



**Human Rights Association**  
**İnsan Hakları Derneği**

EuroMed Non-Governmental Platform  
Plate-forme non gouvernementale EuroMed  
منبر المنظمات غير الحكومية الأوروبية المتوسطي



EURO-MEDITERRANEAN HUMAN RIGHTS NETWORK  
RÉSEAU EURO-MÉDITERRANÉEN DES DROITS DE L'HOMME  
الشبكة الأوروبية - المتوسطية لحقوق الإنسان

Dear Colleague,

The Euro-Mediterranean Human Rights Network (EMHRN), the Human Rights Association (IHD) and the Euro-Med NGO Platform have the pleasure of inviting a representative of your organisation to the conference:

## **Gender Equality in the Euro-Med Region: From Plan of Action to Action?**

**Istanbul, 24-25 October 2009**

This conference, funded by The Swedish International Cooperation Agency (Sida), aims at preparing recommendations for the Euro-Med Ministerial Conference on "Strengthening the Role of Women in Society", which will take place in Morocco, 11-12 November 2009.

Within this framework the objectives of the conference will include to:

- Increase awareness of the Istanbul Plan of Action (IPA) and explore opportunities for using it as an advocacy tool for social and legal change
- Explore synergies between the national, regional and international frameworks for the promotion and protection of gender equality (IPA, CEDAW, other UN mechanisms, the Euro-Mediterranean Partnership (EMP), the European Neighbourhood Policy (ENP) and the Union for the Mediterranean (UfM))
- Strengthen civil society cooperation and coalition building in the Euro-Med region on gender equality and women's rights

Based on the EMHRN *Shadow Report on Follow-up, Monitoring and Evaluation of the IPA*, participants will review obstacles and shortcomings of the IPA and deliver recommendations on promoting gender equality and civil society participation in this regard.

The conference will gather around one hundred participants from main women's and human rights organisation in the Euro-Med region as well as EU and government representatives.

Your expenses for transportation, accommodations and meals in relation to your participation in the conference will be covered. Please fill in the attached registration form and return it to Lasse Tørslev, lto@euromedrights.net, *before 14 September 2009* to ensure your participation.

For further information about the conference, the Istanbul Plan of Action and civil society activities in this regard, kindly visit: <http://gender.euromedrights.org>

We look forward to seeing you in Istanbul.

Yours Sincerely,  
EMHRN, IHD and the Euro-Med NGO Platform

## **BACKGROUND INFORMATION**

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### **The IPA**

Following the recommendation of the Barcelona +10 to convene a Euro-Med Ministerial meeting on women's rights, representatives of the then 35 members of the EU and its Mediterranean Partners met in Istanbul to discuss "Strengthening the Role of Women in Society". They agreed to a common regional platform, the commonly referred to Istanbul Plan of Action<sup>1</sup>, to promote gender equality and women's rights in the Euro-Med region. This 5 Year Plan, from 2006-2010, would include a yearly "reporting mechanism" and would be reviewed at a Ministerial Meeting in 2009.

### **EMHRN Initiatives in relation to the IPA**

#### ***Advocacy on the Plan itself and input from Civil Society to the process***

The EMHRN welcomed this initiative of a common Euro-Med platform for promotion of gender and women's rights and started advocacy already ahead of the adoption of the Plan by making recommendations to the Plan of Action<sup>2</sup>, as well as by organizing meetings in Brussels presenting the EMHRN recommendations to the EU Commission, the EU Council (and specifically the Finnish Presidency under whom the Ministerial Conference took place) and the European Parliament. The EMHRN supported initiatives by the EMHRN members in Morocco and Jordan, writing letters to their national representatives – and in the case of Morocco to the Prime Minister. The EMHRN also published a report: *Achieving Gender Equality in the Euro-Mediterranean Region. Change is Possible and Necessary*, reiterating its recommendations to the IPA<sup>3</sup>. The EMHRN recommendations were adopted by the Civil Forum in Marrakesh and presented by the Euro-Med NGO Platform at the Euro-Med Ministerial Conference in November 2006 in Istanbul.

