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Combating violence against women: towards a Council of Europe convention

Report
Committee on Equal Opportunities for Women and Men
Rapporteur: Mr José MENDES BOTA, Portugal, Group of the European People's Party

Summary

The Parliamentary Assembly was fully involved in the Council of Europe Campaign to Combat Violence against Women, including Domestic Violence (2006-08). The implementation of the parliamentary dimension of the campaign by the Assembly made it possible to mobilise some 40 national parliaments and a European network of 56 contact parliamentarians, which conducted, over two years, more than 200 activities throughout Europe to condemn domestic violence against women, raise awareness among parliamentarians and the general public, and change the laws.

Domestic violence against women is one of the most widespread violations of human rights, which affects all Council of Europe member states. Given the extent of this phenomenon, the Parliamentary Assembly considers it necessary to remain mobilised on the issue of violence against women.

The Assembly should:

– encourage national parliaments to strengthen national legislation on combating violence against women, in particular by adopting, and supervising the application of, the seven key measures identified by the Assembly in Resolution 1582 (2007) as minimum standards;

– continue the European network of contact parliamentarians in charge of promoting, in each national parliament, action to combat violence against women;

– invite the Council of Europe to draft a framework convention on the severest and most widespread forms of violence against women, in particular domestic violence against women (partners or former partners, cohabiting or not), sexual assaults (including rape and "marital rape") and harassment, forced marriages, so-called "honour crimes" and female genital mutilation.

A. Draft resolution

1. Domestic violence against women is one of the most widespread violations of human rights in Europe. Domestic violence affects all Council of Europe member states and all social classes. According to available estimates, 80 million women Europe-wide could be concerned by it.

2. The Parliamentary Assembly welcomes the campaign conducted by the Council of Europe from 2006 to 2008 to combat violence against women, including domestic violence, which for the first time involved all three political dimensions of the Council of Europe (parliamentary, governmental, local and regional), and associated the NGOs. The Council of Europe campaign "Stop domestic violence against women" aided greater awareness of the phenomenon and acknowledgement of the fact that violence against women, in particular domestic violence, is an unacceptable violation of human rights.

3. The Assembly stresses the significant mobilisation and the major contribution of the national parliaments of the Council of Europe member states and of the parliaments holding observer status with the Parliamentary Assembly in implementing the parliamentary dimension of the campaign. For two years, some 40 national parliaments and 56 contact parliamentarians conducted more than 200 activities throughout Europe to condemn domestic violence against women, arouse awareness among parliamentarians and the general public, amend the laws to better protect the victims, prosecute the perpetrators of domestic violence and prevent this ill. Networking of the contact parliamentarians under the aegis of the Assembly constituted an innovative working method.

4. The Assembly is gratified by the co-operation developed during the campaign with the Inter-Parliamentary Union, the European Parliament and the Nordic Council.

5. The Assembly nevertheless considers that action to combat violence against women must be intensified. The Council of Europe, as Europe's human rights watchdog, should take a pioneering role in this regard. The Assembly intends to remain mobilised and encourage national parliaments to keep up their efforts in this direction.

6. The Assembly therefore invites the national parliaments to:

6.1. strengthen national legislation on prevention of violence against women, in accordance with the Committee of Ministers Recommendation Rec(2002)5 on the protection of women against violence;

6.2. carry on adopting, and supervising the application of, the seven landmark measures identified by the Assembly in paragraph 6.6 of Resolution 1582 (2007) and regarded as minimum standards, namely:

"– making domestic violence against women, including marital rape, a criminal offence;

– regarding violence perpetrated between (former) partners as an aggravating circumstance;

– setting up sufficient numbers of safe emergency shelters;

– making provision to remove violent spouses or partners and take out protection orders against perpetrators;

– guaranteeing effective access to the courts and to protection measures for victims;

– allocating sufficient budgetary resources for the implementation of the law;

– monitoring the application of laws on violence against women passed by parliament";

6.3. support the preparation of a Council of Europe framework convention on the severest and most widespread forms of violence against women, in co-operation with the ministries concerned;

6.4. appoint, within their national delegations to the Assembly, a contact parliamentarian responsible for keeping abreast of legislative developments in the prevention of violence against women in his or her country and reporting them regularly to the Assembly;

6.5. continue the actions to raise the awareness of parliamentarians and the general public, focusing especially on men's involvement in combating violence against women, in conjunction with the governmental, local and regional authorities and with the NGOs;

6.6. organise on the occasion of each International Day for the Elimination of Violence against Women (25 November) an action to raise awareness in parliament;

6.7. support the work of the non-governmental organisations active in combating violence against women.

