation of both international human rights law and international humanitarian law. It can also be a war crime, a crime against humanity or an act of genocide.

Mr. Chair,

As a regional security arrangement under chapter VIII of the UN Charter, with a comprehensive approach to security, the OSCE is well situated to assist its participating States in fulfilling its relevant commitments to end sexual violence in conflict.

To prevent these crimes, gender mainstreaming must be a fundamental part of the OSCE's work in all dimensions of security. We have a good platform for this in the OSCE Gender Action Plan, but we must make sure to implement all of the commitments on which we have all agreed.

Thank you, Mr. Chair