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NOTE

from: The Presidency
to: Permanent Representatives Committee (Part I)/Council
Subject: Strategic engagement for gender equality 2016-2019
- Exchange of views

In preparation of the exchange of views that will take place at the EPSCO Council on 7 December 2015, delegations will find attached a Note from the Presidency concerning the Commission's Strategic engagement for gender equality 2016-2019.

Note from the Presidency

Strategic engagement for gender equality 2016-2019

The Commission will publish its "Strategic engagement for gender equality 2016-2019" in the first week of December, setting out priority areas and actions to be taken, together with timelines and indicators.

Progress has been achieved over the last years, as illustrated for example by women's rising employment rate (64% in 2014--the highest ever recorded) and their increasing participation in economic decision-making. However, this upward trend is counterbalanced by persisting disadvantages in other areas. Gender equality in access to financial resources over the life cycle remains unachieved, and the gender pay and earning gaps remain high--and the same is true of the gender gap in pensions. Gender-based violence remains widespread. Worldwide, women continue to face severe inequalities.

The Commission's Strategic engagement builds on the European Pact for gender equality for the period 2011-2020 and the Strategy for equality between women and men 2010-2015, which identified five priority areas for action that remain valid in the light of the consultations and evaluation carried out by the Commission. Thus the ongoing drive to promote gender equality needs to continue and further support is required in the form of new measures in these areas.

The Strategic engagement reaffirms the following five priority areas:

- Increasing female labour market participation and equal economic independence;
- Reducing the gender pay, earnings and pension gaps and thus fighting poverty among women;
- Promoting equality between women and men in decision-making;
- Combating gender-based violence and protecting and supporting victims; and
- Promoting gender equality and women's rights across the world.

The Strategic engagement defines the objectives across these five priority areas towards which the Commission will continue to work. It identifies key actions to be implemented in the five priority areas over the next years, with clear timelines. It also defines indicators for targets and monitoring. In addition, it emphasises the need to integrate a gender equality perspective into all EU policies as well as into EU funding programmes.

The Presidency invites Ministers to share their views and expectations regarding the Commission's Strategic engagement for gender equality 2016-2019 and to present their ideas on possible key actions to be implemented in the five priority areas.
