

Gender Equality in the Euro-Med Region: From Plan of Action to Action?

Istanbul, 24-25 October 2009

Conference Report



EURO-MEDITERRANEAN HUMAN RIGHTS NETWORK
RÉSEAU EURO-MÉDITERRANÉEN DES DROITS DE L'HOMME
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1. Introduction

In cooperation with the Human Rights Association (IHD) and the Euromed NGO Platform, and with financial support from the Swedish International Cooperation Agency (Sida) and the Heinrich Böll Foundation, the Euro-Mediterranean Human Rights Network (EMHRN) organized the conference **Gender Equality in the Euro-Med Region: From Plan of Action to Action?** in Istanbul, Turkey, on 24-25 October 2009.

The aim of the conference was to prepare recommendations for the Euro-Med Ministerial Conference on "Strengthening the Role of Women in Society" in Morocco on 11-12 November 2009. Within this framework the objectives of the conference included to:

- Increase awareness of the Istanbul Plan of Action¹ (IPA) and explore opportunities for using it as an advocacy tool for social and legal change
- Explore synergies between the national, regional and international frameworks for the promotion and protection of gender equality
- Strengthen civil society cooperation and coalition building in the Euro-Med region on gender equality and women's rights

The conference, which gathered more than one hundred participants² from main women's and human rights organisation in the Euro-Med region as well as EU and government representatives, resulted in the endorsement of a statement (incorporating the recommendations of the conference) to the Euro-Mediterranean Ministerial Conference in Marrakech (annex 2). The statement was distributed to the Ministerial Conference participants.

Presenting its sessions chronologically (see the agenda; annex 1), this report summarizes the speeches, presentations, discussions and conclusions of the conference.

¹ Ministerial Conclusions on "Strengthening the Role of Women in Society", 2006

² See the List of Participants, Annex 3



First Day, Saturday 24 October 2009

2. Official opening

Speakers: **Kamel Jendoubi**, EMHRN president / **Reyhan Yalcindag**, member of the Honorary Board of the IHD / **Abdelmaksoud Rachdi**, president of the Euromed NGO Platform / **Magali Thill**, EMHRN (Executive Committee member and political referent for gender)

Kamel Jendoubi, president of the Euro-Mediterranean Human Rights Network (EMHRN) opened the conference by welcoming the participants and thanking them for their presence.

Osman Isci from the Human Rights Association (IHD) read a speech on behalf of **Reyhan Yalcindag**, member of the Honorary Board of the IHD, who apologized for not being able to attend the conference. She underlined that achieving gender equality is critical to the advancement of women. There are common problems faced by women all over the world. However in regions still torn by conflict and war, such as the Middle East, women face worse conditions than elsewhere. In addition, non-democratic, militarist countries create conditions that contribute to discrimination and violence against women. Like in many other regions of the world, Turkish women are subject to serious violations such as honour killings, domestic violence, sexual abuse and harassment. Forced prostitution is also a problem and statistics do not tell the full story because reporting is sparse. Women's (lacking) representation in political and public life constitute the main problem in relation to gender equality in Turkey. There are 9% women in the Turkish parliament, and only 1 % within the local administration. Despite this, the debate about potential quota for women in politics is new on the Turkish agenda. Women are also underrepresented in unions, the media, the medical profession and related areas. Generally, in trade unions men do not want to share decision-making with women. But, Yalcindag underlined, Turkish women will not give up the fight for their rights and for a democratization of the Turkish society.

Abdelmaksoud Rachdi, president of the Euromed NGO Platform, thanked the participants for their contributions to making the conference possible. He particularly thanked the government and EU commission representatives and expressed his gratitude to the Swedish EU presidency for financially supporting the conference. He warmly thanked Kamel Jendoubi for his great work and wished him a full recovery from his illness, stressing his importance for the civil society movement in the Euro-Mediterranean region and his crucial role in the establishment of the Euromed NGO Platform. Rachdi mentioned the importance of the adoption of the Istanbul Plan of Action (IPA) in 2006 as a common Euro-Med framework for enhancing gender equality and stressed the importance of the work done in relation to the IPA by the EMHRN in cooperation with the Euromed NGO Platform. The Platform hoped, he said, that the conference would result in a valuable input to the Euro-Med Ministerial Conference in Marrakech, Morocco, on 11-12 November 2009.

We should not underestimate the impact of the global financial crisis on women and vulnerable groups in our society, Rachdi said. He expressed the Platform's hope that the conference will reinforce awareness on women's rights and raise women's voices in relation to decisions makers. In order to support the conference, the Platform will support various specific initiatives and networking among relevant civil society stakeholders in general. It will, among other things, arrange a meeting in early 2010 (funded by the EU Commission) creating the opportunity to coordinate efforts and work together. Civil society can work on gender equality, but civil society is



not and cannot be a substitute for states, Rachdi said. Furthermore, he underlined that a settlement of the Israeli-Palestinian conflict is crucial to the development of peace and stability in the Mediterranean region.

Magali Thill, EMHRN political referent for gender, recalled the adoption of the IPA by the EU and its southern Mediterranean partners in Istanbul in November 2006. Since then, the EMHRN has been working in relation to the IPA. The work has been hard and it has involved many people, men and women; not least the members of the EMHRN Working Group on Gender and Women's Rights. The concrete physical result of this work is the EMHRN Shadow Report on the implementation of the IPA³. However, the work has also consisted in comprehensive lobby/advocacy work and involved many (other) women's rights organizations.

Despite its shortcomings, the IPA opened a window of opportunity as a regional commitment to enhancing women's rights and gender equality, Thill said. The IPA provided a focus for lobbying around its poor implementation. Some advancement, however, has taken place mainly on the legal level as documented by the shadow report and as result of the hard work done by many of the organizations represented at the conference. The IPA is not a comprehensive document in terms of matters such as gender based violence and benchmarking, Thill noted. One of the issues that continue to cause problems for women is that at the 30th anniversary of CEDAW, many countries still have neither lifted the reservations to the CEDAW nor signed its optional protocol. There is only one year left of the IPA. Yet many of the issues the IPA is supposed to address remain relatively untouched. We therefore have to take advantage of the great potentials of the Euro-Med instruments and transform them into a practical tool for enhancing women's rights and gender equality in the Euro-Med region. She then recalled the objectives of the conference (see the agenda, annex 1).

³ You can find/download the EMHRN Shadow Report on the implementation of the Istanbul Plan of Action here: http://gender.euromedrights.org/index.php/gender_publications/emhrn_gender_reports/3080.html



3. Setting the official framework: Presentation of the Ministerial Conclusions of the 2006 Euro-Mediterranean Ministerial Conference "Strengthening the Role of Women in the Society"

Speaker: **Véronique Arnault**; EU Commission

Moderators: **Patricia Jimenez**; Heinrich Böll Foundation / **Asma Khader**; Sisterhood is Global Institute

Veronique Arnault from the EU Commission (Directorate General for External Relations; Multilateral relations and human rights) thanked the IHD, the EMHRN and the Euromed NGO Platform for organizing the conference and for inviting her to speak. She explained that she is responsible for dealing with the advancement of women's rights within the EU system. With respect to human rights, she said, the EU needs internal and external coherency. Currently, a number of disparities exist, particularly regarding children and women. A plan of action has been adopted to remedy these disparities. For the EU, human rights are inalienable and the goals are the same for all countries. The steps taken to reach the goal will, however, vary from country to country though dialogue is always an important aspect. Civil society is a partner of the EU institutions, and the EU consults civil society before initiating programs within the field of human and women's rights. Arnault mentioned the European Instrument for Democracy and Human Rights (EIDHR)⁴ as an instrument that enables the EU to work with civil society, including with women human rights defenders.

Arnault stressed the importance of the UN mechanism, for example the recommendations of the Universal Periodic Review of the UN Human Rights Office. The Human Rights Office, she elaborated, can help in assessing the Universal Periodic Review as a monitoring instrument in relation to the IPA, while UNIFEM can help in relation to gender indicators and the development of benchmarking. She also stressed the importance of national work in order to implement the IPA. In that regard, political dialogue and cooperation instruments should be coherent.

