



**Joint Nordic Statement on the International Women's Day
As delivered by Ambassador of Iceland, Kristín A. Árnadóttir,
at the 1414th OSCE Permanent Council Meeting,
Vienna, 9 March 2023**

Thank you, Mr. Chair,

In addition to the statements already delivered on our behalf, I have the honour of delivering this statement on behalf of the Nordic countries, Denmark, Finland, Iceland, Norway, Sweden, and my own country Iceland.

We thank the distinguished speakers for their valuable and moving remarks. The Nordic countries stand in full and unwavering solidarity with Ukraine and the Ukrainian people.

The tragic and disproportionate impact of war on women and girls is well documented – and the Russian Federation's ongoing war of aggression against Ukraine is no exception. Systematic use of sexual and gender-based violence is a horrifying reality. The war has caused massive displacement of women and girls, also placing them at heightened risk of falling victim to traffickers preying on their vulnerabilities. It is important to be aware of the diversity of women and girls fleeing conflict, and tailor our response accordingly. Perpetrators of all crimes committed, including conflict-related sexual violence, must be held accountable.

We commend the bravery, resilience, and resourcefulness of Ukrainian women. They are actively participating in the military, political, and emergency response. They are monitoring the human rights situation, documenting war crimes, and advocating for their country.

Mr. Chair,

Gender equality is a human right. Achieving it is a political choice. As we today mark the International Women's Day, we emphasise that the commitment to gender equality must be made every day, repeatedly.

We need diversity in all spheres of society. Ensuring fairness and non-discrimination is only possible when applying a gender transformative approach in all policy- and decision making. Gender equality can only be reached when discriminatory structures, negative social norms and gender stereotypes are overcome. Everyone must be involved in this process, including men and boys.

In addition to domestic policies, gender equality is a core value for the Nordics in our foreign and development policies. But even if the Nordic countries continue to rank high on the Global Gender Gap Index, there is still more to be done in our countries. Equal pay is for example not a reality and women and girls are more likely to be subject to violence, including digital violence. We know that there is a clear link between online violence and violent behaviour in the physical world. In that respect, the UN theme for International Women's Day this year, DigitALL is very topical.

Mr. Chair,

Globally, women's rights are facing a serious backlash. According to the UN Secretary General Antonio Guterres, at the current rate of progress, it will take 300 years to reach full gender parity in the world. In contrast, in 2020, the gender gap was set to close within 100 years.

In a time of democratic backsliding and rising authoritarianism, we must do our utmost to fight setbacks and protect the values of democracy, freedom, and human rights, including gender equality. Protecting girls' and women's rights, including their sexual and reproductive health and rights, is an essential part of protecting individual rights and freedoms.

We commend the OSCE structures for their efforts to increase gender equality. Gender mainstreaming in all activities must continue to be a priority. We appreciate the Chair's commitment to put gender equality and Women, Peace and Security high on the OSCE agenda this year.

Mr. Chair,

Without gender equality, there can be no sustainable development, no comprehensive security, no true democracy.

We must increase our efforts to promote the full enjoyment of all human rights by all women and girls, including by addressing root causes of gender inequality through transformative approaches and enhancing our preventive measures. Our democracies, societies, and the security in our region depend on it.

I thank you.