

## Conclusions

### Union for the Mediterranean

#### SECOND MINISTERIAL CONFERENCE ON STRENGTHENING THE ROLE OF WOMEN IN SOCIETY

- Marrakesh, 11th and 12<sup>th</sup> of November 2009 –

1. Ministers of the 43 Union for the Mediterranean Partners, meeting on the 11<sup>th</sup> and 12<sup>th</sup> of November 2009 in Marrakesh, acknowledge the importance of the first Euro-Mediterranean Ministerial Conference on Strengthening the Role of Women in Society, held in Istanbul in 2006. The Marrakesh Conference is held in accordance with the Barcelona Declaration and Five Year Work Programme agreed upon during the 10<sup>th</sup> anniversary of the Euro-Mediterranean Summit held in Barcelona in 2005, in which 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 the Women”.
2. In this spirit, the Euro-Mediterranean partners, in accordance with their international obligations, reiterate their commitment to promote de jure and de facto equality between women and men and to respect the civil, political, economic, social and cultural rights of women as well as men, as defined in the international human rights instruments to which they are parties, in particular the *UN Convention on the Elimination of All Forms of Discrimination against Women (CEDAW)* and in the *Programme of Action of the International Conference on Population and Development (ICPD)*, the *Beijing Platform for Action* and the *Millennium Declaration and the Millennium Development Goals (MDG)*.
3. In this regard, the significance of important anniversaries is recalled concerning these key instruments as well as the role the Euro-Mediterranean Partners can play in contributing to moving these agendas forward, to honour the 30<sup>th</sup> anniversary of CEDAW and the 15<sup>th</sup> anniversary of the ICPD Programme of Action this year, and the 15<sup>th</sup> anniversary of the Beijing Platform for Action, the 10<sup>th</sup> anniversary of the Millennium Declaration and the Millennium Development Goals, as well as of the UN Security Council Resolution 1325 on Women, Peace and Security in 2010.
4. Equal participation of women and men in all spheres of life is a crucial element of democracy. Only by the inclusion of all and determined actions will the Euro-Mediterranean region's women be able to fulfil their ambitions and aspirations and, by extension, contribute towards the attainment of a common area of peace, stability and shared prosperity in the Euro-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 human rights.

5. Women's participation in development, as guaranteed by international law and integrated into national policies, constitutes a fundamental and universally accepted value and precondition for socio-economic development and good democratic governance within the Euro-Mediterranean partners. The Euro-Mediterranean Ministers are pleased with all the concrete measures taken in this sense, and stress that the Euro-Mediterranean Partners together have to safeguard and implement this value through policies, measures and projects.

6. In line with :

- the Euro-Med Work Programme agreed at the 2005 Barcelona Summit, and particularly its objectives on equality between women and men and the promotion of women's rights;
- the conclusions of the First Euro-Mediterranean Ministerial Conference on "Strengthening the Role of Women in Society ", held on the 14<sup>th</sup>- 15<sup>th</sup> of November 2006 in Istanbul;
- the Joint Declaration of the Paris Summit for the Mediterranean on the 13<sup>th</sup> of July 2008, which aims to revitalise efforts to transform the Mediterranean into an area of peace, democracy, cooperation and prosperity;
- the conclusions of the first Euro-Mediterranean employment and labour Ministers' Conference held in Marrakesh on the 9<sup>th</sup> and 10<sup>th</sup> of November 2008 and the framework of action on employment, employability and decent work adopted on this occasion, fix notably the objective of promoting equal opportunities for men and women, enhancing the employment rate of women and, in particular, encouraging their access to decent work opportunities, in line with the Framework of Action adopted at the 2006 Euro-Med Ministerial Conference on Strengthening the Role of Women in Society.

7. The Euro-Mediterranean partners share the conviction that the Union for the Mediterranean plays an important role in addressing common challenges facing the Euro-Mediterranean region, in order to guarantee women's full enjoyment of their human rights and to achieve gender equality.

8. The Marrakesh Conference enabled the partners of the Union for the Mediterranean to review common actions initiated since the 1<sup>st</sup> Ministerial Conference in Istanbul (the 14<sup>th</sup>- 15<sup>th</sup> of November 2006), to exchange views on the ways and means of implementation of their common political will through actions at national, sub-regional and regional levels, targeted towards improving women's status, strengthening the role of women in political, civil, social, economic and cultural life, and combating all forms of discrimination against women and girls.