In 2005, the 37 Euro-Mediterranean Partnership (EMP)⁵ countries agreed on gender equality as a priority which led to the adoption of the IPA in 2006 with important input from civil society, Arnault recalled. The IPA builds upon five basic principles: Political dialogues should include women's rights systematically, civil society should be recognized as a partner for dialogue, financial resources should be mobilized, human and women's rights should be enshrined in all programs (mainstreaming) and the indivisibility of human rights. The economic, political and social and cultural right pillars were important in the IPA process. The political impulse of the IPA was important but follow-up is critical. This issue must be raised without naming and shaming. Regarding follow-up, there are annual meetings of high level officials. The EU Commission reporting focuses on best practices and on possibilities for improvement. The global financial crisis has made it difficult for civil society to obtain funding, but EU funds are available. The EU thus funds regional programs directly with civil society, and the European Instrument for Human Rights

⁴ See: http://ec.europa.eu/europeaid/how/finance/eidhr_en.htm

⁵ There exist two Euro-Med political frameworks: the Euro-Mediterranean Partnership (EMP) and the European Neighborhood Policy (ENP). The EMP, built upon the principles of the Barcelona Declaration, is a regional politic, which was replaced in July 2008 by the Union for the Mediterranean. The ENP is based on a bilateral approach. In the EMP, the principle human rights instrument is the Association Agreements between the EU and its partner states, while in the framework of the ENP, it is the Action Plans (built upon the Association Agreements) negotiated between the EU and its partner states.



and 'Investing in People'⁶ include civil society (regional and thematic) programs. The funds are limited, though. She added that the EU Commission will continue funding the EMHRN and the Euromed NGO Platform.

In Marrakesh, Arnault said, we need reaffirmation and a strong commitment, and we need a focused action plan with priorities. We don't need naming and shaming. The perspective of gender equality should be applied in relations to all policies and made far more visible by civil society and relevant institutions. Furthermore, all EMP member states should support the UN architecture with one gender entity reporting to Ban Ki-Moon. And all EMP member states should adopt national action plans to implement UN resolution 1325.

From the floor there were a number of **comments and questions**. It was noted that more grass roots work needs to be done to ensure that women's organizations know about the IPA and thus are able to participate in the monitoring process. A participant asked how civil society can do more to influence the high level decision making. Asma Khader from the Sisterhood is Global Institute (moderator of the session) remarked that the EMP is very important and that we therefore need to see how we can integrate women's rights better in the partnership. She asked how to increase the funding allocated to monitoring the implementation of the IPA, and how to monitor the initiatives and projects within the IPA framework. It was remarked that the IPA needs exposure in society through the mass media – which are not dealing with the IPA – and that there is a need to invest in communication. It was suggested that the main problem with the IPA is not a lack of knowledge but that it is ignored by the States – leading to reflections around whether it is the lack of resources or the lack of political will that explains the lack of visibility of the IPA. In relation to visibility, the different roles and responsibilities of States and civil society – not being at the same level - were stressed.

Veronique Arnault replied that the visibility of the IPA is the responsibility of the governments and civil society. This is why governments should commit to visibility at the Ministerial Conference in Marrakech. At the same time, more grassroots work must be done to raise awareness about the IPA and to ensure that information about funding is accessible. The national governments are doing nothing to raise awareness of the IPA and parliamentarians do not know about it either. A monitoring mechanism and benchmarks – closely related to the question of ownership of the IPA – are needed and already existing UN monitoring and reporting mechanisms could be used to avoid inventing new ones. The EU Commission is interested in doing concrete work in the different countries, Arnault said. She reminded that one should not always rely on the UN; as the Durban issue showed, working on racism and xenophobia has been disrupted by issues pertaining to the Israeli-Palestine conflict.

Immaculada Roca I Cortes from the Directorate General for External Relations of the EU Commission said that efforts are done to make the IPA more visible, but that work on the national level is needed. **Asma Khader** (moderator of the session) noted that the questions from the participants showed the urgency of civil society's recommendations: to work for a detailed implementation of the IPA with indicators, benchmarks and time frames, for availability of funds and for coordination with civil society. National mechanism should also be used and a deepened dialogue between North and South should be encouraged. Budgets are needed, statistic information is lacking and political aspirations and legal frameworks do not match, she said.

⁶ 'Investing in People (2007 – 2013)' is the main thematic instrument of the European Commission for support of programs in the area of human and social development, on top of country programs that form the corner stone for the implementation of the EC activities in this area.



4. Setting the civil society framework: Presentation of the EMHRN Shadow Report on the implementation of the Istanbul Plan of Action⁷

Speakers: Shadow Report Researchers **Nawal Yazegi, Amal Abdel Hadi, Amina Lemrini, Ceren Isat** and **Lilian halls French**

Moderators: **Jamila Sayouri**; The Euromed NGO Platform / **Nerea Craviotto**; ACSUR – Las Segovias

The EMHRN Shadow Report researchers Nawal Yazegi, Amal Abdel Hadi, Amina Lemrini, Ceren Isat and Lilian halls French summarized main findings, conclusions and recommendations of the shadow report in accordance with their contributions to the report. **Nawal Yazegi** gave a general introduction while **Amal Abdel Hadi** focused on Egypt, **Amina Lemrini** on the Maghreb region, **Ceren Isat** on Turkey and **Lilian halls French** on Europe.

In the whole Euro-Med region, women's political rights are far from being realized. The issue of gender equality is partially absent in the Euro-Mediterranean Partnership (EMP) Association Agreements - and when the issue is present, it is not included in the political dialogues between the EU and its partner states. EU representatives and officials in the region do not work concretely on implementing the IPA, and they do not contribute to raising awareness about it. In the region, the Shadow Report highlights the problem of religious extremisms attempting to gain power and hinder women's progress in the region. Bargains and compromises have been made (as governments do not want to conflict with religious forces or instrumentalise them in order to stay in power), hindering women's progress. No religious or cultural excuses for not implementing gender equality should be accepted. Progress in relation to women's rights is made (if made at all) regardless and independently of the IPA, and countries do not talk about their achievements in relation to the IPA.

In relation to legislation there are a number of problems. However, here one has to differentiate between Europe and the South Eastern Mediterranean countries. In the later, CEDAW has become void of its meaning because of all the reservations to the Convention made by the States in the region and discrimination prevail in the Personal status laws, nationality laws and other related laws. In Europe, the problem is not discriminatory laws but the lack of implementation of the existing laws. Violence against women is a major problem, and too often the focus is on the results rather than the causes of this problem.

Civil society in Egypt gained knowledge of the IPA via the work of the EMHRN. In Egypt, people have lived under a state of emergency law for 30 years. This governs the life of civil society and has an impact on gender equality, stifling women's rights. The pressure on Egyptian civil society makes it unable to promote the IPA.

Being 'merely' Ministerial Conclusions, the IPA is not really a plan of action. Commitments must be explained concretely, and gender mainstreaming must be dealt with clearly and integrated in the Association Agreements between the EU and Egypt, and in the European Neighbourhood Policy (ENP) Action Plans. Furthermore, sufficient finances must be in place to deal with the advancement of the IPA.

⁷ You can find/download the EMHRN Shadow Report on the implementation of the Istanbul Plan of Action here: http://gender.euromedrights.org/index.php/gender_publications/emhrn_gender_reports/3080.html



In the Maghreb region (Morocco, Algeria and Tunisia), the IPA brought no added value in terms of results in advancing women's rights or assessing developments in relation to gender equality. The questionnaires reporting from the countries in relation to their implementation of the IPA were based on 20th century statistics. Furthermore, activities undertaken before the adoption of the IPA were listed as achievements by the governments, while actually the result of civil society activism undertaken before the IPA came into existence. In terms of international law there is very little harmonisation, despite work done in Morocco to tackle CEDAW reservations. Gender equality is a backbone for legislation but it is not given the necessary attention in the region. Political rights are important, but these depend on civil rights. Civil rights, however, are not part of the IPA and the document was thus born weak.

