



Statement by Minister Counsellor, Ólafur Sigurðsson.
Economic and Environmental Dimension Implementation Meeting, 15
November 2022. Opening Session.

Thank you, Mr. Chair,

I am honoured to deliver this statement on behalf of Iceland.

Let me at the outset express our grave concerns about the immediate and long-term consequences of Russia's unlawful and brutal war against Ukraine. The consequences, including energy and food insecurity, gendered migration and refugee flows, and associated risks of human trafficking and gender-based violence will affect women disproportionately.

We reiterate our unwavering support to Ukraine and urge Russia to immediately stop this war and respect the sovereignty, independence, territorial integrity of Ukraine within its internationally recognised borders.

Mr. Chair,

We welcome the topic of discussion today, being one of high importance for the positive development of all our societies.

Iceland has ranked at the top of the World Economic Forum's Global Gender Gap Index for the last twelve years, and women's labour participation in Iceland is one of the highest in Europe.

Gender equality does not simply come about on its own. Rather, it is the result of persistent, dedicated, and challenging work, political will and leadership, legislation, policies, and tools. Iceland's legislation on equal pay, gender quotas, gender budgeting, shared parental leave, universal affordable childcare have been some of the key policies for progress.

We have learned that gender equality is not just a matter of justice. Research and reports, carried out by the World Bank and the OECD to name but a few reliable sources, increasingly provide strong evidence of the central role that gender equality plays in a society's security, and stability. States with higher female participation in the labour force are more peaceful, and less likely to use military force to resolve international disputes. The Women, Peace and Security agenda also recognises that women's economic security is a fundamental part of women's broader security.

Mr. Chair,

We must continue and strengthen the good work done at the OSCE, in all three dimensions and in our field missions, in advancing gender equality and women's empowerment. The empowerment of women is a driver for sustainable development and stable and prosperous societies.

To conclude, I would like to affirm Iceland's firm commitment to continue our efforts with a view to achieve gender equality. Women's economic empowerment really is a matter of peace and security, for individual women, as well as societies, nations, and regions. We look forward to fruitful discussions on this important topic.

I thank you.