Parliamentary Assembly
Assemblée parlementaire
https://pace.coe.int

COUNCIL OF EUROPE
CONSEIL DE L'EUROPE

Resolution 2351 (2020)[1]

The gender dimension of foreign policy

Parliamentary Assembly

1. In recent decades, women's rights have been enshrined in legislation at national level and in international treaties. The political and economic participation of women has increased. Tangible progress has been made in various spheres and women's rights have been officially recognised as human rights. The Beijing Declaration and Platform for Action, which celebrates its 25th anniversary this year, marked a turning point in the fight for gender equality. The year 2020 is also the 20th anniversary of United Nations Security Council Resolution 1325, which became the normative framework for women, peace and the security agenda.

2. However, the Parliamentary Assembly regrets that full gender equality is not yet a reality. Throughout the world, violence against women, attacks on women's rights and gender inequalities are still rife. There is a revival of organised efforts, and a backlash, against women's rights, including sexual and reproductive health and rights. The Assembly considers that stronger co-ordinated action at international level is needed to promote and protect women's rights, equality and non-discrimination.

3. With a view to promoting inclusiveness, equality and non-discrimination and to counter the backlash against women's rights, several States have launched feminist foreign policies or included a strong gender dimension in their foreign policies. The Swedish feminist foreign policy inspired other countries to use their foreign policies as a political tool to promote women's rights, inclusion and non-discrimination. Political leadership plays an essential role to this end. Placing gender equality at the centre of foreign policy puts forward an inclusive vision of society and is consistent with and contributes to the implementation of the United Nations 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development, which has gender equality as an overarching goal and a stand-alone goal.

4. The Covid-19 pandemic, which has affected countries all around the world, has further revealed existing and persisting inequalities. The Assembly considers that the pandemic and its social and economic consequences are having a disproportionately negative impact on women. In times of crisis, women's rights are often the first ones to be questioned or threatened. There has been an alarming rise in domestic violence. The Assembly therefore believes that an inclusive, co-ordinated and gendered response to this crisis is essential to ensure that no one is left behind. Women's rights can never be considered non-essential or secondary. In this regard, the Assembly welcomes the joint statement on protecting sexual and reproductive health and rights and promoting gender responsiveness in the Covid-19 crisis, published by 59 States on 6 May 2020.

5. The response to the crisis can and should be used as an opportunity to build more resilient and equal societies, grounded in participatory and engaged democracy. The Assembly stresses that women should be an integral part of the response to the crisis and meaningfully involved in all decision-making processes to manage its aftermath and put in place strategies to tackle future crises using an intersectional approach. Sustainable peace and development cannot be achieved without the participation of women. The inclusion of a gender and intersectional dimension in foreign policy can be beneficial for society as a whole. Participation, protection, inclusion and non-discrimination are guiding principles for a strong, inclusive gender dimension of foreign policy.

---

1. *Text adopted by the Standing Committee*, acting on behalf of the Assembly, on 20 November 2020 (see Doc. 15122, report of the Committee on Equality and Non-Discrimination, rapporteur: Ms Petra Stienen).

6. The Assembly recognises that men can play a crucial role in promoting women's rights and in advancing the gender-equality agenda. Men in leadership positions in politics, business, media and civil society should actively advocate for a change of mindset, challenge gender stereotypes and promote gender mainstreaming in all policies and measures and at all levels.

7. In light of these considerations, the Assembly calls on Council of Europe member and observer States, as well as those enjoying observer or partner for democracy status with the Parliamentary Assembly, to:

7.1. engage in developing an inclusive gender dimension of their foreign policy;

7.2. promote women's rights and inclusion at national, bilateral and multilateral levels and prioritise gender equality and women's rights during their presidencies of the United Nations Security Council, Council of Europe and Council of the European Union and presidencies of other international organisations;

7.3. actively promote and prioritise the equal participation of women and men in decision making;

7.4. ensure diversity in panels at events;

7.5. make access to education for women and girls a priority;

7.6. promote the participation of women in peace operations, negotiations and crisis management and develop national action plans and budgets for the implementation of United Nations Security Council Resolution 1325;

7.7. promote, ratify and implement the Council of Europe Convention on Preventing and Combating Violence against Women and Domestic Violence (CETS No. 210, "Istanbul Convention");

7.8. provide political and financial support for programmes protecting women's rights, including sexual and reproductive health and rights;

7.9. use gender budgeting and gender-impact assessments in the preparation and evaluation of legislative measures and policies as well as assistance and co-operation programmes;

7.10. invest in the collection of gender-disaggregated data and related research;

7.11. support civil society organisations promoting and protecting equality and women's rights;

7.12. raise awareness of the benefits of an inclusive gender dimension of foreign policy.

8. As regards diplomatic careers, the Assembly calls on Council of Europe member and observer States, as well as those enjoying observer or partner for democracy status with the Parliamentary Assembly, to:

8.1. promote the participation of women in diplomatic careers, including at ambassador level, and support policy and legal measures allowing a work/life balance;

8.2. promote gender mainstreaming in the functioning of public administrations;

8.3. promote the participation of persons from diverse backgrounds in diplomatic careers;

8.4. provide training on gender equality, diversity and inclusion and on combating sexism in public administrations;

8.5. ensure the participation of women in trade missions.

9. As regards the response to the Covid-19 pandemic, the Assembly calls on Council of Europe member and observer States, as well as those enjoying observer or partner for democracy status with the Parliamentary Assembly, to:

9.1. guarantee the participation and representation of women in all crisis-response planning and decision making;

9.2. undertake gender-impact assessments and ensure gender budgeting for all recovery measures and financial packages;

9.3. protect women and girls from gender-based violence;

9.4. hold public debates on the gender dimension of the Covid-19 pandemic and promote an intersectional approach to recovery plans.

10. The Assembly also calls on political leaders to take a strong stand to protect and promote women's rights at national and international levels and to support a gendered and inclusive approach to foreign policy.

11. The Assembly encourages international organisations to promote the participation of women in higher management, mainstream gender throughout their activities and organise training on gender equality, diversity and inclusion and on combating sexism.