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05 February 2009

## Women's right to hold an individual passport

### Motion for a resolution

tabled by Ms Carina HÄGG and other members of the Assembly

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This motion has not been discussed in the Assembly and commits only those who have signed it

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The United Nations Declaration of Human Rights and the United Nations International Covenant on Civil and Political Rights guarantee the right of everyone to leave any country, including their own, and the right to return to their own country.

Yet many women in the world do not have individual passports and cannot freely travel alone, although travel for personal, professional or humanitarian reasons, for study purposes, on behalf of international organisations or to fulfill political functions at international level is on the increase in a globalised world.

Passports for married couples issued in the countries concerned allow the spouses to travel together, or the husband to travel alone – but not the wife. So this practice is clearly discriminatory and contrary to the United Nations provisions.

Formalities for the issuing of passports are admittedly a matter in which states are sovereign. However, by allowing women without individual passports to cross borders or by denying access to women travelling alone without their own passports because they cannot hold one, Council of Europe member states help to perpetuate a discriminatory practice.

This practice is particularly problematic when a woman without an individual passport wishes to apply for asylum, especially in order to escape gender-based violence that she may experience in her family.

The Parliamentary Assembly invites the member States of the Council of Europe to:

- reaffirm the right of every individual to freely leave his or her country or return to it, and consequently promote the right of every individual to hold an individual passport;
- condemn the discriminatory practices of states which refuse to grant women individual passports or which make obtaining an individual passport subject to permission from a male member of the family;
- encourage third states to abolish all provisions that discriminate against women;
- give special consideration to the reasons why women without individual passports enter their territory, particularly in the case of asylum applications.

*Signed (see overleaf)*



*Signed<sup>1</sup>:*

HÄGG Carina, Sweden  
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SMET Miet, Belgium  
STUMP Doris, Switzerland, SOC  
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1. EPP/CD: Group of the European People's Party  
SOC: Socialist Group