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## DELEGATION OF AFGHANISTAN

### STATEMENT

By Ambassador Khojesta Fana Ebrahimkhel

1178<sup>th</sup> Meeting of the OSCE Permanent Council

Agenda item 1:

International Women's Day:

Address by the Special Representative of the OSCE Chairperson-in-Office  
on Gender, Ambassador Melanne Vermeer

8 March 2018

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Thank you, Chair!

Let me join previous speakers in thanking Ambassador Vermeer for her insightful address. I also wish to thank the Italian Chairmanship for the preparation of the Concept Note on the occasion of International Women's Day (IWD) 2018, entitled "*Strengthening Women's Leadership and Gender Equality*".

Let me here also mention important and relevant initiatives such as the OSCE MenEngage Network, launched in 2012, or the International Gender Champions network for gender equality, started in 2015.

Chair,  
dear colleagues,

On this important day, which strongly reminds us of persisting deficiencies in terms of gender equality, gender parity and the elimination of discrimination and violence against women, we see a remarkable unity among women across the globe, speaking with one voice and demanding our rights. Most importantly, we also watch many men joining us. At the same time, there is a wide range of issues to be tackled, today and on all other days of the year, ranging from child marriage, sexual abuse and harassment, female genital mutilation and femicide, to equal rights, equal representation and equal pay.

Ladies and Gentlemen,

The theme for the 2018 IWD “Time is Now: Rural and Urban Activists Transforming Women’s Lives” was well chosen and it is worth noting that rural women, who make up over a quarter of the world population, are frequently left behind in every measure of development.

In Afghanistan, despite considerable progress over the past sixteen years, women are still facing many and serious challenges. Our Constitution stipulates equal rights and duties for men and women, the President and the First Lady are fervently promoting the rights of women, our Ministry of Women’s Affairs has developed a number of important action plans and similar initiatives, and many of our government bodies closely co-operate with UN-Women Afghanistan. On a personal note, let me say that I had a leading role in the creation of Afghanistan’s National Action Plan on Women, Peace and Security (NAP 1325) and I have also established the Association of Afghan Women Diplomats. Women hold positions in the Government and 28 percent of seats in the Parliament; they have senior positions in the security forces and in the justice sector. Women in Afghanistan engage in start-ups and other private sector businesses, and we have national women teams in football and cycling, to name only a few areas of progress.

Nonetheless, Afghanistan still ranks among the worst countries when it comes to the rights and security of women and this is of course a great matter of concern. We realize that much more needs to be done to substantially improve the situation of women in my country.

Ladies and Gentlemen,

I and the entire delegation of Afghanistan in Vienna will contribute to the empowerment of women, addressing existing disparities and working towards gender equality. We will seize each and every opportunity to closely co-operate with colleagues, men and women, to advance women's rights and to tackle violence against women. In doing so, we shall seek to facilitate provision of additional educational and professional opportunities for girls and women as well as awareness programmes for men and women. Here, we count on the continued assistance of the OSCE and our partners among the OSCE participating and Partner States. We will not shy away from making any effort to inspire and convince men and women about the advantages, necessity and justness of gender equality and parity, as pre-requisite for peace and security, development, human rights, prosperity and well-being for all, also against the background of the SDGs.

In closing, let me express my hope that we all can use this important day to generate momentum towards realization of what should be normalcy: an equal status of men and women.

Thank you, Chair!