

**DECLARATION OF THE NON-GOVERNMENTAL EUROMED PLATFORM
ON THE OCCASION OF THE INTERNATIONAL WOMEN'S DAY
AND OF THE EUROPEAN YEAR FOR INTERCULTURAL DIALOGUE
Paris, 8 March 2008**

**«There is no future for the Euromediterranean Partnership
without an effective guarantee of women's rights»**

On the occasion of the International Women's Day, celebrated this year (2008) within the framework of the European Year for Intercultural Dialogue, the non-governmental Platform Euromed, which consists of international, regional, and national organisations and platforms, which are active in the 37 countries of the Euromediterranean Partnership, reminds Heads of States and Governments of partner- countries and EU institutions their obligation:

- to guarantee and strengthen the universal and indivisible fundamental human rights; in this respect, to put an end to the serious violations of the fundamental rights of women, in particular those perpetrated under the cover of respect of «cultural, traditional and religious difference»; indeed, international instruments, such as the CEDAW (Article 5) and the International Covenant on Civil and Political Rights, require that cultural or religious traditions and practices are not used as a justification of violations of women's rights; this is recalled and stressed by the Vienna Declaration of the World Conference on Human Rights (1993), unanimously adopted by 171 States.
- to guarantee, apply and promote effectively, in law and in practice, real gender equality in all fields, as a condition *sine qua non* of the democratisation process, development, and «intercultural dialogue»; gender equality necessarily implies an effective secularisation in law.

The respect of this value, universal right and horizontal objective, imposed by international and European instruments¹, on the EU, its Member States and its partner States, including in the framework of its external policy, constitutes a condition *sine qua non* for participation and accession to the EU and a cornerstone of the Euromediterranean Partnership.

The Euromed Platform welcomes the commitment to promote the fundamental right to gender equality, which was reaffirmed by Partner States at the Ministerial Euromed Conference in Istanbul, and in the Euromed Conference of the Ministers of Foreign Affairs in Tampere. It urges the political authorities of the Euromediterranean Partnership to implement effectively these commitments by all adequate means.

In this respect, the Euromed Platform recalls the recommendations of the organisations meeting within the framework of the Euromed Civil Forum in Marrakech², in particular:

“• All states participating in the Barcelona Process should lift their reservations to CEDAW (Convention on the Elimination of All Forms of Discrimination against Women), bring their domestic laws and policies into line with the dispositions of this convention and proceed to ratify its optional protocol.

• Ask the EU and the Partner states to fight all forms of discrimination and violence against women, including in the couple and the family, - while respecting human rights and stop treating women's rights essentially as a matter of « religious norms and cultural traditions ».

• Ask for the full integration of the gender dimension in all policies, programmes and projects of the EU, EMP and the ENP, at both the national and regional level. At the same time, affirmative action and programmes specifically directed at women must be established.

• Ask the Partner states to promote full participation, information and genuine consultation in the decision making process, at all levels and all pertinent mechanisms, with independent civil society, in particular associations promoting and protecting women's rights.”

¹V. art. 6, 7, 11 et 49 du EUT, art. 2, 3(2) et 13 du TEC, Charter of Fundamental Rights of the EU, art. 23.

²EUROMED CIVIL FORUM, FINAL DECLARATION, « Recommendations for the Euromed Ministerial Conference of Istanbul of November, 14 – 15, 2006, aimed at adopting a five years Action plan for strengthening the role of women in society », November the 6th 2006.