



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 to the Permanent Council  
Vienna, 18 June 2020

CHECK AGAINST DELIVERY

Chair,

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

We appreciate that the Albanian chairmanship has put the International Day for the Elimination of Sexual Violence in Conflict on today's agenda. We also wish to thank Ambassador Melanne Verweir for her statement placing the issue in context and perspective, and demonstrating the importance of effectively combatting sexual violence in conflict.

Sexual and gender-based violence (SGBV) is not a mere side effect of war. Frequently it is used as a weapon of war that aims to destroy not just the victims, but entire families and communities. It destroys the future, as well as the present, for many more than the women and girls, men and boys, who are directly affected. Sexual and gender-based violence in conflict affects everyone.

It 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.

It is not limited to any particular culture or religion, nor to any particular region or continent. It is a universal problem, perpetrated wherever conflict has arisen, also within the OSCE region.

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Our responsibility as states is to end sexual and gender-based violence. This obligation is legal as well as moral, and includes preventing acts of sexual and gender-based violence, strengthening national legislation, holding perpetrators to account, and ensuring an appropriate provision of services to victims and survivors through a survivor-centric and trauma-informed approach.

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 and gender-based violence. We also have a region-wide toolkit to assist states in their efforts to eliminate it. Earlier this month, the UN launched a handbook for field missions on preventing and responding to conflict-related sexual violence. We have many useful tools.

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, the OSCE actually has a duty to contribute to ending sexual and gender-based violence in conflict in our region.

Full and effective gender mainstreaming is an important measure to end sexual and gender-based violence. In order to move toward gender equality, we must uphold the rights of women and girls, ensure their meaningful participation in decision-making, and bring down unequal and discriminatory power structures. To succeed, men and boys must be fully engaged with these efforts.

The following three considerations continue to guide our efforts to countering and eliminating sexual and gender based violence, including in conflict:

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

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

Third, we need a common approach rooted in human rights and their practical, as much as their moral value. To succeed we need to mobilize resources and broad alliances of governments, multilateral organisations, civil society, and people at large. Preventing, mitigating and responding to sexual and gender-based violence must be a key humanitarian priority.

Thank you