Over the last 10 years, the EU Accession Process has affected some important changes at the legislative level in terms of the legal codes and the constitution in Turkey. Gender equality needs, however, to be seen in its own right and not just as a requirement of the accession process. Most importantly, changes have been made in the Turkish constitution determining that international law is above national legislation. This is, however, not implemented. Article 90 of the constitution recognises international law such as CEDAW. The problem is the lacking implementation; officials refer to discriminatory national laws. Violence against women is a major issue on the agenda of the Turkish government, but the government should adopt a holistic approach in that regard; for example women do not have access to financial resources that would enable them to create situations of independence. The IPA is not well known in Turkey.

The European part of the report deals with the difference between formal and real equality. There is a regression in women's rights which is caused by, inter alia, economic problems and the rise of fundamentalisms. Professional equality and women's access to decision making processes continue to be problems. Women suffer more than men during economic crisis as they have fewer and more vulnerable work opportunities, and there has been a regression in educational provision and more women are expected to take care of the elderly at home. The rationale of profit overrules the social protection of women, and the democratic deficit is a real problem; for an example, only 35% of the members of the European Parliament are women. Violence against women is transnational and women are very vulnerable. Women face many common problems in the Euro-Med region, not least because the women from the South and East of the Mediterranean countries living as migrants, refugees or asylum seekers in Europe are subjected to discriminatory laws and practices similar to the ones existing in their countries of origin. We need joint strategies to work against the forces preventing the realization of equality between women and men.

Questions and Comments: Participants welcomed the Shadow report finding it reflecting the realities in their countries and a useful instrument at the regional level to acknowledge the common challenges of women in all Euro-Med countries. In relation to the lack of implementation of the IPA, it was argued that the IPA is a Framework of Action, not a Plan of Action as such, and that it could be seen as a cross-checking mechanism, a political dialogue to motivate action and that it is the role of the civil society to demand more.



5. 30th anniversary of CEDAW: Overview of instruments for promotion of gender equality and women's rights and their implementation: Exploring synergies

Speakers: **Sabika Al-Najjar**; Regional CEDAW Coalition "Equality without reservations" / **Afaf Miri**; The Egyptian NGOs CEDAW Coalition

Moderator: **Nicole Savy**; Ligue des droits de l'Homme

Nicole Savy opened the session by remarking that it has been a great struggle and taken 30 years to get the majority of the world's states to sign the CEDAW. It is one of the most important international instruments for enhancing women's rights and gender equality. Yet it is one of the less known instruments in many parts of the world and CEDAW is not yet fully implemented by all states. Savy recalled the purpose of the session: to provide an overview of instruments for promotion of gender equality and women's rights and their implementation with a focus on exploring synergies, including exploring the relation(s) between CEDAW and the IPA.

Sabika Al-Najjar introduced the Regional CEDAW Coalition "Equality without reservations". The Coalition, which was established in Rabat in 2006, focuses upon regional mechanisms and the Arab world. It works to promote gender equality, human rights and human dignity, and one of its main objectives is to ensure the commitment of all Arab countries to the CEDAW and their ratification of its protocol. The strategy of the coalition has been to launch a regional advocacy and awareness raising campaign in the Arab world. Each country or member organization has formed a national coalition which is member of the regional coalition. The practical objective of the campaign has been to introduce the public to the CEDAW and maximize public support for the CEDAW. The working methodology has focused on interaction and communication, including an electronic campaign of online petitions collecting signatures. The coalition has cooperated with the Arab League of States when calling upon countries to lift their reservations to the CEDAW. Its lobby work includes work in relation to the CEDAW committee and the European Commission. As a regional organization, the Coalition has a substantial need for financial support⁸.

Afaf Miri spoke about the work of the Egyptian NGOs CEDAW Coalition. The Coalition has staged a campaign to lift Egypt's reservations to CEDAW within the framework of the 30th anniversary of the convention. CEDAW is important in the fight against gender inequality and discrimination against women. It is a problem that, unlike in the CEDAW, there is nothing obligatory in the IPA. Concrete measures need to be taken to ensure the implementation of the IPA. The influence of religious fundamentalism and the reinforcement of a patriarchal mentality are among the challenges in Egypt for the implementation of CEDAW and for lifting the Egyptian reservations to the convention. Egypt has not ratified the Optional Protocol, and discriminatory laws still exist due to the reservations. This is justified by arguments based on cultural relativism. The Egyptian feminist movement and the CEDAW Coalition submitted the recommendations of the EMHRN Shadow Report on the implementation of the IPA to Egyptian government. The Coalition is working to enhance the capacities of its member organizations and it is working with the different stakeholders in relation of women's rights. It provides information and conducts trainings, studies, seminars and experts workshops on the IPA and CEDAW⁹.

⁸ The Power Point presentation given by Sabika Al-Najjar is available (in Arabic only) upon request; please contact the EMHRN Secretariat, Marit Flø Jørgensen: mfj@euromedrights.net

⁹ The Power Point presentation given by Afaf Miri is available (in Arabic only) upon request; please contact the EMHRN Secretariat, Marit Flø Jørgensen: mfj@euromedrights.net



During the following **discussion** of linkages between CEDAW and the IPA, several questions and comments were made. It was remarked that CEDAW is not put on national agendas. A participant asked how it could be that the UN allows reservations to the CEDAW even though reservations are not allowed under international law. Europe was criticised for its weakness in challenging the lack of democracy in some of the countries in the South. It was asked how the conference would move on and how to be more effective in this field. More institutional efforts should be made, it was commented, and the linkages between the CEDAW and the IPA should be addressed throughout the rest of the conference. It was noted that the framework of the IPA could create regional dynamics.

6. Workshops to define priorities and strategies

The following three workshops were conducted:

- A. Defining priorities and strategies for work on gender equality based on a discussion of findings & recommendations of the Shadow Report
- B. Interlinking the IPA with international, regional and national mechanisms for gender equality and women's rights: Defining priorities and strategies
- C. Future engagement in the Istanbul Process and civil society coordination

Below, please find summaries of / reports from the workshops.



Workshop A: Defining priorities and strategies for work on gender equality based on a discussion of findings & recommendations of the Shadow Report

Key notes by **Amina Lemrini** (Researcher); Association Démocratique des Femmes du Maroc

Moderator: **Amal Abdel Hadi** (Researcher); Cairo Institute for Human Rights Studies

The presentation given by Mrs Amina Lemrini in workshop A is entitled: ***Defining the priorities and the work strategies on equality between men and women based on the conclusions and recommendations of the shadow report.***

The presentation begins by outlining the main findings about the Istanbul Plan of Action clarifying that government strategies do not refer to IPA because of a lack of knowledge of the latter. The effectiveness of the IPA is hindered by a lack of concrete provisions and operational indicators and mechanisms for monitoring and evaluation.

Subsequently, Mrs Lemrini continues by presenting the conclusions of the report by fields/ state engagement discussing the following points:

- The obligations vis-à-vis the international conventions, in particular the CEDAW.
- Discrimination in national law and legislation.
- Women's participation in the public, civil, and political spheres.
- Concerning violence towards women (including migrants) in the family and community.

Moreover, the presentation develops various obstacles hindering the realization of gender equality in the region. The obstacles hindering the gender equality are as follow:

- The dominance of patriarchal structures.
- The predominance of religious, political and social conservatism.
- The predominance of political/ security uncertainty as means of justification for not introducing democratic reforms on the agenda.

After presenting the obstacles, she proposes the principal recommendations already discussed in the shadow report:

- On commitment to CEDAW.
- On the rights of women in national legislation.
- On the public participation of women in civil and political life.
- On combating violence against women, including migrant women.
- On the Istanbul Plan of Action.

Finally, the presentation is calling for the establishment of practical procedures such as:

Prepare an action plan for the regional and national levels that is "clear, explicit and goal-specific"; The establishment of an ad hoc committee to follow up and monitor the implementation of the IPA ; develop mechanisms to ensure consistency and linkages between the IPA, the UFM framework, the European Neighbourhood Policy and other bilateral frameworks ; involve the non-governmental organisations in the Euro-Mediterranean Ministerial Conference ;



Encourage the European Parliament and the Euro-Mediterranean Parliamentary Assembly to be involved in the follow-up process on the implementation of the decisions of the Istanbul conference; Place gender equality and women's rights high on the agenda of the EMP and the UFM and among their priorities.