7. The Assembly agrees to convene the network of contact parliamentarians in 2009 in order to assess the legislative advances made and to prepare the Assembly contribution to the drafting of a framework convention.

8. The Assembly invites the European Parliament and the Nordic Council to maintain their co-operation with the Council of Europe.

9. The Assembly invites the Inter-Parliamentary Union to contemplate joint actions in the context of the United Nations campaign to end violence against women and girls (2008-2015).

B. Draft recommendation

1. Recalling its Resolution … (2008) on combating violence against women: towards a Council of Europe convention, the Parliamentary Assembly welcomes the campaign conducted by the Council of Europe from 2006 to 2008 in order to combat violence against women, including domestic violence, involving all three political dimensions of the Council of Europe (parliamentary, governmental, local and regional) and associating the NGOs.

2. The Assembly considers that the Council of Europe campaign "Stop domestic violence against women" has aided greater awareness of the phenomenon and acknowledgement of the fact that violence against women, particularly domestic violence, is an unacceptable violation of human rights.

3. Despite the progress made and the international instruments already in existence, the Assembly considers that action to combat violence against women must be intensified. It is convinced that the drafting of a legal instrument which embodies the "three Ps" (protection of victims, punishment of perpetrators, prevention) and specifically addressing the question of gender-based violence is necessary for encouraging the member states to attain the minimum standards in this respect and strengthen their legislation. The Assembly feels that the preparation of a framework convention (modelled on the Framework Convention for the Protection of National Minorities, ETS No. 157) would make it possible to propose guidelines and provisions defining objectives that the Contracting Parties would undertake to pursue through national legislation and appropriate governmental action.

4. The Assembly accordingly invites the Committee of Ministers to draft a framework convention on the severest and most widespread forms of violence against women, associating the Parliamentary Assembly, the Congress of Local and Regional Authorities of the Council of Europe and the NGOs in the drafting process, which should:

4.1. encompass the gender dimension and address the specific nature of gender-based violence;

4.2. cover the severest and most widespread forms of violence against women, in particular domestic violence against women (partners or former partners, cohabiting or not), sexual assaults (including rape and "marital rape") and harassment, forced marriages, so-called "honour crimes" and female genital mutilation.

5. Recalling its Recommendation 1838 (2008) on empowering women in a modern, multicultural society, the Assembly invites the Committee of Ministers to appoint a Council of Europe special rapporteur on women's rights who, under the authority of the Council of Europe Commissioner for Human Rights, would be responsible for monitoring the progress of women's rights in fields including that of action to combat violence against women.

6. The Assembly invites the Committee of Ministers to include the action to combat domestic violence against women and other gender-based forms of violence in its co-operation and assistance programmes (including parliamentary programmes) and to seek extra-budgetary funds to finance these activities.

7. The Assembly invites the Committee of Ministers to step up its co-operation with the United Nations in connection with the UN campaign to end violence against women and girls (2008-2015), so that the good practices identified during the Council of Europe campaign are developed and amplified worldwide.

C. Explanatory memorandum, by Mr Mendes Bota

1. Introduction

1. According to the statistics available, one woman in every four or five in Europe has been subjected to physical violence at least once in her lifetime. Some 12 to 16% of women have experienced domestic violence since reaching the age of 16.[1] Across the continent of Europe as a whole, this violation of human rights may be assumed to affect almost 80 million women. Faced with the extent and seriousness of this problem, the heads of state and government of Council of Europe member states, in response to the requests made by the Parliamentary Assembly in 2002 and 2004,[2] included in the Action Plan adopted at the 3rd Summit (in Warsaw) a pan-European campaign to combat violence against women, including domestic violence. The campaign was launched on 27 November 2006 at the Spanish Senate, and was officially closed on 11 June 2008 in Strasbourg at Council of Europe headquarters.