9. The Marrakesh Conference provides an opportunity to evaluate progress achieved since the setting up of the Common Framework of Action 2006-2011 and to learn the lessons of this first experience. It also provides an opportunity to reaffirm actions agreed by the partners of the Union for the Mediterranean.

10. Ministers reiterate their commitment to the Istanbul conclusions and the Common Framework of Action 2006-2011, which constitutes, to date, one of the most important policy frameworks for the promotion of women's full enjoyment of their human rights, achieving gender equality and strengthening the role of women in society in the Union for the Mediterranean.

11. Ministers welcome the efforts made to date by all the participants, within the framework of the implementation of the Istanbul Common Framework of Action. They are pleased to note the progress on the promotion of gender equality and women's rights at the Euro-Mediterranean level, due to the existence of the Common Framework of Action 2006-2011 and the measures taken within its framework.

12. They stress, however, that important efforts remain to be exerted to give effect, concretely and completely, according to the Common Framework of Action 2006-2011, and agree in this respect to boost their efforts to make it a catalyst instrument of all the synergies, resolutely turned towards concrete achievements, in a spirit of common responsibility, mutual respect, and dialogue.

13. They recognize that important challenges remain, in all 43 Union for the Mediterranean partners, which hamper the full and equal enjoyment of human rights by women, notably persistent inequalities between women and men on the labour market, which hinder women from reaching economic independence and that increase the risk for women to fall into poverty and social exclusion, the under-representation of women in the political, public and economic decision-making processes, reconciliation of work and family life and the persistent phenomenon of violence against women, in all its forms and manifestations, including domestic violence, violence in work places, an in particular women victims of armed conflicts, and situations of foreign occupation.

14. They affirm the need to pay due attention to the contribution of women to the economy and also to the impact of the current financial crisis and the global economic slowdown on women's lives and gender equality, and to integrate gender perspectives and ensure women's participation in the recovery responses.

15. Convinced that equal participation of women and men in all spheres of economic, political and public life constitutes a crucial element of democracy and sustainable development, therefore Ministers agree that new concrete measures should be implemented to achieve this goal and to mainstream a gender perspective in all policy areas, acknowledging the diversity of the region

16. Ministers reaffirm their determination to combat all forms of violence against women, by adopting and implementing legislative and policy measures to prevent violence against women, protect and support victims and prosecute perpetrators of violence against women in order to ensure the full enjoyment of the fundamental human rights by women.

17. Ministers highlight the important role of civil society, inter alia the Euro-Med non-governmental Platform, as valuable partners in the irreversible process started in Istanbul. They stress, within this framework, the importance of the independent national human rights institutions established in conformity with Paris Principles and non governmental organisations, in particular, those working for women's full enjoyment of their human rights and gender equality. They encourage the establishment of a dialogue between the governmental entities and these civil society organisations and the exchange of best practices in the field of strengthening the role of women in society and the empowerment of women, between the actors of civil society in the Euro-Mediterranean area.

18. In addition, they underline the importance of including the promotion of dialogue within the Euro-Mediterranean Parliamentary Assembly, in particular the Committee on Women's Rights, Economic and Social committees and similar institutions as well as youth, trade unions, business and professional associations, in accordance with national legislation, as appropriate, and cooperation between national, regional and local administrations. All these organisations should be further involved in the implementation of the Common Framework of Action.

19. Ministers underline the added value of working together among the 43 Union for the Mediterranean partners in order to achieve equality between women and men and learning from each others' experiences and best practices, while taking into account the specificities of each country. In this respect encourage regional and sub-regional activities.

20. Ministers take note of the implementation of the regional program "Enhancing Equality between Men and Women in the Euro-Med Region (EGEP)" financed by the European Commission as an accompanying measure for the implementation of the Istanbul Ministerial conclusions. They look forward to be informed of the outcome of the programme.

21. Ministers stress the need for each partner to clearly define, elaborate and implement strategies for ensuring the equal and full enjoyment of all economic, social, cultural, civil and political rights by women, and to adopt and implement national action plans, strengthen institutional mechanisms, promote gender mainstreaming, positive actions, gender budgeting, capacity building, awareness-raising, knowledge building and other measures and strategies.

22. Under the umbrella of the Istanbul Framework of Action and following this first three years of its implementation, some key priorities have been identified as catalysers.

