

Welcome by Erik Sandsmark Idsøe, State Secretary the Norwegian Ministry of Justice and Public Security, Conference 30th March 2022

- Dear Ladies and Gentlemen, a warm welcome to you all to this Conference on Protecting Refugee, Migrant and Asylum-seeking Women and Girls.
- This conference is hosted by the Norwegian Ministry of Justice and Public Security and the Council of Europe, as a part of the EEA and Norway Grants SYNERGY Network against Gender-Based and Domestic Violence.
- Norway condemns Russia's military attack on Ukraine in the strongest possible terms. This attack is a serious violation of international law and endangers the lives of innocent people. We are deeply concerned about the particular impacts it is having on Ukrainian women and girls.
- Preventing violence against women and domestic violence is a key task for the Norwegian government. In 2017 Norway ratified the Istanbul Convention in order to step up our efforts. The Convention applies both in times of peace and in situations of armed conflict.
- The UN Security Council Resolution 1325 on Women Peace and Security was adopted in 2000. The resolution has been a crucial catalyst for placing increased risk of sexual and gender-based violence, and trafficking of those who have been displaced or fled to neighbouring countries in times of armed conflict - on the agenda of the international community. This is also a priority area for Norway's term on the Security Council.
- I want to give Tetiana Antonchenko an especially warm and wholeheartedly welcome. You are an Ukrainian expert on violence against women and domestic violence, now facing displacement because of the war. I'm grateful for your presence here today, giving us a first-hand account on the situation. We stand in solidarity with you. You and other survivors/victims of war are in a position to tell us what is needed to improve the protection of displaced women and girls from abuse, violence and exploitation.
- The rights of women and girls must be placed at the centre of all measures implemented. Thus, I also appreciate the broad engagement of the Council of Europe, bringing us expertise on European and international standards.
- The EEA and Norway Grants have given us – EFTA/EU countries - the opportunity of working together towards a Europe free from violence in accordance with national and international goals. Financial and human resources are allocated for the implementation of measures to prevent gender-based and domestic violence.

- Together we have established the SYNERGY Network against Gender-based and Domestic Violence – a network for governmental and non-governmental stakeholders from different countries cooperating to prevent and combat gender-based and domestic violence. Networking provides us with a forum for exchange of knowledge and support across sectors and borders.
- Today members and friends of the SYNERGY Network will share ideas and exchange promising practices for the protection of Refugee, Migrant and Asylum-seeking Women and Girls.
- I appreciate the support of the Financial Mechanism Office for this conference, and I am looking forward to know more about how the funds can be used to address the refugee crisis in Beneficiary States as a result of Russia's invasion of Ukraine.
- I hope that the conference will provide concrete and actionable guidance for all countries receiving refugees, potentially providing inspiration for cooperation under the EEA and Norway Grants.
- The Norwegian government will continue its strong international commitment to the promotion of gender equality and the fundamental right to freedom from violence for women and girls, in times of peace and in situations of armed conflict, for women of Ukraine, and for all women.

I wish you all the best.
Thank you.