2. From June 2006 to June 2008, in accordance with Resolution 1512 (2006), the Parliamentary Assembly implemented the parliamentary dimension of the Council of Europe Campaign to Combat Violence against Women, including Domestic Violence. In October 2007, I was asked to write a report assessing the campaign at the halfway stage,[3] and in this report the Parliamentary Assembly identified seven key legislative measures that the national parliaments of member states were invited to adopt and/or supervise.

3. The Committee on Equal Opportunities for Women and Men has instructed me to write the final report assessing the parliamentary dimension of the Council of Europe campaign. I shall endeavour to demonstrate to what extent this campaign contributed to mobilise and involve national parliaments and helped to bring about changes in the legislation of several member states. As pointed out by Mrs Sabuni, Sweden's Minister for Integration and Equal Opportunities, speaking on behalf of the Swedish chairmanship of the Committee of Ministers,[4] the closing conference of the campaign marked "the end of the beginning" of Council of Europe action to combat violence against women, including domestic violence. I should also like to go on to highlight future activities that could be undertaken by the Parliamentary Assembly and national parliaments in this field.

2. "Parliaments united in combating violence against women": assessment of an unprecedented experiment by the PACE

2.1. Networking among parliaments

4. The implementation of the parliamentary dimension of the campaign was based on networking among member states' national parliaments and the parliaments that hold observer status with the PACE. By appointing 56 contact parliamentarians, the parliaments involved in the campaign gave an indication of their commitment to eradicate domestic violence. Within their parliaments and in their constituencies, MPs did a great deal of work to break the silence. Many awareness-raising activities were carried out.[5] The Inter-Parliamentary Union, European Parliament and Nordic Council played a full part in the conduct of the campaign. The contact parliamentarians were in regular contact (co-ordination meetings of 19 October 2006 and 4 and 5 June 2007, and final conference on 30 April 2008) to exchange their experiences. This networking was backed up by the setting up of six regional groups,[6] which met in autumn 2007 in Strasbourg, Helsinki, Vienna, Sofia and Paris.

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1. "Combating violence against women: stocktaking study on the measures and actions taken in Council of Europe member states", CDEG(2006)3, pp. 7-8, Professor Dr Carol Hagemann-White, see www.coe.int/stopviolence, governmental dimension of the campaign.
2. See Recommendation 1582 (2002) on domestic violence against women, and Doc. 9525 (rapporteur: Mrs Olga Keltošová, Slovakia, European Democrat Group), and Recommendation 1681 (2004) on the campaign to combat domestic violence against women in Europe, and Doc. 10273 (rapporteur: Mr Jean-Guy Branger, France, Group of the European People's Party).
3. Resolution 1582 (2007) and Recommendation 1817 (2007) on parliaments united in combating domestic violence against women: mid-term assessment of the campaign, see Doc. 11372 (rapporteur: Mr José Mendes Bota, Portugal, Group of the European People's Party).
4. Speech made by Mrs Sabuni in Strasbourg on 10 June 2008, at the closing conference of the campaign.
5. A document summarising the activities undertaken by the PACE and the national parliaments is available (see Document AS/Ega/Inf(2008)8 rev.). Also visit the address below to see the activities undertaken in each country by contact parliamentarians: www.coe.int/t/pace/campaign/stopviolence/ ActionsbyCountry_en.asp.
6. www.coe.int/t/pace/campaign/stopviolence/mencombatviolence_EN.asp.

5. At the instigation of the Parliamentary Assembly, pan-European activities were taken up in national parliaments: adoption of a solemn declaration against domestic violence on the occasion of 25 November 2006, holding of parliamentary hearings to mark International Women's Day (8 March 2007) and launch in the context of 25 November 2007 of an initiative to get men involved in combating violence against women.[7]

2.2. Involvement of parliaments and interplay with the work of the PACE and the Council of Europe

6. An active role for parliaments in implementing the parliamentary dimension of the campaign was facilitated through the making available of PACE communication tools distributed by the national parliaments: the "Handbook for parliamentarians", a practical guide to promotion of the fight against domestic violence, is now available in 11 languages, thanks to the support provided by several national parliaments. A visual identity and promotional material (posters, leaflets, white ribbons) were offered to contact parliamentarians, who were able to adapt these to their national language.

