



Delegation of Canada
to the OSCE

Délégation du Canada
auprès de l'OSCE

**STATEMENT BY CHARGÉ D'AFFAIRES DANIEL BARBARIE
MARKING THE INTERNATIONAL DAY OF THE GIRL CHILD
1340th MEETING OF THE PERMANENT COUNCIL
21 OCTOBER 2021**

Madam Chairperson,

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

Madam Chairperson,

October 11th marked the Tenth International Day of the Girl Child themed “*Digital Generation. Our Generation.*” Officially commemorating this day is critical in working towards the recognition that girls deserve as equal and powerful actors in society. This year, our countries again express our commitment to standing with, and supporting, girls everywhere as they inspire and creatively take charge of their own futures. We commit to continue our collective work to address the gap that still exists worldwide in recognizing and supporting girls and young women, and addressing the particular obstacles they face around the world, particularly those from marginalized groups. We will continue to improve our national and collective policies in protecting and advancing the human rights of girls and young women; supporting their full, equal, and meaningful participation in all political, economic, and social matters; and work towards their economic empowerment and in reducing inequalities in access to, and control over, resources.

Our countries agree that advancing gender equality and the empowerment of girls and young women is one of the most effective ways to reduce poverty, create lasting peace, and achieve sustainable development. When girls get the support and opportunities they need, they can create a better world for themselves, their communities, and future generations. We envision a world where girls and young women are valued and empowered, have control over their own lives, fully participate as decision-makers in their home and in public and political life, and contribute to and benefit from development and economic prosperity in equal measure. We also recognize that engaging boys and young men as stakeholders and partners is critical to achieving uniform gender equality. It requires re-distributing unequal power relations and challenging social norms and gender stereotypes that limit opportunities for women and girls and restrict men and boys to specific roles. This societal change requires everyone’s attention and action. There is ample evidence that equality translates to sound economic growth, sustainability, and lasting prosperity. This in turn leads to enhanced security in our region.

Madam Chairperson,

This year's theme is particularly pertinent given that negotiations have begun on a decision of "Freedom of Expression in the Digital Age". Around the world, and in the OSCE region, girls are less likely to own and use devices. This limits girls' access to technology, and hinders their development of technology-related skills, and opportunities for employment. The gender divide goes beyond the digital space and connectivity, however, as girls throughout the OSCE region are more likely to experience cyberbullying and online sexual and gender-based violence, which has lifelong mental and physical impacts – and can potentially incite and worsen experiences of violence offline, through the reinforcement of harmful gender norms. Thus, girls' full, equitable and safe access to digital technology has been further hampered by the COVID-19 pandemic. It is necessary that we acknowledge this situation, and take concrete action to ensure that women and girls have the tools needed to succeed, and that this includes digital connectivity and freedom of expression online.

Madam Chairperson,

In our region, the OSCE and each participating State has an important role to play in providing an environment that empowers girls and young women. We look forward to the continued assistance that ODIHR and the Secretariat's Gender Section will offer and provide to participating States in this area. We also look to Secretary General Schmid to continue her efforts to enable the full implementation of gender-mainstreaming, and gender-responsive approaches, in the OSCE, including upgrading the function of the OSCE Gender Section. We commend the Secretary General for her work to ensure that gender equality considerations are taken into account by all OSCE staff and in all areas of the OSCE's field operations and policy.

Thank you Madam Chairperson.