

## RECOMMENDATION 142/2014<sup>1</sup>

### *Gender Equality in the BSEC Region: Achievements and Challenges*

1. The Parliamentary Assembly of the Black Sea Economic Cooperation (PABSEC) recalls the Istanbul Summit Declaration on the Occasion of the Twentieth Anniversary of BSEC, wherein the Heads of State and Government stressed the importance of gender equality and the vital role of women's participation in economic and political processes for achieving sustainable and inclusive development.
2. The PABSEC reaffirms its belief that the empowerment of women and achievement of gender equality is a matter of human rights, a key component of social justice, and a prerequisite for sustainable development. In this respect, the Assembly recalls its Recommendations:
  - Recommendation 35/1999 on *The Legal Framework for Combating Trafficking in People*;
  - Recommendation 61/2002 on *Women's Participation in the Political, Economic, Social and Cultural Life*;
  - Recommendation 67/2002 on *Social Reintegration of Jobless People*;
  - Recommendation 70/2003 on *the Role of Culture in the Development of the BSEC Region*;
  - Recommendation 74/2003 on *The Fight against Poverty in the BSEC Member States*;
  - Recommendation 103/2008 on *Social Cohesion within the BSEC Member States: Contribution to Political Stability*; and

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<sup>1</sup> *Rapporteur*: Mr. Ioan Vulpescu, Chairman of the Committee – Romania.

Assembly debate on 9 December 2014 (see Doc.: GA43/CC43/REP/14, Report of the Cultural, Educational, and Social Affairs Committee on *Gender Equality in the BSEC Region: Achievements and Challenges*, discussed in Yerevan on 16 September 2014; *Rapporteur*: Mrs. Liudmila Bokova, Member of the Committee – Russia).

*Text adopted by the 44<sup>th</sup> General Assembly in Athens on 9 December 2014.*

- Recommendation 116/2010 on *Protecting Women against Violence in the BSEC Member States*.
3. The PABSEC notes that the principle of equality is primarily enshrined in the Constitutions of the BSEC Member States and that legislation in all Member States generally guarantees equal rights for men and women and non-discrimination in all spheres of society. Moreover, reforms continue to be implemented in the Civil, Penal, and Labor Codes and in other legal instruments of several Member States, and numerous strategies are being devised to promote gender equality.
  4. Despite progress in promoting non-discrimination, the PABSEC expresses concern that although the adopted legislative instruments provide the legal basis for promoting gender equality in society and determine the basic directions of the states' gender policies, the existing mechanisms and instruments on gender equality remain inadequate. Although women have obtained the *de jure* status of equality with men, *de facto* they continue to be discriminated against due to gender stereotypes that are deeply rooted in society and also ingrained among the authorities.
  5. The PABSEC stresses that gender inequalities violate fundamental human rights. They also impose a heavy toll on the economy and result in underutilization of aptitude. To achieve the BSEC goals for sustainable and inclusive development, the potential talent pool of women needs to be used more extensively and more efficiently.
  6. In this regard, the PABSEC calls upon the Member States to intensify efforts to address the gaps and weaknesses in the implementation of relevant laws and to translate these legal instruments into concrete action. An effective legal framework that fulfills its purpose requires monitoring, enforcement, regular evaluation and updating, as well as ongoing dialogue with businesses, social partners, organizations promoting gender equality, and civil society representatives.
  7. The PABSEC emphasizes the need to directly address the causal reasons for gender inequality, including traditional belief systems and attitudes. To remove barriers to gender equality, it is necessary to challenge customary ingrained behaviors and attitudes within families and peoples in the BSEC region. Traditional attitudes and deeply rooted cultural norms regarding gender roles, held by both males and females, are the greatest impediments to achieving gender equality.
  8. **Therefore, the PABSEC recommends** that the parliaments and the governments of the BSEC Member States:
    - i) *ensure* implementation of the United Nations (UN) Convention on the Elimination of All Forms of Discrimination against Women and the decisions of the Fourth World Conference on Women (the Beijing Declaration and platform for Action);
    - ii) *guarantee* fulfillment of the obligations assumed by the Member States in terms of harmonization of national legislation with international standards on the protection of women's rights;

- iii) *develop* effective measures to bring about the equal participation of women in democratic processes and formulate best practices for their implementation;
- iv) *establish* local capacities and expertise on gender issues and build networks linking community leaders and politicians;
- v) *create* a unified system combining the national machinery and institutional mechanisms to formulate and implement gender-equality policies;
- vi) *set up* democratic institutions to actively promote gender equality, such as establishing ombudsman offices at local and national levels, as appropriate;
- vii) *support* the implementation of projects aimed at eradicating women's poverty;
- viii) *enact* policies to address and challenge women's unequal access to economic livelihood opportunities and formal employment (such as promoting equal pay for equal work, ensuring freedom from discrimination in the workplace, and combatting gendered labor market segregation);
- ix) *facilitate* employment of women, including those with children, by creating conditions that achieve a healthy balance between work and family obligations;
- x) *make* legal regulations enabling both parents to arrange their working hours according to their needs (part-time work) until the child reaches a certain age;
- xi) *promote* the creation of jobs and salary increases, duly considering the gender aspects of economy sectors with predominantly female workers;
- xii) *promote* the development of women's entrepreneurial and other work-related skills by supporting training, retraining, and special education facilities, and promoting equal education and training of women and men;
- xiii) *support* women's business activities and provide incentives for loan projects that target women's economic initiatives, especially in rural areas;
- xiv) *enhance* cooperation within the framework of the BSEC Working Group on Small and Medium Enterprises (SMEs) related to the promotion and support of women entrepreneurship;
- xv) *support* better organization of women in the labor market;
- xvi) *improve* working status and conditions of women and to ensure their inclusion into the scope of social security through combating informal employment;
- xvii) *incorporate* a gender knowledge communication module in educational programs;
- xviii) *ensure* that girls and boys, as well as women and men, have equal opportunities to receive education and training, including training in non-traditional vocations and jobs;

- xix) *facilitate* dialogue and cooperation between civil society, the media, and governments to promote gender mainstreaming;
  - xx) *ensure* collection, analysis, and dissemination of statistical data on women's and men's participation in public and civic life, in order to formulate policies that effectively address gender inequalities.
9. **The PABSEC invites** the Council of Ministers of Foreign Affairs to consider this Recommendation.