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# INTERNATIONAL CONVENTIONS AND ISTANBUL FRAMEWORK OF ACTION: A COMMON FRAME TO PROMOTE AND SUPPORT WOMEN'S RIGHTS AS UNIVERSAL HUMAN RIGHTS

Promoting a common agenda for equality between women and men through  
Istanbul Process  
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## THE CONTEXT/s WE LIVE TODAY IN THE EURO-MED REGION

We live historical moments: People in the Arab world are rising up against political dictatorship and corruption. They demand reforms and organize towards freedom, democracy, human dignity and social justice. Women have been shouldering the responsibilities in all uprisings in Tunisia, Egypt, Iraq, Jordan, Libya, Yemen, Bahrain and Syria and the women's movements are full part of the democratic movements for social and economic justice. However women are systematically excluded from the decision making processes that shape the future of their countries.

Discriminations, oppression, military acts of repression and killings are used to subdue the progressive social movements; violence exercised against women, from verbal humiliation to rape, are perpetrated to control them and to silence their voice. Continuous and un-challenged militarization, oppression by occupation, economic and financial crises, increasing influence and interference of religious fundamentalist forces in the public and political spheres are the major obstacles to gender equality to day. They are tightly interconnected and curtail all over the world women's freedom and their empowerment.

In Europe patriarchal ideology remains a dominant social structure. Women are the first victims of a deep economic and political crisis that together with an increasing intrusion of religion in the public sphere deprives them from their fundamental rights. Austerity measures with an imposed flexicurity model have meant increasing cuts in the public sector, increasing number of part-time jobs and services, decreasing affordable child-care structures and services, leading to the over-representation of women in paid part time work and the unequal share of responsibilities between women and men in the unpaid work at home, and consequently a very bleak retirement future. Women remain under-represented in high level posts and decision-making both in the private and public sectors. In spite of laws, declarations and resolutions that should ensure equality and democracy for all citizens there is an ongoing marginalization and exclusion of women which leads to questioning the meaning of the existing concept of democracy.

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Women's subjugation can't be dissociated from all forms of oppression. Patriarchal structures that sustain women's subordination are strongly prevailing during transitions. Conservative political regimes, ultra liberal economic systems that are supporting them and the male shaped structures of political parties which don't promote women's rights as a first rank political issue are tightly interconnected. These conservative and traditional trends are united with religious fundamentalist movements to confront the right of women to be full citizens and to live a life free of violence.

Women's rights are universal human rights. We are using the international conventions and resolutions, the regional and national frames to promote this guiding principle and value. Among them CEDAW (the Convention on the Elimination of all forms of Discrimination against Women), the United Nation Security Council Resolutions 1325, 1820, 1888, 1889 and the Beijing Platform for Action are the most important tools to claim women's rights.

The Ministerial Conclusions from the Istanbul and Marrakesh Ministerial Conferences held 2006 and respectively 2009, reaffirmed the commitments of the governments in Euro-Med region to strengthen women's rights and gender equality. They are the most essential references to the national and political obligations of both governments and societies. They open the way for a common mobilization and a common action of the women's movements in Maghreb, Mashrek and Europe.

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## FROM BARCELONA SUMMIT TO ISTANBUL-MARRAKESH PROCESS

At the Barcelona Summit in 2005, held to commemorate the 10th anniversary of the Euro-Mediterranean partnership, 10 years after its launching as a political space organized between the 15 member countries of the European Union and 12 countries in the Mediterranean with the purpose to develop a large free trade region among the 27 countries, it was decided to make equality between men and women one of the Euro-Med Partnership objectives.

A Euro-Med Ministerial Meeting held in 2006 in Istanbul came up with Ministerial Conclusions and a Framework of Action, known as Istanbul Framework of Action (IFA), whose objective is "to strengthen women's role in political, civil, social, economic and cultural spheres, as well as to fight against discrimination."

***From the Ministerial Conclusions on Strengthening the Role of Women in Society 2006:***

**"3. Euro-Mediterranean Ministers stress that equal participation of women and men in all spheres of life is a crucial element of democracy and confirm that only by the inclusion of all people and determined action will the region's women be able to fulfill their ambitions and aspirations and, by extension, contribute towards the realization of the underlying objectives of the Barcelona Declaration: the attainment of a common area of peace, stability and shared prosperity in the Mediterranean region. This goal, based inter alia on democracy, respect for human rights and sustainable development, can only be achieved by guaranteeing all women full enjoyment of rights."**

The follow up Ministerial Conference in Marrakech 2009 affirmed the governments' commitments to work for strengthening of women's rights and gender equality in their respective countries in this process known as Istanbul Marrakech process.



