The Union's policy and the Mediterranean countries regarding the promotion of women's rights and equal opportunities

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The committee adopted the own-initiative report by Rodi KRATSA-TSAGAROPOULOU (EPP-ED, GR) on the situation and role of women in the Euro-Mediterranean region. The report noted that Euro-Mediterranean cooperation had hitherto allowed women only a marginal role and called for the gender dimension, and hence respect for and promotion of women's rights, to be explicitly incorporated in the three pillars of the Euro-Mediterranean partnership. This meant recognising and respecting the principle of political, social and economic equality between the sexes. The Commission was also urged to include the gender dimension in a separate chapter of its annual review of the Euro-Mediterranean partnership and MEDA funding. MEPs also pointed out that, while association agreements with the partner countries always contained a clause on respect for human rights, they did not include a specific clause on women's rights. In future, an explicit provision on protection of women's rights should be included in such agreements, and there should be a policy for monitoring such protection. The Commission was urged to ensure that women participated in association agreement negotiations as a prerequisite for the balanced development of the future Mediterranean free trade area, and to draw up measures to benefit women in the various fields of the MEDA programme. The committee also called on the Commission to draw up action plans focusing on the promotion of education and training for women, access to the labour market and to facilities for combining work and family life, promotion of the role of women in trade unions, access to financial and credit facilities and improved access for women to basic reproductive health services. Lastly, the committee believed that Euro-Mediterranean cooperation policies must enable the situation of women to be addressed in a way which was not conditioned by gender or religious stereotypes, by analysing and studying the presence and role of women in the world today.