



## EUROPEAN UNION

### OSCE Permanent Council No. 1394 Vienna, 13 October 2021

#### EU Statement on the International Day of the Girl Child

1. On 11 October, we celebrated the 10th anniversary of the International Day of the Girl Child, highlighting the needs and challenges girls around the world are facing while at the same time promoting girls' empowerment and their full enjoyment of human rights.
2. The human rights situation for girls is challenging around the world, the progress towards gender equality is slow and uneven. In too many places, girls continue to face unprecedented challenges to enjoyment of their right to education, their right to physical and mental health, and the protections needed for a life without violence. UN Women's recent report "Progress on the Sustainable Development Goals: The Gender Snapshot 2022" estimates that the development goal on gender equality will not be achieved for another 300 years.
3. Russia's illegal and brutal war of aggression in Ukraine has a severe impact on women, girls and individuals in vulnerable situations. UN reports state that Russia's war of aggression impedes progress towards gender equality worldwide. The war's impact on food and energy security has widened gender gaps in hunger, education and poverty, and has also increased gender-based violence. Existing inequalities have aggravated within and between countries, especially harming those most vulnerable.
4. In the wake of Russia's war of aggression, there is also an alarming increase in gender-based violence, transactional sex for food and survival, and other forms of sexual exploitation and trafficking in human beings as well as child marriages and

forced marriages to be expected due to the worsened living conditions in many countries.

5. Russia's war of aggression against Ukraine highlights the urgent need to pay particular attention to the situation of girls and women in wars and conflicts. Reports, including those under the OSCE Moscow Mechanism, indicate that Ukrainian girls and women are subject to horrendous cruelties, including sexual and gender-based violence and sexual harassment committed by the Russian Armed Forces, as well as trafficking in human beings and forced displacement
6. At the same time, the important role that women play in contributing to resilience of Ukraine has been central to countering the Russian aggression. We see women journalists, women soldiers, women civil society representatives, and women politicians carry on with their important work under war-time conditions. We see how empowered women give back to their societies. They serve as important role models to the girls growing up under the Russian war of aggression.
7. Gender equal societies, where human rights are fully enjoyed by all benefit from comprehensive security and have better prospects for sustainable and prosperous development. All participating States have committed themselves to continue working towards girls' full enjoyment of human rights. This year's theme was "Our time is now – our rights, our future". Let us do all we can to build gender equal societies.

The Candidate Countries REPUBLIC of NORTH MACEDONIA\*, MONTENEGRO\*, ALBANIA\*, UKRAINE and REPUBLIC OF MOLDOVA, the Potential Candidate Countries BOSNIA and HERZEGOVINA\* and GEORGIA, the EFTA country ICELAND, member of the European Economic Area, as well as ANDORRA, MONACO and SAN MARINO align themselves with this statement.

\* Republic of North Macedonia, Montenegro, Albania and Bosnia and Herzegovina continue to be part of the Stabilisation and Association Process.