7. It should be noted that, thanks to the four part-sessions held each year in Strasbourg, the PACE was able to provide the link between the activity of contact parliamentarians and national PACE delegations, which were kept regularly informed of the activities in progress, especially via a website and through six newsletters published between January 2007 and April 2008.[8] The chairs of national delegations helped to get MPs actively involved and to convey the Council of Europe's message to their own parliaments.[9] By mobilising resources, by unfailingly offering political support to the Council of Europe campaign,[10] and through the positions adopted by its presidents, firstly René van der Linden, and subsequently Lluís Maria de Puig, the Parliamentary Assembly showed its strong condemnation of violence against women, a subject to which it has given priority since 2006.

8. In order to implement the parliamentary dimension of the campaign, the PACE wished to develop co-operation between national parliaments, governments and elected local and regional representatives. In this context, the meeting between contact parliamentarians and governments' focal points on 5 June 2007 emphasised the need to increase co-operation between the various national players in order to ensure that effective measures are adopted and implemented in every member state. The PACE also wished to involve in its work non-governmental organisations, which perform the vital functions of identifying and assisting victims and setting up prevention programmes. Productive co-operation was developed by both the PACE and national parliaments with Amnesty International, the White Ribbon Campaign (United Kingdom), the WAVE (Women against Violence Europe) Network, the Gender Equality Grouping of INGOs holding participatory status with the Council of Europe and the European Women's Lobby.

2.3. Promotion of minimum legislative standards in all Council of Europe member states

9. In order to combat domestic violence against women, a firm political will is needed by all policy makers, as well as numerous awareness-raising activities to change attitudes and mentalities. But unless legal rules are adopted, this effort will be in vain. The adoption of laws – and supervision of their implementation – is central to the work of parliaments. Recommendation Rec(2002)5 on the protection of women against violence, addressed by the Committee of Ministers of the Council of Europe to member states, provides an excellent basis for defining rules and standards. The Parliamentary Assembly, in line with the report that I presented on 5 October 2007, has identified seven key legislative measures regarded as minimum standards,[11] and priority should be given to adopting and/or supervising these:

"6.6.1. making domestic violence against women, including marital rape, a criminal offence;

6.6.2. regarding violence perpetrated between (former) partners as an aggravating circumstance;

6.6.3. setting up sufficient numbers of safe emergency shelters;

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7. www.coe.int/t/pace/campaign/stopviolence/mencombatviolence_EN.asp.
8. www.coe.int/t/pace/campaign/stopviolence/acceuilnewsletter_EN.asp.
9. At the instigation of its chair, Jean-Claude Mignon, the French national delegation to the PACE, jointly with the Sub-Committee on Violence against Women, held a parliamentary colloquy in Paris on 15 May 2008 entitled "Domestic violence against women: prevention as the key to action".
10. See the adoption of a declaration by the Standing Committee of the PACE meeting in San Marino (17 November 2007), prior to the launch of the campaign, and of the Declaration on Involvement of Men – A Crucial Factor for Change to Combat Violence against Women (Bratislava, 23 November 2007).
11. Paragraph 6.6 of Resolution 1582 (2007) on parliaments united in combating domestic violence against women: mid-term assessment of the campaign.

6.6.4. making provision to remove violent spouses or partners and take out protection orders against perpetrators;

6.6.5. guaranteeing effective access to the courts and to protection measures for victims;

6.6.6. allocating sufficient budgetary resources for the implementation of the law;

6.6.7. monitoring the application of laws on violence against women passed by parliament;".

10. All national parliaments were asked to complete a questionnaire, and the replies from 39 member states' parliaments and Canada were presented at the final conference in Vienna.[12] Without going into detail about the findings of this survey, some trends can be identified from the replies received:

– domestic violence against women is classified as a criminal offence in two thirds of member states. Several member states do not treat "marital rape" as a separate criminal offence;[13]

– the removal of the violent spouse is a measure for which two thirds of the states provide, and this is a positive development demonstrating a growing awareness in Europe of the fact that it is for the perpetrator of domestic violence to leave the conjugal home or to keep away from the victim;

– the fact that violence has occurred between partners is an aggravating circumstance in less than half of the states;

– there are inadequate numbers of safe places in shelters (only 17% of national delegations believed that their country had one place available per 7 500 members of the population);

– many delegations found it difficult to evaluate the amounts assigned to combating violence against women. Often thinly spread out, the funds allocated to combating violence against women are not easily identifiable in the national budget;

– finally, over half of the delegations said that their parliament did not have a body tasked with monitoring implementation of the law against domestic violence, although this is a fundamental power of parliamentary institutions.

