

29th Council of Europe Conference of Ministers of justice
“Breaking the silence – united against domestic violence”
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SPEECH

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Honourable Ministers of Justice, representatives of the Council of Europe, Ladies and Gentlemen,

First of all, I would like to thank our colleague, the Minister of Justice of the Kingdom of Norway, as well as the Secretary General of the Council of Europe for their kind initiative to host this Conference.

Regarding this year's agenda for the Conference of Ministers of Justice of the Council of Europe, we need to be aware of the delicate nature of the topic of domestic violence, especially taking into account issues regarding family .I believe that we all welcome the choice of the main topic of this Conference as critical.

Ministers,

Domestic violence is one of the most dangerous forms of abuse. It takes place in a closed environment which is protected, kept away from public opinion and undermines the development of the individual and the family, therefore having some of the most complex social consequences and implications.

The persistence of all forms of violence against vulnerable persons, especially women and children, demonstrates society has not yet achieved to protect all citizens. All forms of violence against women violate human rights and obstruct the achievement of gender equality. The Council of Europe campaign "Stop domestic violence against women" (2006-2008), in which Greek parliament, government, local and regional authorities and NGOs were fully involved for over a two-year period, was aimed at combating violence against women, including domestic violence . Domestic violence, which affects the members of a family in the broad sense or those close to a victim, is a serious problem and a matter of concern to all of us.

The prevention and fighting of domestic violence constitutes one of the priorities needing direct and focused actions.

Greece recently introduced legislation to combat all forms of domestic violence. We also introduced a mediation procedure on domestic violence in the criminal law.

I seize the opportunity to present you those provisions of the Code of Criminal law and Procedure that serve the protection of victims of domestic violence:

Stricter sanctions were imposed for committing certain culpable acts within family, especially corporal injuries and illegal violence or threat. We established the procedure of penal intervention for misdemeanours of domestic violence.

We ensured the protection of victims by means of facilitating their access to judicial procedures, and, on the other hand, guaranteeing their security within and outside the family. In particular, the immediate expulsion of the perpetrator from the residence and the prohibition for him to have access to the places of residence and work of the victim, to the residence of the victim's closest relatives, to the shelters and to the children's schools, so as to ensure the most effective protection of victims and their children. The acts of domestic violence against a pregnant woman are severely punished, while the exercise of domestic violence constitutes a rebuttable presumption of marriage breakdown, as do the cases of adultery, bigamy, and attempt on the life of the victim.

These are some informative points of the new legislation, but the veil of the silence still covers victims' voices.

The penal provisions reflect the complexity of the abuse and violations relating to domestic violence but as member of the Council of Europe we have the constant will to ensure to all persons living in Europe that violence can not be hidden in family bedrooms and dark children rooms.

We will follow the light from the lighthouse of the resolutions presented today and will bring our society in the safe harbour of justice and liberty.

Thank you for your attention