



**Committee on Women's Rights of the Parliamentary
Assembly of the Union For the Mediterranean**

Meeting

Saturday, 06 July 2013

(15:00 – 18:00)

Amman (Jordan)

MINUTES

The Commission on Women's Rights of the Parliamentary Assembly of the Union for the Mediterranean held its meeting on 6 July 2013 in Amman (Jordan). The meeting was chaired by Ms. Samira MERAI-FRIAA, Member of the Bureau of the Tunisian National Constituent Assembly, in charge of Legislation and Relations with the Government and the Presidency of the Republic.

Attended the meeting:

- The Vice -Chairwoman of the Committee: Ms. Akila Hachichi, member of the Algerian National People's Assembly.

- Members of the committee: Mr Wolfgang Grossruck (Austria) , Ms Maria Mussini (Italy), Ms. Wafa Bani Mustafa (Jordan), Ms. Intisar Dkadek (Jordan), Ms. Amneh Alfalah (Jordan), Ms. Fatiha Bekkali (Morocco), Ms. Khadija Arib (Netherlands), Ms. Jihad Abu Zneid (Palestine), Ms. Emilia Santos (Portugal), Ms. Assia Naffati (Tunisia), Ms. Zeynep Armağan USLU (Turkey), Mr. Ulrik Nilsson (Sweden).

- Observer: Ms Grace Attard, member of the European Economic and Social Committee.

- Speakers:

- Ms. Ajla Van Heel, Gender Officer of the OSCE Office for Democratic Institutions and Human Rights:
- Mr. Allal Auazzani, Adviser to the Secretary General of the Union for the Mediterranean.

- Was Excused Ms Mulita Mulic, Vice -President of the Committee and member of the Croatian Parliament.

- No member of the European Parliament took part in the meeting (of 9 members), including Mr. Sergio Silvestris, Vice- Chair of the Committee who did not participate in any meeting of the Committee.

Before the start of the meeting, Mrs Samira Merai invited the members of the Committee to pay tribute to former Energy Committee Vice-Chair and former Palestinian deputy Mr. Abu Ayyash, who passed away in June 2013.

The meeting discussed the following points:

- **Item 1: Adoption of the Draft agenda:**

The draft agenda was adopted with the addition of item proposed by the Chairwoman of the Commission on "Situations of Syrian women living in refugee camps in Jordan".

- **Item 2: Approval of the minutes of the meeting of 11 April 2013 in Brussels:**

The minutes of the meeting of the Committee was approved without modification.

- **Item 3: Chairperson's announcements, Ms. Samira MERAI-FRIAA:**

- The Chairwoman welcomed the participants, and thanked Mr. Saad Hayel Srour, Speaker of the Jordanian House of Representatives and President of the PA-UfM for his agreement to hold this meeting in Amman.

- Stressed the importance of the theme "Women and job creation," especially during this period when most countries on both sides experiencing economic difficulties that have a negative impact on women's employment. The question of employment is now one of the main challenges facing the euro-Mediterranean countries, in which the share of women is still very low in the labour market, despite the modest progress made in recent years, and showed that women are more vulnerable to economic crises in the region, and that national employment policies suffer from many shortcomings.

- She informed members that she had participated to the launch of the UfM project «Young Women as Job Creators» which took place at the headquarters of the UfM in Barcelona on 30 April 2013. This is an important project that is realized between May and November 2013, and relates in a first time, four countries, namely Morocco, Jordan, Palestine and Spain.

- She presented a summary of the results related to her participation in the meeting of the UfM Enlarged Bureau, which was held in Amman on the morning of the same day, saying that She had asked the Bureau for clarification on how distribute the members of the Assembly on committees, including the Committee on Women's Rights. This after the recent revision of the rules of the procedure, so that each committee become composed of 56 members (28 for each side), and she asked the question on how to distribute these new members, especially that can not represent all the national parliaments of the European Union in all the committee?