11. It emerges from this study that no European state has adopted all seven key measures identified by the PACE.[14] However, the information collected since 2006 indicates that the Council of Europe campaign provided the impetus that encouraged MPs to raise questions in their own parliaments (Liechtenstein, Sweden), or to initiate legislative procedures as yet incomplete (Lithuania), under examination (Azerbaijan, Armenia) or culminating in the adoption of legislation (Monaco, Slovenia). While these developments are welcome, the findings remind us that, at this point in time, the minimum standards are a long way from being met. The conclusion that must be drawn is that action must be taken quickly, and must continue.

3. Looking ahead to future parliamentary activities

12. All the players involved in the implementation of the Council of Europe campaign agreed that the end of the campaign must not mean the end of the effort to fight violence against women. The same opinion was expressed by the participants in the final conference on the parliamentary dimension of the campaign, held in Vienna on 30 April 2008 at the invitation of the Austrian Parliament.[15] I shall therefore suggest three lines of work.

13. Networking among national parliaments has been a powerful means of fostering exchanges of information and experience between parliaments and of working at sub-regional level, with six regional groups being set up, led by co-ordinators appointed by the contact parliamentarians. As emphasised in Vienna by PACE President Lluís Maria de Puig, the active involvement of all national parliaments through networking constituted a unique and exemplary way of working, and was certainly one of the values added by this campaign to the collective efforts of European and international institutions. The Council of Europe was effectively in a position to ask all the national parliaments to serve as relay stations in a campaign

12. See Document AS/EGA(2008)15 rev2, available at www.coe.int/stopviolence/assembly.
13. A Parliamentary Assembly report is being written on this subject (rapporteur: Mrs Marlene Rupprecht, Germany, Socialist Group).
14. Only Canada meets every single criterion.
15. Parliaments: Act Now to Stop Domestic Violence, declaration adopted in Vienna on 30 April 2008, see http://assembly.coe.int/ASP/APFeaturesManager/defaultArtSiteView.asp?ID=773.

endeavouring to promote human rights. I should also like to suggest that this experience be taken further in the Parliamentary Assembly, which must continue to be the driving force in Europe urging national parliaments into action on this issue.

14. Secondly, the parliamentary dimension of the campaign enabled new issues to be raised that it was not possible to deal with:

– almost 80% of the members of parliament in Europe are men. Men's involvement in combating violence against women, which was the subject of a specific PACE activity, is worth continuing. Several countries have begun to set up networks of male MPs, modelled on the Swedish Parliament's network, which has been operating since 2002. In this context, I am pleased that Mr Steingrímur J. Sigfússon (Iceland, UEL), Chairperson of the Committee on Equal Opportunities for Women and Men, is currently writing a report on "Involving men to achieve gender equality", which will enable the work done by the PACE during the campaign to be taken further and expanded;

– the cost of domestic violence is another crucial factor. Some studies have already been published, assessing the costs associated with domestic violence,[16] whether in terms of health services, the justice system or policing. It is, however, also necessary to take account of the – financial and human – costs that arise indirectly for families and national economies;

– the investment of budgetary resources in combating violence against women and the promotion of gender equality must become priorities that must be taken into account when national budgets are drawn up, through gender budgeting. This presupposes the ability to identify clearly the resources allocated, and to identify the aims pursued. In this context, I applaud the efforts made by the Scandinavian and Baltic states, at the initiative of Mrs Hägg, regional co-ordinator, to identify the funds assigned to combating violence against women;[17]

– the situation of migrant women who face domestic violence, and their access to protection arrangements, need to be better grasped in Council of Europe member states. Co-operation with the Council of Europe's North-South Centre in Lisbon would be particularly helpful in involving the countries of origin in discussions on this matter. I am pleased that our colleague Mrs Nursuna Memecan (Turkey, ALDE) has tabled a motion for a recommendation on this subject;[18]

– certain legal concepts, such as stalking and feminicide could also be investigated.

