



PORTUGAL

Statement by
H.E. the Secretary of State for Parliamentary Affairs
and Equality of Portugal
Ms. Teresa Morais

At the fifty-seventh Session of
the Commission on the Status of Women
General discussion

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Madam Chair,

Distinguished delegates,

Portugal participated actively, in 1995, in the process of construction and adoption of the Beijing Platform for Action as well as in the Future Actions and Initiatives approved in 2000.

The implementation of the Platform at national and European Union levels has also been a concern for our country. We participated in the development of indicators to measure the level of implementation of the Platform, developed by the EU Presidencies, and we contributed to the work that has been developed by the European Institute for Gender Equality.

Among the priorities that have been established in our country, included in the Governmental Program with regard to gender equality, I would like to highlight some of the critical areas of the Platform.

One of these areas is violence against women, in its multiple aspects, which has been our first priority and a special concern.

This priority is reflected in the National Plan Against Domestic Violence, which is already in the fourth edition, in the National Plan Against Trafficking in Human Beings (2nd edition), as well as in the Program for the Elimination of Female Genital Mutilation (also in 2nd edition).

These instruments are coordinated by the Commission for Citizenship and Gender Equality, the national mechanism responsible for the implementation of public policies in the field of citizenship and the promotion of equality between women and men, accompanied by working groups involving representatives from relevant governmental departments.

Last year we invested especially in the prevention of domestic and gender violence and in the protection of their victims.

We strengthened the means of intervention on the network of public support structures; we also established new financial provisions to create emergency places in shelters and to promote the empowerment of the victims when they leave the shelters.

To help the women that cannot return to their home, the Government established partnerships with the municipalities aiming to facilitate access to low-cost housing for victims of domestic violence.

In the area of violence against women we are giving a special attention to the training of health professionals, security forces, prosecutors and other key stakeholders involved.

Also the Women, Peace and Security area deserves a special attention. Indeed, Portugal adopted a national action plan for the implementation of the UN Security Council Resolution 1325 that aims, in particular, to increase the participation of Portuguese women in peacekeeping missions and to ensure the training of those involved in peace-building processes, both on gender equality and gender violence.

The current economic crisis, which also affected Portugal, forced to a greater effort to act in the critical area of women and the economy.

The Portuguese Government promoted positive actions for women with low qualifications and single-parent families (women in majority), by creating a support to employers who contract these women, representing 60% of their salary.

The same solution was adopted to increase the employment of women and men in sectors where each group is underrepresented in view of the elimination of segregation in labor market.

Conscious of the difficulties faced by women victims of domestic violence in accessing employment, a specific support system was established. Today, in Portugal there are focal points for the victims in the employment and vocational training centers. Women are accompanied with privacy and are sent with priority to jobs and training actions.

To promote women's access to Boards of Directors, Portuguese Government approved last year a resolution to increase, in the public and private sectors, the effective participation of women in the management bodies of the companies.

Public companies must approve and evaluate plans for equality and the resolution recommends private companies to adopt identical procedure.

Another area that deserves special attention is education and training of women. In fact, recognizing the work that has been developed for decades, we also know that it is necessary to strengthen the intervention.

It is a fact that the level of academic qualifications of women (especially younger) is - in Portugal as in many other countries - higher than men. But it is also true that there are still low literacy levels among older women, which may result in their exclusion. It justifies, in consequence, a greater effort to provide these women access to education.

On the other hand, the persistence of gender stereotypes in society should justify increased investment on their elimination, which should be a priority of the education system. Girls and boys must have the same choice in their school lives and in their work careers, and build their lives in accordance with their true skills, free of prejudices.

Concerning this, Portugal produced and published 4 guides on "Gender and Citizenship", in order to integrate the gender equality dimension within school curricula.

These guides are being progressively implemented in our schools in a process that also includes training actions for the teachers involved.

Certainly we all agree that investment in education for equality is absolutely strategic for our development.

To finish I would like to stress that Portugal is available to respond to the commitment promoted by UN Women to end violence against women and girls.

I wish you a fruitful work.

Thank you for your attention.