23. Ministers reiterate their commitment to 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 parties, in particular, the Convention on the Elimination of All Forms of Discrimination against Women (CEDAW) and its Optional Protocol and the Millennium Development Goals.

24. In that sense, Ministers renew their commitments towards the following areas, which shall be implemented by all partners, in accordance with their international obligations, as real opportunities for women in the region:

- i. Civil and Political rights: Implementation of their obligations under the international conventions promoting women's full enjoyment of human rights (in particular CEDAW), Women and peace and security (contributing to the implementation of UN Security Council resolutions 1325 (2000), 1820 (2008), 1888 (2009) and 1889 (2009) towards the ministerial meeting on the occasion of the 10 years' celebration of UNSCR 1325); review of laws discriminatory against women and girls that may still be implemented in contravention with the international obligations accepted by States; promotion of women's capacity and leadership in political decision-making processes; eradication of all forms of violence against women and girls, including in situations of armed conflict and foreign occupation and fighting trafficking in women and girls; contribute to strengthening the capacity of and networking of national public institutions and among civil society organizations active in the protection and the promotion of full enjoyment of all human rights by women, enhancing human rights education and awareness-raising, and ensure the rights of migrant and refugee women;
- ii. Economic rights: In the light of the current economic and financial crisis, a clear priority is women's economic empowerment, that is: gender equality in employment (including equal pay and decent work), social protection and the fight against poverty; guaranteeing equal access and promotion in employment and on the labor market, promote women's entrepreneurship by improving inter alia women's equal access to and ownership of land and enterprises, finance, markets, information, training and networking and encourage financial institutions to tailor products to women's needs, in particular by providing micro-credit; promote modules to improve economic and financial management skills for women entrepreneurs, investing in women's economic participation as "smart economics"; promote gender responsive budgeting, and ensure women's right to control their property, income and available resources
- iii. Cultural and Social rights: combat all forms of gender stereotyping; ensure equal access to education and vocational training, including new information technologies; recognize women's specific health needs and ensure equal access to health care (including sexual and reproductive health); promote a balanced and non stereotyped portrayal of women and men in the media; and acknowledge and promote as well women's participation in dialogue between cultures and cultural exchanges. Special attention should be given to the integration of the gender dimension in education and training as well as in health policies are of primary importance for the success of the Millennium Development Goals, of which one is about eliminating the gender inequalities at all levels between now and 2015.

25. Ministers stress the importance of paying particular attention to migrant women through the development of Mediterranean plans aiming at integrating migrant women into the development process, and to do it in agreement with the regional and international instruments to which they are parties. The positive role played by migrant women in the development of their host societies must be recognized. Effective measures to ensure their protection from discrimination and xenophobia and the enforcement of their human rights should be implemented. Ministers agree that gender and culture-sensitive counselling, services and education are important tools for promoting the integration of migrant women in the societies in which they live.

26. Ministers reaffirm the importance of paying particular attention to refugee women and their specific needs, and to ensure their right according to human rights principles, international humanitarian law and the international standards and resolutions related to refugees from a gender perspective.

27. Ministers stress the importance of paying particular attention to the situation of women in rural areas. They commit to ensure that women in rural areas have equal access to training and education, health care facilities, credits and loans, marketing facilities and appropriate technology, and that they equally benefit from social security programmes.

28. Ministers also commit to engage in advocacy and communication work, which is indispensable in view of the voluntary nature of the Istanbul Process and which creates ownership and promotes shared responsibility among the partners. They affirm that it is important to make all the efforts undertaken, under the “Istanbul process”, more visible.

29. In addition, partners of the Union for the Mediterranean underline that adequate resources are needed in order to ensure the effective implementation and follow-up of the Istanbul Framework of Action. All 43 Union for the Mediterranean partners will consider favourably to increase financial support for the activities, related to the implementation of the Common Istanbul Framework of Action.

30. Ministers call upon all relevant stakeholders, including all levels of government, notably national machineries on gender equality, the European institutions, the social partners, business, and civil society organisations to contribute towards putting this framework into action.

31. Ministers reaffirm their commitment to the conclusions of the first Euro-Mediterranean Conference on Employment and Labour, held in Marrakesh on the 9<sup>th</sup> and 10<sup>th</sup> of November 2008 on conducting an effective social dialogue for enhancing gender equality in employment, including the Tripartite dialogue between the social partners and governments, which is key for implementing concrete actions at national and local level.

