



Rappresentanza Permanente d'Italia
OSCE

ITALY'S STATEMENT AT THE 2023 CHAIRPERSONSHIP CONFERENCE ON GENDER EQUALITY AND WOMEN'S EMPOWERMENT

Tetovo, 5-6 September 2023

Mr Chair,

Italy aligns with the statement delivered by the European Union and would like to add some additional remarks in a national capacity.

First of all, allow me to thank the OSCE Chairpersonship of North Macedonia for convening this important Conference.

Promoting gender equality and the empowerment of all women and girls is at the forefront of the Italian Government's agenda, today led for the first time by a woman who has identified this issue as a priority also within the framework of national policy.

We cannot ignore the obstacles that women still face today on their path to full realization, such as access to education, labor market, and finance, as well as the discrimination and cultural barriers that still hinder women from reaching their full potential. Economic development cannot be separated from the contribution of women, who represent half of the world's population. Women are not a minority to be protected, and public policies must take this into account.

At the national level in Italy, a National Gender Equality Strategy with a long-term perspective (2021-2026) has been adopted for the first time. This document is inspired by the European Union's Gender Equality Strategy 2020-2025 and sets an ambitious goal: to make Italy a country where people of all genders, ages, and backgrounds have equal opportunities for personal and professional development and can realize their potential with the assurance of guaranteed equality in a modern State prepared to face the challenges of the future.

We are aware that achieving lasting results requires promoting cultural change, including within the business world. For this reason, we have engaged the private sector in two important initiatives.

The first is the creation of a National Gender Equality Certification system, aimed at guiding companies in reducing gender disparities in areas considered most critical for women's professional growth. To incentivize companies to obtain certification, there are incentives in public procurement, tax breaks, and financial support measures for small and medium businesses to become certified.

The second initiative involves the dissemination of a Code of Self-Discipline, a flexible tool used on a voluntary basis. It is a moral-suasion instrument that will complement measures to facilitate women's entry and retention in the workforce. The Code of Self-Discipline, already signed by major Italian companies, focuses on three areas: career continuity for women after maternity leave, initiatives for the prevention and care of health needs, and work-life balance.

We believe that involving businesses is one of the keys to promoting women's empowerment because necessary change can only be achieved through the involvement of civil society and all stakeholders.

It should also be noted that economic empowerment and education for autonomy and independence are among the best tools we have today to enable women to escape situations of violence.

In this regard, the Italian government has adopted the new National Strategic Plan on Male Violence against Women 2021-2023. The goal is to continue doubling the Government's efforts to address very specific needs related to various aspects of violence: prevention; protection of victims; punishment of men who inflict violence; training and education of professionals and the population; information and awareness-raising; actions taken against abusive men; protection of migrant women and victims of various types of discrimination; employment, economic autonomy, and housing; the creation of more dedicated spaces for women.

We believe that working together on these issues can make a difference in creating a more equitable and inclusive society that responds to the needs of women as equally as those of men, and in which every woman can express her potential for growth and freedom.