



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, 20 June 2019

CHECK AGAINST DELIVERY

Chair,

I am delivering this statement on behalf of Canada, Iceland, Liechtenstein, Mongolia, Switzerland and Norway.

Sexual and gender-based violence (SGBV) is a weapon that causes lasting damage to individuals and whole societies. It is not limited to any particular culture or religion, nor to any particular region or continent. It is a universal problem, perpetrated across cultures and continents. Our region is not immune. Wherever conflict has arisen, so has sexual and gender based violence. While it disproportionately affects women and girls in conflict, men and boys, as well as LGBTI persons are also targets. Sexual violence in conflict affects everyone.

The primary responsibility to prevent, counter and eliminate sexual violence rests with us, the states. It is our responsibility to do all we can to end sexual and gender-based violence. This is our legal and moral obligation as states. It is also our obligation as contributors and partners to organisations that engage directly with those affected. This responsibility includes strengthening national legislation against sexual violence, holding perpetrators to account, and ensuring adequate provision of services to survivors.

At our disposal in these efforts are the tools of multilateral diplomacy, the OSCE among them. Through the OSCE, we have commitments to fight sexual violence. More importantly we have a region-wide toolkit to assist states in their efforts to eliminate sexual violence.

As a regional arrangement under Chapter VIII of the UN Charter, the OSCE has a clear mandate to assist states in the implementation of relevant commitments. As a regional arrangement with common security as its guiding purpose, we would argue that the OSCE also has a duty to contribute to ending sexual violence in conflict in our region.

Gender inequality and unequal distribution of power between men and women, boys and girls, are root causes of sexual and gender based violence. It can be eliminated only as we uphold the rights of women and girls and are moving toward gender equality. We must make concerted efforts to ensure the equality of women and men, boys and girls. We must ensure the meaningful participation of women in decision-making and the participation of girls in matters that affect them. It is essential that men and boys be fully engaged in efforts to advance gender equality.

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 a constituent element of genocide. Full and effective gender mainstreaming is an important measure toward ending sexual violence.

Three further considerations serve to guide our efforts to countering and eliminating sexual and gender based violence, including in conflict:

First, a survivor-centric approach is the basis of our collective efforts. The survivors know best themselves how we can assist them in rebuilding their lives and removing stigma.

Second, while assisting and listening to individual survivors, we also need to underpin efforts by communities and authorities in repairing the social fabric at large.

Third, humanitarian actors must be better coordinated and better funded. We need a common approach rooted in human rights and the practical, as well as moral, value of their enjoyment. To succeed we need to mobilize broad alliances of governments, multilateral organizations and civil society.

Thank you