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Promoting a United Nations 5th World Conference on Women

Recommendation 1716 (2005)

Reply from the Committee of Ministers
adopted at the 958th meeting of the Ministers' Deputies (15 March 2006)

1. The Committee of Ministers takes note of Parliamentary Assembly Recommendation 1716 (2005) – Promoting a United Nations 5th World Conference on Women, in particular with respect to two aspects. This recommendation stresses the alarming developments in the situation of women in the world and the role which the Council of Europe must take on in reinvigorating the implementation of the Beijing Platform for Action drawn up by the United Nations. In so doing, it coincides with two major objectives set by the Heads of State and Government for the Council of Europe at the Third Summit in Warsaw on 16 and 17 May 2005.
2. The determination shown by the Heads of State and Government on this point is clearly reflected in the Declaration and Action Plan adopted in Warsaw. They specify the main thrusts of the requisite action as follows: "Equal participation of both women and men is a crucial element of democracy. We therefore confirm our commitment to achieving real equality between women and men. We will strengthen gender mainstreaming in national policies, elaborate guidelines and methods for further progress in equality between women and men, promote the setting-up of national equality mechanisms, and enhance the implementation of the United Nations' Beijing Platform for Action".
3. Like the Assembly, the Committee of Ministers follows closely the development of gender equality in the member states of the Council of Europe, as an integral part of overall human rights. It recalls that in 2003 it initiated a procedure for monitoring the honouring of commitments entered into by member states on the theme of gender equality. As a result of this monitoring procedure, a draft recommendation is now being prepared by the Steering Committee for Equality between Women and Men (CDEG) on the standards and mechanisms for gender equality, which will set out guidelines on European gender equality standards.
4. In fact, most of the topics pinpointed by the Assembly in paragraph 6 of the recommendation as requiring consideration at the United Nations 5th World Conference on Women have been or are being specifically dealt with by the CDEG. These include gender mainstreaming, particularly in the education and health fields, integrating a gender perspective into budgetary processes, protecting women against violence, combating trafficking in human beings and examining the role of women and men in preventing and settling conflicts. New activities will be launched after the European Ministerial Conference to be held in Stockholm on 8 and 9 June 2006 on the theme of "Human rights and economic challenges in Europe – Equality between women and men". These activities will move forward the objectives set by the Beijing Platform for Action in the crucial fields of women and the economy and women and poverty.
5. The Council of Europe and the United Nations are working in close co-operation in this field. In this respect, it should be stressed that the Council of Europe has been making major contributions to the sessions of the Commission on the Status of Women (CSW) since the Beijing Conference in 1995, for example when the Beijing Declaration and Platform for Action (Beijing + 5 and Beijing + 10) were examined and assessed in March 2000 and 2005.¹ The parallel event organised jointly by the Council of Europe and

¹ Council of Europe activities since 1995 in the field of gender equality relating to the strategic objectives of the Beijing Platform for Action and the Vienna Action Plan and the "Beijing + 5" measures and initiatives, Document EG (2004) 3; national mechanisms, action plans and gender mainstreaming in the member states of the Council of Europe since the 4th World Conference on Women (Beijing, 1995), Document EG (2004) 4.

the Slovene authorities during the 49th session of the Commission on the Status of Women (CSW) geared to examining and assessing the Beijing Declaration and Platform for Action (Beijing + 10) in March 2005, on the theme of "Equality between women and men in Europe: institutional mechanisms and balanced participation" illustrates the Council of Europe's commitment to this issue.

6. All the activities launched require appropriate follow-up and it is important to make further headway in the fields that have already been explored in order to secure solid innovative bases and fresh proposals for achieving effective equality between women and men before organising a 5th World Conference on Women. However, should the United Nations decide to organise such a conference, the Committee of Ministers would then consider what form a Council of Europe contribution to the event could usefully take.