



PARLIAMENTARY ASSEMBLY OF THE UNION FOR THE MEDITERRANEAN

Committee on Women's Rights

in the Euro- Mediterranean countries

Meeting

Thursday, 6 December 2012

09:00- 13:00

Croatian Parliament, ZAGREB

MINUTES

The Committee on Women's Rights of the Parliamentary Assembly of the Union for the Mediterranean (PA-UfM) held a meeting at the Croatian Parliament in Zagreb, Thursday, 6 December 2012 under the chairmanship of Mrs. Samira MERAI-FRIAA, Assistant to the President of Tunisian National Constituent Assembly, in charge of Legislation and Relations with the Government and the Presidency of the Republic.

Attended the meeting, Mrs. Mulita MULIC, Vice-chair of the Committee and member of the Croatian Parliament, Mrs. Akila HACHICHI, Vice-chair of the Committee and member of the Algerian National People's assembly.

The third Vice-chair Mr Sergio Paolo Francesco SILVESTRIS, MEP could not be present.

Attended the meeting, from the members of the committee, Mrs. Ingeborg DEMEULEMEESTER (Belgium), Mrs. Rena DOUROU (Greece), Mrs. Claudia DALL 'AGNOL (Luxembourg), Mrs. Fatiha BAKKALI (Morocco), Mrs. Emilia

SANTOS (Portugal), Ms. Assia NAFFATI (Tunisia), Mr. Mehmet Kasim GULPINAR (Turkey), Mrs. Tamara VONTA (Slovenia), and Mrs. Malika BENARAB-ATTOU (European Parliament).

The participants from Croatia were Mr. Josip LEKO, Speaker of the Parliament, Mr. Nebojsa KOHAROVIC, MFAE Director-general for Bilateral Affairs, and other parliamentary and governmental personalities.

At the invitation of the Chairw of the Committee, took part in the meeting Mrs. Cecilia ATTARD-PIROTTA, Deputy Secretary General of the UfM responsible for Social and Civil Affairs (List of participants attached).

1. Welcoming address by Ms. Melita MULIC, Vice- Chair of the Committee (Croatia):

Ms. Melita MULIC welcomed the members of the Committee in Zagreb. She stressed the Mediterranean aspect of Croatia with its 6200 km coastline, the third after Greece and Italy in terms of the length of the coast. It has not ceased to develop its economic, cultural and political ties with the Euro-Mediterranean countries and in particular with the countries of the southern Mediterranean. Croatia supported, from the beginning, the Barcelona process and encouraged the idea of the creation of the Union for the Mediterranean.

She said that Croatia will become the 28th member of the European Union in the coming months, and will contribute in favor of the Union for the Mediterranean, hoping it will become an area of peace, stability and development, despite the difficulties and obstacles it faces today. She held the role played by the Anna Lindh Foundation for dialogue between cultures in this area.

She thanked the President of the European Parliament for its efforts in support of the Union for the Mediterranean, also thanked the Chair of the Committee on the important topic that was selected related to the "role of women in the new governance».

2. Welcome address by the Speaker of the Croatian Parliament Mr. Josip LEKO:

Mr. Josip LEKO Expressed his great pleasure to receive members of the Committee on Women's Rights of the PA-UfM at the headquarters of the Croatian parliament in Zagreb. He stressed that the events in the Southern Mediterranean are the focus of Croatia, indicating that the UfM and its organs may be responsible for the most turbulent region in the world now, especially in the areas of fight against crime and poverty. He added that Croatia supports all the positive efforts directed towards achieving peace, prosperity and democracy in the region.

Mr. Josip LEKO recalled that Croatia will soon become the 28th member of the European Union, and will contribute to the development of the role of the Union for the Mediterranean, which faces many challenges and difficulties. He added: "We want to contribute to the implementation of projects related to environmental protection, improving infrastructure and strengthening programs that ensure the protection of human rights, including the rights of women.