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With these conclusions the governments themselves recognized existence of inequalities and the need to take measures to address them. The civil society can hold the governments accountable for what they have themselves committed to, underlying their previous commitments to CEDAW, the UNSC Resolutions and the Beijing Platform for Action. The feminist movement in the Arab world and Europe take this opportunity to strengthen common feminist analyses on issues of mutual interest such as violence against women, civil legislation and citizenship and to develop strong common speech and solidarity cooperation.

**We appreciate this document as the most important political reference for promoting women's rights and gender equality in the Euro-Mediterranean Partnership until now. Istanbul Framework of Action is a political declaratory document produced by governments and indicating their political will and commitment for action to improve the status of women's rights and gender equality in their respective countries and in the whole region.**

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## ABOUT ISTANBUL FRAMEWORK OF ACTION (IFA) and INTERNATIONAL CONVENTIONS AND RESOLUTIONS PROMOTING WOMEN'S RIGHTS AND GENDER EQUALITY

Today, it is more than ever important to raise up and address the international conventions, regional and national tools for gender equality as parts of the same framework promoting women's rights as universal human rights. Istanbul Framework of Action must be approached in connection with the other international and national tools for promoting equality between women and men. The international conventions are a precious tool for protection and promotion of women's rights, through the values of equality and justice they are based on. All these international, regional and national mechanisms must be approached as parts of one global frame for enhancing gender equality and women's rights. In this perspective, IFA is not only "one more document". It articulates the political will to strengthen the Governments action for gender equality, following their obligations to all other international conventions and resolutions the States have signed.

**From the Ministerial Conclusions on Strengthening the Role of Women in Society 2006: On Women's Political and Civil Rights:**

**10...."Euro-Mediterranean partners will work towards taking measures that:**  
**a) Enable the full and effective implementation and translation into legislative and policy reform of UN conventions related to human rights of women to which they are party, in particular the Convention on the Elimination of All Forms of Discrimination Against Women (CEDAW) and its Optional Protocol."**

All Euro-Med countries ratified or acceded to CEDAW and are legally bound to implement its provisions. The Arab States have reservations on some articles explained by political, social and religious considerations. However, as a universal human rights convention that wishes to guarantee basic human rights to all women, no matter where they are from, the reservations must not contradict the purpose of the CEDAW itself, as they do. Their lifting is a major step needed to be taken by the governments.



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**States parties to CEDAW have committed themselves to:**

1. Incorporate the principle of gender equality and non-discrimination in their legal systems and abolish discriminatory laws;
2. Establish institutional protections against discrimination;
3. Take positive measures to advance gender equality;
4. Eliminate discrimination against women by private persons and organizations.

The governments should then adopt the definition of discrimination in CEDAW and work towards abolishing all legal discrimination in the Personal Status Laws, Penal Codes, Labor Laws etc. Those governments that have already done this should immediately take time-and-resource-bound measures to implement CEDAW on the ground. This means, among others, adopting affirmative measures as gender quotas to address the structural exclusion of women and correct the lack of democratic access to positions of power and decision making.

The quota system aims at ensuring that women constitute at least a "critical minority" of 20, 30, or 40% or even to ensure true gender of 50-50 per cent. It addresses direct discrimination and hidden barriers that prevent women from getting legitimate their share of political influence. Quotas are only compensation for structural barriers that women meet in the electoral process.

**Beijing Platform for Action, section on *Women in Power and Decision-Making*:**

... "Women's equal participation in decision-making is not only a demand for simple justice or democracy but can also be seen as a necessary condition for women's interests to be taken into account. Without the active participation of women and the incorporation of women's perspectives at all levels of decision-making, the goals of equality, development and peace cannot be achieved." These words are part of the strategic objectives and action which the Beijing Platform for Action stipulates, and which the governments have signed.



