



**PARLIAMENTARY ASSEMBLY OF  
THE UNION FOR THE  
MEDITERRANEAN**



Rabat, 24 March 2012

# **RECOMMENDATION**

of the Committee on Women's Rights

on **The role of women in the democratisation process and the governance of the Euro-Mediterranean countries**

Rapporteurs: Ms. Antonia Parvanova (European Parliament)  
Mr. Gennaro Malgieri (Italy)  
Ms. Fatima Chellouche (Algeria)

The Committee on Women's Rights and Gender Equality,

- A. Whereas gender equality is a key principle that has had a major impact on the international scene in recent years, influencing both national and international policies;
- B. Whereas democracy without the full participation of women in the political process can't be achieved, as their role is essential to the strengthening of democratic institutions;
- C. Whereas there is a tendency to consider women's rights as a cultural and religious matter in certain Mediterranean countries;
- D. Whereas equal representation of women and men in political decision making is a matter of human rights and social justice has been recognized by the international community as a condition for the functioning of a democratic society;
- E. Whereas enhancing women's political, economic, and social participation is a key condition for a successful institutional transformation and democratisation;
- F. Whereas the Convention on the Elimination of All Forms of Discrimination against Women (CEDAW) states, inter alia, that state parties should take all appropriate measures, including positive measures, to eliminate discrimination against women in political and public life;
- G. Whereas women's participation and leadership in political decision making in the Mediterranean region is still affected by obstacles such as the absence of enabling environments in political institutions and in society's welfare structures, as well as by the persistence of stereotypes;
- H. Whereas the Committee on Women's Rights of the Parliamentary Assembly of the Union for the Mediterranean has been proactively promoting gender equality in the EuroMed context stressing particularly the need for gender mainstreaming in the framing of public policies in order to guarantee women's participation in the decision-making processes;
- I. Whereas, given the tumultuous changes in the Southern Mediterranean, the status of Arab women has become a central aspect of a successful transition to democracy;
- J. Whereas women's active participation in the historic movements towards democracy in the Southern Mediterranean region, led, in certain countries, to major transformations of their legal systems in order to enable women to play a leading role in their society (i.e. the Provisional Constitution of Egypt; the Tunisian electoral law, the new Constitution of Morocco, the Algerian law of 12 January 2012), the Algerian laws adopted on 12 January 2012 (the electoral law, law on the political parties, law on associations, and organic law on measures to increase women's opportunities to be elected to elected assemblies);
- K. Whereas in recent elections the women won 26.3% of the seats in the Tunisian Parliament; 16,96% of the seats in the Moroccan Chamber of Representatives; and 10,8% in the Jordanian House of Representatives, while in Egypt women account for less than 2 % of elected members of Parliament;
- L. Whereas public and private financial support is important for the development of civil society and of non-governmental organisations promoting women's rights, with a dynamic participation of women in their activities;

- M. Whereas it regrets the dissolution of the Women's Foundation for the Mediterranean due to the critical situation created by the lack of renewal or of formal commitment of public subsidies, at a time when events show how crucial the issue of gender equality in the Mediterranean is;

### ***Gender equality as a fundamental human right***

1. Highlights that women's rights are fundamental human rights and their respect, as well as the welfare of women and girls both at home and in society, are necessary for the quality of democracy and for the success of the political, economic, and social objectives of the Union for the Mediterranean; encourages the UfM Member States to actively implement the CEDAW, and its Optional Protocol e.g. by formulating national road maps which would contribute to strengthening the role of women in the EuroMed region through providing for concrete positive actions to be taken, such as: the inclusion of the principle of gender equality in the new constitutions; the establishment of a quotas or other instruments to guarantee a congruous and significant female presence in elected assemblies; the setting up of a Ministry for Equal Opportunities in newly-established governments; the establishment of an Agency for equal opportunities and the fight against all forms of discrimination; improved education for women; equality of access for women to employment and economic resources; calls for the abrogation of laws which lead women to marry their rapist;
2. Encourages Member States to launch a gender-oriented impact assessment of national legislation for better promotion of women's rights and institutionalization of gender equality;
3. Considers of utmost importance to increase the number of women participating in the drafting of laws in national parliaments with the view of ensuring more equitable legislative practices and genuine democratic process;
4. Reiterates its calls upon the Member States to follow-up of the Istanbul/Marrakech process, through the creation of a Euro-Mediterranean observatory on gender equality to monitor progress in gender equality in decision making posts; calls for the creation of a Euro-Mediterranean network of academics and scientists as part of the secretariat of the UfM, with a view to establishing a forum for the coordination of local development projects involving women in the EuroMed area;
5. Reiterates its appeal to Member States to encourage the exchange of best practices between professional and non-governmental organisations from both shores of the Mediterranean for a broader involvement of women in the transition towards democracy;

### ***Partnership with civil society and the international community***

6. Pays tribute to the valuable work done by women organisations in the Euro-Mediterranean countries in supporting and promoting public campaigns aimed at improving the situation of women and calls upon the Member States to increase measures supporting women's organisations, including by providing them with adequate funding and creating platforms for cooperation in elections; recalls the importance of men's active role in improving the status of woman and gender equality;
7. Calls on the Member States to take measures to increase their cooperation with other actors at international level, such as UN WOMEN and the Inter-parliamentary Union, in order to promote balanced representation of women in political life; in that regard it promotes the establishment of joint programmes for women's empowerment between the UfM and relevant UN bodies, notably the UN Women;