He praised the great efforts and initiatives that Mr Martin Schulz, President of the European Parliament is currently deployed to strengthen the UfM.

3. Opening of the meeting by the Chair of the Committee Ms. Samira MERAI-FRIAA, (Tunisia), and adoption of the draft agenda:

The draft agenda was adopted.

4. Approval of minutes of the meeting of 24 March 2012 in Rabat:

The minutes were approved.

5. Chairperson's announcements:

Mrs. Samira Merai-FRIAA thanked the Croatian Parliament for agreeing to hold this meeting in Zagreb, and for his cooperation with the Tunisian National Constituent Assembly by providing all the conditions for success of the meeting.

She later apologized for the delay in holding the first meeting of the Committee during this session, explaining that the National Constituent Assembly was occupied first by adoption of its rules of procedure and election of its organs. So she could not be appointed Chair of the Committee on Women's Rights of the PA-UfM until the end of June 2012. For this reason it was not able to attend the first meeting of the Expanded Bureau of the Assembly, which took place on June 8, and during which the Bureau determined subjects of the committees, and took important decisions concerning the new method of working committees, namely:

- Do not treat more than one theme by committee;

- Abandon the system of co-rapporteurs entrusted instead to the President of the committee the task of directing work and associate with other members, while ensuring respect for the balance between the north and the south;

- Adopt a new format, shorter, one-page for committee recommendations and one page containing a description of their activities and the main message to be submitted at the next plenary session.

She then recalled that the subject "The role of women in the new governance" was proposed by Mr Martin Schulz, President of the European Parliament, and she gladly accepted it because of its importance. The Chair stressed that she sent a letter on the month of July 2012 to the members of the committee to have their opinions and demand them to prepare reports on this subject. She noted that the Chair of the Committee has received reports of three countries (Germany, Croatia and Turkey).

The Committee has tried to hold a meeting in Brussels in November 20012 but that meeting has not been held.

In addition, she stated that in his capacity as Chair of the women's committee, was invited by Mrs. Tokia SAIFI, Chair of the Political Committee of PA-UfM to attend the meeting of this committee on 3 October 2012 when she had the opportunity to make a presentation on the theme "Strengthening women parliamentarians in Political".

The Chair of the Committee also expressed the results of her participation in the meeting of the Expanded Bureau held in Rome in November 12, 2012, and gave an overview of the issue to be discussed by the Committee during the current session and recommendations to be submitted to the next plenary session of the PA-UfM.

She also said she has participated as Chair of the Committee on Women's Rights, at the preparatory meeting of the Civil Forum which will be held in Marseille from 4 to 7 April 2013. This meeting was organized by the Anna Lindh Foundation for the Dialogue between Cultures, 23 and 24 November 2012 in Casablanca.

6. Statement by:

- Mr. Nebojša KOHAROVIĆ, MFEA, Director-general for Bilateral Affairs:

He stressed that Croatia is committed to its Euro-Mediterranean dimension. It supported the Barcelona Process since its beginning in 1995, and has contributed to the development of civil societies, cultural and social relations, especially in the context of the Anna Lindh Foundation for the Dialogue between Cultures.

- Confirmed that among the priorities of the foreign policy of Croatia, is the integration into the European Community, especially as it prepares to join the European Union in the second half of 2013.

- He stressed that Croatia has focused on two issues:

- Support for the democratic transition of the countries after a period of conflict, in order to support peace, security, stability and development in these countries.

- Promotion of human rights and women's rights.

- Mrs Cecilia ATTARD-PIROTTA, Deputy Secretary General of the UfM responsible for Social and Civil Affairs:

- Welcomed the cooperation between the Commission and the General Secretariat of the UfM, and called for the need to continue consultation on women's rights in the Euro- Mediterranean region.

- Said that the revolutions of the people in some Arab countries that have requested the change and equality among all citizens, men have played an important

role in supporting women's rights. There will also be an important opportunity during the month of July 2013 in Paris to discuss several topics related to gender equality.

