



United States Mission to the OSCE

Statement on the International Day of the Girl

As delivered by Deputy Chief of Mission Tim Hanway
to the Permanent Council, Vienna
October 17, 2024

As we commemorate the International Day of the Girl, we call on participating States to engage on this year's "Girls' Vision for the Future" theme and to improve the safety, education, health, and wellbeing of girls everywhere so they can shape their own futures. Sadly, children in and outside of the OSCE area continue to face dangers from gender-based violence, conflict and war, and humanitarian disasters. These dangers are even more acute for girls.

This is particularly true in Ukraine, where girls – in fact, all children – lack safe access to education because of Russia's brutal attacks wreaking death and destruction on their communities. UNICEF estimates that more than 1,300 Ukrainian schools have been destroyed. Between August 30 and September 1, ahead of the first day of school in Ukraine, Russia's strikes killed seven children; injured at least 29; displaced at least 400 from the Donetsk and Sumy regions; and damaged schools in Kyiv, Kherson, and Sumy. These numbers do not account for children whose parents have perished, or the thousands of children whom Russia has forcibly removed from their families and guardians. Sadly, a generation of Ukrainian children is growing up in an environment of fear and devastation. The use by Russia's forces of conflict-related sexual violence – including rape, threats of rape, attempted rape, and forced nudity – has not spared Ukraine's girls, nor its women, boys, and men. We must continue providing comprehensive survivor-centered and trauma-informed services to survivors. We also should ensure that survivors of sexual violence have access to safe reporting mechanisms and options for pursuing justice and accountability.

We laud the work of the OSCE Support Program for Ukraine to address the terrible consequences of Russia's brutality.

And we value the organization's work, through the field missions and independent institutions, to build and strengthen inclusive societies by promoting gender equality, reducing discrimination, improving interethnic relations, and integrating the voices of young people, including girls. The Program Office in Dushanbe, for example, convened a roundtable on October 10 and 11 focused on challenging harmful social norms and creating opportunities for girls to access technology, education, and leadership roles. This is how we build resilience, strengthen our economies, and enhance security.

The United States is committed to the empowerment of all girls. We launched our updated Global Strategy to Empower Adolescent Girls on October 11 to ensure that girls can pursue their dreams free from discrimination, violence, or intimidation, and put their creative energies and thoughts into building a better future for all.

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