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

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The European Parliament approved the resolution by Mrs Rodi KRATSA-TSAGAROPOULOU (EPP-ED, GR) by 355 votes to 30 with 8 abstentions. The Parliament calls for the effective implementation of what has already been laid down in the Barcelona Declaration regarding progress towards democracy and respect for human rights and calls for the gender dimension, and accordingly respect for and promotion of women's rights, to be explicitly incorporated horizontally in the Barcelona process and in the three pillars of the partnership. It calls on the Commission to incorporate the democratic clause regarding respect for fundamental rights and the gender dimension in the negotiations on association agreements by including an explicit provision in those agreements on protection of women's rights and also to provide for a policy for monitoring such protection similar to that applied to the candidate countries. Parliament suggests that the Commission should report on the fulfilment and effective application of the financial commitments laid down in the MEDA programme to support women's active participation in economic and social life and fund preparatory measures and pilot projects geared to information and training in the field of gender equality. Further, the Commission is called upon to promote action plans in the first regional programme to further the participation of women in economic and social life and development with the following objectives: promotion of education and training for women; access for women to the labour market and their continued presence there by supporting the reform of the legal framework governing the labour market, open vocational training using technological media, the adoption of positive action and the creation of facilities for combining working and family life such as day-care centres for children and care services for dependants (elderly or sick people, etc.), and promotion of the role of women in trade union organisations by facilitating their inclusion in the executive bodies of such organisations; promotion of the role of women in business by creating networks at regional level and making access to financial and credit facilities simpler; support for measures which raise the profile of the Euro-Mediterranean partnership, particularly in respect of organisations working for women's rights, and of the role of women in the context of the partnership; drafting of programmes concerning the protection of health and safety at the workplace; improved access for women to basic reproductive health services; points out that the projects and programmes implemented will have to take account of the needs of women's organisations, on a pluralist and transparent basis, at local level and will need to provide the necessary technical and economic support to enable these organisations to benefit from them. The Commission and the partner countries are called upon to promote the rights of women by setting up an observatory and databank to monitor and evaluate the situation of women's rights in all areas, at the same time as setting up local centres for each partner country to produce an annual report on women's rights on the basis of fixed indicators. Parliament takes the view that the European Investment Bank should create a financial assistance line earmarked for projectsor loans which are designed, organised and/or managed by women. It is suggested that there may be the possiblity of creating a Euro-Mediterranean Development Bank within the framework of the Barcelona Process be studied, debated and assessed. In addition, Parliament appeals to the governments of the partner countries to demonstrate the necessary political will and press ahead with the legislative, administrative and other reforms necessary to establish legal equality between men and women and incorporate gender equality in all their policies. Parliament calls on the EU to draw up an active and committed policy aimed at resolving the Arab-Israeli conflict in order to establish a just and lasting peace in the region and to create the conditions which will make it possible to achieve political, economic, social and cultural development, which will without doubt bring benefits in terms of the rights and progress of women on both sides. Lastly, the Parliament calls on the Commission, the Member States and the partner countries to take initiatives to promote women's activities in fields other than those with which women are traditionally associated. It welcomes, therefore, the Commission

initiative, announced by Commissioner Reding at the informal meeting of sport ministers on 12 November 2001, of holding a conference in the second half of 2002 on sport and women in the Mediterranean countries.