



Statement of Ambassador Guðni Bragason, Permanent Representative of Iceland, on the occasion of the International Women's Day 8th March, delivered at the OSCE Permanent Council, Vienna, 12th March 2020.

Mr Chairman/Madam Chair.

Iceland welcomes this milestone year for the advancement of women's rights, as we celebrate 20th anniversary of the UNSCR 1325 and the 25th anniversary of the Peking Declaration, which stated so pointedly that “women's rights are human rights”.

This is a moment to celebrate the successes, but also to contemplate the fact that no country, however, has achieved complete gender equality.

Few words on successes: For the 11th consecutive year, Iceland ranks at the top of the World Economic Forum's Global Gender Gap Index which surveys 144 countries. We have a new law to enforce legislation on equal pay. Iceland and 70 other states recently instigated a resolution at the Human Rights Council in Geneva on Equal Pay of men and women. The UN General Assembly has subsequently established September 18th as International Equal Pay Day to support equal pay for work of equal value.

On our “to-do” list, however, we still need to address the labor market segregation that contributes largely to the gender pay gap. We also need to implement better laws on equal representation in company boards and promote and support women in the corporate world, in entrepreneurship and the economy.

We are proud of our achievements, but also aware of the numerous remaining challenges to fully close the gender gap. We are also aware of the privileges enjoyed compared to the millions of women in the world denied basic human rights and suffering from poverty and war. Easing the plight of women in conflict zones in the OSCE area should be a priority of the OSCE.

Gender equality, however, does not come about of its own accord. As we know within the OSCE, it requires a strong political will and development of tools, such as guidelines, legislation and action plans and establishing gender education in schools and gender training in the work place, to name but few issues. Important in this respect is the implementation of the OSCE *Action Plan for the Promotion of Gender Equality*.

It is also important to fight against gender-based violence, in line with the Council of Europe *Convention on preventing and combating violence against women and domestic violence*, which Iceland has ratified. In this respect I also like to recall the OSCE Ministerial Declaration in Milano 2018 on *Violence against Women* which should encourage us to venture further in eliminating this evil.

Finally,

We should also not forget the fact that the Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs) can never be reached unless we simultaneously promote gender equality.

Thank you.