





activities of the Organization based on a cross-dimensional approach and also adequate monitoring and review mechanisms.

Within the Organization, the Plan addresses in particular training programmes on gender awareness, on the promotion of a professional and gender-sensitive management culture and working environment and on applying innovative recruitment strategies to ensure a gender-balance in staffing.

With regard to assistance to its participating States the plan focuses on:

- The implementation of relevant commitments
- The highlighting and promotion of the role of women in conflict prevention and peace reconstruction processes
- Providing a framework to regularly review the implementation of the Plan

The OSCE is working at different levels and in different areas on the promotion of gender equality:

- Through the Gender Unit of the OSCE Office for Democratic Institutions and Human Rights (ODIHR),
- through its field missions in Central Asia, the Caucasus, Eastern and South Eastern Europe,
- and through other structures including the Office of the Coordinator of Economic and Environmental Affairs, through the Secretariat, and through the programmes of the Special Representative to the OSCE Chairman-in-Office on Combating Trafficking in Human Beings.

Since 1998/1999 when gender advisers were introduced both to the ODIHR in Warsaw and the OSCE Secretariat in Vienna, activities have been developed in the following critical areas of concern: education and training of women, violence against women, women and armed conflict, women and the economy, women in power and decision-making, institutional mechanisms for the advancement of women, human rights of women and the girl child.

The first and largest programmes that were developed are aiming at women's empowerment and their participation in political decision-making. For almost five years the ODIHR has been developing and implementing large scale programmes in South Caucasus and Central Asia in order to support democratic development in OSCE participating States by country-tailored activities aimed at increasing the participation of women in democratic processes and advancing the role of women at all levels of decision-making. The ODIHR programmes have been designed to safeguard continuity and to allow for long-term impact by adopting a three phased implementation strategy of awareness-raising, local capacity building and national expertise development.

The continued under-representation and insufficient participation of women in democratic processes and decision-making subsequently results in governance and policies that fail to acknowledge the needs and interests of the more than 50% of the population that women represent. This is particularly evident in transition and post-transition societies with a resurgence and increase in the prevalence of traditional attitudes and stereotypical

opportunities available to women, and are subsequently leading to women being increasingly marginalized and underrepresented in democratic processes.

One of the successful approaches, for which the OSCE's political and the ODIHR's democratic institutions building mandates are well suited, is ensuring the increase of women's equal participation in decision-making and influencing democratic developments by building effective and sustainable co-operation strategies between civil society and government structures. Such an approach requires awareness-raising



As countries strive to achieve greater levels of democracy, it is imperative to recognize that a movement towards gender equality is made as important a priority as other reforms being implemented at the national level. The existence of both legislative and non-legislative measures to address discrimination and promote equal treatment and opportunities are prerequisites for the fulfillment of international commitments. The key to the establishment of good governance at local level is the ability to respond to the distinct needs and concerns of the local population, and thus encourage representative and participative governance processes. To effectively pursue the goal of gender equality and anti-discrimination at all levels, international assistance can support broader initiatives to foster collaboration and establish sustainable institutions and processes to achieve these shared goals.

The process of the further institutionalization of the gender equality mechanisms is focusing on providing legal and political recognition of the gender equality mechanisms, providing know-how and political empowerment of women and providing further institution building to already existing gender equality mechanisms.

In order to provide legal recognition, the Missions give assistance to developing the necessary legal framework on gender equality, based on international standards, which should contain provisions for regulating the procedures for establishment, function, nomination of members, decision-making, public representation, and budgets of the

Since its inception, the SPTF has provided critical leadership and served as a catalyst for the creation of the country mechanisms designed to organize the implementation of anti-trafficking work in the countries and across the region. Through the SPTF framework, participating governments have started to play a leading role in the regional fight against trafficking, resulting in enormous improvements in structures and anti-trafficking legislation throughout the region.

The SPTF has been a leading advocate for the view that responses to human trafficking be victim-centered and, in so doing, showed that preserving and protecting the human rights of the victim is not inimical to the interests of States in effective law enforcement and regulation of migration. At the same time, the SPTF consistently pressed the theme of “inclusion” and the necessity of cooperative efforts among government and law enforcement officials, NGOs and international organizations.

The Task Force’s regional activities were firmly based on the needs and priorities of the member countries. It has been crucial to achieve sustainability through a regional sense of “ownership” of this issue, through development of local participation, responsibility, and accountability of efforts. The SPTF has ensured that the regional dimension of the multi-

a few can be mentioned in this framework. These activities and programmes fit into three different functions that the Organization should assume:

- promoter of a legal and political framework for gender equality
- supporter of the process of institutionalization of gender equality
- role model for the culture of gender equality and equal opportunities.

OSCE Missions and Institutions are revising or drafting laws and support local partners in the process of making the relevant changes to the legal framework in order to bring it into compliance with international standards including the UN Convention on the Elimination of all forms of Discrimination Against Women (CEDAW). Examples of such work include the support given to drafting regulations on the prohibition of trafficking in persons, regulations on protection against domestic violence, anti-discrimination law and gender equality law. Several Missions are also assisting local partners in drawing up country reports under the CEDAW.

The support to the process of institutionalization of gender equality can go through projects as outlined above, but it can also be rendered as a political involvement to strengthen the existing network of gender organizations, both intra-state and inter-state. Such a network and common platform is critical if gender equality promotion efforts are to gain currency at national and local levels. Regional organizations can reinforce - and often create - synergies between the national and local government and non-governmental sectors that might not otherwise take shape. One of the great challenges in the process towards gender equality is the task of building links between gender equality actors within a country, to converge all of the various gender equality activities and approaches into one common cause with one common platform. As experienced on the international level, it takes a lot of political will and effort to gather all interests into one common movement in which all actors can bring added value. International organizations can lend legitimacy and buttress national and local level initiatives by symbolically as well as technically supporting advocacy and institutional activities that promote gender equality.

However, no political statement, no programme, no financial support will be truly effective if the organization itself does not reflect the values and standards that it promotes at a local level in its structures and operations. International organizations should reflect and reinforce the commitment to gender equality and make visible that this should be the same core value from the level of international and regional organizations down to national and grassroots level campaigns and initiatives.

In the OSCE, gender programmes in the field have been developed in parallel with provisions to provide for fair employment practices, appropriate staff rules and policies on the professional work environment and equal opportunities for women and men. Women have to have equal opportunity for advancement and representation at all levels of the Organization. In particular national staff members learning about and working with fair practices and policies will be able to transfer such labour standards into the national market if they are taking employment on the local market. In the OSCE Mission to Bosnia and Herzegovina, the organization's internal policies match with programmes in the host country. Initiatives within the public administration reform programme included the adoption of fair employment practices and the development of recruitment guidelines, job descriptions as well as employment policies, which ensure non-discrimination in recruitment and administration of staff. A fair employment monitoring programme assists companies to incorporate fair



