

Ministerial Conclusions

on

Strengthening the Role of Women in Society

1. The partners at the Euro-Mediterranean Ministerial Conference on “Strengthening the Role of Women in Society”, held on 14-15 November 2006 in Istanbul under the auspices of Finland’s EU Presidency, based on their shared international, regional and national commitments¹, agreed to work within the following common framework of action to strengthen women’s role in political, civil, social, economic and cultural spheres, as well as to fight against discrimination.
2. The Conference was held in accordance with the Barcelona Declaration of 1995 and the Five Year Work Programme agreed upon during the 10th Anniversary Euro-Mediterranean Summit in Barcelona 2005. It was then stated that partners would adopt "measures to achieve gender equality, preventing all forms of discrimination and ensuring the protection of the rights of women", while taking stock of the Rabat Preparatory Conference that was held on 14-16 June 2006.
3. Euro-Mediterranean Ministers stress that equal participation of women and men in all spheres of life is a crucial element of democracy and confirm that only by the inclusion of all people and determined action will the region’s women be able to fulfil their ambitions and aspirations and, by extension, contribute towards the realisation of the underlying objectives of the Barcelona Declaration: the attainment of a common area of peace, stability

¹ Those include inter alia:

The Treaty establishing the European Community (1957);
The Convention on the Elimination of All Forms of Discrimination Against Women (CEDAW), 1979;
The Programme of Action of the United Nations International Conference on Population & Development in Cairo (1994)
The Beijing Declaration and Platform for Action (1995);
The Cairo Declaration issued by the First Arab Women’s Summit (2000);
The Millennium Declaration and the Millennium Development Goals (2000);
UNSCR 1325 (2000) on women, peace and security;
The Arab Women’s Organisation Plan of action (2001);
The Tunis Declaration adopted at the 2004 Summit of the Arab League;
The Alger Declaration adopted at the 2005 Summit of the Arab League;
The outcome of the twenty-third special session of the United Nations General Assembly and the Declaration of the Commission on the Status of Women at its 49th session (March 2005, Beijing +10)
The Khartoum Declaration adopted at the 2006 Summit of the Arab League;
The European Consensus on Development (2006);
The National Constitutions of the partner countries which recognise the principle of non discrimination against women.

and shared prosperity in the Mediterranean region. This goal, based inter alia on democracy, respect for human rights and sustainable development, can only be achieved by guaranteeing all women full enjoyment of rights.

4. The Euro-Mediterranean partners will include women's political, civil, social, economic and cultural rights in their dialogues including in the framework of the Association Agreements, the European Neighbourhood Policy action plans and in the EU programs and projects.
5. In this framework, the Ministers recognise that a strengthened dialogue and cooperation between governmental and non-governmental actors across the Euro-Mediterranean region is necessary. This will include the promotion of dialogue between Parliamentarians within the Euro-Mediterranean Parliamentary Assembly, as well as with civil society organizations, women's associations, youth, trade unions, business and professional associations, in accordance with national legislation as appropriate and cooperation between national, regional and local administrations.
6. All Euro-Mediterranean partners commit themselves to mobilise financial resources to support the implementation of this Framework of Action. In addition to national funding, the European Union will provide adequate resources for its implementation at national and regional levels through technical and financial assistance provided through the European Neighbourhood Partnership Instrument (ENPI), bilateral contributions from EU Member States, FEMIP and other relevant financial instruments.
7. Recognising that the International Covenants on Human Rights include the obligation to ensure the equal rights of men and women to enjoy all economic, social, cultural, civil and political rights, the Euro-Mediterranean partners will embrace this holistic approach based on the following interdependent and interlinked priorities:
 - Women's political and civil rights;
 - Women's social and economic rights and sustainable development;
 - Women's rights in the cultural sphere and the role of communications and the mass media.
8. The Euro-Mediterranean partners, according to the shared internationally agreed commitments, will pursue the objective of strengthening the role of women through mainstreaming of full enjoyment of human rights by women and needs into all plans, projects and other relevant activities of the Euro-

Mediterranean Partnership and supporting specific measures in favour of women.

