Declaration for International Women's Day

Equality, if not now, then when?

The Council of European Municipalities and Regions (CEMR) Standing Committee for Equality of Women and Men in Local Life affirms that equality of women and men is a fundamental right and a core value for democracy. Local and regional governments, as the spheres of governance closest to the citizens, represent an important level of intervention to tackle persisting inequalities and promote women´s rights in Europe and all over the world.

On this International Women's Day, 8 March 2016, representatives of local and regional governments:

1. Recall that democracy cannot be built without women, thereby requiring the adoption of all necessary measures at all levels – local, regional, national, European and worldwide – to achieve equal participation of women and men in the decision-making processes;
2. Call on the national governments and the European institutions to confirm that equality of women and men is a core element of our European values and societies; it therefore needs to be at the centre of the political agenda and to be mainstreamed into all relevant policies and legislation;
3. Call on local authorities and regions in Europe to take a formal pledge in favour of equality by signing the European Charter for the Equality of Women and Men in Local Life, launched by CEMR in 2006 and signed by more than 1500 local authorities and regions to date;
4. Act in favour of gender equality in their capacity as employers and service providers to support the improvement of the professional situation of women and recognise their contribution to the economy;
5. Invite the signatories of the Charter to take concrete political measures to promote equality at regional and local level; using the tools made available by CEMR through its Observatory, in line with the powers conferred on local and regional governments in the different countries; and to allocate the necessary financial and human resources for their implementation according to their available capacities;
6. Denounce the violence that is still experienced by women today in the 21st century: any form of violence perpetrated against women in public and private life must be combated and eliminated, including trafficking, sexual exploitation, domestic violence and any other act contrary to the respecting of human rights;
7. Call on national governments and European institutions to adopt common policies and legislation on prevention, protection and support for victims of gender-based violence; call on national governments to ratify the Council of Europe's Convention on preventing and combating violence against women and domestic violence (Istanbul Convention);
8. Take into account the specific needs of women and children among the refugees fleeing war and persecution, and arriving in our local communities; ensure adequate reception and assistance, and prevention of all kinds of violence and discrimination.
9. Demonstrate their willingness to cooperate at global level in order to achieve Goal 5 of the United Nations 2030 Agenda which aims to achieve gender equality and empower all women and girls.