The Ministerial Conclusions from Istanbul and Marrakech on strengthening of women's rights are in perfect coherence with the Beijing Platform for Action and should follow the platform recommendations summarized as:

- 1. Set a firm timetable to end all legal discrimination against women (along the lines of CEDAW), and establish a civil framework to promote legal equality.**
- 2. Initiate affirmative measures of adopting minimum 30% quota for women in national decision-making positions, with a long-term aim of reaching 50% and adopt the proportional representation system to rectify imbalances in political representation.**
- 3. Mobilize national and international efforts to facilitate for everyone - and for women in particular - greater access to economic and political opportunities.**

Women's involvement in politics is an important prerequisite for democracy. Women's under-representation in decision-making positions in all fields limits their participation in creating public policies and programs that serve women's rights and interests. In the same way the absence of women in top positions in peace processes contributes to the lack of attention given to the consequences of wars and military conflicts on women and to gender perspectives in peace agreements. UNSCR1325 corrects that and affirms that women "full participation in the peace process can significantly contribute to the maintenance and promotion of international peace and security"

### The United Nations Security Council Resolution 1325

..."Urges Member States to ensure increased representation of women at all decision-making levels in national, regional and international institutions and mechanisms for the prevention, management, and resolution of conflict".



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**ONE GLOBAL FRAME ENHANCING GENDER EQUALITY**

The connection between Istanbul Framework for Action and the international conventions is important, as well as the connection between the International Conventions themselves.

**Istanbul Framework of Action and International Conventions and Resolutions promoting women's rights as universal human rights are parts of one and the same global frame for enhancing gender equality.**

The governments have agreed to fight discrimination according to IFA. As CEDAW provides a definition of discrimination and as the governments have ratified CEDAW, they must go on working for implementation of CEDAW. UNSCR 1325 is talking about women's participation in the political sphere and in preventing violent ways of solving conflicts. CEDAW provides the way how to do it by recommending affirmative measures, and the Beijing Platform for Action, explains that a critical mass of minimum 30% of underrepresented is needed in decision making and in the political sphere in order to be able to take into account the needs and interests of women. UNSCR 1820 recognizes the sexual violence against women in armed conflicts. We address violence against women in its continuum and make the links between violence in war and in peace, and therefore recognize that the sexual violence and rape of women during war is nothing else but an exacerbation of the violence and discrimination that women suffer in times of peace. Without addressing violence against women, that keeps women in control it is impossible to fight discrimination and is very difficult to strengthen their role in the society.

**This global frame enhancing gender equality is the reference for harmonization of national laws with international standards for women's rights.**

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There is still prevailing open discriminative legislation concerning women's rights in the Arab world. In Europe, independently of the enhanced legislation protecting and promoting formally women's rights, discrimination of women persists: gap in the representation of women in the positions of political and economic power and decision-making, gap in the wages for women and men, gap in the un/employment for women and men, persisting violence against women that has not stopped in spite of some improvements of the legislative measures against it.

Nowhere have the governments prioritize gender equality as a first rank political issue. The ENP and consequently the National Action Plans between EU and the Southern neighbors are never built in priority on the respect of human rights, women's rights and gender equality and several countries are given privileged statuses, even if these rights are violated. EU must put the implementation of basic women's human rights as a condition for signing any partnership country agreement. All governments must respect their commitments to women's rights and their obligations to harmonize national legislation with international standards. Culture, tradition or religions cannot be excuses for violence, oppression or discrimination.

**The women's mobilization for the implementation of International Conventions and Regional Agreements is tightly connected with the daily struggle of women against violence and inequality.**

Therefore we can't only lobby for Istanbul Frame of Action without exposing and connected it with the existing violence and discrimination in daily lives of women in all fields. To be successful, the lobby work can't be a matter of only experts. It has to be connected with the mobilization of the women's movement and take into account the needs and the interest of women from community to national level, from national to region, from regional to international. Our work is interconnected as are our resistance and gains.