- Then she presented a summary of the decisions taken by the enlarged Bureau, including:

Presentation of the Presidency's priorities for the year 2013-2014

The Jordanian Presidency presents the PA-UfM priorities for 2013/2014, which include:

- Middle East Peace Process.
- Water, renewable energy, environment.
- Human rights and democracy
- Dialogue among cultures and civilizations
- Strengthening the role of women in society
- Strengthening the role of the committees
- Parliamentary Dimension of the Parliamentary Assembly in the UfM.

Results of the visit of a delegation at Camp Zaatari for Syrians refugees in South Jordan:

The Chair of the Committee informed the members that the enlarged Bureau discussed this theme and emphasized the following points:

- The deterioration of the situation of Syrian refugees in this camp: malnutrition, lack of water, a large number of diseases and lack of health care, in addition to cases of rape, abortion and other tragedies suffered by camp residents, particularly women.

- The Jordanian President of the House of Representatives confirmed that the number of refugees has reached nearly 140.000 people without regard to the rest of the camps. This High number of refugees had a negative impact on social and economic conditions in Jordan. He urge the sisterly and friendly countries to provide assistance to the Jordanian authorities to enable them to overcome this crisis that we cannot predict when and how it will end.

In this context, the Chairperson of the Committee indicated that she proposed to the Bureau to add an item to the agenda of the Committee on Women's Rights related to "the situation of Syrian refugee women in Zaatari Camp". She expressed regret for the situation of refugees in this camp and its negative impact on women and children, and stressed the need for

the international community to assume its responsibilities and find a solution to the Syrian crisis.

- **Item 4: Monitoring the implementation of recommendations of the Committee adopted in the session of Brussels 2013:**

- **Intervention of Ms. Ajla Van Heel, Gender Officer of the OSCE Office for Democratic Institutions and Human Rights:**

Ms. Ajla Van Heel presented Six-Step action plan to promote gender equality in elected office:

1. Constitutional rights: Guarantee equal rights for women and men, including rights to the voting suffrage and to candidate nomination.
2. Electoral system: Reform the type of electoral system; proportional representation with large district magnitudes maximizes opportunities for women.
3. Legal quotas: Review laws regulating candidate recruitment processes for all parties.
4. Party rules and recruitment procedures: Review internal candidate recruitment processes within each party; adopt fast track strategies in party rulebooks and regulations to achieve gender equality for nominated candidates.
5. Capacity development: Strengthen the skills and resources of women in the pipeline for elected office, with initiatives by parties, the media and NGOs, including knowledge networks, mentoring programs, skills training and funding for women candidates.
6. Parliamentary reform: Reform the rules and internal procedures within parliament, including the facilities and working conditions, hours of sitting, principles for leadership recruitment, and provision of childcare facilities.

After this intervention, discussions took place between the members of the Committee on the quota system for women. Is it a necessary conditions to achieve parity between women and men in decision-making, or it must be based on skill? Participants considered the quota as a temporary measure which must be accompanied by the skill to avoid favoritism.

- **Item 5: Exchange of views on the theme "Woman and job creation":**

- **Mrs Samira MERAI, Chairwoman of the Committee:**

The Chair of the Committee presented the theme, and asked that the debate focuses on the following points:

- What is the employment situation of women in the Euro- Mediterranean region?

- How to integrate women into the economic cycle, and enable them to create jobs?
- What is the role of women parliamentarians in the fight against all forms of discrimination against women in the field of employment?
- How can we develop partnership in the framework of the Union for the Mediterranean?

- Intervention of Mr. Allal Ouazzani Touhami, Advisor to the Secretary General of the Union for the Mediterranean (UfM):

Mr. Allal Ouazzani said in his speech that the priorities of the Secretariat of the Union for the Mediterranean are to enhance the status of women at all levels, in particular the promotion and job creation in collaboration with organizations civil society.

Among the projects relating to the employment of women:

- Young Women as Job Creators
- Developing Women Empowerment
- Skills for Success – Employability Skills for Women.

Concerning the conditions of labeling a project, noted that the Secretariat receives the proposals and selects the appropriate project after decision of the member countries of the UfM. Then the Secretariat tries to obtain the necessary financing for the project.