8. Encourages the setting up of a PA UfM IT network, run by its Secretariat, for the use of the Assembly's female members with the aim to exchange relevant information and best practices to lead to legislative progress in the field; re-calls on the Member States to increase the exchange of experiences and laws between the Euro-Mediterranean countries, and to multiply the forums and meetings aiming to bring a *rapprochement* of cultures and ideas relating to gender issues;
9. Encourages Member States' cooperation with women's non-governmental organisations, to promote and exchange good practices that contribute to achieving gender balance in decision-making positions;

### ***Political transition in the Arab Partner countries***

10. In light of ongoing socio-political developments in the Southern Mediterranean region, urges Member States to ensure that democracy movements result in truly equitable societies with equal rights for all;
11. Notes that a successful democratisation cannot happen without a substantial representation of women in all aspects of life, including political representation and governance. Thus, considers of utmost importance the mainstreaming of women's rights and gender equality in the emerging democracies and the establishment of constitutional guarantees giving women in the Member States the right to exercise their full citizenship and participate in the shaping of the democratic process in the region;
12. Underlines the need for an adequate representation of women in unions and political parties in order to ensure a better participation of women in the decision-making process;
13. Highlights the fact that equal participation by women and men in all spheres of life is a crucial element of democracy and that women's participation in governance constitutes a precondition for socio-economic progress, social cohesion and equitable democratic governance; henceforth, strongly urges all countries to make gender equality a priority in their democracy promotion agenda;
14. Recognises the role of media for the promotion of the issues regarding the situation of women and their role in society as well as its influence on the attitude of the citizens in their countries; recommends the drawing up of an action plan aiming to support women in the media, both as a professional career path and as an opportunity for monitoring how women are represented on television, through the production of television programmes and the use of the new media (the internet and social networks) to encourage the political participation of women and to propagate the notion that tradition and equal opportunities can be made to work harmoniously together;
15. Stresses the principle of universality of human rights, and urges Member States to avoid considering women's rights as a cultural and religious matter and use the golden opportunity of transition to enshrine in their constitutions the indivisibility of human rights;
16. Calls upon the Arab Partner States to ensure that women are equally involved in post-revolutionary political systems, notably by drawing lessons from past experiences, and to guarantee that women's political engagement in the revolutionary activities is fully recognised throughout the democratisation process;
17. Acknowledges the vital role of political parties as key factors in the promotion of women in politics and calls on Member States to encourage national parties to take measures to increase

the nominations of women candidates for elected office; expresses satisfaction with the developments in Tunisia, which set a positive example for its neighbours through compelling the political parties to ensure parity between men and women in the electoral lists; welcomes the adoption, by the Algerian authorities, of the reforms introduced by the organic laws of 12 January 2012 as well as with the law adopted by the Algerian authorities on 12 January 2012, providing for concrete measures for boosting women's candidacies in elections;

18. Believes that it is of utmost importance for women's equality in the Partner States undergoing radical transformation that the Union for the Mediterranean gives its explicit support for women's full and equal participation in national reform processes;
19. Calls upon the concerned UfM Member States to withdraw the reservations expressed to the Convention on the Elimination of All Forms of Discrimination against Women;
20. Takes the view that the experience of democratic transition following the collapse of communist dictatorships in Central and Eastern Europe should be shared with the newly emerging democratic forces in North Africa and the wider Middle East; encourages the Commission and the EEAS to be more actively engaged in the unfolding democratisation process in this important neighbouring region;
21. Takes note of the decision by the Commission and the High Representative to support the establishment of a European Endowment for Democracy (EED) to assist political actors striving for democratic change in their countries and urges utilization of this instrument in the Southern Mediterranean region; calls upon the European Commission to ensure the EED would endorse women's equal participation to the democratisation process of their respective countries;
22. Expresses disappointment with the European Commission's and the High Representative of the European Union for Foreign Affairs and Security Policy's Joint Communication, adopted on 25 May 2011, entitled "A new response to a changing Neighbourhood" which does not address women's rights and their empowerment in the Arab political life; calls upon the Southern Mediterranean countries to make full use of the resources allocated by the EU as part of the European Neighbourhood and Partnership Instrument (ENPI) for the period 2007-2013 for indicative regional and national programmes, including the "Support to Partnership, Reform and Inclusive Growth" (SPRING) project for southern neighbours (for which the EU has earmarked €350 million for 2012-2013), which seeks to promote the protection of human rights and democratic principles; urges the European Commission to continue the EuroMed Gender Equality Programme (EGEP) 2008-2011;

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Instructs its President to forward this recommendation to the Co-Presidency of the Union for the Mediterranean, the Secretary-General of the UfM Secretariat, the League of Arab States, the Council of Ministers of the European Union, High Representative/Vice-President Catherine Ashton, the European Commission, the parliaments and governments of the members of the Union for the Mediterranean, and the European Parliament.

