



CONCLUSIONS OF THE SEMINAR FOR REAL GENDER EQUALITY IN THE EURO-MEDITERRANEAN REGION

CASABLANCA, 24 APRIL 2010

The representatives of the women's movement and autonomous civil society working for gender equality, from both shores of the Mediterranean, have met in Casablanca on 23 & 24 April 2010, in the framework of the Seminar "For Real Gender Equality in the Euro-Mediterranean Region", organized upon the initiative of the Euro-Mediterranean Non-Governmental Platform, in collaboration with the Euro-Mediterranean Human Rights Network and the Moroccan Euromed Platform, with the support of the European Commission.

This Seminar, consecrated to deepening the recommendations adopted at Civil Forums on the issue of women's rights, including Marseille 2008 Civil Forum, in the light of the 2nd Euromed Ministerial Conference on "Strengthening the Role of Women in Society", held in Marrakech, on 11 & 12 November 2009, focused on three main topics:

- Civil society's evaluation of the Marrakech Ministerial Conference's conclusions;
- Case review of the most important campaigns for promoting gender equality and women's rights in the region;
- Implementing strategies aiming at coordinating civil society's existing initiatives.

Participant organizations in the Seminar "For Real Gender Equality in the Euro-Mediterranean Region", affirm their willingness to work jointly in a network for promoting real gender equality as a universal value and women's fundamental rights as an essential part of universal and individual human rights;

Express their vigorous concerns about the aggravated violations of women's rights, in the current context of economic crisis and the rising power of fundamentalism of which women are the first victims in the Euro-Mediterranean region, as well as the rest of the world;

Recall the mandatory obligation imposed, in accordance with European and international treaties, on the European Union, its institutions, member states and partner states, to eliminate the inequalities of which women are the victims and promote, *de facto and de jure*, gender equality in all domains, including the Union's external policy;

Remind that gender equality constitutes a corner stone of the Euro-Mediterranean Partnership and a condition *sine qua non* to democratization and development of the Euro-Mediterranean region. No cultural or religious specificities can justify the inequalities between women and men and violence against women.

In this respect, the participants, while welcoming the progress marked by the Marrakech Ministerial Conclusions as well as some national legislation, emphasize:

- The incoherence between the reiterated obligations and commitments of the Union for the Mediterranean's partner countries, based on European and international treaties, the CEDAW in the first place, and their reduced implementation of these commitments in their practices;
- The absence of the gender equality dimension in the European Neighbourhood Policy Action Plans;
- The absence of follow-up mechanisms of Marrakech Ministerial Conclusions;
- The rising difficulty for civil society to become part and participate in the institutional discussions and decision making processes.

The participants firmly demand the European Union, its institutions and member states and the 43 partner states of the Union for the Mediterranean to:

1. Mainstream gender equality and ensure its respect and effective implementation in all policies, programmes and projects of the Union for the Mediterranean, all the European Neighbourhood Policy Action Plans, as well as all paragraphs concerning democracy and Human Rights in the Association Agreements.
2. Implement, *de jure and de facto*, all Marrakech Ministerial Conclusions on the basis of follow-up mechanisms and appropriate financial means, in conformity with the CEDAW and in coordination with the European Neighbourhood Policy and the Programme for Strengthening Equality between Men and Women in the Euro-Mediterranean Region;
3. Ensure civil society's full participation, notably women's organizations, both in the conception, implementation and follow-up of these policies, without which it would be impossible to have any real impact on societies.

The participants emphasize the historical contribution and achieved results by the women's movement gathered in the framework of the Euromed Civil Forums and the current urgent need to:

- Develop new strategies aiming at coordinating civil society's numerous existing initiatives on the national and regional levels and inform about good practices and their implementation in different contexts;
- Encourage women's organizations and more generally civil society to participate in the elaboration of concrete national plans for the implementation of the Conclusions of Marrakech Ministerial Conference;
- Plead the European Commission to enhance its support to regional projects aiming at informing, educating and raising citizens' awareness of the different dimensions of gender equality.

The participants welcome this initiative of the Euro-Mediterranean Non-Governmental Platform and the Euro-Mediterranean Human Rights Network and thank the European Commission for its support. They ask them to continue their efforts to foster gender equality through the organization of at least one annual meeting, in order to ensure the follow-up of the relevant recommendations of the Civil Forums' workshops and through coordinating civil society's initiatives.