32. Ministers call on business community and investors to contribute to implementing the Framework of Actions through promoting Corporate Social Responsibility, with a view to effectively enhance gender equality in access to the labour market and in the work place.

33. Ministers highlight the importance of cooperation with international organisations, in particular the UN.

34. Ministers reaffirm their commitment towards the full and effective implementation of the Common Framework of Action 2006-2011 and undertake to transform it into policies implemented in each country. They reiterate, in the same spirit, the opportunity to integrate civil, political, social, economic and cultural rights of women in the programme of the Euro-Mediterranean dialogue, including in the framework of the Association Agreements, the European Neighbourhood Policy action plans and in the programmes and projects set up by the EU. They underline the need to ensure consistency between the various regional initiatives and the bilateral co-operation projects with the EU.

35. Ministers acknowledge that the process established by the Istanbul Conference is a pioneer method since it proposes accompanying measures, which aim to support a regional consultation process, where all relevant stakeholders, including civil society, take part. It is a cross-peer learning process and sharing of best practices, as well as a joint work around common obstacles and interests.

36. Ministers acknowledge that follow-up is an important element of the process and agree to consolidate mechanisms for following-up the Common Framework of Action 2006-2011.

37. Ministers mandate the senior officials/experts meetings on strengthening the role of women in society to act as the appropriate follow up mechanism during 2010 - 2011.

38. The senior officials/experts meetings shall convene at least once a year to share views on national trends and policy developments, identify and exchange best practices, as well as address issues, which arise in the implementation of the Common Framework of Action 2006-2011.

39. The meetings will draw up an outcome document on progress under the Common Framework of Action 2006-2011 to be submitted to the next Ministerial Conference on Strengthening the Role of Women in Society.

40. According to the Joint Declaration of the Paris Summit for the Mediterranean on the 13<sup>th</sup> of July 2008, which underlines the necessity to extend the cooperation between partners in fields, such as the strengthening the role of women in society, ministers affirm the necessity to translate the objectives of the Union for the Mediterranean into concrete projects, more visible for citizens.

41. Ministers agree on promoting projects, which involve various stakeholders (states, local authorities, private companies and civil societies) drawing on past experiences and making use of available tools and means to promote and support women's positive role in development.

42. Ministers propose to integrate gender equality as one of the priority project areas of the Union for the Mediterranean framework. To this end, Ministers will promote initiatives on voluntary and coordinated financing of projects on strengthening of the role of women in society.

43. Ministers encourage partners to come forward with concrete projects, and welcome that the following new projects have been proposed for the Union for the Mediterranean

- The Foundation of Women for the Mediterranean (France, Lebanon, Jordan, Morocco), which is presented in the annex;
- Educational and Training project for vulnerable girls and women (Jordan);
- Women Safety project for vulnerable girls and women(Jordan);
- Women Empowerment and Protection Media Network (Jordan);
- ICT for Poverty Reduction (Egypt), which is presented in the annex;
- Centre for the Political Empowerment of Women (Egypt), which is presented in the annex.

44. Ministers agree that the next Ministerial Conference shall take place in 2012. The validity of the current Plan of Action agreed in Istanbul and the priorities underlined in this declaration are therefore extended until the next Ministerial Conference.

45. Ministers congratulate the Co-Presidency of the Union for the Mediterranean and thank the Kingdom of Morocco for the kind and generous hospitality and for all the efforts exerted to ensure the success of the Second Ministerial Conference on Strengthening the Role of Women in Society, held on the 11<sup>th</sup> and 12<sup>th</sup> of November 2009 in Marrakesh, as a follow up of the First Ministerial Conference in Istanbul (on the 14<sup>th</sup> -15<sup>th</sup> of November 2006).

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## ANNEX

### Projects proposed for the Union for the Mediterranean

#### 1. THE WOMEN'S FOUNDATION FOR THE MEDITERRANEAN (France, Lebanon, Morocco, Jordan)

The central focus of the Foundation is on the development of the role of Women in the Mediterranean region.

