

AUSTRIA



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TO THE UNITED NATIONS

Statement

by

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Federal President of the Republic of Austria

**Global Leaders' Meeting on Gender Equality
and Women's Empowerment**

A Commitment to Action

New York

27 September 2015

Check against delivery.

Excellencies,

Ladies and Gentlemen,

2015 is a truly important and decisive year for gender equality and women's empowerment. It is the **20th anniversary of the Beijing Declaration and Platform for Action**, which confirmed – building on the Vienna Declaration and Program of Action - that women's rights are human rights. It remains the global normative framework and road map for realizing gender equality, the empowerment of women and the human rights of women and girls.

We agreed on a new Agenda 2030, which sets out universally valid sustainable development goals for the next 15 years. These goals clearly confirm the common ambition to eliminate all forms of discrimination of women and girls and to give them the opportunity to fully live up to their potentials. It requires all states to do a stock taking of achievements, but also to identify gaps and formulate policies to close them.

Another key event for the empowerment of women in October this year will be the **15th anniversary of resolution 1325 (2000) on Women, Peace and Security**. We look forward to the Global Study on the implementation of Security Council resolution 1325, which will be presented on this occasion. We are worried by reports about abuse cases committed by members of UN missions. We cannot tolerate that some of those that come to protect become perpetrators themselves. The reputation of the UN and the entire international community is put at risk. We therefore support your initiatives, Mr. Secretary-General, on combatting sexual exploitation and abuse, and look forward to further discussions on measures contained in the Report of the High Level Panel on UN Peacekeeping Operations.

This new political impetus will reinvigorate and streamline our efforts to promote women's and girls' rights and to give them their rightful place in our global society. Let me use this occasion to pay tribute to the outstanding work undertaken by UN Women in promoting the rights of women and girls. I would also like to thank you, Mr. Secretary-General, for your personal engagement in this context. Amongst other positive developments we noted with great pleasure that and the number of women-senior advisers to the Secretary General have substantially increased in recent years.

Women's rights and gender equality have been an important focus for **Austria** for many years. Let me point out that Austria pursues a **dual strategy**, namely the interplay of gender mainstreaming on the one hand, and of the promotion of women on the other. We are convinced that working together with civil society partners from **NGOs** is of the utmost importance in this regard.

In our continuous efforts we aim to achieve further progress towards equal rights for women and men in all areas of life:

- **Gender stereotypes** are often an underlying cause and starting point for discrimination against women and girls. They create barriers for women and girls for the realization of their rights, potentials and wishes. Austria commits to further tackling gender stereotypes in order to **diversify** women's and girls' as well as men's and boys' **educational and career choices**. To this end, **gender-sensitive vocational orientation and educational guidance** are going to be extended, and **gender-theory-based competence of teachers and educators** will be strengthened.
- Austria commits to addressing the persisting **gender-specific distribution** of men and women in **different occupational groups** by inter alia **specialized promotion programs** offering training in **technology and crafts** for women. Talents programs and traineeship initiatives in **research and technology** aim at encouraging women's access to careers in science and technology.
- Austria commits to the continuation of her **National Action Plan on Gender Equality on the Labour Market** to further eliminate disadvantages faced by women in the Austrian labour market and to strengthen women's economic independence. Austria will also continue to tackle the high **gender-pay gap** and to strengthen **income transparency**. Equal pay for equal and equal-value work remains a principle to be realized in women's every day working life.
- Comprehensive action will continue to be taken to **reconcile work and family life** both for women and men in Austria. Extending the **provision of childcare facilities** and **including men in childcare and other care responsibilities** remains a focus of our efforts to empower women to gain and enjoy equal chances on the labor market. Austria commits to raising men's and **father's participation in care work**.
- **Mentoring and training programs** to encourage women to stand for elections on all **political levels** as well as **awareness raising and trainings in gender competence** for **university bodies and decision makers** will be continued. Effective implementation of policies and measures **promoting women's share in management and board positions** in Austrian companies remain a priority of initiatives on local, regional and federal level.
- Creating efficient measures to raise awareness for and to **prevent and to protect women and girls from all forms of violence** in domestic and social contexts will remain a central concern of the Austrian Federal Government. A comprehensive National Action Plan on the Protection of Women against Violence was adopted in 2014. Political coordination of policy measures on the prevention of violence, the protection and support of victims, new means concerning investigation, criminal prosecution and procedural law, as well as measures for European and international cooperation are and will continue to be part of Austria's implementation efforts.

- Austria's current health policies and strategies already put a specific gender focus and explicitly aim to promote equal opportunities. Beyond that, the **future Women's Health Action Plan** to be presented in late 2015 will set out **comprehensive action**, for example to strengthen gender sensitive health promotion and research, to prevent violence against women, to improve health literacy of female migrants and to enhance women's and girls' sexual and reproductive health and rights.
 - While **protection against discrimination** has been clearly strengthened in Austrian **legislation** over the last decades, we will continue to review and improve our existing laws on equal treatment in all areas of life.
 - Austria is committed to the **work of UN Women** and will continue on a voluntary basis to **support activities in the fields of Women, Peace and Security, violence against women and access to justice**.
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