Please find attached the complete power point presentation.

Suggestions for future work

In relation to future work, the participants suggested to focus on developing a campaign around the IPA, and to collect and capitalise on best practises in relation to the implementation of the IPA.

Recommendations

In general, the participants felt that the recommendations of the Shadow Report are quite comprehensive. Some participants mentioned, though, that the report could have dealt more thoroughly with the issue of economic empowerment of women, including gender budgeting, equal payment and economic and labour rights (as focused upon in the Beijing Plan of Action).

The importance of specific recommendations in Shadow Report was mentioned, e.g. recommendation d) and e) on page 23 of the (English version of the) report:

- d. The involvement of non-governmental organisations in the Euro-Mediterranean Ministerial Conference that will be held in 2009, the organisation of consultations, and the establishment in all countries of observatories that include representatives from civil society organisations and will monitor the implementation of the Istanbul decisions and prepare an annual report on the results that have been achieved;
- e. Encouraging the European Parliament and the Euro-Mediterranean Parliamentary Assembly to be involved in the follow-up process on the implementation of the decisions of the Istanbul conference.

It was suggested to set timeframes for the recommendations, e.g. "freeing all legislation from all discrimination within five years". The participants stressed the importance of having the following three pillars in mind: political will, means and the involvement of women themselves. In addition, the following issues were emphasized:

- a) Gender Equality is the core of women's human rights and should not be compromised in the name of cultural specificity. There is a need for specific indicators for measuring any progress in this domain
- b) Fully fledged citizenship for all women in the Euro-Mediterranean based on the common principle of gender equality is needed. There is a need to have specific indicators for any progress in this domain
- c) The need to link the IPA to the European Neighbourhood Policy Action Plans, because there is a framework for follow up and assessment and funds that could be used
- d) To recognize and support the work of civil society in enhancing the implementation of the IPA



- i. Build on the capacities of local networks and organizations: strengthen the visibility of women's work, more efficient networking.
 - ii. Establishment of observatories in each country that include representatives from civil society organizations to monitor the implementation of the IPA
- e) Gender equality actors must work with grassroots organizations to promote gender equality
- f) It is the states' responsibility to guarantee access to justice for every woman, and thus for all women to be able to use the laws in order to obtain and enjoy their human rights



Workshop B: Interlinking the IPA with international, regional and national mechanisms for enhancing gender equality and women's rights: Defining priorities and strategies

Key notes by **Sabine Gürtner** (WOMNET/WIDE) and **Boriana Jönsson** (Kvinna Till Kvinna)

Moderator: **Leila Hamarneh**; Arab Women Organization

Boriana Jönsson focused her presentation on the opportunities offered by the IPA. She stressed the importance of the IPA not being an operational action plan in itself that will bring about changes via concrete measures. It is a political framework that expresses a certain level of political will. The IPA created a new space to bring up the commitments to e.g. UNSCR 1325 and 1820 (on women and peace and security) as well as commitments to CEDAW since the IPA recognises these commitments (also in relation to the fight against gender-based violence). By uncovering linkages between the instruments we can analyse why certain issues were not addressed in the IPA. This can lead us to identifying priorities and common strategies.

Jönsson developed the idea that an important difference between these international instruments and the IPA is that, unlike CEDAW, UNSCR 1325, 1820, etc. that have been adopted due to the long-term struggle and demands by the women's movements across the world, the IPA has been adopted top down by the governments. It therefore provides new opportunities for the women's movements to approach their governments and hold them responsible, since, if CEDAW and 1325 can be viewed by them as "imposed", the IPA is fully owned by the governments. Therefore, independently of its vague language the governments can now move on to create their own plans of actions based on this framework.

As for the civil society and the women's movement, the Euro-Med space offers a space for increased lobbying and cooperation with concerned institutions and political bodies, and opportunities to raise old questions in new ways: Why CEDAW has been ratified with reservations while the governments themselves speak of strengthening the political rights of women? Can political rights of women be strengthened with "reservations"? And if the governments put it as a priority to strengthen the political and civil rights of women then CEDAW provides them with a useful instrument to do exactly that; by adopting affirmative measures for example.

Jönsson pointed out that it is vital to consider the IPA as a process and to approach it from the dynamic perspective of its interconnectedness with these other documents and international instruments that the governments have ratified and committed to, documents that globally enhance gender equality: CEDAW, UNSCR 1325, 1820 etc. If the governments reinforced their commitments to UNSCR 1325 within the Istanbul Framework it would mean, for example, that the question of women's rights (as international women's rights standards and as being central to maintaining peace and security) should not be disregarded with reference to the instability of the region. The need to strengthen women's rights should never be disregarded with reference to any instable situation. Instead these standards should be applied in politics connected to the commitments to IPA and to peace and stability – equally valid for the whole Euro-Med region. In other words, gender equality should be on the top of the agenda of our governments, as both goal and means to achieve lasting peace.

Furthermore, Jönsson stressed that that the Istanbul Framework for Action gives women's social movements and NGOs the opportunity to work together across the political differences in the



Euro-Med region on jointly identified priorities for common action addressing common problems faced by women in the region. Such work can focus, for an example, on analysing and addressing raising fundamentalisms, the persisting violence against women accompanied by social intolerance, and on demanding that governments lift their reservations to CEDAW and implement the convention as an indicator of political will to act.

Sabine Gürtner introduced the various instruments and mechanisms on gender equality, especially within the EU. She stressed that 2010 will be a big review year – Beijing +15, the 10th anniversary of the Millennium Development Goals, the 30th anniversary of CEDAW – and thus offers an opportunity to voice our concerns in relation to gender equality. She explained how the EU has committed itself to promote and protect gender equality in all its policies through gender mainstreaming, including in its foreign relations, as stressed in the Roadmap for Gender Equality between Men and Women – a milestone for women’s rights in Europe. Furthermore, she underlined the importance of the European Neighbourhood Policy (ENP) and its financial instrument (ENPI) which has a budget of 12 billion Euros for 2007-2013. Gürtner explained that:

The European Commission’s Roadmap for equality between women and men 2006-2010 was launched in March 2006 with the goal of accelerating gender equality and strengthening gender mainstreaming in all areas. The Roadmap outlines six priority areas for EU action for the period 2006-2010 (and for each area priority objectives and actions are identified):

1. Equal economic independence for women and men
2. Reconciliation of private and professional life
3. Equal representation in decision making
4. Eradication of all forms of gender based violence
5. Elimination of gender stereotypes
6. Promotion of gender equality in external and development policies

Relevance: The EU Roadmap is considered a milestone for progressing women’s empowerment and gender equality in particular since it provides in each of its sections a set of indicators to monitor progress towards gender equality in the policy areas identified in the Roadmap. It has been developed by Member States, Eurostat and the EU Commission. These indicators were also developed for the follow-up of the Beijing Platform for Action. However, with one exception, there are *no indicators for priority area 6* concerning the promotion of gender equality in external and development policies. Since 2006 WOMNET and Karat have been forwarding (see WOMNET International Conference ENP and IPA) recommendations to adopt gender indicators and thus link the roadmap to the EU’s External Policy.

The European Neighbourhood and Partnership Instrument (ENPI) is a financial policy-driven instrument that replaces TACIS (for eastern neighbours) and MEDA (for southern Mediterranean neighbours). It aims at supporting sustainable development, security, peace and prosperity to EU Neighbourhood countries with no perspective for accession. The priorities identified in the ENP National Action Plans serve as a guiding principle in programming the EU assistance priorities which are, together with the countries concerned, laid down in general Country and Multi-Country (regional) Strategy Papers (7 year periods, 2007-13), National and Multi country Indicative Programmes (3 year periods, 2007-10) and detailed annual programmes



for each financial period. ENP National Action Plans exist for 12 countries¹⁰. For the current budgetary period (2007-2013), there is funding of approximately 12 billion Euros available.

