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Committee on Equal Opportunities for Women and Men

Address by Ms Carmen Quintanilla Barba (Spain, EPP/CD), Member of the Committee on Equal Opportunities for Women and Men of the Parliamentary Assembly of the Council of Europe

On the occasion of the European Parliament conference on violence against women held in Brussels on 16 March 2010

Information document

It gives me great pleasure to be able to address you on behalf of the Parliamentary Assembly of the Council of Europe. It is very encouraging to see today how the action and determination of the European Union, the Council of Europe and also the United Nations are converging in condemning and combating violence against women.

After its Stop Domestic Violence against Women campaign, the Council of Europe is in the process of drafting a convention on preventing and combating violence against women and domestic violence

The Council of Europe has been actively involved in combating violence against women for several years.¹ A convention on preventing and combating violence against women and domestic violence is now under preparation.² It should focus on “the elimination of violence against women” and deal with “domestic violence which affects women disproportionately”.³ There are four main thrusts:

- ✓ protection of victims;
- ✓ prosecution of perpetrators;
- ✓ prevention;
- ✓ and integrated gender equality policies.⁴

The contribution of national parliaments and the PACE to the drafting, ratification and implementation of a binding legal instrument

The text of the convention should be finalised in spring 2011. The Parliamentary Assembly is calling for high European standards, based, in particular, on its own recent positions.⁵ The involvement of the PACE and the national parliaments of the Council of Europe’s 47 member states is crucial here so that the member states pass legislation, ratify the future convention and monitor its effective implementation with appropriate mechanisms. In the case of Spain, for instance, the Sub-Committee on Violence against Women is tasked with monitoring the proper implementation of the integral law against gender violence and of international legal instruments.

Stepping up co-operation between the Parliamentary Assembly and the European Parliament to promote high standards for combating violence against women in Europe

I should like here to congratulate the Minister, Ms Bibiana Aído Almagro, for the Spanish Presidency of the European Union, and yourself, Ms Svensson, on the fresh impetus you have given to combating

¹ In particular, the Council of Europe ran a campaign called Stop Domestic Violence against Women (see www.coe.int.stopviolence) from 2006 to 2008, involving governments, national parliaments, local and regional elected representatives and civil society, which led to work being started on a convention on the subject.

² Government experts from the 47 Council of Europe member states are taking part in the negotiations, along with the Parliamentary Assembly, international organisations (including the European Union) and representatives of several non-governmental organisations active in the field.

³ CAHVIO (2009) 4 FIN, para 6.

⁴ CAHVIO (2009) 4 FIN.

⁵ With regard to rape, including marital rape, so-called “honour crimes” and domestic violence affecting migrant women, see Resolution 1670 (2009), Recommendation 1873 (2009) and Doc. 11916 on Sexual violence against women in armed conflicts (Rapporteur: Miet SMET, Belgium, Group of the European People’s Party); Recommendation 1868 (2009), Resolution 1662 (2009) and Doc. 11784 on Action to combat gender-based human rights violations, including abduction of women and girls (Rapporteur: Antigoni Papadopoulos, Cyprus, Alliance of Liberals and Democrats for Europe); Recommendation 1861 (2009), Resolution 1654 (2009) and Doc. 11781 on Femicides (Rapporteur: Lydie Err, Luxembourg, Socialist Group); Recommendation 1881, Resolution 1681 (2009) and Doc. 11943 on The urgent need to combat so-called “honour crimes” (Rapporteur: John Austin, United Kingdom, Socialist Group); Recommendation 1887, Resolution 1691 (2009) and Doc. 12013 on Rape of women, including marital rape (Rapporteur: Marlene Rupperecht, Germany, Socialist Group); and Recommendation 1891, Resolution 1697 (2009) and Doc. 11991 on Migrant women: at particular risk of domestic violence (Rapporteur: Karin S. Woldseth, Norway, European Democrat Group).

violence against women in Europe. We welcome these efforts and are following with great interest the proposals which the European Union is currently working on against the background of the entry into force of the Lisbon Treaty.

