



**North-South Centre
of the Council of Europe**



**Ministry of Foreign Affairs and Cooperation
Kingdom of Morocco**

3rd International Conference of the North-South Process for the Empowerment of Women



Euro-Med Women Network
North-South Process for the Empowerment of Women

«The participation of women in political life in the Southern and Eastern Mediterranean countries: Challenges and Opportunities»

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Ministry of Foreign Affairs and Cooperation

CONCLUSIONS AND RECOMMENDATIONS

In partnership with:



**Equality Division
Directorate General of Democracy
Council of Europe**

Conclusions of the Conference presented by Ms. Fatiha SAÏDI, Member of the Parliamentary Assembly of the Council of Europe (Belgium)

Ladies and Gentlemen,
Honourable guests,

It is a great pleasure to report on the work of this 3rd International Conference. It is a great pleasure but also a great challenge given the magnitude and high quality of the work. Assuming that nobody is expected to do the impossible, I have decided to structure this report as a list of recommendations.

We have seen that, though women from the southern shore of the Mediterranean are all determined to obtain full and effective enjoyment of equal rights on an equal footing, the fact remains that they are not all facing the same challenges.

We have all been truly moved by the intervention of our Libyan colleague who described the struggles of Libyan women in every-day life, facing political pressure, glaring inequalities, patriarchal mentality... Her cry for help was explicit and it must be heard and listened to.

With respect to Algeria, the same can be said in support of women whose struggle has been undermined by the years of violence and terrorism the country has gone through. It is also important to demonstrate support for them in order to enable them to continue their struggle and to reinforce the links between the associations who have demonstrated their determination and bravery in the not so distant past.

For Morocco, although the adoption of the new Constitution in 2011 and the Moudawana reform, which led to the adoption of the Family Code, represent an encouraging step towards gender equality, the need to pass laws implementing constitutional provisions still remains. We must acknowledge the progress and congratulate Morocco for its progressive stance regarding the adoption of gender-sensitive public and financial policies. This could serve as inspiration to several countries, not least some European states where these kinds of policies are often either ignored or not wanted. Morocco, which has been granted partner for democracy status by the Parliamentary Assembly of the Council of Europe, is committed to advancing on the path towards effective equality and parity, in partnership with member states of the Council of Europe and others from the Southern Mediterranean.

As for Tunisia, which may be considered a successful revolution, our colleagues invited us to continue our support for and promote deeper involvement of women and young people in the decision-making processes. Our Tunisian colleagues also drew our attention to the need for vigilance regarding implementation of legislation, which could conceal some harmful effects. The poor representation of women following the elections of October 2011 perfectly illustrates the undesired effects which could be prevented by adopting laws that promote vertical and horizontal equality.

The Council of Europe, through the work of the North-South Centre, the Venice Commission etc. and other European Institutions should assist the reforms undertaken in these countries. The interest in the work, workshops, and international conferences we organise stems from the fact that they reflect the reality and the needs expressed by those most affected. A closer look at these expectations reveals the following:

- The need for a network that facilitates the exchange of experience, good practices, and strategies... came up time and again in this conference. If we decide to follow this path, we should examine how best to set it up so that it is an effective and efficient tool and method to follow. Furthermore, we could take inspiration from the experience of the *Collectif Maghreb Egalité*. The work of this socially conscious, pragmatic and concrete collective launched a few years ago by women of the Maghreb, has borne fruit as can be testified by the fact that often reforms have been implemented in response to citizen pressure.
- Simone De Beauvoir said “One is not born, but rather becomes, a woman”. I will paraphrase: “One is not born, but rather becomes, a woman politician”. Therefore, information and training are keys to success! For though politics is no longer an exclusively male-dominated field, it nevertheless remains strongly influenced by men. For this reason we need to identify the mechanisms, try to anticipate them and to react. Assertiveness, public speaking and expertise are skills women need to develop and master to get involved in politics, and at the same time eradicate self-censorship and interiorised patriarchal feeling which sometimes hinder their engagement in politics. The field of politics doesn’t stop at the parliamentary level considering the fundamental importance of the local level. It is at this level that we can undertake concrete awareness-raising activities to promote equality, parity, citizenship and democracy. It is important to raise awareness at this level and to prepare women to participate in local-level politics.
- As for the media, there is an urgent need to act both regarding the image of women it portrays, and representation of women within it. Indeed, although positive steps have

been made towards greater gender diversity, it nevertheless remains far from satisfactory. A comprehensive action plan is therefore required to promote a culture of gender equality in the media. It should seek to promote balanced representation as well as fair presentation of information in order to convey a positive image of women, free from any stereotypical connotations.

Those were the three concrete recommendations that I wanted to underline; the following are three more general recommendations:

- One of the points raised repeatedly in the course of our discussion is that women should not have the monopoly on debates around equality issues. Every single person should consider gender equality as a cornerstone of society, and should recognise it as the foundation not only of society, but also of democracy itself. In other words, men, and especially young men, should be involved in the work and training courses that address the issue of gender equality.
- Though relations and dialogue between the North and the South are essential /crucial and should be reinforced, it is also necessary to strengthen South-South dialogue, and the example of the *Collectif Maghreb Egalité*, cited above, should be adapted and extended to other countries of the southern shore of the Mediterranean.
- The ongoing processes to promote gender equality should be constantly maintained to prevent them from faltering or dying out completely. They should be constantly evaluated since they change and evolve and thus they should be able to meet different standards, expectations and emergencies. It is on this basis that I wanted to thank you for your attention and I hope to see you very soon to follow-up on our work!