

## RECOMMENDATION 116/2010\*

### “Protecting women against violence in the BSEC Member States”

1. The Parliamentary Assembly of the Organisation of the Black Sea Economic Cooperation is concerned with the extend of violence against women, which affects the lives of millions of women worldwide, cutting across socio-economic, educational, cultural and religious barriers. The Assembly firmly believes that violence against women constitutes one of the biggest challenges to the advancement of gender equality and the protection of human rights. It has a devastating impact on individuals, families, communities and countries and enormous social and economic costs at global scale, as well in the BSEC region. It also impedes the contribution of women to development and poses a serious threat to the achievement of the Millennium Development Goals.

2. The Assembly reaffirms its belief that empowerment of women and achievement of equality between women and men are a matter of human rights, a condition for social justice and a prerequisite for sustainable development. In this respect, it recalls its Recommendations on: “The Legal Framework for Combating Trafficking in People” (35/1999); “Women’s Participation in the Political, Economic, Social and Cultural Life” (61/2002); “Social Reintegration of Jobless People” (67/2002); “Role of Culture in the Development of the BSEC Region” (70/2003); “The Fight against Poverty in the BSEC Member-States” (74/2003); and “Social cohesion within the BSEC Member States: contribution to political stability” (103/2008).

3. Furthermore, the Assembly fully shares the fundamental principles set forth in the universal human rights instruments: the *Universal Declaration of Human Rights*, the *International Covenant on Economic, Social and Cultural Rights*, the *International Covenant on Civil and*

---

\* The Assembly debate on 3 June 2010 (see Doc. GA35/CC34/REP/10 – Report on “Protecting women against violence in the BSEC Member States”, discussed by the Cultural, Educational and Social Affairs Committee at its Thirty-Fourth Meeting in Moscow on 7 April 2010.

*Political Rights, the Convention on the Elimination of All Forms of Discrimination against Women, as well as the the Beijing Declaration and Platform for Action.*

4. The Assembly notes with satisfaction that during the recent years, the BSEC Member States have embarked upon legal reforms and policy development with the aim of combating violence against women more effectively. However, greater efforts are needed to address the gaps and weaknesses in implementation of the laws and to translate them into concrete action and particularly into financial support and budgets to address violence against women, including domestic violence.

5. Aware of the complexity of the issue, and taking into consideration that violence against women and particularly domestic violence remains under-reported in most of the BSEC countries, the Assembly is convinced that the issue requires a comprehensive response, building on the contribution of all stakeholders. Strategies to combat violence need to be holistic in their approach, moving beyond mere criminalization to include prevention and assistance measures, as well as initiatives aimed at changing the social attitudes and norms that perpetuate gender-based violence. Combating violence against women requires challenging the way that gender roles and power relations are articulated in society.

6. The Assembly stresses that firm political will and a commitment to implement established standards is a *sine qua non* condition to eliminate violence against women, and that parliamentarians - particularly women - are well placed to influence mentalities at decision-making level, since they are in a key position for coordination between civil society and legislatures.

**7. Therefore, the Parliamentary Assembly recommends** that the Parliaments and Governments of the BSEC Member States:

i. *ensure* full compliance with international and regional instruments pertaining to violence against women, such as the Convention on the Elimination of All Forms of Discrimination against Women (CEDAW) and its Optional Protocol;

ii. *promote* and endorse the advancement of women and intensify efforts to bridge the gender gap in all political, economic and social spheres;

iii. *review* legislation to detect practices and traditions that impede the attainment of equality between the sexes and amend remaining discriminatory articles;

iv. *criminalize* all acts of violence against women perpetrated by state or non-state actors in both the public and the private spheres;

v. *develop*, if they have not yet done so, and implement specific legislation and/or reinforce appropriate mechanisms to handle cases of all forms of domestic and sexual violence, including marital rape and sexual abuse of women and girls, and to ensure that such cases are brought to justice;

vi. *involve* in the drafting of laws and policies advocates who work with victims and can best represent their interests;

vii. *adopt measures* to encourage adequate reporting of domestic violence and ensure that victims of domestic and sexual violence have access to the criminal justice system without facing pressure to withdraw their complaints;

viii. *increase* the capacity, awareness and sensitivity of professionals to respond appropriately to violence against women through the development and delivery of a core curriculum, adapted by profession, on all forms of violence against women across police, law, social work, psychology, health, education;

ix. *strengthen* national statistical and research capacity for collecting data on violence against women, through both specialized surveys and routine data collection;

x. *develop* indicators and compile data, disaggregated by sex, to monitor the effectiveness of policies for the elimination of such violence;

xi. *ensure* that statistics on violence against women, including on prosecution and conviction rates, are made available in a variety of ways and formats accessible to various audiences;

xii. *strengthen* the exchange of data between government bodies, crisis centres and non-governmental organizations at the national, regional and international levels;

xiii. *cooperate with* and *allocate* resources to ensure provision of support and advocacy services by NGOs, including shelters, helplines, advocacy, counselling and other services;

xiv. *ensure* adequate funding to improve the existing infrastructure to support victims of domestic violence and create new centres that provide psychosocial, legal and residential services throughout the member states, including in rural areas;

xv. *integrate* prevention of all forms of violence against women into school curricula and provide gender training for teachers, with a view to changing patriarchal attitudes and stereotypes regarding the role of men and women within the family and in society;

xvi. *promote*, through nationwide awareness and educational campaigns, changes in social and cultural attitudes regarding gender roles so as to eliminate patterns of behaviour that engender violence;

xvii. *conduct* awareness-raising campaigns on violence against women and women's rights targeted at women, particularly in rural areas, to enhance their awareness of their human rights and to ensure that they can avail themselves of procedures and remedies for the violation of their rights;

xviii. *engage* the media in a more active role in promoting women's status in society, and discourage media portrayals of gender stereotypes or discriminatory attitudes towards women.

**8. The Parliamentary Assembly** invites the BSEC Council of Ministers of Foreign Affairs to consider its Recommendation.