- Stressed the importance of education in promoting women's participation in politics, and the reform of social attitudes and advocacy to promote adequate orientation and training and exchange of best practices and programs.

- Noted that France has proposed the creation of a body to monitor the situation of women in the Euro-Mediterranean region. This topic is pursued by the Anna Lindh Foundation for the dialogue between cultures and can be realized during 2013.

- Showed that the General Secretariat of the UfM has planned two projects to benefit women in the Euro-Mediterranean region, namely:

- Young Women as Job Creators.
- Skills for Success.

- She said she will submit to the chair of the committee documents for both projects.

7. Exchange of views on "The Role of women in the new governances":

Mrs. Samira MERAI-FRIAA emphasized at the beginning of the debate the importance of this theme that complements the theme of the last session. Then she gave the floor to participants in the meeting which discussed the following points:

Mrs. Malika BENARAB-ATTOU (European Parliament)

Shared the idea to focus on concrete actions, because the Commission had already issued several recommendations, but are not implemented, noting that the President of the European Parliament supports this position. And proposed:

- to adopt the system of co-presidency between women and men in national and local institutions in the Euro-Mediterranean countries to strengthen the leadership skills of women in politics. Be given the vice-presidency to the woman if the chair is man, and vice versa, and called for the need to involve men in the defense of women's rights.

- launch awareness campaigns to change attitudes to the acceptance of the female partners of men in all areas. It showed the importance of the media in promoting the participation of women in politics and reform societal attitudes.
- create a Euro-Mediterranean Observatory, in order to monitor the situation of equality between men and women in decision-making and create a database that will be used to develop additional measures if targets are not met.
- create a website for interaction between members of the commission and the exchange of ideas and experiences.

- Ms. Fatiha BAKKALI (Morocco):

- Noted that Morocco has made great efforts to improve the conditions of women (Family Code, imposed a quota system in legislative elections and collective. But on the other hand, women still face many challenges, including high rates of illiteracy, poverty and unemployment and low participation and access to decision-making positions, whether in public or private institutions.

- Showed that the Moroccan Constitution guarantees equality between men and women. The quota system has contributed to the growth rate of women in Parliament from 10% to 16% in the last election (60 women among 395 members), Morocco has lifted its reservations to the Convention on the Elimination of All Forms of Discrimination against Women (CEDAW). Women are more effective parliamentary committees than men, with their focus on the rights of women, children and minorities, and are more concerned with the "common good."

- Asked the political parties to select their candidates for election on the basis of competence and integrity, and ensure that women are not a simple décor element to polish the image of the party in the public eye while women combatants remain out of the spotlight.

- Proposed work to combat all forms of discrimination against women in education and the media. She said that statistics and rates are not of great importance in relation to the proper role of women and their contribution to political life.

- Ms. Akila HACHICHI (Vice-President and Algeria):

She said that the Algerian woman has experienced in recent years considerable progress both in regard to political rights, economic and social.

In numerical terms, the public service employs 50% women, 40% the judiciary, medicine and education 60% more than 50%. Ms. Hachichi added that the Algerian government is aware that development efforts could not meet the objectives that ensure the exercise by women of all rights and facilitating the participation of the latter in the process of sustainable development and decision-making.

She stated that the law of 12 January 2012 which was adopted pursuant to Article 31bis of the Algerian Constitution increased the chances of access to the "Woman" representation in elected assemblies through the introduction of quota reserved for women in electoral lists.

To increase the effectiveness of these provisions, the legislature has also introduced an incentive by providing for financial assistance to state specific political parties, according to the number of candidates elected to the Communal People's Assemblies, and of wilaya parliament (art. 7). In this and Following the parliamentary elections of May 2012, these measures were realized by the growth rate of female representation in the National People going from about 7% to over 31%.

- Ms. Rena DOUROU (Greece) :

- Underline that Greece, despite the ratification of all international conventions on women's rights, the reality of women still below the desired level (63 women among 300 parliament members).

