



EUROPEAN UNION

OSCE Permanent Council No 1106 Vienna, 23 June 2016

EU Statement on the International Day for the Elimination of Sexual Violence in Conflict

On the occasion of the first International Day for the Elimination of Sexual Violence in Conflict on 19 June 2016, the European Union would like to reaffirm its strongest support for zero tolerance to any form of sexual violence. Sexual violence is a flagrant and unacceptable violation of human rights and international humanitarian law.

Sexual violence in conflict continues to be used as a tactic of war and terror. It targets predominantly women and girls, but also men and boys, and both male and female survivors must be acknowledged and supported. It can also significantly hinder peace-building and reconciliation efforts, as sexual violence can have a long-lasting effect on local communities. More needs to be done to ensure that the elimination of sexual violence is mainstreamed through all relevant peace-building related activity. The international community must also look more closely at challenging negative attitudes that can condone or justify sexual violence as well stigma directed towards the survivors.

Following up on the London Global Summit to End Sexual Violence in Conflict of June 2014, the EU adopted a Guide to Practical Actions for Ending Sexual Violence in Conflict, which promotes a comprehensive, multi-sectoral and multidimensional approach. The EU is also committed to the global initiative "Call to Action on Protection from Gender-based Violence in Emergencies" and its implementation.

Elimination of sexual violence in conflict is also included in the OSCE commitments, in the Ministerial Council Decision 7/14 on violence against women taken in Basel in 2014 and it marks an important step to tackle the issue in the OSCE area. Prevention

of sexual violence in conflicts should also be an area of focus of the OSCE's work on gender and the Women, Peace and Security Agenda.

The EU would like to see practical steps to tackle all forms of sexual violence, including impunity for the use of rape as a weapon of war and to begin to change global attitudes – such as survivor stigma - to these crimes. Accountability and access to justice are essential. There must be no impunity for those responsible for committing sexual violence. Likewise, the victims and survivors must be made aware of their rights and have access to justice. The EU has adopted a framework for transitional justice that ensures gender is a key consideration taken into account in these processes. Perpetrators must be prosecuted in accordance with national and international law.

Efforts to fight sexual violence in conflict also need measures to ensure adequate information, fact-finding and proper documentation. The International Protocol that was launched in the 2014 Global Summit in London is one such tool to help deliver this objective. Raising awareness of women's and girls' rights, as well as of the existence of sexual violence against men and boys, is extremely important in addition to fair representation of women in all relevant bodies and processes. We acknowledge the central role of civil society organisations in identifying and protecting victims, and we will continue supporting them in their efforts.

The EU continues to support the International Criminal Court, as well as non-permanent International Criminal Tribunals, and recognises the significant progress they have achieved in combating sexual violence in conflict. The ICTY's legacy project and guidance on prosecuting sexual violence will help tackle impunity for these crimes. We also support multilateral mechanisms in tackling sexual violence in conflict, in particular the valuable work of the UN Secretary-General's Special Representative on Sexual Violence in Conflict, Zainab Bangura.

The EU strongly supports women's full and effective participation in conflict prevention and resolution and in peacebuilding processes in order to achieve long-term sustainable results – we know this leads to more inclusive outcomes and contributes to lasting peace and a more gender equal society.

The Candidate Countries the FORMER YUGOSLAV REPUBLIC OF MACEDONIA*, MONTENEGRO*, SERBIA* and ALBANIA*, the Country of the Stabilisation and Association Process and Potential Candidate BOSNIA and HERZEGOVINA, and the EFTA countries ICELAND, LIECHTENSTEIN and

NORWAY, members of the European Economic Area, as well as UKRAINE, the REPUBLIC OF MOLDOVA, GEORGIA, ANDORRA and SAN MARINO align themselves with this statement.

* The Former Yugoslav Republic of Macedonia, Montenegro, Serbia and Albania continue to be part of the Stabilisation and Association Process.