

“THE NORTH SOUTH WOMEN’S EMPOWERMENT PROCESS”

CONFERENCE FINAL DOCUMENT

Rome, 25 October 2011

At the conclusion of the Conference on "Women as agents of change in the Southern Mediterranean", it is agreed on the need to:

1. foster the enhancement of the status of women as a priority issue on the Council of Europe’s agenda, based on the conviction that this is necessary to combat all forms of discrimination ever more effectively, and work for the full implementation of the principle of equality; by promoting the mainstreaming of a gender equality dimension into future cooperation programmes between the Council of Europe and the southern Mediterranean countries that set out on the road to democratic changes;
2. create a women’s network for democratic governance, aimed at investing in capacity building to promote women’s access to political life both at a national and a local level; such a network should be modelled on the innovative structure of the North-South Centre, linking the governmental and parliamentary dimensions, local authorities and civil society, to constitute an embryonic form of enhanced cooperation between the CoE member countries and the states on the southern Mediterranean shore, also involving the Union for the Mediterranean and its Parliamentary Assembly, as well as the Women’s Foundation for the Mediterranean, to share ideas, information and best practices; this network could also be supported in each participating country by an operational staff and a policy coordinator, who would be invited to the sessions of the Parliamentary Assembly and to the meetings of the network of parliamentarians for combating violence against women;
3. guarantee a yearly follow-up event to this Conference, with the venue alternating between a member country of the Council of Europe and a country on the southern Mediterranean shore. The cycle of conferences would be entitled “*The North South Women’s empowerment process*“. The themes of the conferences ought to be chosen by joint agreement between the host country, the North-South Centre, and the Parliamentary Assembly of the Council of Europe.
4. encourage more parliaments, particularly on the southern shore of the Mediterranean, following the recognition of partners for democracy status for the parliaments of Morocco and of the Palestinian Authority, to commit themselves in a structured cooperation with the Parliamentary Assembly of the Council of Europe and to join the North-South Centre, following the example of Morocco that has been a member of the Centre since 2009;
5. promote the signing and ratification of the UN Convention on the Elimination of all Forms of Discrimination against Women (CEDAW) and the lifting of all reservations on the convention by the countries that have made them, as well as the signing of the relevant conventions of the Council of Europe, notably Convention no. 210 on preventing and combating violence against women, open for signature in Istanbul on 11 May 2011.