

Joint Statement
of the participants of the First Regional Meeting of Parliamentary Bodies in Charge of Human and Minority Rights and Gender Equality

After the completion of the First Regional Meeting of Parliamentary Bodies in Charge of Human and Minority Rights and Gender Equality, held in Belgrade on 29 and 30 October 2013, the delegations of the:

- Joint Commission on Human Rights, Rights of Children, Youth, Immigration, Refugees, Asylum and Ethics of the Parliamentary Assembly of Bosnia and Herzegovina
 - Committee on Gender Equality of the Parliamentary Assembly of Bosnia and Herzegovina
 - Gender Equality Committee of the Parliament of Montenegro
 - Committee on Human Rights and Freedoms of the Parliament of Montenegro
 - Gender Equality Committee of the Croatian Parliament
 - Committee on Human and National Minority Rights of the Croatian Parliament
 - Commission on Equal Opportunities for Women and Men of the Assembly of Republic of Macedonia
 - Committee on Human and Minority Rights and Gender Equality of the National Assembly of the Republic of Serbia
- express the need to strengthen regional cooperation on human and minority rights and gender equality,
 - the need to organise a cycle of conferences of this kind hosted by each of the countries in the region, with pre-defined topics,
 - note the importance of exchanging experiences and best practice for strengthening the mechanisms and procedures ensuring the efficiency and performance of duties of the parliamentary bodies,
 - believe the priority areas of activity in future to be:
 - national minority rights,
 - addressing the issue of refugees and internally displaced persons,
 - economic rights, primarily the right to work,
 - protection of persons of alternative sexual orientation,
 - the rights of Roma and related support to the regional project of Roma Interparliamentary Organisation,
 - women's rights and gender equality,
 - protection of children's rights, particularly protection against child pornography and cyber crime
 - express the need to ensure an increased participation of these parliamentary bodies in the realisation of the parliament's legislative duties in the possible future amendments and modifications to the rules of procedure regulating the operation of parliaments,
 - emphasise the need for a more efficient implementation of all the ratified international conventions and national legislation, with a special focus on violence against women and striving for zero tolerance for violence, and the related need to ratify the Council of Europe Convention on preventing and combating violence against women and domestic violence, and strengthen the role of the parliament in the implementation of the Convention,
 - believe it necessary to invest additional effort into ensuring consistent and efficient implementation of adopted laws and strategic documents regulating the field and strengthen the related mechanisms, procedures and modalities for the performance of the parliament's control function over the executive,

- underline the need for increased participation of parliamentary bodies in monitoring the implementation of ratified international treaties, recommendations of relevant bodies of international organisations and enforcing the judgements of the European Court of Human Rights,
- underline the need for more efficient cooperation and coordination between parliamentary bodies and independent human rights and liberties institutions and an increased involvement of civil society organisations in the work of parliamentary bodies so as to ensure an increased role of said institutions and organisations in the protection and promotion of human rights and liberties,
- confirm the readiness for increased participation of parliamentary bodies in raising public awareness and mobilising public opinion to ensure proper reporting on the gender dimension and human and minority rights,
- emphasise the need to introduce gender budgeting so as to create official policies resulting in the economic empowerment of women,
- also stress the need to be mindful of human and minority rights protection in the budgeting process so as to create adequate policies,
- stress the need for further increase of women's participation in the parliament in order to reach the critical mass necessary to conduct concrete changes and promote gender equality
- need for continuous education of both individuals and civil servants at all levels and all institutions including the local level in order to raise awareness and shatter stereotypes
- stress the need for an increased participation of parliamentary bodies in the monitoring of the implementation of UNSC Resolution 1325 – Women, Peace and Security
- emphasise the need to focus more on persons suffering double and multiple discrimination,
- emphasise the importance of education, especially for the shattering of stereotypes and combating discrimination in educational programmes at all levels
- stress the need for an increased use of gender sensitive language,
- thank the Organization for Security and Co-operation in Europe for its assistance and support in the realisation of the regional parliamentary cooperation on human and minority rights and gender equality.

Participants of the First Regional Meeting:

- on the behalf of the Joint Commission on Human Rights, Rights of Children, Youth, Immigration, Refugees, Asylum and Ethics of the Parliamentary Assembly of Bosnia and Herzegovina, Aleksandra Pandurevic, Chair
- on the behalf of the Committee on Gender Equality of the Parliamentary Assembly of Bosnia and Herzegovina, Milica Markovic, Second Deputy
- on the behalf of the Gender Equality Committee of the Parliament of Montenegro, Zana Filipovic, member
- on the behalf of the Committee on Human Rights and Freedoms of the Parliament of Montenegro, Dr Halil Dukovic, Chairman

- on the behalf of the Gender Equality Committee of the Croatian Parliament, Nansi Tireli, Chairperson
- on the behalf of the Committee on Human and National Minority Rights of the Croatian Parliament, Furio Radin, Chairperson
- on the behalf of the Commission on Equal Opportunities for Women and Men of the Assembly of Republic of Macedonia, Ljiljana Popovska, Chairperson
- on the behalf of the Committee on Human and Minority Rights and Gender Equality of the National Assembly of the Republic of Serbia, Meho Omerovic, Chairman

Belgrade, 30 October 2013