I should like, in this connection, to pass on our concerns and also our expectations by quoting José Mendes Bota (Portugal, EPP/CD), Chair of the PACE Equality Committee, who welcomed your recent initiatives and the new legal instruments which the European Union may develop. In his view, however, these instruments should not “duplicate Council of Europe instruments or result in less demanding standards”.⁶

It is vital that we join forces and speak out together to combat violence against women in Europe effectively. We need your determination, your commitment and your support to make progress with legislation and to change attitudes. We must work together to set high standards both within the European Union and throughout the Council of Europe. That is why we are counting on the support of the European Union and its member states for the conclusion of the future Council of Europe Convention.⁷ We hope that the European Union will be able to accede to the convention when it is opened for signature and, given the additional resources at the EU's disposal, contribute to the monitoring of the convention as regards data collection, for instance.

The Parliamentary Assembly is determined to continue dialogue and co-operation with the European Parliament in order to intensify efforts to combat violence against women. You can rest assured that the Committee on Equal Opportunities will stand ready to support – within European Union national parliaments – *your* actions which are fully in line with *our* objectives.

Thank you for your attention.

⁶ See appendix.

⁷ See Employment and Social Policy Council Conclusions on the eradication of violence against women, adopted 8 March 2010, para 39.

Appendix Statement by Mr José Mendes Bota (Portugal, EPP/CD), Chairperson of the PACE Committee on Equal Opportunities for Women and Men, PACE Rapporteur on Combating violence against women: towards a Council of Europe convention following the 4th meeting of the Ad Hoc Committee on Preventing and Combating Violence against Women and Domestic Violence (CAHVIO), Strasbourg, 22-24 February 2010

Combating violence against women: José Mendes Bota calls for demanding European standards

The progress achieved in the work of the Expert Committee in charge of drafting the Council of Europe convention to prevent and combat violence against women and domestic violence is encouraging, but the Parliamentary Assembly remains mobilised to ensure that the future convention lays down demanding standards concerning the protection of victims, the prosecution of perpetrators and prevention. I call on my fellow parliamentarians and also on the representatives of Council of Europe member states, local and regional authorities and non-governmental organisations participating in the discussions to keep in mind the ultimate aim of this convention: respect for the human rights of victims of gender based violence and domestic violence whatever their status.

The recent initiatives launched by the Spanish presidency of the European Union and the European Parliament's proposals for reinforcing measures to combat violence against women are to be welcomed. They reflect the common focus of our activities and our determination no longer to tolerate acts of violence against women deriving from unequal relations between the genders. However, under no circumstances should any new legal instruments that may be developed by the European Union duplicate Council of Europe instruments or result in less demanding standards. From this standpoint co-operation between the Council of Europe and the European Union is essential to ensure that our joint efforts result in the establishment of a common legal area affording effective protection to female victims of violence. In this connection, I would like the European Union to clarify as soon as possible its position regarding the implications of the entry into force of the Treaty of Lisbon and the EU's contribution to the drafting and implementation of the future Council of Europe convention.

The convention must be a vigorous legal instrument at the service of Europe's 800 million inhabitants. The establishment of a parliamentary mechanism to monitor the convention's implementation by the Parties would constitute a trailblazing major democratic advance. The Parliamentary Assembly strongly committed itself to the Council of Europe campaign "Stop domestic violence against women" (2006-2008), the principal outcome of which was the launch of the drafting of the convention. The Assembly now intends to remain proactive to secure the adoption of a convention incorporating demanding standards, ensure that it is ratified by the largest possible number of Council of Europe member states and have its implementation guaranteed by a strong, independent monitoring mechanism with the necessary human and financial resources at its disposal.

PACE action: "Parliaments united to combat violence against women"

<http://assembly.coe.int/stopviolence>

**Information on the future Council of Europe convention
on preventing and combating violence against women and domestic violence**

www.coe.int/violence

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