9. Euro-Mediterranean Ministers call on the Euro-Mediterranean Ministerial Conference in Tampere (Barcelona VIII) to welcome these commitments and to agree on regularly review of progress.

The Euro-Mediterranean Ministers agreed upon the following Framework of Action:

WOMEN'S POLITICAL AND CIVIL RIGHTS

10. In accordance with the spirit and the letter of the Barcelona Declaration and the Five-Year Work Program, the Euro-Mediterranean partners will work towards taking measures that:
 - a) Enable the full and effective implementation and translation into legislative and policy reform of UN conventions related to human rights of women to which they are party, in particular the Convention on the Elimination of All Forms of Discrimination Against Women (CEDAW) and its Optional Protocol.
 - b) Provide equal access for women and men to justice at all levels.
 - c) Combat all forms of violence against women, guarantee women protection and redress in case of violation of their rights; protect the fundamental rights of women victims of all forms of violence, especially domestic violence, trafficking in human beings, harmful traditional practices and violence against migrant women.
 - d) Enhance women's full and equal participation in conflict prevention, crisis management and peace-building, inter alia through implementing United Nations resolutions including Security Council Resolution 1325 on Women, Peace and Security.
 - e) Develop a better knowledge of women in conflict areas and increase protection and awareness of women and their rights in any war, foreign occupation or violent conflict; alleviate the negative effects of armed conflicts on the status of women in the region, promote their legal rights and prevent incitement and recruitment for terrorist acts.

- f) Ensure that law enforcement authorities are aware of and implement human rights of women. Promote exchange of views and experiences on issues related to the fight against discrimination against women.
- g) Foster the role of civil society organizations, particularly women's organizations, in accordance with national legislation as appropriate, as well as Parliaments and local authorities, in the defense and promotion of women's rights. Contribute to strengthening the capacity of and networking among civil society organizations active in the protection and the promotion of full enjoyment of all human rights by women.
- h) Promote women's active participation in political decision-making positions in the executive and judicial powers at all levels, inter alia through enhancing women's full and equal participation in elections (as candidates and voters), including through temporary special measures at both national and local levels. Contribute to the building up of gender capacity in public administration.
- i) Promote public education on human rights and civic responsibilities.
- j) Ensure that adequate policies, legislation and infrastructure to combat all forms of violence against women are in place.
- k) Pursue the establishment of national Ombudsman Offices or other institutional mechanisms as a means to fight against discrimination.
- l) Promote awareness-raising campaigns and training on the full enjoyment of all human rights by women.

WOMEN'S SOCIAL AND ECONOMIC RIGHTS AND SUSTAINABLE DEVELOPMENT

11. To work towards achieving an increase and improvement in women's employment, stronger social inclusion, a reduction of disparities between rural and urban women and a better knowledge of women's contribution to the overall economy, the Euro-Mediterranean partners will undertake measures that.
 - a) Create equal opportunities and remove obstacles for women to work or to be recruited/ employed or to stay employed.

- b) Ensure equal treatment and promote the rights of women, in particular of vulnerable women, in social security systems.
- c) Ensure that men and women benefit equally from adequate health services.
- d) Promote family friendly policies, aiming at reconciliation between professional and family life, in particular affordable care services for children, elderly and other dependents and ensure a professional environment that is suited to women in terms of transport and safety and non-discrimination at the workplace.
- e) Promote and strengthen national capacities to regularly collect and analyze gender disaggregated data, including on the informal sector and on the impact of macro-economic reforms on women and men.
- f) Strengthen knowledge of the impact of macro-economic policies on women's and men's employment and develop research focused on gender to enable the elaboration of efficient strategies aiming at strengthening the role of women in the economy.
- g) Pursue the establishment of gender responsive budget initiatives and ensure more effective anti-poverty strategies at both national and local levels.
- h) Promote women's representation and participation in economic decision-making positions, in particular in employers' association, workers' unions and other socio-economic structures.
- i) Promote women's entrepreneurship by improving inter-alia women's access to land, finance, markets, information, training and networking and encourage financial institutions to tailor products to women's needs, in particular by providing micro- credit.
- j) Ensure empowerment of women including through greater access to education at all levels and to vocational and technical training. In this regard:
 - With the objective of halving female illiteracy by 2010, launch literacy campaigns targeting especially rural and poor women and provide more incentives to encourage women to demand literacy;