Relevance: The ENPI will be reviewed in 2009 through a Mid-Term Review, which might result in an update of the existing Strategy Papers as well as of the development and adoption of new Indicative Programmes (IP's) for the period 2011-13. The Commission has started a dialogue with civil society inviting CSOs to monitor the implementation of the Action Plans. It is, however, not yet clear how much CSO recommendations will be reflected in the new National Indicative Programs. Consultations included CSO participation in ad hoc meetings, internet consultations and specific events, taking into account the local political reality. Concerning the ENPI's relevance to gender equality, women's organisations criticize that in the EU's external policies, including the ENP, mainstreaming of gender equality is done in an ad-hoc way. Still, bilateral agreements and funding mechanisms lack a strong gender perspective and there is a lack of information and monitoring opportunities for NGOs. The existing initial concept notes for the new indicative programmes have not yet adopted a strong gender aspect within their priority areas and they lack references to gender equality, women's empowerment and gender budgeting, even though reference to human rights and democratic development support is made.

Judith Neisse from Transtec briefly introduced the EU funded 'Enhancing Equality between Men & Women in the Euromed Region' program. She stressed the importance of linking up to this initiative as it would be a way to link this mainly inter-governmental project to a civil society initiative/input. She explained that the added value of the IPA is its implementation mechanisms (in the form of the 'Investing in People' and the 'Enhancing Equality between Men & Women in the Euromed Region' program) and the regional knowledge it implies and creates.

Leila Hamarneh, the moderator of the workshop, stressed the need to come up with recommendations for how to enhance gender equality and women's rights by inter-linking the different frameworks/mechanisms.

The following priorities and recommendations were made:

- The Euro-Med Ministerial Conference should further the Euro-Med process in a holistic manner. This should be done by linking the IPA process to national, regional and international conventions, resolutions and mechanisms to which governments of the region have already committed themselves, e.g. CEDAW, UNSCR 1325, the European Parliament Resolution on Gender, Peace and Conflict, the Beijing Platform for Action and the Millennium Development Goals.
- All reservations on CEDAW should be lifted as a priority and governments should sign up to its Optional Protocol
- Gender equality and women's human rights should be on the top of every political agenda within the ENP – such as in the Country Strategy Papers and the Annual Action Plans
- Autonomy of women's NGOs should be recognised and respected; they must be given space to be actors in their own right (Marrakesh could be followed by a North-South meeting to share examples of models of interaction between women's NGOs and governments).

¹⁰ Armenia, Azerbaijan, Egypt, Georgia, Israel, Jordan, Lebanon, Moldova, Morocco, The Palestinian Authority of the West Bank and Gaza Strip, Tunisia and Ukraine



- Mechanisms should be created that involve women inside and outside the formal Peace and Security mechanisms at *all levels*; not just in the informal level.
- Each Government should prepare a National Action Plan for the implantation of UNSCR 1325.
- Mechanisms for regular consultation with women's NGOs should be set up (as the knowledge on gender equality and women's rights is not properly transferred to governments)
- EU delegations should meet with women's rights organisations
- Women's participation in political decision making should be increased and temporary quotas introduced
- The existing multiple frameworks to enforce gender equality should be exploited
- International solidarity through cooperation within civil society should be encouraged
- The idea of having the UN launch a world-wide campaign on the implementation of CEDAW should be explored



Workshop C: Future Engagement in the Istanbul Process and civil society coordination

Keynotes by **Magali Thill** (EMHRN) and **Sophie Dimitroulias** (Member of the Board of the Euromed NGO Platform, Vice President of AFEM)

Moderators: **Khedija Cherif** (Association Tunisienne des Femmes Démocrates) / **Rhadia Ben Haj Zekri** (Member of the Board of the Euromed NGO Platform)

Sophie Dimitroulias emphasized the historical contribution made by the women's movement and more broadly speaking by civil society united in the Euro-Med Civil Fora and the Euromed NGO Platform, to promote gender equality as part of universal values and human rights and as a founding principle of the Euro-Mediterranean Partnership established in 1995. She stressed the fact that the violations of women's rights in the Euro-med region are worsening despite the commitment of member states and partners to EU and international treaties to promote fundamental rights. However, she underlined the progress in terms of official recognition of civil society, notably the Euromed Platform, as a valuable partner in that Euro-Med cooperation framework, but also the need to enhance effective civil society participation in all policies, and by all necessary means.

Magali Thill focused on civil society cooperation and coordination in relation to strengthening gender equality and women's rights in the framework of the IPA. She recalled the regional campaigns, such as the "Equality without Reservation" campaign to lift reservations to CEDAW and make States ratify the Optional Protocol to the Convention as an example of a good practice in relation to awareness raising about gender issues. She stressed the need for short, medium and long term goals with respect to the future agenda. She explained that the EMHRN is a network of more than 60 organizations working in the area of women's and human rights as well as a member of the Euromed NGO Platform. The EMHRN Working Group on Gender and Women's Rights has been working on gender mainstreaming, and on monitoring the IPA. It is important to forge alliances with others and benefit from each others ideas, she underlined.

Following the presentations by Dimitroulias and Thill the floor was opened for a **discussion** which focused on:

Social and economic rights: It was remarked that organizations need to consider how to tackle concrete obstacles to the implementation of the IPA. In this regard, the global economic crisis must be taken into consideration since it severely influences the condition of women. It was added that there is a need to consider the regressive economic, social and cultural rights and to what extent they are dealt with in the IPA; broad alliances could be forged in that regard. European governments and their partner states focus on economic issues at the expense of women's and human rights, it was argued.

The integration of the IPA with other mechanisms, especially CEDAW and the ENP: It was suggested to focus on the provisions of the CEDAW as the most comprehensive international gender equality treaty ratified by the Euro-Med states and which already has a follow-up mechanism. It was remarked that the IPA reiterates the principles of CEDAW, and that the IPA should support effective implementation of CEDAW and be understood as complementary to CEDAW; neither as separated from it nor as its replacement.



It was suggested to work more in relation to the European Neighbourhood Policy (ENP). Within the framework of the ENP, work on national implementation of the IPA could be done by integrating the IPA in the ENP Action Plans and encouraging the EU to establish funding incentives to do so. If the IPA is included in the ENP Action Plans it will be much easier to monitor its implementation, since the Action Plans imply an annual review mechanism. It was suggested to monitor how the Union for the Mediterranean abides by the IPA and what work is being done in relation to women's rights in general within its framework.

Coalition building: It was commented that efforts to sustain the previous initiatives are needed as well as initiatives to broaden the work by involving more organizations. Flexible alliances should be built since no new or additional structures are needed. Organizations working in the region could cooperate with the EMHRN and its WG on Gender and work in alliance with the Euromed NGO Platform and women's regional and national organizations which are members of the Platform. It was suggested that the IPA follow up mechanism could be a women's network and it was remarked that we need to enlarge the dialogue as well as to recognize the work done by the EMHRN and the Euromed Platform.

Media and awareness raising: It was stressed that the ministers' awareness about the IPA should be raised before the Ministerial Conference. It was commented that the IPA is an important political tool, and that the task is to make the relevant ministers understand that. Countries represented at the Ministerial Conference in Marrakech should commit to clear gender equality texts and to the communication of these texts through education and the media. It was noted that more work should be done on the media, since the media coverage of the IPA is scarce. It was commented that the media should cover this conference and other similar events, and that non-traditional coverage is needed that will convey the content of this meeting/conference. It was commented that civil society's advocacy tools too often seem to be limited to drafting reports, and it was suggested to use petitions as a tool for lobbying and awareness raising.

Furthermore, it was suggested to launch a constant dialogue between European and Arab states in relation to the IPA and work on the integration of the IPA into national strategies, placing this on national government agendas. It was remarked that after the conference the EMHRN and the Euromed Platform should continue following up in relation to the IPA on both sides of the Mediterranean. It was suggested to focus on research and studies, since statistics are lacking.

