



Resolution 1615 (2008)¹

Empowering women in a modern, multicultural society

Parliamentary Assembly

1. On the tenth anniversary of the establishment of the Committee on Equal Opportunities for Women and Men, the Parliamentary Assembly reiterates the importance it attaches to:

- 1.1. promoting equality between women and men in all areas of life;
- 1.2. furthering women's rights – particularly access for women to public, political and economic decisionmaking posts through the introduction of positive measures (quotas and other mechanisms);
- 1.3. combating gender-based discrimination (particularly in the areas of employment, pensions, narrowing the wage gap between women and men and breaking through the “glass ceiling”);
- 1.4. combating violence against women (domestic violence, trafficking, so-called “honour crimes” and new forms of violence against women);
- 1.5. educational opportunities for all females, both children and adults.

2. The Assembly is concerned about the backlash against gender equality and women's rights that has been occurring for several years. It observes that the progress that had been made in the political, economic and social spheres is regularly undermined. For instance, quota policies aimed at improving women's participation in decision-making processes are being called into question, even within the Assembly. The side-effects of “pro-natal” policies, the effects of the economic crisis and arguments put forward in the name of culture and religion are confining women to their traditional roles and undermining their rights and their chances of realising their full potential.

3. The Assembly reiterates that states must protect women against violations of their rights (including those carried out in the name of religion), promote and fully implement gender equality and reject all religious or cultural relativism where women's rights are concerned.

4. It considers that vigorous policies must be introduced to extend and consolidate women's rights and, with due regard for human rights and the principle of gender equality, to alter the traditional stereotypes of the role of women and empower women in their national communities by enabling them to fully exercise their political and socio-economic rights.

5. In accordance with [Recommendation 1716 \(2005\)](#), the Assembly will support efforts to hold a 5th United Nations (UN) World Conference on Women, which could relate to the recent challenges that women's rights and gender equality have been posed (the spread of HIV/Aids among women, women's access to new information technologies, trafficking in human beings and the deliberate victimisation of women during armed conflicts), while rejecting any move to call into question the decisions taken in Beijing in 1995 at the UN's last World Conference on Women.

1. Assembly debate on 24 June 2008 (21st Sitting) (see [Doc. 11612Doc. 11612](#), report of the Committee on Equal Opportunities for Women and Men, rapporteur: Mrs Circene, and [Doc. 11621Doc. 11621](#), opinion of the Committee on Culture, Science and Education, rapporteur: Mr Pollozhani). Text adopted by the Assembly on 24 June 2008 (21st Sitting).



6. The Assembly invites the member states to empower women in a modern, multicultural society and encourages them to:
 - 6.1. incorporate, if they have not already done so, the principle of equality between women and men into their constitutions or, where no constitution exists, into law as a fundamental human right;
 - 6.2. combat all cultural and religious relativism, which still often prevents women and young girls from reaching their full potential and participating equally in the development of their society;
 - 6.3. combat discrimination against women and gender-based violence;
 - 6.4. promote “positive measures” to achieve balanced participation of women and men in public, political and economic life;
 - 6.5. make education and training of girls and women a priority issue, including state financial support for girls’ education where necessary, and place emphasis on promoting an equal role for women and girls in education programmes;
 - 6.6. promote active participation by women in intercultural dialogue, including its religious dimension;
 - 6.7. support the organisation of the European regional conference which could be organised by the Council of Europe in order to prepare the 5th UN World Conference on Women.
7. Moreover, the Assembly encourages its members to take appropriate action in national parliaments in order to promote the holding of such a conference.