15. Finally, the setting up of co-operation and assistance programmes, *inter alia*, at parliamentary level, might be an excellent means of helping national parliaments to bolster their legislation, draw up parliamentary strategies for amending legislation and subsequently supervise this, and promote exchanges of good practice. It is in my view important for countries that have advanced legislation (such as Spain, Austria, Finland and the Netherlands) to be able to support the efforts of less advanced countries. The Council of Europe should include the combating of domestic violence against women and other gender-based forms of violence in its co-operation and assistance programmes (including parliamentary programmes) and seek extra budgetary funds to finance these activities.

4. Promoting the drafting of a framework convention on the severest and most widespread forms of violence against women

16. The Committee on Equal Opportunities for Women and Men considers that it is no longer sufficient to address a recommendation to member states to guarantee that women enjoy protection against domestic violence. Following the exchanges of views that the committee had in April 2008 with the Commissioner for Human Rights, Thomas Hammarberg, the Deputy Secretary General, Maud de Boer-Buquicchio, and representatives of nongovernmental organisations, the committee now feels certain that a legal instrument in this field has become necessary in order to ensure that victims are protected, perpetrators of violence are punished and violence against women is prevented.

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16. See CDEG(2006)3, pp. 10 ff., or INSEE's 2007 survey of violence against women in France (www.insee.fr/fr/ffc/ipweb/ip1180/ip1180.html).

17. "The Council of Europe Campaign to Stop Domestic Violence against Women – The costs of the fight to stop men's violence against women in the Nordic and the Baltic countries", study prepared by the Swedish Parliament in 2008, see www.coe.int/t/pace/campaign/stopviolence/Source/sweden_analysis_costofviolence_en.pdf.

18. See Doc. 11613, motion for a recommendation on migrant women: at particular risk of domestic violence, tabled by Mrs Nursuna Memecan (Turkey, ALDE) and others.

17. While a consensus seems to be emerging on the need for a legal instrument to encompass the "three Ps" (protection of victims, punishment of offenders, prevention), views differ on the scope that such a convention should have. It should be borne in mind that the Ministers of Justice, at their 27th conference (Yerevan, 12-13 October 2006), invited the Committee of Ministers to ask the European Committee on Crime Problems (CDPC) to report back to it on the "need for the Council of Europe to carry out work in this field, possibly in the form of an international normative instrument to combat domestic violence, *in particular violence against the partner*".[19] The Council of Europe Task Force to Combat Violence against Women, including Domestic Violence, recommends preparation of "a legally binding human rights instrument in this field", which should encompass "*all forms of gender-based violence perpetrated against women throughout their lifetime*, and should therefore include girls"[20] (the emphases in italics are my own). At the closing conference of the campaign (Strasbourg, 10 June 2008), Nyamko Sabuni, Swedish Minister for Integration and Equal Opportunities, said that "a convention on combating violence against women, including violence in the name of honour", would be "an important contribution" to the efforts to make rights effective.[21]

18. Following the declaration adopted by participants at the end of the final conference of the parliamentary dimension of the campaign (Vienna, 30 April 2008), the Committee on Equal Opportunities for Women and Men takes the view that an international treaty in this field should encompass the gender dimension. The gender dimension of the violence inflicted on women was constantly highlighted throughout this campaign, for a very great majority of the victims of violence are women, a very great majority of the perpetrators are men, and domestic violence against women stems from an unequal relationship between women and men in societies still permeated by patriarchal attitudes. The committee considers it particularly important to ensure that the convention will be the subject of regular supervision through an independent monitoring system. It therefore suggests that the convention, in order to remain an effective legal instrument, focus on the severest and most widespread forms of violence against women, in particular domestic violence against women (partners or former partners, cohabiting or not), sexual assaults (including rape and "marital rape") and harassment, forced marriages, so-called "honour crimes" and female genital mutilation. The convention should at least guarantee application of the seven key measures identified by the Assembly to combat domestic violence against women.

19. Finally, the committee is in favour of the drawing up of a framework convention. The studies carried out by the Council of Europe and the PACE show that Council of Europe member states have legislation at varying stages of development, in a variety of legal systems. While it is essential to adopt a convention, by which is meant an instrument that is legally binding under international law, the drafting of a framework convention (modelled on the Framework Convention for the Protection of National Minorities, ETS No. 157)[22] would make possible the inclusion of guidelines and provisions defining objectives that the contracting parties would undertake to pursue through national legislation and appropriate governmental action.