Responding to the many comments, **Sophie Dimitroulias** noted that the presence of such a variety of women organizations and civil society actors, representing national and international levels showed the success of this conference and was a proof of solidarity and the importance of gender equality as a common universal value. Summarizing the joint position of the workshop participants, she underlined that the ministers participating in the Ministerial Conference in Marrakech should be urged to eliminate all inequalities, all discrimination and all forms of violence against women, and promote gender equality in all fields. She reiterated the need for effective human rights guarantees in conformity with European and international treaties, notably the CEDAW; and that gender equality must be integrated into all policies and instruments of the Euro-Mediterranean Partnership and the European Neighbourhood Policy, including bilateral Agreements and Action Plans. She stressed that women are the first victims of the rise of fundamentalist forces which are contrary to gender equality, posing a serious risk to the universal rights that has been gained in that regard. Dimitroulias acknowledged the specific need to effectively guarantee women's social and economic rights as well as reproductive health rights in the context of the economic crisis. She recalled the critical importance of organizing regular NGO meetings and called for a joint mobilization of civil society at all levels, notably the national level.



Magali Thill underlined that IPA is complementary to CEDAW. She noted that ENP is the framework within which the IPA must be mainstreamed and that benchmarks must be included in the bilateral agreements under the ENP to ensure that it happens. She also stressed the importance of a proper follow up mechanism to monitor and evaluate the implementation of the IPA. Some coalitions have already been forged and sent information to their national ministers, she said. In relation to future work, she added, the IPA campaign should be widened to include for an example the CEDAW coalition.

Conclusions/recommendations

The workshop resulted in the following conclusions/recommendations:

In the current context of economic crisis and of rising fundamentalisms all over the world of which women are the first victims, the participants of this workshop recall that gender equality is part of universal and indivisible human rights. They urge the EU member states and partner states to condemn all form of violations of women's human rights perpetrated in the name of tradition and religion, and to promote gender equality and women's rights, especially social rights, at all levels.

Short term recommendations:

- To lobby government representatives participating in the Marrakesh Ministerial Conference
- To send a letter with the declaration and the Shadow Report to the head of the governments and the representatives of the governments who will participate in the Marrakesh Ministerial Conference
- To urge the organisers of the Ministerial Conference to permit the participation of a wide joint delegation composed of representatives of the EMHRN, the Euromed NGO Platform and the CEDAW Coalition
- To have the statement of this conference read by a speaker from the joint delegation at the Ministerial Conference
- To address the supportive governments (mainly in the European Union) through the European women's organizations participating in the conference, such as the Association of Women of Southern Europe (AFEM), the European Council of the International Council of Women (CECIF), and the European Women's Lobby (EWL).
- To ensure that the media know about the demands of this conference and to have a press conference in Morocco before the Ministerial Conference
- To launch an on-line and written petition for supporting the demands of this conference in relation to the IPA, including the lifting of the CEDAW reservations in the whole Euro-Med region
- To urge the governments in the Euro-Med Region to ensure that the IPA is understood by all its representatives at the Ministerial Conference and that these are high level representatives



- To urge the member states and the partner states to ensure the effective participation of women's organisations in the decision-making process of the EMP and the ENP at all levels and by all appropriate means

Long term recommendations:

- To demand the effective participation of civil society in the IPA follow-up
- To call for an evaluation meeting with wide participation of women's, human rights and civil society organizations in order to assess the results of the Ministerial Conference
- To promote the sharing of experiences about campaigning, lobbying and research in relation to work on gender equality. This should be done from a bottom-up and top-down approach and on the regional and national level.
- To urge states to integrate the IPA into ENP Action Plans and the ENP instrument in a strong way with concrete benchmarks and objectives and into their annual review processes
- To urge the European Commission and the partner states to permit and support the participation of human and women's rights organisations in the evaluation and the monitoring of ENP instruments and the national plans of action
- To launch a campaign to widen the support for gender equality in the Euro-med region among other coalitions, networks and organisations
- To urge governments to mainstream gender equality in the Union for the Mediterranean
- To urge governments to distribute the IPA to its ministries and public administrations. They should also support the publication of the IPA and distribute it to the public, to grass roots organisations, in schools and at universities
- To urge participants to this conference to build civil society alliances capable of integrating economic, social and cultural rights and to assess the IPA in all its aspects
- To ensure that the European Presidencies will give top priority to gender equality and the full implementation of the IPA in regard to the external policies of the EU and that they will support civil society participation in the IPA following-up mechanism
- To urge the governments of the Euro-med region to adopt all necessary measures to fight gender inequalities, all forms of discriminations and violence.
- To urge the governments and the European Commission to support comparative studies on national legal systems from a gender perspective and to take their results into consideration in the elaboration of the ENP Action Plans and their annual reviews.



Second Day, Sunday 25 October 2009

7. Presentations of the Workshops findings

Moderator: **Azza Kamel**; Appropriate Communication Techniques for Development Center

Workshop rapporteurs presented the findings and recommendations of the three workshops conducted on Saturday 24 October (see above the reports from the workshops):

- A. Defining priorities and strategies for work on gender equality based on a discussion of findings & recommendations of the Shadow Report
- B. Interlinking the IPA with international, regional and national mechanisms for gender equality and women's rights: Defining priorities and strategies
- C. Future engagement in the Istanbul Process and civil society coordination

Following the presentations of the workshop findings, the floor was opened for discussion. The participants welcomed the rich debates and concrete discussions that had taken place in the workshops.

In relation to workshop A, it was recommended to include more statistics and indicators in future shadow reports in order to better measure progress. It was remarked that national constitutions lack a clear commitment to gender equality, there is a need to reconcile national constitutions with CEDAW. This, it was added, can only be done by endorsing civil legislation. Other participants took the argument a step further and insisted on the need for full citizenship. Furthermore, it was remarked that the link between democratic development and women's rights should be stressed. In a restrictive political environment such as in Tunisia and Libya, where independent civil society is prevented by all means to fulfill their legitimate role as human rights and women's rights organizations, it is impossible to speak about advancement of women's rights.

In relation to workshop B, it was recommended to include a specific focus upon migrant and refugee women. Participants also suggested to support and link up to other campaigns in the region, and thus to work together in relation to IPA.

In relation to workshop C, it was suggested that European governments should be held accountable for implementing CEDAW in their external relations.

Generally, it was suggested to focus on best practices rather than the regression in order to encourage the governments gathered in Marrakesh to act. And it was suggested to structure the conference statement (to the Ministerial Conference in Marrakech) around political positions followed by strategic recommendations to the governments, the Ministerial Conference and civil society. In relation to the Israeli-Palestinian conflict, it was suggested to work for the largest possible governmental support for the Goldstone report, and all the NGO present at the conference were encouraged to call upon their governments to support it. Furthermore, the following was stressed by several participants:



- The idea of building an alliance of participants of this conference on the IPA
- That the indivisibility and universality of human rights should be reinforced – and that ‘culture’ should never be accepted as an excuse for not doing so
- That the IPA should be linked to the ENP
- That benchmarks and time frames be included in the IPA (but no conditionality as such)
- That indicators for the follow-up mechanisms should be developed

Veronique Arnaud from the EU Commission commented on the ideas put forward and supported the idea of linking the IPA to the existing UN and EU mechanisms. She informed the conference that with the entry into force of the Treaty of Lisbon on December 2009 the EU will have a new service for external relations¹¹ with the aim of increasing the impact and coherence of the EU's foreign policy. Furthermore, a new EU Gender Equality Action Plan for 2010-2015 will be launched in early 2010. Arnaud also confirmed the EU Commission's support for civil society.

8. Endorsement of Statement to the Euro-Med Ministerial Conference on “Strengthening the Role of Women in Society” in Morocco on 11-12 November 2009

Moderator: **Alya Chammari**; Collectif 95 - Maghreb Egalité

On the evening of Saturday 24 October, the Conference Statement Drafting Committee – composed of Alya Cherif Chammari (Collectif 95 - Maghreb Egalité) and Gerarda Venture (Euromed NGO Platform) – received reports (summaries of the main findings and recommendations) from the three workshops held that day. Based upon the workshop reports, the committee prepared a draft statement which was distributed to the participants on Sunday morning.

Generally, the participants endorsed the statement stressing that it well reflected the discussion and concerns expressed during the conference. However, participants made important recommendations both to the structure and the content of the statement during the session. The drafting committee asked the participants to give it the mandate to incorporate the recommendations during the lunch break and to forward any recommendations to the committee in writing. It was suggested to add some of the recommendations to the workshop reports and/or the conference report, in order for the statement not to be too long (see the final statement; annex 2).

