

**DECLARATION
ON COOPERATION BETWEEN GENDER MAINSTREAMING
INSTITUTIONAL MECHANISMS
IN THE WEST BALKAN AND MEDITERRANEAN COUNTRIES**

In the exercise of the powers invested in us by the establishing governments, which make our institutional mechanisms for gender mainstreaming or gender equality promotion a final authority in developing gender equality policies and strategies, under which we shall ensure a balanced gender equality policy;

Recalling the Beijing Declaration and Platform for Action, signed in Beijing in 1995, which our countries signed as well, and especially paragraphs 301-305, Part B. Regional Cooperation, as well as our national action plans under the Beijing Declaration;

Regarding the Convention on Elimination of All Forms of Discrimination Against Women which our countries ratified;

Taking into consideration the Declaration on Equality Between Women and Men of the Council of Europe that we all are members of;

Being aware of the conclusions of the «Beijing + 10» Regional Conference which took place in Sarajevo in 2005, in which the member-states concluded that a close cooperation between gender mainstreaming institutional mechanisms in the region of West Balkans and Mediterranean is necessary;

Being further aware of a successful cooperation between the West Balkan and Mediterranean countries, especially bilateral and multilateral meetings held between gender mainstreaming mechanisms in the period 2003 – 2005, the Sarajevo Regional Conference in 2005, the Conference in Podgora/Tivat in 2004; the Regional Conference in Banja Luka in 2003; expert meetings in Sarajevo in 2003 and in Zagreb in 2002;

Noting that an ad hoc cooperation will not yield a desired gender equality effect in the West Balkan and Mediterranean region or establish a lasting and sustainable system of exchanging knowledge and practices in gender mainstreaming;

Emphasizing strongly the need to ensure coherence, continuity, transparency and a close cooperation in the work of gender mainstreaming institutional mechanisms and civil sector in the West Balkans and Mediterranean countries, and of mainstreaming mechanisms in the European integration processes underway in the countries in the region;

Convinced that gender equity and equality in all spheres of public and private life is of vital importance for a sustainable development of all the societies in the West Balkans and Mediterranean;

Having considered, born in mind and noted all the above, we, the representatives of the legislative and executive national gender equality mechanisms in the West Balkan and Mediterranean region, have agreed on the following

DECLARATION
on Cooperation Between Gender Mainstreaming Institutional Mechanisms
in the West Balkan and Mediterranean countries

The main goal of this Declaration is a regional cooperation on issues of gender equality and improving the position of women, which is in common interest of all the signatories. This implies a continued flow of information, exchange of experiences and good practices, exchange of knowledge between gender and human rights experts, initiating bilateral and multilateral gender equity and equality agreements and projects.

The signatories of this Declaration have agreed on the following:

Specific objectives / strategic priorities established on the basis of our shared activities and exchange of experiences so far are:

- in the area of **gender equality institutional mechanisms**, with an emphasis on:
 - development of a regional gender policy;
 - establishment of gender mechanisms at the regional level.

- in the area of **gender equality and development strategy**, with an emphasis on:
 - continued activities in relation to the processes of gender mainstreaming in macro-economic policies;
 - implementation of training of men and women in the concept and valuation of paid, unpaid and community work;
 - activities and exchange of experiences in regard to gender reviews of the budgets and gender sensitive budgeting;

- in the area of **gender equality, education and new technologies**, with an emphasis on:
 - identification and creation of a critical mass of experts for gender sensitive knowledge which would form a regional network for gender research and training and implement the regional distance learning, post-graduate gender studies;
 - continued work on exchange of experiences in introducing gender equality principles in education;

- implementation of campaigns toward affirmative action to include women in education and give them access to new information technologies;
- implementation of affirmative actions to encourage young women and girls in rural areas to education.

- in the area of **gender equality in policies and decision making**, with an emphasis on:

- implementation of training of men and women in public and political life and at decision-making positions in gender concept, gender review of laws, policies and programs, and assessment of impact of laws, policies and programs on men and women;
- launching of the establishment of a regional women's lobby the aim of which would be to strengthen leadership skills of women – politicians, and resolving specific issues at the regional level;
- exchange of experience regarding policies and legislation which regulate electorate processes, elected offices and participation in public and political life with the aim to improve and increase the number of women in politics and in decision-making offices;
- ensuring a gender-balanced composition of the EU pre-accession negotiating teams;
- creation of a gender lobby made up of gender mechanisms of legislative and executive authorities, non-governmental and academic communities.

- in the area of **gender equality and violence**, with an emphasis on:

- exchange of experience in the development and implementation of national action plans for implementation of UN Security Council Resolution 1325 "Women, Peace and Security", as an instrument for achieving a safe environment;
- continued work on educating and integrating gender equality issues in the security sector, including the concept of "human security";
- ensuring equal participation in decision-making in military and police structures, peacekeeping and negotiating about achieving and maintaining peace and security.

- in the area of **gender equality, peace and security**, with an emphasis on:

- continued work on joint regional campaigns toward participation of the state in funding of safe houses accommodating victims of violence and human trafficking;
- strengthening of a regional approach to preventing violence and trafficking in women through stronger cross-border law enforcement cooperation, harmonization of laws and especially sanctions, exchange of practical experiences and theoretical commitments between the institutions in the region.

- in the area of **gender equality and cultures and the media**, with an emphasis on:

- implementation of gender training at the regional level for editors and journalists, which would result in gender sensitive language in the media and research of the program content of the media in the region;
- regional pressures on self-regulatory bodies and media associations to implement the existing gender-sensitive laws.

- in the area of **gender equality and health**, with an emphasis on:

- joint campaigns of regional partners to combat HIV/AIDS, using the measures from the national action plans;
- joint campaigns to prevent and detect in a timely fashion those diseases which are the most frequent causes of death, and to protect reproductive health of men and women;
- regional harmonization of health-related laws under gender criteria.

Implementation of the general goal and specific objectives/strategic priorities implies:

1. formal establishment of a regional coordinating body which will be responsible for implementation, monitoring, reporting, (promotion) and evaluation of all joint regional activities involving the representatives of all regional gender equality institutional mechanisms, the signatories of this Declaration;
2. issuance of annual operational work plans in which joint activities serving the purpose of implementing the goals and objectives set forth in this Regional Declaration/Action Platform will be defined in detail.

The Declaration is open to other gender mechanisms in a wider region.

This Declaration will be shared with the Governments and Parliaments of the West Balkan and Mediterranean countries, Council of Europe offices, the Delegations of the European Commission, and international agencies.

Sarajevo, November 08, 2013

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