



## Lisbon Forum 2016 – Side Event

### Roundtable on Women Refugees, Migrants and Asylum Seekers in Europe and the Southern Mediterranean:

Meet the immediate emergency needs and find the longer term solutions

25 November 2016  
Ismaili Centre, Lisbon

Concept Note

*With the support of The Government of Portugal*



GOVERNO DE  
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## Background

Currently, women and girls represent half of the 244 million migrants and 21.3 million refugees<sup>1</sup>. They are, with children, the most vulnerable and those who are significantly exposed to human rights violations in forcible displacement situations. The sudden increase of migrants and refugees in the Southern Mediterranean and Europe poses serious challenges to the protection of their fundamental rights and given the specificities and their vulnerability, women face particular issues. Adequate and particular humanitarian and political responses must therefore be taken to efficiently protect them.

Women refugees, migrants and asylum seekers are facing gender-based violence, rape, exploitation and human-trafficking. It is so fundamental for these women to find the necessary assistance with professionals such as social workers, health care professionals, justice officers, administrative and police agents. Civil society organisations handle this situation according to their ability and means but the response has to be coordinated at national and local levels to ensure refugee, migrant and asylum seeker women access to proper assistance and protection services. It is accordingly essential, in the implementing process of asylum policies, to establish gender-based asylum policies.

The Council of Europe (CoE) has already raised this issue through [resolution 1765](#) and [recommendation 1940](#) on gender-related claims for asylum in 2010. In view of the last [recommendation of the Tallinn Conference](#)<sup>2</sup> and other relevant reports and Conventions<sup>3</sup>, coordinated actions need to be taken by all the key stakeholders regarding the situation of women refugees in European and the Southern Mediterranean countries. In that respect, it is important to recall that the Council of Europe Convention on preventing and combating violence against women and domestic violence (the [Istanbul Convention](#)) expressly provides a legal framework for the protection of refugee women against violence.

## Framework

Since 1994, the North-South Centre (NSC) organises the Lisbon Forum, a platform bringing together high-level participants from Europe, neighbouring regions and other continents to share experience, good practice and expertise. Themes of the Forum are closely related to the core mission of the Council of Europe: promote democracy, human rights and the rule of law. With regard to the Centre's mission to contribute to the Council of Europe's policy towards its neighbouring regions and its overall objective to empower civil society, in particular youth and women, through intercultural dialogue and global education, the Lisbon Forum 2016 will seek to address a key challenge faced by countries of the Southern Mediterranean and explore possibilities for renewed cooperation with Europe within the 2016 theme: *"Migration and human rights: how to structure effective collective action? Best practices and shared knowledge in the Mediterranean and European space"*.

The Lisbon Forum is an opportunity to gather members of the quadrilogue<sup>4</sup> at the regional level to reflect on human rights violations faced by women refugees and migrants and make recommendations for an efficient coordination of actions in order to protect and empower refugee and migrant women.

<sup>1</sup> Statistics data and information provided by [UN Women](#) and [UNHRC](#).

<sup>2</sup> The Gender Equality Commission of the CoE recommended a focus on Migrant Women in the CoE's future activities (June, 2016).

<sup>3</sup> With regard to the [Council of Europe Convention on preventing and combating violence against women and domestic violence](#) (Istanbul Convention), the [Convention on the protection of children against sexual exploitation and sexual abuse](#) (Lanzarote Convention), the Convention on action against trafficking in human beings, the UNHCR, UNFPA and Women's Refugee Commission Initial Assessment [Report](#): Protection and others [main international reports](#) on conflict-related violence against women and girls listed by UN Women.

<sup>4</sup> The "quadrilogue" brings together representatives of governments, national parliaments, local and regional authorities and civil society.



One of the objectives of the NSC Empowerment of Women programme is to raise awareness about new forms of violence against women in Europe and the Southern Mediterranean. In this context and at the occasion of the International Day of the Elimination of Violence against women<sup>5</sup>, the NSC will organise, with the support of the Government of Portugal, a roundtable as the Lisbon Forum 2016's side event on the theme of: "*Women Refugees, Migrants and Asylum Seekers in Europe and the Southern Mediterranean: meet the immediate emergency needs and find the longer term solutions*".

## Objectives

The overall objective is to raise awareness among the quadrilogue actors of the Lisbon Forum 2016 on the gender-sensitive measures to ensure the safety of women seeking asylum and on the issues and situations faced specifically by refugee and migrant women and women asylum seekers in Europe and in the Southern Mediterranean.

### Specific objectives:

- To present the common and specific risks and dangers faced by refugee women in the European and the Southern Mediterranean countries;
- To point out the gender-based violence and the distinct needs of women and girls in the situation of refugees in the Europe and the Southern Mediterranean countries;
- To promote the Istanbul Convention as a practical tool for the protection of refugee women against violence in the European and the Southern Mediterranean region;
- To collect practical recommendations in the framework of the next NSC's Conference on Migrant Women.

### Expected results:

- Common challenges to protect refugee women are identified in the Northern and Southern Mediterranean regions as well as specificities linked to the context and geographical area;
- Awareness is raised among different actors from the quadrilogue about the gender-sensitive understanding of violence against women refugees, migrants and asylum-seekers ;
- The Istanbul Convention is promoted as a practical tool for the protection of refugee women against violence;
- Statements linked to the International Day for the Elimination of Violence against Women are collected from Lisbon Forum's participants and shared in NSC communication networks;
- The active role of women in current crisis and their involvement in peace-building processes are promoted through good practices and/or testimonies;
- The next NSC Conference on Migrants Women will be based on the recommendations made by the stakeholders.

## Format

The roundtable will be held in the framework of the Lisbon Forum 2016 at the Ismaili Centre, Lisbon, Portugal. The roundtable will be organised on the 25<sup>th</sup> November from 11:30 to 13:00 (Lisbon time).

The conclusions and recommendations of the roundtable will be shared among the Lisbon Forum's participants and among the NSC's networks.

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<sup>5</sup> By [Resolution](#) of 17 December 1999, the United Nations General Assembly designated 25 November as the International Day for the Elimination of Violence against Women, and invited governments, international organizations and NGOs to organize activities designed to raise public awareness of the problem on that day.



A life testimony of a young refugee woman will be shared as introductory statement. Experts from European and the Southern Mediterranean countries will share their knowledge and experience on the following topics:

- Local humanitarian response on emergency needs of refugee women and children in transit countries;
- Violence against women refugees and asylum seekers and the means of protection;
- Multiple discriminations faced by refugee and migrant women in Europe;
- The political challenges to protect refugee women and girls;
- The gender-sensitive political and juridical response and the challenges of multi-level cooperation.

The working languages will be English and French.

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