Murder of women in Central America and Mexico and the European Union's role in preventing this

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The Committee on Women's Rights and Gender Equality adopted the own-initiative report drafted by Raül **ROMEVA i RUEDA** (Greens/ALE, ES) on the murders of women (feminicides) in Central America and Mexico and the role of the European Union in fighting this phenomenon. The report follows the public hearing on feminicide which was held at the European Parliament in April 2006 and organised jointly by Parliament's Committee on Women's Rights and Gender Equality and its Subcommittee on Human Rights.

The report urged the countries of Central America to take all necessary steps to enable violence against women to be combated effectively. These measures must ensure full respect for human rights, as defined in the Universal Declaration of Human Rights and the American Declaration of Human Rights and Duties.

The national authorities of these countries are asked to: i) promote legislative initiatives defining violence within the family and sexual harassment at work and in all areas of public life as specific crimes; ii) draw up policies and legislation to deal with impunity and promote gender equality; iii) recognise and facilitate the role of the NGOs and civil-society organisations working for the victims of feminicide; iv) recognise the relatives of the victims and human rights campaigners, by creating effective arrangements for protecting witnesses and promoting reparation mechanisms for the victims' relatives; v) ensure respect for women's labour rights under national law and at all levels of government.

Acknowledging the legislative advances achieved in Mexico as regards equality between men and women, the report welcomed the federal law on the prevention and elimination of discrimination and urged Mexico to make further progress in this direction.

Members called upon national governments in the context of their bilateral relations with the countries of Latin America and upon the European institutions in the context of the strategic partnership: i) to support (by means of cooperation programmes and financial and technical resources) prevention and protection policies relating to violence against women, such as creating or reinforcing awareness-raising and training programmes on gender issues; ii) to increase the budget for the bodies responsible for investigating the killings; iii) to create effective protection arrangements for witnesses, victims and their relatives; iv) to develop the capacity of the courts, security corps and public prosecutor's offices in order to facilitate the prosecution and punishment of the perpetrators and to combat drug trafficking and organised crime. Members also called for the promotion of closer coordination in these areas amongst all levels of government, and on the European institutions to work for cooperation and dialogue between the EU, its Member States and the countries of Central America and Mexico.

The European Commission, for its part, was asked in the context of the agreements in force and those under negotiation, to promote the inclusion of a reciprocal obligation designed to create mechanisms for implementing the human-rights and democracy clause, with particular reference to respect for women's rights and gender equality.

The Committee also called on the Commission to provide information on the progress made on this issue in the context of the negotiations on the EC-Central America Association Agreement. The EU-Mexico

Joint Parliamentary Committee and the Parliament's Delegation for relations with the countries of Central America were asked to integrate systematically the issue of ‘gender violence, feminicide and impunity in Mexico, Central America and Europe' in the programmes for their respective parliamentary missions.

Lastly, the report proposed that a joint hearing be organised by its Committee on Women's Rights and Gender Equality, its Subcommittee on Human Rights and the delegations concerned before the 2008 EU-LAC Lima Summit, with a view to evaluating the measures in place, including the experiences of the relevant bodies set up in Mexico in the fight against gender violence in both the European Union and Latin America.