- Discussion:

Following the intervention of Mr. Allal Ouazzani, had a discussion as follows:

- The call to give priority to the employment of women in rural areas.
- Provide a Constitutional value for the international conventions and treaties that have been ratified, including the Convention on the Elimination of All Forms of Discrimination against Women, Convention No. 111 to eliminate forms of discrimination in employment and wages, and Convention No. 100 of the International Labour Organisation.
- The unconstitutionality of any law which provides for discrimination against women rules.
- Do not adopt laws to reduce employment opportunities for women, or prevent certain professions or at certain times.
- Adopt clear legal texts to grant maternity leave, parental care, nursing and others.
- Creating spaces for child care at the workplace.
- Increase funding for small and medium projects oriented towards the employment of women, especially in rural areas.
- The inclusion of unpaid work (such as caring for children and elderly) in the GDP of the countries.

- The importance of social protection for women working in jobs of precarious work.
- A compendium of good practices in the field of women's employment.
- Promote cooperation relations between the European Economic and Social Committee and the Committee on Women's Rights of the UfM.
- Strengthening the partnership between the North and the South in the field of vocational training and employment of women and increase the proportion of funding training programs for women, particularly women who have been deprived of education.
- Provide additional training for women with supreme certificates to facilitate their entry into the labor market, especially in technical training and the importance of harmonization between academic disciplines and requirements of the market job.
- Encourage the creation of small and medium enterprises for women who cannot get credits because of the global economic crisis.

- Creation of a fund to pay housewives.

After discussion and exchange of views, it was agreed to entrust the presidency of the Commission to prepare a draft questionnaire on women's employment and send it to committee members to enrich and complete.

- Item 6: exchange of views on the extra point on the situation of the Syrian refugee women in camp Zaatari :

- Note that the woman is the most affected by armed conflict, where she is used as a weapon of war with negative effects (psychological and social sexual physical violence).
- Remind legal references on the protection of women in conflict zones and armed conflict, including: the decision of the Security Council No 1820 of 2008, which considered the sexual violence committed during the conflict and its effects in result constitutes a threat to international peace and security, in addition to the provisions of the Geneva Convention of 1949 on the protection of victims of armed conflicts and their Additional Protocols of 1979.
- Estimation of efforts by the Jordanian authorities to improve the situation of Syrian refugees, and emphasize the need for international support to Jordan to face this crisis.
- Refer to the situation of Palestinian refugees who face difficult situations and the call to give them more importance.
- Rent efforts by Tunisia in its embrace of large numbers of refugees during the Libyan revolution, despite the difficult conditions experienced by Tunisia in this period.
- Propose the following recommendations:

- The need to involve women at all stages of transitional justice, in particular stages of the peace negotiations and the final solution.
- The need for the international community to provide all forms of assistance and support for women who are victims of conflict.
- Consider the crimes of rape, forced prostitution, sexual slavery, forced pregnancy and sterilization as crimes against humanity and war crimes under the International Criminal Court.

- It was agreed to charge the Jordanian MP to give a presentation on «the situation of Syrian refugees in Jordan" at the next meeting of the Committee.

- Load a contact group to monitor the situation of Syrian refugee women in the camp Zaatari, and to inform the Committee of contingencies. The group consists of:

- Ms. Wafa Bani Mustafa (Jordan).
- Ms. Fatiha Bakkali (Morocco) .
- Ms. Abu Jihad Zneid (Palestine).
- Ms.Khadija Arib (Netherlands) .

The Jordanian delegation also suggested that the Commission will consider at its next meeting on the theme «the situation of women in armed conflict».

The Chair of the Committee accepted the idea, and suggested that this topic be a permanent theme in the future agendas of committee meetings because of conflicts in a number of countries in the region. The members of the Committee agreed to this proposal.

- Date and place of next meeting:

At the end of the meeting, the Chairwoman of the Committee informed the members of the possibility to hold the next meeting at the headquarters of the Union for the Mediterranean in Barcelona during the fall of 2013.