- Put in place incentives for families, especially in rural and poor areas, for sending girls to school;
 - Promote specific vocational and technical training courses for women in diversified job sectors;
 - Ensure an increased number of women trainers (including at decision-making levels) and take into account the full enjoyment of all human rights by women in the training of trainers;
 - Promote post-training support through appropriate linkages between relevant partners such as training institutions and governmental employment agencies and, in case of self employed women, micro finance institutions and business support services;
 - Promote modules to improve economic and financial management skills for women entrepreneurs, women's cooperatives, grass-roots associations, etc.;
 - Ensure women's participation in the newly established scholarships scheme for university students from Euro-Mediterranean partner countries and in the mobility grants for Higher Education staff;
 - Ensure greater access to life-long learning to provide women with skills responsive to the rapidly changing labor market;
 - Provide guiding programs to help women return to the labor market after an absence or to direct them to new sectors.
- k) Develop a better knowledge and increase research of women in migration (causes, processes, enjoyment of their full human rights and impact on women in countries of origin and in the host countries) and mainstream a gender approach in studies and statistics related to migration. Increase protection and integration of migrant women and ensure the effective enjoyment of their human rights.
- l) Raise awareness of migrant women on their rights and duties in the host country and improve their role as actors of development in the host country and the country of origin.

WOMEN'S RIGHTS IN THE CULTURAL SPHERE AND THE ROLE OF COMMUNICATIONS AND THE MASS MEDIA

12. The Euro-Mediterranean partners will work towards taking measures that:

- a) Promote equality and fight against discrimination between girls and boys in education and culture so as to convey a positive and non stereotyped image of girls and women, and where appropriate identify new pedagogical materials. Train teachers at all levels on equality values and non-discrimination and involve parents in activities applying gender-sensitive educational methods;
- b) Support women's effective access to ICT science and technology, activities aiming at providing women with computer literacy, training and education in ICT science and technology;
- c) Promote a balanced and non stereotyped portrayal of women and men in the media;
- d) Combat gender-based violence in all its manifestations, including through research, awareness raising campaigns involving men and boys, education, media campaigns, toll free and emergency numbers, institutional networks, exchange of experiences, views and good practices in the Euro-Mediterranean region;
- e) Enhance women's participation in cultural exchanges and intercultural dialogue;
- f) Promote research on gender equality in mass media products and institutions to reduce negative gender stereotyping. Support media regulatory bodies to monitor gender issues as part of their mandates;
- g) Promote training of media professionals on the full enjoyment of all human rights by women and increase the number of women professional in the media sector. Support the promotion of women to leading positions in media. Develop the capacity of national women's institutions and NGOs on engaging with media;
- h) Combat stereotypical representation of women in artistic products, increase the number of women in art professions and ensure a greater recognition of their contribution to art and culture through history and in present times;

- i) Encourage civil society organizations, particularly women's organizations, in accordance with national legislation as appropriate, to advocate for and carry out programmes aiming to promote the full enjoyment of all human rights by women and gender equality.

Review mechanism

13. The Euro-Mediterranean partners commit to work towards the objectives contained in this document over the next five years. In this respect they invite the Euromed Committee to convene, at least once a year, a Euromed ad hoc meeting at expert senior officials level to review the implementation of the present measures contained in these conclusions and to inform the annual Euromed Foreign Affairs Ministers Conference. A follow-up Euromed Ministerial Conference to discuss issues related to the full enjoyment of all human rights by women and the progress made in the implementation of these measures will take place in 2009.