



**BOSNIA AND HERZEGOVINA**

**STATEMENT**

by

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Head of Delegation of Bosnia and Herzegovina  
on occasion of 52<sup>nd</sup> meeting of Commission on the Status of Women

New York  
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Excellencies, distinguished representatives  
Ladies and Gentlemen,

During the war, in Bosnia and Herzegovina (1992-1995.), hundreds of persons out of 4.4 million people, were dead or missing. The tens of thousands women were raped. Two-thirds of the industrial potential and half homes and social welfare state facilities were demolished, half the Bosnian population was displaced, the poor and uneducated rural population fled to the cities (mostly women, children and the elderly). In December 1995, 1.2 million Bosnian citizens were refugees and displaced.

Bosnia and Herzegovina, following the signing of the Dayton Peace Agreement, continues its existence with new territorial organization.

The levels and types of violence against women during the war suggest strong and profoundly deep-rooted patriarchal values. In many communities it was women who were the strongest link between families, providing shelter and aid to war-affected women, caring for widowed refugees and their children, and organizing income-generating activities, the schooling of children and the care of the basic needs of the elderly. Women were first that crossed the borders between the entities which helped a lot in integration processes of Bosnia and Herzegovina in post conflict period.

Activist links with international women's networks helped a critical mass of women in Bosnia and Herzegovina to move towards the development and reconstruction phase of post-war activities, empowering them to become equal partners and actors in the process and not just victims of the war. The poverty gap between men and women is largely attributable to their ability to access economic resources and the labor market. Women aged from 16-64 constitute only 35% of the Bosnia and Herzegovina labor force. Bosnia and Herzegovina has the lowest female share of the labor market in South East Europe. The limited access to education during 1990s has had a profound effect on women's access to employment.

Gender equality is quite important issue today in Bosnia and Herzegovina. Women are more and more aware of their rights and new economic, cultural and private possibilities. Bosnia and Herzegovina on its way to European Integrations developed institutions that are primarily responsible for gender equality, such as Gender Equality Agency of Bosnia and Herzegovina and Gender Centers of the Federation of Bosnia and Herzegovina and Republika Srpska. Furthermore, Parliamentarian gender equality commissions have been established at the state and entity levels. The aim of Gender Equality mechanisms is to improve legislation in Bosnia and Herzegovina, thus all new Laws will be gender sensitive already, and previously adopted laws will be amended.

The very important step forward, regarding the gender issues, was adoption of the Gender Equality Law of Bosnia and Herzegovina that was adopted in 2003. The Law contains all international standards, defines both direct and indirect discrimination, gender based violence, harassment and sexual harassment and introduces sanctions against offenders. The areas covered by the Law are: education, employment, work, and access to all forms of resources, social protection, health care, sport and culture, public life, media, prohibition of violence. The Law sets forth obligations of competent authorities to adopt programs and measures for achievement of gender equality in all areas in compliance with the Gender Equality Law provisions.

Furthermore, after the war, gender equality in politics has made a breakthrough with greater participation of women in the political arena. Thanks to quota regulations in the Election Law, the representation of women in the Bosnia and Herzegovina State Parliament reached about 17% as compared with 2% in 1996. Unfortunately, in this mandate of the Council of Ministers of Bosnia and Herzegovina, there are no women representatives, only two women are the deputy ministers in this composition.

In October 2005, the Gender Equality Agency of Bosnia and Herzegovina initiated signing Declaration on Cooperation between Gender Mainstreaming Institutional Mechanisms in the West Balkan Countries.

In 2005, the Gender Equality Agency of Bosnia and Herzegovina, Gender Centre of Republika Srpska and Gender Centre of the Federation of Bosnia and Herzegovina have established Coordination Board. The Coordination Board is consisted of directors of the above mentioned institutions. The Gender Equality Agency and Gender Centers represent the rule model of cooperation between the state and entity institutions in Bosnia and Herzegovina.

On 14<sup>th</sup> of September 2006, at the 129<sup>th</sup> session of the Council of Ministers of Bosnia and Herzegovina, the Gender Action Plan of Bosnia and Herzegovina was adopted. It is a five-year strategic document, in which all the obligations, set forth in the documents of the United Nations, the European Union, and the Council of Europe, are now vertically and horizontally linked.

The areas of the Gender Action Plan are:

1. European integrations in the light of gender equality
2. Cooperation and capacity strengthening
3. Macroeconomic and development strategies
4. Gender sensitive budgets
5. Political life and decision-making
6. Employment and labour market
7. Social inclusion
8. Gender sensitive medias
9. Lifelong education
10. Health, prevention and protection
11. Domestic violence, sex based violence, harassment, sexual harassment and trafficking in human beings
12. Role of men
13. Reconciliation of professional and family life
14. Gender and sustainable environment
15. Information and communication technologies

We anticipate that in the future Bosnia and Herzegovina will have better possibilities in economic, social, cultural, healthcare and educational aspects both for women and men.

Finally, on this auspicious occasion, on behalf of my Country, I would like to thank you for all the support provided so far, and we hope that it will continue in the future, as we need it now more than ever.

Thank you for your attention!