Following the adoption of the IPA, the EMHRN issued a statement welcoming the Plan, but pointing out its shortcomings in relation to especially the follow-up mechanism<sup>4</sup>. Following consultation with civil society organizations (see below, Awareness Raising and Coalition Building), recommendations for the Euro-Med Ministerial Conference in 2009 were formulated<sup>5</sup> and adopted at the Civil Forum in Marseille, November 2008, organised by the Euro-Med NGO Platform.

In 2007 and 2008 the EMHRN participated in the ad hoc meetings on the IPA held in Brussels.

#### ***Awareness Raising and Coalition Building***

The EMHRN has held several coordination/preparatory meetings with civil society organizations in Brussels (October 2008), Spain (December 2008), Lebanon (March 2009), Sweden (May 2009), Egypt (June 2009)<sup>6</sup> and Morocco (July 2009) in order to raise awareness of the IPA as a common platform for promotion of gender equality and women's rights in the region and to discuss how civil society can promote and critically engage with this mechanism and come up with input to the Euro-Med Ministerial Conference in Morocco, November 2009. The idea of the conference in

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<sup>1</sup> Ministerial Conclusions on Strengthening the Role of Women in Society, see:

[http://gender.euromedrights.org/index.php/istanbul\\_action\\_plan/background\\_documents/3029.html](http://gender.euromedrights.org/index.php/istanbul_action_plan/background_documents/3029.html)

<sup>2</sup> RECOMMENDATIONS ON ACHIEVING GENDER EQUALITY IN THE EURO-MEDITERRANEAN REGION, see:

<http://www.euromedrights.net/pages/275/news/focus/20507>

<sup>3</sup> See: <http://www.emhrn.net/pages/339>

<sup>4</sup> EMHRN Position on the 5 Years Plan for Action Adopted at the Euromed Ministerial Conference on Strengthening the Role Of Women in Society, in Istanbul 14-15 November 2006, see:

[http://gender.euromedrights.org/index.php/istanbul\\_action\\_plan/emhrn\\_documents/3036.html](http://gender.euromedrights.org/index.php/istanbul_action_plan/emhrn_documents/3036.html)

<sup>5</sup> See: [http://gender.euromedrights.org/index.php/istanbul\\_action\\_plan/emhrn\\_documents/3039.html](http://gender.euromedrights.org/index.php/istanbul_action_plan/emhrn_documents/3039.html)

<sup>6</sup> See; [http://gender.euromedrights.org/index.php/about\\_gender/meetings/index.1.html](http://gender.euromedrights.org/index.php/about_gender/meetings/index.1.html)

Istanbul on 24-25 October 2009 is to gather EMHRN members, participants from these coordination/preparatory meetings and others to possibly build a coalition on the IPA.

In relation to these coordination/preparatory meetings, the EMHRN recommendations in view of the Euro-Med Ministerial conference 2009 were presented to the national governments in the countries where the meetings were held.

### **Monitoring**

Since the Civil Forum in Marrakesh in 2006, the EMHRN has been mandated by the Euro-Med NGO Platform to conduct constitutional monitoring in relation to the IPA. The EMHRN decided to monitor the implementation of the IPA by preparing an Alternative/Shadow report. The report analyses the developments pertaining to gender equality and women's rights from 2006-2008 in the following key areas<sup>7</sup>:

- Commitment to international conventions, especially CEDAW<sup>8</sup>
- Discrimination in national laws and legislation
- Participation of women in public, civil and political life
- Violence against women, including migrant women<sup>9</sup>

Developments in these fields are analysed in the Mashrek countries (Palestine, Jordan, Syria, and Lebanon, including Egypt), the Maghreb (Morocco, Tunisia and Algeria) as well as Turkey and Europe (with France, Sweden and Poland as examples).

The findings of the report are summarized in the Shadow report, which will be presented to the participants at the conference.

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<sup>7</sup> Identified on the basis of previous EMHRN reports such as 'The Integration of Women's rights from the MENA in to the Euro-Mediterranean Partnership', and 'Change is Possible and Necessary', see: <http://gender.euromedrights.org> as well as discussions within the EMHRN Working Group on gender and women's rights

<sup>8</sup> The Convention on the Elimination of all forms of Discrimination Against Women

<sup>9</sup> On the basis of the findings of the EMHRN report on Violence against Migrant and Refugee Women in the Euro-Mediterranean Region.