



EURO-MEDITERRANEAN MINISTERIAL CONFERENCE: “STRENGTHENING THE ROLE OF WOMEN IN SOCIETY”

Istanbul, Turkey, 14-15 November, 2006

Ministers of the EU and the Mediterranean partner countries met in Istanbul, Turkey, on 14-15 November for the first Euro-Mediterranean Ministerial Conference on “Strengthening the Role of Women in Society.” Based on their shared international, regional and national commitments, they agreed to work within a common framework of action to strengthen women’s role in the political, civil, social, economic and cultural spheres, as well as to fight against discrimination.

Euro-Mediterranean Ministers stressed that the equal participation of women and men in all spheres of life is a crucial element of democracy and confirmed 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 and shared prosperity in the Mediterranean region.

At the conference it was agreed that the Euro-Mediterranean partners will include women’s political, civil, social, economic and cultural rights in their dialogues, including the framework of the Association Agreements, European Neighbourhood Policy action plans and EU programmes and projects. The Ministers noted that a strengthened dialogue and cooperation between governmental and non-governmental actors across the Euro-Mediterranean region is necessary.

All the Euro-Mediterranean partners committed themselves to mobilise financial resources to support the implementation of a 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.

It was agreed that the Euro-Mediterranean partners would embrace a holistic approach based on three interdependent and interlinked priorities: women’s political and civil rights; women’s social and economic rights and sustainable development; and women’s rights in the cultural sphere and the role of communications and the mass media. All countries 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.

Euro-Mediterranean Ministers agreed upon a Framework of Action for the next five years, through which the role of women will be strengthened in the political, civil, social, economic and cultural spheres in order to combat discrimination. The plan of action is subdivided into three parts:

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1- Women's political and civil rights

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

- 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.
- Guarantee women protection and redress in case of violation of their rights.
- Ensure that law enforcement authorities are aware of and implement human rights of women.
- Provide equal access for women and men to justice at all levels.
- 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.
- Foster the role of civil society organizations, particularly women's organizations.
- Combat all forms of violence against women, especially domestic violence, trafficking in human beings, harmful traditional practices and violence against migrant women.

2- Women's social and economic rights and sustainable development

The Euro-Mediterranean partners will undertake measures that:

- Create equal opportunities and remove obstacles for women to work.
- Ensure equal treatment and promote the rights of women, in particular of vulnerable women, in social security systems.
- Ensure empowerment of women including through greater access to education at all levels and to vocational and technical training. 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 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; halving female illiteracy by 2010, launch literacy campaigns targeting especially rural and poor women.
- Promote affordable care services for children



- Promote women's entrepreneurship
- 3- Women's rights in the cultural sphere and the role of communications and the mass media

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

- Enhance women's participation in cultural exchanges and intercultural dialogue
- Promote equality and fight against discrimination between girls and boys in education and support women's effective access to ICT science and technology.
- Promote a balanced and non stereotyped portrayal of women and men in the media.

The Euro-Mediterranean partners invited 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.

During the 8th Euro-Mediterranean Conference of Ministers of Foreign Affairs, in Tampere, 27-28 November 2006, Ministers welcomed the results of this First Ministerial Conference and endorsed the adopted Ministerial Conclusions, urging their full implementation with a view to promoting the full participation of women in the economic, political, civil, social and cultural life of the Euro-Mediterranean region. Ministers took note of the proposals made in the Marrakech Civil forum on gender equality and encouraged civil society actors, notably through the Euromed Non-governmental platform, to continue working with Euromed institutions to strengthen their participation in all sectors of the partnership.

The ministerial Conclusions can be viewed at:

http://ec.europa.eu/comm/external_relations/euromed/women/docs/conclusions_1106.pdf

The Tampere Conclusions are available at:

http://ec.europa.eu/comm/external_relations/euromed/conf/tampere/2006_tampere_conclusions.pdf