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## WHAT DO WE WANT

- Equality between women and men as a guiding principle for policies making, from the national Constitutions to the local self-governments and political parties' agendas;
- No less than 30% quota for women to ensure minimum required representation of women in all positions of power in political and economic sphere in order to address and correct the deficit of democracy and to favor the inclusion of women's needs;
- Legislation and family codes based on civil, women's human rights values, without intrusion of religions in public, political and legislative spheres; urgent measures to change educational and cultural systems based on patriarchal stereotypes which perpetuate subjugation of women in public and family life. Women's rights are universal human rights and no abuse of women's integrity can be tolerated in the name of tradition, culture or religions;
- Urgent action from the Security Council, United Nations, European Union and national governments to promote and pass binding legislation with zero tolerance against perpetrators of violence against women;
- EU future partnerships based on the full respect of human rights and women's human rights and the end of agreements or enhanced status with any Southern neighbor State where these rights are violated;
- An immediate end of all types of occupation, in Palestine in particular. No use of military and all other types of violent attacks against civilians as a way to solve conflicts. Democracy cannot be used as a tool in the name of which military interventions and invasions can be justified;
- The involvement of the European Parliament and the Euro-Mediterranean Parliamentary Assembly in the follow-up process on the implementation of the International resolutions and decisions taken in the frame of the Istanbul Marrakech process and ensuring that gender equality and women's rights are high on the agenda of the Euro-Med Partnership frameworks.
- The recognition of the civil society organizations as effective partners to promote the international conventions and the Istanbul Framework of Action and to follow-up their implementation on the basis of complete respect for the organizations' independence. Only they can promote and raise awareness of the international conventions and Istanbul Framework of Action and make these texts become the property of women through favoring open discussions on the important obstacles women face across the Euro Mediterranean space.

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## WHAT TO DO: Euro Mediterranean region is our region

Although the discrimination women face have "local" expressions, their roots are common, stemming from a patriarchal system based on the domination and control that cuts across our countries and societies. Yet worldwide, it is still challenging to discuss gender power relations as a political question.

It is essential to develop common actions between feminist movements from Maghreb, Mashrek and Europe based on solidarity and common feminist analyses in order to address patriarchal structures that hinder women's full enjoyment of their human rights, locally and globally.

The regional and international lobby helps the national endeavors. Some fringes of the women's movement neglect the fact that international documents are a major tool to support the fight for improving discriminatory legislation, or even deny it. They often refer to respect of cultural differences, even when these are abusive to universal women's rights.

We promote a global approach of the international tools with a permanent link with democracy, peace, economic and social justice. We approach these instruments together, as a common frame and use them to question their implementation and the governments' stated commitments.

We link the international and regional women's rights instruments in order to contribute to develop a strong shared language that can strengthen cooperation and exchange between Arab and European feminist networks to challenge the patriarchal gender power structures.

The need of an international feminist cooperation and reflection is increasing in these times when the global economic conditions, in interplay with a patriarchal security policy, are limiting the women's scope of action and are aggravating the life conditions of the people. At the same time the globalization creates possibilities for building up bridges over the borders. We are taking advantage of this opportunity to reinforce alliances for a democratic peaceful and secular world, required for women to develop our universal human rights and preserve our freedoms.



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We call women to invest in the Euro-Mediterranean region with our common concerns and our common values. We call upon the governments in the Arab countries to lift the reservations of CEDAW. We call on the European governments to implement CEDAW. We call upon the governments in the Euro-Med region to put **Equality First** on their political, social and economic agendas. We call upon the democratic movement in the Arab world and in Europe to act with the values of gender equality and women's rights as universal human rights.

**Istanbul-Marrakech process is a common space for organizing over lifting of CEDAW reservations and implementation of CEDAW; for demanding that implementation of women's rights are monitored in the ENP; for implementation of United Nation Security Council Resolutions on women's rights and for rights-based approach to democracy and social justice.**

**This means that the governments should commit to the establishment of civil States and civil legislation as prerequisite for achieving equality between women and men, social justice and democracy. These steps are the only way to prevent the raising of a fundamentalist wave on the current political scenes.**

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## WHO WE ARE

We are a democratic coalition of women leaders of advocacy and lobby women's rights NGOs from six Arab countries from Mashrek and Maghreb and the European Feminist Initiative IFE-EFI, a women's rights network represented in 15 countries in Europe.

The cooperation that we have been developing for several years now is based on the respect of our differences but also the high consciousness of the strength of our common principles and values. Together we develop a continuous and persistent work for equality between women and men; for the full implementation of women's rights as universal human rights. These are conditions for achieving a sustainable democracy.

We are now aiming at the "Promotion a common agenda for equality between women and men through Istanbul Process". We advocate for putting *Equality First* on the political parties' and governmental agendas in our region and in our respective countries. Our diversity is our common wealth.

The history shows that achieving positive changes for women's rights always requires the solidarity and the involvement of women's themselves. That's why our project aims at raising awareness, involving the grassroots associations and linking the civil and political spheres in order to promote as a common working frame the international conventions and regional agreements as a tool that we use to improve the status of women's rights and equality between men and women and for strengthening the role of women in Maghreb, Mashrek and Europe, as agreed and promoted by our governments with the Istanbul-Marrakech Process.

