



# PARLIAMENTARY ASSEMBLY OF THE UNION FOR THE MEDITERRANEAN

## *Committee on Women's Rights in the Euro- Mediterranean countries*

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**Meetings  
Thursday, 24 January 2013  
European Parliament, BRUSSELS**

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### **MINUTES**

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The Committee on women's rights in the Parliamentary Assembly of the Union for the Mediterranean (PA-UfM) held two meetings on Thursday 24 January 2013 in the headquarter of the European parliament in Brussels.

- First Meeting: Committee on women's rights meeting.
- Second meeting: joint meeting between the committee on women rights and the committee on political affairs, security and human rights.

#### **First meeting: Committee on women's rights: (10:30- 11:00)**

The meeting opened at 10.30 on Thursday, 24 January 2013, under the chairmanship of Samira MERAI-FRIAA, Assistant of Tunisian National Constituent Assembly President.

The Deputy Chairwoman who took part in the meeting is Mrs. Akila Hachichi, Member of Algerian People's Assembly, while Mrs. Mulita MULIC, Member of Croatian parliament and Mr. Sergio SILVESTRIS, Member of European parliament apologized not to attend the meeting.

After the adoption of the draft agenda and the minutes of the meeting held in Zagreb (Croatia) on 6 December 2012, the chairwoman of the committee thanked the President of the European parliament and the chairwoman of the committee on political affairs for agreeing to hold these two meetings in Brussels. She also reminded with the draft proposed recommendations by the members of women's rights on the theme "the role of woman in the new governance" which led to the general impression that the rate of women's access to political decision-making positions do not respond to the aspirations and hopes.

The proposals were of a practical nature, of the most important:

- Creation of an euro- Mediterranean observatory to monitor the situation of women.
- Establishment Euro - Mediterranean lobby of Women to pressure governments.
- Adoption of a co-presidency mechanism between women and men in the steering bodies.
- The adoption of Quota system and imposition of legal and financial penalties in order to achieve parity between women and men in decision-making positions.
- Creation of a site web for interaction between committee members.

Commenting, the Palestinian member mentioned that the committee on women's rights did not address the Palestinian woman who struggles on different political, economic and social levels, and she is now in an ongoing revolution to defend her rights and those of Palestinian people.

The chairwoman of the committee answered him that the Palestinian woman merits respect and appreciation for the sacrifices she makes, but unfortunately the Palestinian delegation did not participate in the last meeting held in Croatia in order to inform about the problems and obstacles she faces.

Concerning the draft recommendations which she was reciting was a summary of ideas and viewpoints of the committee members which can be adjustable. The Palestinian delegation can present his proposals to enrich them or to add new draft recommendations as the rest of committee members.

Commenting the intervention of Mr. Haythem BELGACEM from Tunisia who said that woman need encouraged and supported rather than control (indication the euro-Mediterranean observatory), the committee chairwoman answered him that the observatory task is to follow the woman situation and analysis of data relating to woman and not to control her.

At the end of the meeting, Mrs. Samira MERAI-FRIAA indicated that she intends to invite the committee bureau in order to hold a meeting in Tunisia on 8 March 2013 in the occasion of celebrating the woman world day to examine the draft recommendations which will be discussed during the next PA-UfM session.

She also asked the committee members to present their proposals and ideas in order to include them in the document to be presented to them later in order to present their suggestions. It will be referred to the discussions that will be with the members of the political committee in order to examine these recommendations in depth.

**- Second meeting: joint meeting between the committee on women rights and the committee on political affairs, security and human rights: (11:00- 13:00)**

The meeting opened at 11.00 on Thursday, 24 January 2013, with Tokia Saïfi in the chair.

After the adoption of the draft agenda and the minutes of the Political committee meeting held in Brussels on 3 October 2012, the **Chair** of the Political committee welcomed the members of the PA-UfM's Committee on Women's Rights and its Chair, Ms Samira MERAI-FRIAA.

The **Chair** recalled that the next Committee meeting scheduled for 11 April would be used for the adoption of recommendations to the PA-UfM Plenary. In accordance with the instructions given by the PA-UfM Bureau on 7 June, 2012, the rapporteur system had been abandoned. It was up to the Chair to propose a draft text. This text would be sent to members in the next few weeks. It would include recommendations around the Committee's flagship topic which was supporting countries in transition and in particular their parliaments. It would also summarise the Committee's activities during the year, referring to the projects undertaken. One such project was a seminar for women parliamentarians from the Maghreb organised by the Office for Promotion of Parliamentary Democracy of the European Parliament (OPPD) who had been invited to this meeting.

The two committees discussed a common theme "**Being a woman in politics: A comparison of the experiences of women members of the Moroccan, Algerian, Tunisian and Libyan Parliaments – exchange of views**"

- moderated by Ms Simona GRANATA-MENGHINI, Deputy Secretary of the Council of Europe's Venice Commission
- with Mr Bernardino LEON, EU Special Representative for the Southern Mediterranean region

**Ms Simona Granata** emphasised the need for a constitutional basis to secure the role of women and ensure that the electoral system had an impact on their presence in politics.

**Mr Bernardino León** addressed three messages to members: 1. Women had a crucial role to play in the process of political change; 2. Parallel to political change, a profound social transformation was under way; 3. The EU was committed - and wished - to support this process of change, despite the economic difficulties it was facing. He emphasised the importance of changing educational systems to secure the effective participation of women at all levels.

**Ms Samira Merai-Friaa** presented the recommendations of the Committee on Women's Affairs, including the constitution a EuroMed women's lobby, a EuroMed women's observatory to serve as a database for setting gender equality targets, and a website for exchanges between women parliamentarians.

Members heard the testimonies of the fifteen or so Moroccan, Algerian, Tunisian and Libyan women taking part in the training seminar organized by the OPPD.

These testimonials reflected points of convergence in the fight for women's rights on both sides of the Mediterranean. They highlighted the significant advances in legislation and the representation of women in some countries, but also the need to change attitudes to take advantage of existing opportunities provided by the law.

While all the women parliamentarians considered that they were treated with respect by their male colleagues, they noted the persistence of patriarchal attitudes in key sectors such as justice. Education and civil society had a crucial role to play in overcoming them.

They also emphasised the economic independence of women and the importance of eliminating violence against women. Overall, they show a combative spirit, demanding equality at all levels. Far from being seen as a panacea, the progress made by quota systems was unanimously welcomed.

The **Chair** promised help to meet to the request of the Maghreb women parliamentarians to form a network.

The **Libyan participants** inquired about the possibility of Libya joining the PA-UfM. The **Chair** informed them that the EP's Maghreb Delegation would invite the Libyan parliament to send a formal request to President Schulz during his visit to Libya in February. Thus, Libya could become a full member at the PA-UfM's April plenary session.