The project is aimed at creating an identified location for both institutions and actors on the ground to serve as a channel for communication on the building and implementation of coordinated and coherent programmes, with priority being given to long-term, sustained projects directed at Women in the Mediterranean region. The task is to channel together currently deployed efforts and resources in order to build leverage to enhance the actions undertaken. The Foundation, building on existing work, will have the mission to gather and coordinate efforts.

This project is gathering only voluntary partners, and is open to each Union for Mediterranean partners. It will be driven in particular by local initiatives in the Mediterranean region (as for example through a network of major cities involved in the project. Among ten Euro-Mediterranean countries, twelve local authorities have already expressed their willingness to take on the project and to participate in it, and twenty-three are currently considering joining the project). This project will be financed, on a voluntary basis, by public and private donations.

The Foundation will have a range of specific missions:

- to provide a location for the cataloguing and collection of knowledge and all research (academic, institutional, public and private) on Gender in all domains, and especially in the Mediterranean region. The goal is to create a Mediterranean resource and training centre on gender that will permit, most notably, the networking of local and national centres for research on this subject, and the fostering of research programmes. In addition, this centre will collect and pool knowledge on Women and Gender, especially in the Mediterranean Region. Another goal is to host an Euro-Mediterranean observatory on violence against women.
- to act as a facilitator of exchanges of best practices, particularly by setting up and helping set up projects (some concrete project have already be indentified, such as develop tolls to change the female representation in the media, creation of a vocational training centre for women from rural areas, development of rural tourism by a network of women, creation of vocational training for underprivileged women, creation of schools for girls and housing for school girls, creation of emergency shelters for women victims of violence, establishment, development and support network against violence against women, creation of a specialized training institution for graduate women leaders,...).
- to act as a network of networks of women around the Mediterranean, and notably to foster the existence and development of those networks. Among these, the Foundation will create a network of local government authorities engaged in programmes directed at women.

## **2. ICT for Poverty Reduction (Egypt)**

Women represent half of the world's population, and gender inequalities exist in every nation on the planet especially in our region, they are still disadvantaged when compared to men in virtually all aspects of life. Women's economic empowerment enhances the wealth and well-being of nations. It is expected that the global economic crisis will adversely affect the poor, especially women. This requires creative solutions to address these negative consequences. The economic recovery cannot be achieved without the empowerment and integration of women in all levels of economic activities. It is essential to enable women to enter all sectors that offer decent employment and to have access to credit to start their own businesses.

Women's economic empowerment requires equipping them with the appropriate skills. Capacity building and training programs are needed. ICT should fully be utilized to enhance entrepreneurial skills of women to manage and market their products.

It will be one of the main aims of the training centre to develop entrepreneurs such they are not only confined in the micro enterprises and the informal sector, but to enhance their skills to contribute to the domestic and global economy.

A regional training centre to equip women with the capabilities and skills is needed to enhance their contribution to the economy, by offering:

- Enterprise development assistance to female business owners and would be entrepreneur;
- Workforce development to female universities and school graduates;
- Development of ICT skills to meet the requirements of the job market and for developing and expanding their enterprises.

## **3. Centre for the Political Empowerment of Women (Egypt)**

Women's political empowerment and active participation in the political spheres are considered one of the most important and vital areas of common interest among the EUROMED countries.

In that context, this proposed project aims at enhancing women's participation in the political life through the provision of a conducive institutional framework that would allow better cooperation and sharing of experiences among individuals and agencies that are actively involved in the political empowerment of women.

This project adopts the establishment of a regional centre for the political empowerment of women in the Euro-Mediterranean region, mainly through two keys areas:

1. Capacity building of the potential parliamentarians in terms of leadership and the required skills to enable them play a more active role in the political life;
2. Training and building the capacity of the women parliamentarians in the EUROMED countries through the provision of collaboration and interchange of success stories and knowledge in the common areas of interest.

## Objectives:

- Provide training and capacity building opportunities at various levels with the objective of developing the leadership and political skills required for the elections and campaigning process;
- Establish an enabling environment and institutional framework that would help women attain a seat at the Parliament through supporting the local communities in understanding better the importance of women Parliamentarians role;
- Compile and document efforts, best practices, experiences and success stories at the local, regional and international levels in the field of women political empowerment, and encourage its adoption among countries;
- Offer sustainable and permanent channel of communication and interaction among women parliamentarians in EUROMED region;
- Strengthen the level of performance of women parliamentarians through equipping them with the necessarily knowledge in the priority areas to cater development in the region.

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