*Egyptian Association for Community Participation Enhancement EACPE* was founded in 2001 with the goal of promoting democratic development and improving the human rights situation in Egypt. It works toward these goals by raising awareness of political and human rights among the population and building capacities of various organizations, networks and coalitions. The organization works closely with other non-profit organizations as well as youth organizations, trade unions and political parties.



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The Gender Equality Program aims to improve the status of women in the Egyptian society legally, socially and culturally. EACPE is the coordinator of the CEDAW Coalition, an alliance of a group of NGOs that enforce and observes the implementation of the convention and advocates the removal of the reservations made by the Egyptian Government on this convention. EACPE is also member of the Women's Rights Organizations Network. In addition, the organization is raising public awareness on women rights issues through the publication of reports, booklets and researches on violence and discrimination against women as well as through the organization of events.

*Tunisian Association of Democratic Women ATFD* is an autonomous women's movement aiming at building a different speech and a different action in order to fight against patriarchal oppression and conquer their full citizenship.

Since 1989, when ATFD was legally authorized, they have developed actions based on the founding values of independency, pluralism, solidarity. ATFD is working to promote equality between women and men democracy, secularism and social justice. It fights against all forms of discriminations and violence and all demonstrations of patriarchal order.

*Sisterhood is Global Institute SIGI/Jordan* was founded in 1998 as a non-governmental, not-for-profit and independent body upon an initiative by a number of Jordanian women who believed that women's issues are issues of the whole society. SIGI is acting for a democratic society of freedom, justice, equality and respect for human rights; one that is free of discrimination and violence where both women and men enjoy dignity and human rights, access to information and knowledge and have equal opportunities. SIGI strives to disseminate and realize women's rights as well as empower women to enjoy, defend, protect and ensure recognition of their rights.



*Arab Women Organization, AWO Jordan* has gained recognition as one of the leading women NGOs in Jordan throughout 40 years of working with and for women. With a long standing experience in empowering women and local communities and in building partnerships and networks, AWO has succeeded in aggregating the efforts of women NGOs by establishing Mosawa (Equality) Network for grassroots NGO as of 2005. Since then, AWO and Mosawa Network have been diligently involved in massive vigils to call for the effective implementation of the ratified international conventions, especially CEDAW, UNSCR1325 and Istanbul Framework of Action.

*European Feminist Initiative (IFE-EFI)* is a feminist network represented in 15 countries in Europe. It works for the mobilization of organizations and individual activists and develops solidarity cooperation with feminist organizations and activists from the Middle East and North Africa in order to contribute to making the feminist voices in Euro-Med region heard and to bringing visibility of the feminist movement against oppression and discrimination.

IFE-EFI uses feminist critique and analyses to underline the links between structures of subordination of women in peace and war, between economic system, war and patriarchy, between the front march of the neo-liberal rhetoric and the reduced role of the social movements as well as the reduced possibilities for egalitarian redistribution of resources and statuses in such a context. IFE-EFI also makes the link between theory and practice by providing a gathering space for academic women and grass root activist; a space for generating feminist power through articulation and connection of women's experiences during war and peace and across the different political, geographical, social and cultural contexts.

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*The Women's Studies Centre WSC* Jerusalem, Palestine is a human rights organization working on the promotion of gender equality and women's rights as human rights in the Palestinian society. Since its establishment in 1989, the WSC has worked on empowerment of women, research to monitor and provide credible data on the Palestinian women situation, awareness-raising and educational campaigns, documentary films and lobby and advocacy for women rights and change in discriminatory laws. The WSC has established the first and largest specialized public library on gender and women's issues which is widely used by researchers, academics, human rights activists, and university students. WSC has developed partnerships with a large number of Palestinian organizations. Regionally, WSC is a coordinating committee member of Aisha Arab Women's Forum. The WSC work is of utmost importance because it attempts to achieve the goals of social change, equality and justice in the midst of strong social and political oppression.

*Association Najdeh AN* seeks to empower Palestinian refugee women to play a more active role in community development and to promote the social, economic, civic and national rights of Palestinian refugees in Lebanon. It promotes respect for basic human rights, social justice and equal human rights for men, women and children and is committed to respect of human dignity and equal value for all people without discrimination.