- Affirmed the importance of changing attitudes towards the acceptance of women in all fields.

- Ms. Mulita MULIC (Croatia)

- There are no areas reserved for women. They can intervene in all matters affecting them.

- The quota system in Croatia was allowed to reach 25% women in parliament, and our goal is 40% after 3 sessions election. She stressed the importance of sanctions in case of non-compliance of this system.

- **Ms. Assia NAFFATI (Tunisia) :**

She noted that womn in Tunisia, despite her efficiency and reliability, that has proven in all fields of education, professional, cultural, and its important role in the family, civil society, and political parties, and in spite of laws that are available, including the personal Status Code, she does not have the right to political participation and contribution to decision making.

She stressed the importance of the rule of parity and alternation in the electoral lists related to the election of the National Constituent Assembly in October 2011. This rule allows the Tunisian woman to be present at the National Constituent Assembly, with 29% currently (63 women among 217 members).

Parity encourages women to participate actively in political life.

- **Ingeborg DEMEULEMEESTER (Belgium):**

- Stressed that Belgium uses the rule of parity in electoral lists.
 - Confirmed that the woman is always concerned with the care of children, and family obligations. So she can not find enough time to exercise policy, and we need to think of methods and mechanisms to help participate in political life.

- **Mrs. Samira Merai-FRIAA, Chairwoman of the Committee (Tunisia):**

- Pointed to the low proportion of women in the Tunisian government (3 members, two ministers and a secretary of state) and political parties (only 6%).

- A parliamentary group in the National Constituent Assembly was formed to coordinate efforts, especially after the passage of seven women against gender, and examine possible methods to activate the role of women in the Assembly .

- Praised the proposals for system co-presidency between men and women, and the creation of a Euro-Mediterranean lobbying of women, and the creation of an observatory Euro - Mediterranean women.

- Ms Emilia Santos (Portugal)

- Noted that the number of women in parliament is not important. The most important is their role in defending their views, emphasizing the absence of specific topics in which women can intervene.

- Mehmet Kasim Gulpinar (Turkey):

- The proportion of women in the Turkish Parliament has increased from 4% in 2002 to 14% in 2011.

- The woman needs to be presented to decision-making positions, but we must listen and understand her concerns.

- Women in Turkey are active in the political, social and cultural at national and local levels. Our country is ruled by a Muslim majority which is based on a secular democracy. Turkey is considered a model in the Mediterranean region.

- Claudia DALL 'AGNOL (Luxembourg):

- The proportion of women in Luxembourg is 29% without introducing the quota system, which is an important system, but not enough.

- To propose that the Committee adopt a statement or press release said the need to respect democratic values and public and individual freedoms that are remote during the last period in some countries. The message we must convey is to denounce the practices of certain parties radicals (neo-Nazi) in some parliaments, such as Greece.

- After a discussion between members, the Committee decided to defer the adoption of this statement until we agree on the subject. The text will be presented to the Committee at a subsequent meeting and will be presented at the office of the PA-UfM. And to comply with the Rules of Procedure of the Assembly.

8. Date and place of next meeting:

The Chair of the Committee proposed to the Turkish member the holding of the next meeting in Turkey, during the first half of March 2013. He stressed that he would inform the Turkish parliament this proposal and will coordinate with the Chair of the Committee in this regard (but the Turkish parliament apologized later).

On the other hand, the Chair suggested to Ms. Cecilia Attard-PIROTTA Representative of the Union for the Mediterranean to be a permanent member in the committee meetings this year.

At the end of the meeting, Ms. Samira MERAI-FRIAA thanked the committee members for the rich and fruitful dialogue which took place about the topics discussed by the Committee, and for the very interesting ideas and proposals submitted and will be taken into account in the preparation of the Committee's recommendations which will in turn submitted to the plenary session of the next session of the Parliamentary Assembly of the Union for the Mediterranean to be held on 11 and 12 April 2013.