¹¹ The European External Action Service (EEAS)



9. Closing Session

Moderators: **Kamel Jendoubi**; President, EMHRN / **Gerarda Ventura**; The Euromed NGO Platform

The final statement to the Euro-Mediterranean Ministerial Conference in Marrakech (annex 2) was presented (read aloud) to the conference. The representatives from the Swedish EU presidency, the French Union for the Mediterranean presidency, the Moroccan government and the French government were then asked to comment on the statement and to shortly talk about their expectation to the Marrakech conference.

Helén Lundkvist, representing the Swedish EU Presidency, commented that the IPA and its framework documents are landmark documents that embrace women's civil, political, economic, social, media and cultural rights. The follow up in relation to the IPA shows that activities are taking place in member states but it is difficult to know the impact of these activities. The Ministerial Conference in Marrakech will provide an opportunity for a mid-term review and for developing synergies. It would help co-operation to develop a more focused action plan. And a strong, clear, focused document is needed to ensure that the relevant ministers know what civil society wants. Consistent follow up mechanisms are also important, Lundkvist said.

Alain Kurkdjian from the French Ministry of Work, Social Relations, Family Solidarity and the City expressed his view that the contribution of civil society is very important for ministers. Sometimes, he said, the problem is that when legislation embraces equality provisions this is not translated into action on the ground. For example, men tend to go on dominating the higher-rated professions while women tend to occupy part-time and lower status jobs. There are, furthermore, jobs that are 'feminised', particularly within service professions. There is a large gap between men's and women's wages; women earn less. This has nothing to do with education since women are better educated than men. A lot of work has been done on the question of women's rights following the adoption of the IPA in 2006. There are some good practices, including work to combat stereotypes in the educational field. In relation to the Ministerial Conference in Marrakech, France is cooperating closely with Egypt and other states. It would be useful if civil society encourages the IPA work and push forward the status of women in the Mediterranean region. Action priorities have to be established regarding each of the three pillars of the IPA, and the Ministers' declaration to be adopted in Marrakech should allow for the participation of all stakeholders in the IPA process.

Nathalie Pilhes, representing the Presidency of the French Republic of the Union for the Mediterranean, made a number of comments on the IPA and the Ministerial Conference in Marrakech. The Ministerial Conference, she said, will result in a political declaration and include processes for the development of concrete projects such as the setting up of a Foundation for Women in the Mediterranean. The mission of the foundation will be to create a Mediterranean resource and training centre on gender that will permit the networking of local and national centres for research on this subject, to establish a Euro-Med observatory on violence against women, to develop field projects that start at the local level but give ideas to others at the regional level, to act as a network of networks of women around the Mediterranean, and to foster the existence and development of those networks. This Foundation could include a network of private actors. This would not be an inter-governmental project but a project autonomous from states; flexible but sponsored by the states.



Rachida Tahri, representing the Moroccan Ministry of Social Development, Family and Solidarity made the following points: The most difficult mission will be to bridge the gap between expectations on the one side and difficulties and practicalities on the other side. The IPA is an important tool that should be developed.

The content of the IPA is currently not well known and this is a problem for the Marrakesh conference, nevertheless there are achievements that should be highlighted and upon which we should build such as equality as a principle.

We must move away from the use of cultural specificities as an excuse to avoid legal obligations. The Marrakech Conference should renew the commitment to gender equality and renew the IPA by setting priorities; we cannot go backward. We need assessment mechanisms and assessment tools. We should draw lessons from past experiences and we need a tool allowing us to assess what we are doing. We need to highlight what is common and what we share, and we need to disseminate findings.

Helén Lundkvist (Swedish EU Presidency) commented that legal mechanisms would be useful in pursuing gender equality. Reminding states to observe their legal obligations under CEDAW would and should be an important part of this process, she said. In 2010 important initiatives in the pursuance of gender equality will include Beijing +15, the possibility of a Special Rapporteur for Women and a new 5 year EU action plan on gender equality. Developing efficiency is also critical in the work of NGOs to avoid wasting resources. This might include linking women's work and children's work, and working with other networks. The exposure of the work on gender equality through the publicity thus obtained might also prove fruitful.



Annex 1: Conference Agenda



Human Rights Association
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1986

EuroMed Non-Governmental Platform
Plate-forme non gouvernementale EuroMed
مفبر المنظمات غير الحكومية الأورو-متوسطی



EURO-MEDITERRANEAN HUMAN RIGHTS NETWORK
RÉSEAU EURO-MÉDITERRANÉEN DES DROITS DE L'HOMME
الشبكة الأوروبية - المتوسطية لحقوق الإنسان

The Euro-Mediterranean Human Rights Network (EMHRN), the Human Rights Association (IHD) and the Euromed NGO Platform organise the conference:

Gender Equality in the Euro-Med Region: From Plan of Action to Action?

Istanbul, 24-25 October 2009

Agenda

The conference aims at preparing recommendations for the Euro-Med Ministerial Conference on "Strengthening the Role of Women in Society", which will take place in Morocco, 11-12 November 2009.

Within this framework the objectives of the conference will include to:

- Increase awareness of the Istanbul Plan of Action¹² (IPA) and explore opportunities for using it as an advocacy tool for social and legal change
- Explore synergies between the national, regional and international frameworks for the promotion and protection of gender equality (IPA, CEDAW, the European Neighbourhood Policy (ENP) and other EU mechanisms (the Euro-Med Gender Equality Project et al))
- Strengthen civil society cooperation and coalition building in the Euro-Med region on gender equality and women's rights

Based on the EMHRN Shadow Report on the Implementation of the Istanbul Plan of Action, participants will review obstacles and shortcomings of the IPA and deliver recommendations on promoting gender equality and civil society participation in this regard.

¹² Ministerial Conclusions on "Strengthening the Role of Women in Society", 2006



First Day, Saturday 24 October 2009

- 09:00–10:00 **Official opening**
Representatives of the organisers, and Turkish civil society and government
- 10:00-11:00 **Setting the official framework:** Presentation of the Ministerial Conclusions of the 2006 Euro-Mediterranean Ministerial Conference "Strengthening the Role of Women in the Society"
Speaker: Véronique Arnault; EU Commission
Questions and discussion

Moderators: Patricia Jimenez; Heinrich Boell Foundation / Asma Khader; Sisterhood is Global Institute
- 11:00-11:30 Coffee Break
- 11:30-13:00 **Setting the civil society framework:** Presentation of the EMHRN Shadow Report on the Implementation of the Istanbul Plan of Action
Speakers: Shadow Report Researchers Nawal Yazegi, Amal Abdel Hadi Amina Lemrini, Ceren Isat and Lilian halls French
Questions and discussion

Moderators: Jamila Syouri; The Euro-Med NGO Platform / Nerea Craviotto; ACSUR – Las Segovias
- 13:00-14:30 Lunch
- 14:30-15:30 **30th anniversary of CEDAW:** Overview of instruments for promotion of gender equality and women's rights and their implementation: Exploring synergies
Speakers: Sabika Najjar; Regional CEDAW Coalition "Equality without reservations" / Afaf Miri; The Egyptian NGOs CEDAW Coalition

Moderator: Nicole Savy; Ligue des droits de l'Homme
- 15:30-16:00 Coffee Break
- 16:00-18:00 **Workshops** to define priorities and strategies:
a) Defining priorities and strategies for work on gender equality based on a discussion of findings & recommendations of the Shadow Report
Key notes by Amina Lemrini (Researcher); Association Démocratique des Femmes du Maroc

Moderator: Amal Abdel Hadi (Researcher); Cairo Institute for Human Rights Studies



- b) Interlinking the IPA with international, regional and national mechanisms for gender equality and women's rights: Defining priorities and strategies

Key notes by Sabine Gürtner (WOMNET/WIDE) and Boriana Jönsson (Kvinna Till Kvinna)

Moderator: Leila Harmarneh; Arab Women Organization

- c) Future engagement in the Istanbul Process and civil society coordination

Key notes by Magali Thill (EMHRN) and Sophie Dimitroulias (The Euro-Med NGO Platform)

Moderators: Khedija Cherif; Association Tunisienne de Femmes Democratres / Radhia Ben Haj Zekri; The Euro-Med NGO Platform