Established in 1976 Association Najdeh provides income generating embroidery projects, vocational training, women's empowerment activities and pre-school education. In response to the complex difficulties facing the Palestinian community in Lebanon, Association Najdeh focuses on educational, social and economic interventions from a gender-based perspective. Using an integrated developmental approach between and across programs and services, it seeks to 1) empower the most vulnerable girls and women to challenge patriarchal social norms, 2) promote human rights values and good practices at the community-level, and 3) campaign for the implementation of the community's fundamental rights.



*Democratic Gathering of Lebanese Women RDFL* is a secular non-governmental women organization which works with the democratic forces to promote women's status and participation and empower them, aiming at achieving full equality between both sexes. RDFL is a part of the advocacy secular democratic women's movement, on the basis of international pacts and treaties, as well as the Universal Declaration of Human Rights and the Universal Declaration on the Elimination of Violence against Women CEDAW. RDFL network and coordinate with women and civil society forces to enhance democracy and equality, to protect and promote the culture of women's rights within the human rights movement towards full equality between woman and man. RDFL works for lifting of all reservations on CEDAW and for implementation of all international conventions that ensure equality between the two genders and lobby for amendment of unfair legislation. Moreover, RDFL strives to involve women in all decision-making levels.

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## INTRODUCTION TO INTERNATIONAL CONVENTIONS

Since the international feminist movement began to gain momentum during the 1970s, a number of key international agreements and conventions which look at promoting gender equality and women's empowerment have been endorsed by governments across the world.

### Women's Rights and Women's Empowerment

In December 1979, the UN General Assembly adopted the [Convention on the Elimination of All Forms of Discrimination against Women](#) (CEDAW), which is often described as an International Bill of Rights for Women. In its 30 articles, the Convention explicitly defines discrimination against women and sets up an agenda for national action to end such discrimination and foster greater gender equality.

In September 1995, the [Beijing Platform for Action](#) was ratified during the Fourth World Conference on Women held in Beijing. It asserted women's rights as human rights and through its action plan, it committed governments in the run-up to the year 2000 to specific actions to ensure respect for those rights and empower women within social, economic and political spheres.

### Women, Peace and Security

In October 2000, the UN Security Council unanimously adopted a ground-breaking resolution on women, peace and security. UNSC [Resolution 1325](#) is the first resolution which addressed the impact of armed conflict on women and girls and recognized the contributions and role of women in peace-building and the gender dimensions of peace processes and conflict resolution. It urged Member States to increase women's representation at all decision-making levels for the prevention, management, and resolution of conflict.

In the following years, a series of Resolutions built up on the message conveyed by the 1325.



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[UNSC Resolution 1820](#), ratified in 2008, confronts sexual violence in conflict and post-conflict situations. It recognizes the use of sexual violence as an instrument of conflict and considers appropriate steps to end such atrocities and punish their perpetrators.

[UNSC Resolution 1888](#), ratified in 2009, strengthens the implementation of Resolution 1820 by calling for leadership to address conflict-related sexual violence, deployment of teams (military and gender experts) to critical conflict areas, and improved monitoring and reporting on conflict trends and perpetrators.

[UNSC Resolution 1889](#), ratified in 2009, addresses obstacles to women's participation in peace processes and calls for development of global indicators to track the implementation of Resolution 1325, and improvement of international and national responses to the needs of women in conflict and post-conflict settings.

[UNSC Resolution 1960](#), ratified in 2010, calls for an end to sexual violence in armed conflict, particularly against women and girls, and provides measures aimed at ending impunity for perpetrators of sexual violence, including through sanctions and reporting measures.

### Women in the Euro-Med region

In 1995, the Euro-Med region was organized as a political space gathering 15 member countries of the European Union and 12 countries in the Mediterranean with a purpose to develop a large free trade region.

In 2006 the first Euro-Med Ministerial Conference on 'Strengthening the Role of Women in Society' took place in Istanbul. The Ministers addressed the issue of women's rights in the Euro-Med region and agreed upon a common Framework of Action, indicating the commitment of the governments to work for improvement of women's role in the society and the equal access of women and men to full economic, social, cultural civic and political rights.

In 2009, at the second Ministerial conference held in Marrakech, achievements were reviewed and the Istanbul Framework of Action was strengthened by introducing the importance of gender equality and establishing a follow-up mechanism to make governments accountable for progress.



