

## BRUSSELS DECLARATION

### WOMEN MINISTER' SUMMIT ON VIOLENCE AGAINST WOMEN

24 November 2010 – Brussels

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#### **BRUSSELS DECLARATION : TOWARDS A COHERENT, EFFECTIVE AND GLOBAL EUROPEAN POLICY TO COMBAT VIOLENCE AGAINST WOMEN**

Recalling the two European women in power Summits held in Athens in 1992 and in Cadiz in 2010, and the successive declarations made in the EU context, we, the Ministers and political leaders of the EU Member States, united in Brussels on the initiative of the Belgian Presidency of the Council, are holding the Third European Summit, which is for the first time devoted to combating violence against women.

#### **Recalling :**

The Conclusions of the Council (EPSCO) on the Eradication of Violence Against Women in the European Union adopted on 8 March 2010.

The work of the European Commission aimed at the implementation of a new strategy on gender equality by means of priority and horizontal actions, in which the elimination of gender-based violence is a priority area.

The EU indicators on violence against women, adopted in 2002 during the Danish presidency as part of the follow-up to the evaluation and monitoring of the Beijing Platform for action.

The EU's Human Rights Guidelines on violence against women and girls adopted at the General Affairs Council on 8 December 2008 in which the EU reiterates the three indivisible aims of combating violence against women: prevention of violence, protection of and support for victims and prosecution of the perpetrators of such violence.

The Draft Convention on preventing and combating violence against women and domestic violence, which is now being drawn up by the Council of Europe.

The first results of three studies carried out by the European Commission:

- the feasibility study to assess the possibilities, opportunities and needs to standardise national legislation on violence against women, violence against children and sexual orientation violence;
- the study on harmful traditional practices in the EU, including female genital mutilation;
- the study on violence against women and the role of gender equality, social inclusion and health strategies.

**We find that :**

Acts of violence committed against women are an abuse of human rights and liberties. They are a violation of the principle of human integrity and dignity and can cause serious physical and psychological repercussions for the victims and their children. This kind of violence is a consequence of a manifestation of historically unequal power relation between men and women. Moreover, they are an obstacle to the achievement of gender equality.

Combating violence against women is thus required for justice and democracy, a Peace and Human Rights issue, and is also a necessary condition for the personal and professional development of women and the fulfilment of gender equality.

For these fundamental reasons, but also because of the alarmingly high human, social and economic cost for society as a whole, violence against women is major political problem for every Member State.

**This is why, as women ministers :**

We condemn violence against women and reaffirm that no custom, tradition or religious consideration can be invoked to justify this violence or to avoid the obligations of the States with respect to its elimination.

We welcome the fact that combating violence against women is one of the five priorities of the European Commission's Strategy on gender equality 2010-2015, which was presented by the European Commission on 21 September 2010.

We call for the improvement and adaptation of the European Pact for gender equality under the Hungarian Presidency, in order to restate the key aims of EU gender equality policy, including the Member States' common commitment to combat violence against women, in particular by means of national action plans to combat violence.

We are committed to support the drafting of effective European policies, based on the five following principles : policy, prevention, provision and support services to women and girls, protection and prosecution.

We are committed to support the development of European and national strategies and actions under such policies serving as a frame of reference for national policies, defining common principles and appropriate instruments and guaranteeing measurable and timely progress.

We are committed to support the national governments and the European institutions in intensifying, where appropriate and in accordance with Member States' national legal systems, the following measures:

*a) In the field of policy*

- The exchange of best practices and the improvement of legal instruments.

*b) In the field of prevention*

- Specific preventive measures to deal with all forms of violence against women.
- Collaboration with the professionals, in particular in the field of education, civil society, medical, judicial, police and social and business sector in order to develop the most appropriate messages and actions to sensitize the society.
- Regular and large public awareness campaigns encouraging victims to register a complaint or to appeal for support.
- Encouragement of men and boys to take an active part in the prevention and the elimination of all forms of gender based violence.

*c) In the field of provision and support services*

- Setting up structures to provide sufficient, accessible and high quality support for victims of violence.
- The development of services for the treatment of perpetrators while ensuring that such services do not limit the availability of support services for victims.

*d) In the field of protection*

- Provision of appropriate protection, accommodation and psycho-medical-social and court accompaniment to women victims of violence and children who have witnessed such violence.

*e) In the field of prosecution*

- Systematic handling of complaints in order to, on the one hand, provide an appropriate and effective response and solution, punish the perpetrators while respecting, protecting and recognizing the victim and, if need be, the victim's children, and, on the other hand, to make the perpetrator aware of his responsibilities and the impact of his actions.

*f) In a horizontal manner:*

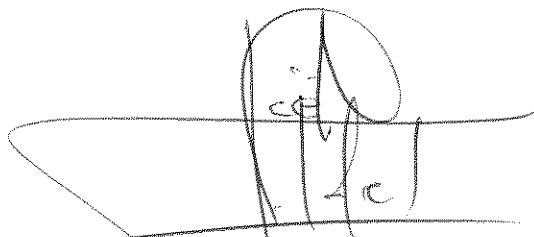
- The coordination between the different institutions and organizations involved in the assistance and support of victims, children who have witnessed violence and in the treatment of perpetrators of violence, the police services, the judicial sector and the psycho-medical-social services in order to intervene as appropriately as possible.
- Carry out awareness-raising education training campaigns to combat discriminatory cultural norms, and tackle the prevalent sexist stereotypes and social stigmatisation which legitimise and perpetuate violence against women.
- The adoption of specific actions addressing the specific violence against young girls and women in vulnerable situations.
- While respecting the independence of the media, note the important role the media and new technologies can play in creating the climate in which violence against women is unacceptable and to encourage all media to deal responsibly and sensitively with the issue of gender-specific violence.
- Efficient gender mainstreaming which also contributes to combating violence against women.
- The importance of data and knowledge, in order to inform the decision-making process and improve the policies regarding violence against women.

We encourage the taking of further steps in order to establish an European Observatory against violence building on existing institutional structures with an expertise in gender issues.

We consider the introduction of a common and free telephone number that could be used in Member States to offer specific and updated information and assistance to the victims of violence against women.

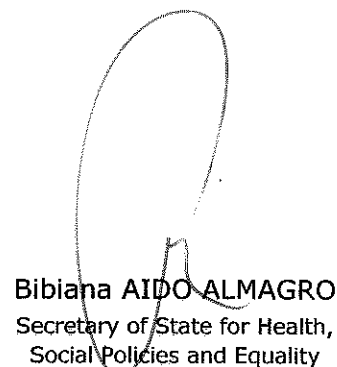
We support the creation of a European year to fight violence against women to reaffirm our commitment to combat this type of violence as a violation of women's full enjoyment of their Human Rights.

We call upon the Governments of the 27 Member States, EU institutions, social and economic partners, the media, academic institutions and all men and women to actively contribute to combating all forms of violence against women.



Joëlle MILQUET  
Minister of Employment  
and Equal Opportunities

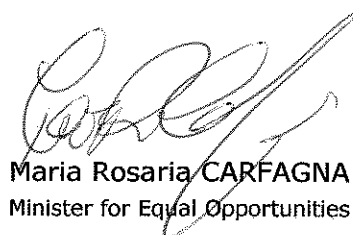
Annemie TURTELBOOM  
Minister of Internal Affairs



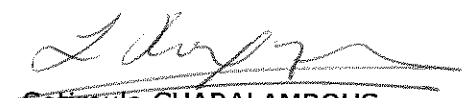
Bibiana AIDO-ALMAGRO  
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