20:00 Dinner

Second Day, Sunday 25 October 2009

9:30–11:00 **Presentations of the Workshops findings**

Moderator: Azza Kamel; Appropriate Communication Techniques for Development Center

11:00–11:30 Coffee break

11:30–13:00 **Endorsement of Statement to the Euro-Med Ministerial Conference** on "Strengthening the Role of Women in Society", which will take place in Morocco on 11-12 November 2009

Moderator: Alya Chammari; Collectif 95 - Maghreb Egalité

13:00–14:30 Lunch

14:30–16:00 **Closing Session**

Presentation of the statement to the Euro-Med Ministerial Conference; Responses to the statement from the EU and Union for the Mediterranean Presidencies and the host country (Sweden, France, Egypt and Morocco), and their expectations for the Euro-Med Ministerial Conference; Closing notes by organisers

Moderators: Kamel Jendoubi; President, EMHRN / Gerarda Ventura; The Euro-Med NGO Platform

16:00–17.00 Goodbye coffee



Annex 2: Final Statement to the Euro-Mediterranean Ministerial Conference



Human Rights Association
İnsan Hakları Derneği

EuroMed Non-Governmental Platform
Plate-forme non gouvernementale EuroMed
منبر المنظمات غير الحكومية الأروميتوسطي



EURO-MEDITERRANEAN HUMAN RIGHTS NETWORK
RÉSEAU EURO-MÉDITERRANÉEN DES DROITS DE L'HOMME
الشبكة الأوروبية - المتوسطية لحقوق الإنسان

Final Statement

Gender Equality in the Euro-Mediterranean Region: From Framework to Action Istanbul, 24-25 October 2009

On 24-25 October 2009, over 120 representatives of independent civil society, women's rights and human rights organizations from the Mediterranean and European countries met in Istanbul to make recommendations to the Euro-Med Ministerial meeting on Strengthening the Role of Women in Society, which will take place in Morocco 11-12 November 2009.

These recommendations were based on an assessment of the implementation of the Ministerial Conclusions on Strengthening the Role of Women in Society, commonly referred to as the Istanbul Plan of Action (IPA). This evaluation is examined in the 'Shadow Report on the Implementation of the Istanbul Plan of Action: Gender Equality in the Euro-Mediterranean Region: From Plan of Action to Action? (See: http://en.euromedrights.org/files.php?force&file=emhrn-publications/istanbul_action_plan_shadow_report_ENG_896104668.pdf)

The endorsement of the IPA in 2006 by EU member countries and Mediterranean partners was welcomed by civil society as a regional tool for enhancing gender equality in the Euro-Med region in spite of lack of concrete benchmarks, indicators and binding provision. However, three years later equal participation of women and men in all spheres of life, considered a crucial element of democracy, is far from being reached.

The Shadow Report reveals poor implementation of the IPA and limited impact on promoting gender equality and women's rights in the region. The potential of the IPA in effectively developing a gender policy has been seriously hampered by the lack of concrete, efficient and binding measures. For the time being, the IPA remains declaratory and a real commitment to promote women's rights in the region is still needed in the three spheres of action set by IPA: women's political and civil rights; women's social and economic rights and sustainable development; and women's rights in the cultural sphere including the role of communications and the mass media.

The Joint Declaration of the Paris Summit, 13 July 2008, initiating the Union for Mediterranean omits mentioning the promotion of gender equality and women's rights as a priority. Political, civil, social, economic and cultural rights have not been mainstreamed into the Association Agreements between the EU and its Partners or into the European Neighbourhood Policy Action Plans. While the international community will celebrate the 30th anniversary of CEDAW in November 2009, women in the Euro-Med region remain victims of gender-based violence and exposed to



patriarchal discrimination in the family, community and society migrant women, women in conflict and military occupation being particularly vulnerable groups. Many countries did not lift their reservations to the CEDAW, especially article 2, which reads: "States Parties condemn discrimination against women in all its forms, agree to pursue by all appropriate means and without delay a policy of eliminating discrimination against women". Even in the countries of the Euro-Mediterranean region which have adapted their legislation in accordance with CEDAW, the laws are not sufficiently implemented. There has even been a regression over the last years.

Several factors have exacerbated obstacles to gender equality in the region. The economic crisis and its effects on human security, the Israeli occupation, armed conflicts, the lack of democracy and fundamental freedoms, restrictive policies affecting refugees, asylum seekers and migrants, the rise of religious and patriarchal fundamentalisms and their instrumentalisation by governments have increased the vulnerability of women and require urgent stands and action from all Euro-Mediterranean countries. The lack of political will in the south and the lack of real interest in the north have negatively affected the advancement of gender equality in the region as well as the implementation of the IPA. With this in mind, how can we expect achieving gender equality when the participation of civil society is hampered and its representatives harassed?

We, the participants at the civil society conference in Istanbul 24-25 October 2009,

Consider that the Marrakech meetings offer an unprecedented opportunity to redress the IPA track and develop it into a concrete tool for the promotion of gender equality and protection of women's rights, in complement and coordination with existing national, regional and international mechanisms. It is now time for Euro-Med governments to set higher benchmarks and initiate immediate and effective action.

Recommend the Ministerial Conference in Marrakesh to:

- a. Reaffirm their collective commitment to gender equality and women's rights as a universal value and as a clear and explicit objective of the IPA or any regional plan of action within the Euro-Med space dealing with women, in accordance with European treaties and international conventions.
- b. Respect their commitment to CEDAW by lifting all reservations and ratifying the Optional Protocol as well as taking all necessary measures to harmonise the constitutions and national laws with CEDAW and ensuring its full implementation.
- c. Recognise the full citizenship of all women living in the Euro-Med space including migrant women and ensure their social, political, economic and legal empowerment. This includes, among others, ensuring their equal inheritance rights, access to and property of land, as well as equal access to employment and equal pay for equal work, etc.
- d. Make urgent, joint and efficient efforts to protect women and girls under military occupation and in conflicts, especially Palestinian women, from violence, human rights violations and war crimes and to create mechanisms that involve women into the peace and security mechanisms by establishing national actions plans in accordance with UN SC Resolution 1325.
- e. To formulate and adopt specific laws against violence against women, and enforce existing laws, ensuring their implementation.



- f. Ensure that the outcomes of the Euro-med Ministerial Conference in Marrakesh are included in the conclusions of the next Euro-Med Ministerial Meeting of Foreign Ministers, and that gender is mainstreamed into all conclusions of all Euro-med Ministerial meetings.
- g. Create effective and credible mechanisms supported by concrete work plans to make the IPA operational and to follow up on the progress in all Euro-Med policies in relation to strengthening gender equality, e.g. through the establishment of national independent observatories. These mechanisms should be provided with the necessary financial resources. The European Parliament and the Euro-Mediterranean Parliamentary Assembly should be involved in the design and follow-up.
- h. Ensure that the IPA will be fully and efficiently integrated into the existing frameworks, namely the ENP, the UfM and the national action plans of the Partner countries and in all regional partnership agreements. Guarantee consultation with civil society and especially with women's rights organisations, on national as well as regional level in the follow-up and evaluation of the ENP.
- i. Recognise the role of civil society organisations and support their work and defend their independence as well as their freedom to act as effective partners in promoting the IPA following-up on its implementation, and ensure their consultation and participation in any policy making process in relation to women's right and gender equality in the region. The Euro-Med Ministerial Meeting should ensure the participation of independent civil society in its diversity, specifically the Euro-Med NGO Platform, the EMHRN and women's rights organisations, take their recommendations into consideration and support any further coordinated initiatives to promote gender equality in the region.
- j. Support a follow-up meeting of the Euro - Med Ministerial Conference in Marrakesh in 2010 with a wide participation of independent civil society in its diversity, especially women's rights and human rights organisations, to evaluate the outcomes of the Conference and explore how to work together on this process in order to support gender equality and women's rights in the region. This meeting will ensure that gender equality and women's rights are mainstreamed into the Civil Forum 2010.

We recall that gender equality is the *sine qua non* condition of democracy and development and that there is no excuse what so ever for delaying the advancement of equal rights for women and men and for ending violence against women.



Annex 3: List of Participants

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