20. In line with the suggestion put forward by the Council of Europe Task Force to Combat Violence against Women, including Domestic Violence, the rapporteur supports the proposal to appoint a Council of Europe special rapporteur on women's rights, as the PACE requested in its Recommendation 1838 (2008) on empowering women in a modern multicultural society. Under the authority of the Council of Europe Commissioner for Human Rights, the special rapporteur would be responsible for monitoring the progress of women's rights in fields including that of action to combat violence against women.

5. Conclusions

21. The Parliamentary Assembly should take the view that, because of the extent of domestic violence against women in all member states, there is an urgent need to take action and to continue to combat domestic violence against women. The Council of Europe's Stop Domestic Violence against Women campaign was based on the three political dimensions of the Council of Europe (parliamentary, governmental, and local and regional), involved NGOs, and was targeted at the general public. It helped to raise awareness of the problem and to make it clear that violence against women, particularly domestic violence, is an unacceptable violation of human rights.

22. The Assembly emphasises the fact that the campaign made it possible to acquire a particularly rich fund of information and experience, which deserves to be put to good use.

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19. Resolution No. 1 on victims of crime, MJU-27(2006)Resol. 1 Final, paragraph 23.2.
20. Paragraph 15 of the "Final activity report of the Council of Europe Task Force to Combat Violence against Women, including Domestic Violence", EG-TFV(2008)5 rev 1, 27 May 2008.
21. The text of her speech is available at: www.coe.int/t/dc/files/themes/violence_femmes/default_EN.asp.
22. See http://conventions.coe.int/Treaty/Commun/QueVoulezVous.asp?NT=157&CM=1&DF=6/18/2008&CL=ENG.

23. The Assembly could propose that each national delegation to the PACE appoint a contact parliamentarian to be responsible for following legislative developments relating to the combating of violence against women in his or her own country and for making regular reports to the PACE.

24. The Parliamentary Assembly should continue and strengthen its co-operation with the Inter-Parliamentary Union, European Parliament and Nordic Council, especially in the context of the United Nations Secretary-General's campaign to end violence against women (2008-15).

25. The Parliamentary Assembly should invite the Committee of Ministers to draw up a framework convention on severe forms of violence against women, which should:

– encompass the gender dimension and address the specific nature of gender-based violence;

– cover the severest and most widespread forms of violence against women, in particular domestic violence against women (partners or former partners, cohabiting or not), sexual assaults (including rape and "marital rape") and harassment, forced marriages, so-called "honour crimes" and female genital mutilation.

26. The Parliamentary Assembly should invite the Council of Europe to include the combating of the severest and most widespread forms of violence against women in its co-operation and assistance programmes (including parliamentary programmes) and to seek extra budgetary funds to finance these activities.

Reporting committee: Committee on Equal Opportunities for Women and Men.

Reference to committee: Doc. 11504 and Reference No. 3418 of 14 April 2008.

Draft resolution and draft recommendation unanimously adopted by the committee on 12 September 2008.

Members of the committee: Mr Steingrímur J. **Sigfússon** (Chairperson), Mr José **Mendes Bota** (1st Vice-Chairperson), Mrs Ingrida **Circene** (2nd Vice-Chairperson), Mrs Anna **Čurdová** (3rd Vice-Chairperson), Mr Frank Aaen, Mr John Austin, Mr Lokman Ayva, Ms Marieluise Beck, Mrs Anna Benaki, Mrs Oksana **Bilozir**, Ms María Delia Blanco Terán, Mrs Olena **Bondarenko**, Mr Predrag Bošcović, Mr Jean-Guy **Branger**, Mr Igor Chernyshenko (alternate: Ms Svetlana **Khorkina**), Mr James **Clappison**, Mrs Minodora Cliveti (alternate: Ms Monalisa **Găleteanu**), Ms Diana Çuli, Mr Ivica Dačić, Mr Joseph Debono Grech, Mr Marcello Dell'Utri, Mr José Luiz Del Roio, Mrs Lydie Err, Mrs Catherine Fautrier, Mrs Mirjana Ferić-Vac, Ms Sonia Fertuzinhos, Mrs Alena Gajdůšková, Mrs Ruth Genner (alternate: Mr Andreas **Gross**), Mrs Claude **Greff**, Mr Attila Gruber, Mrs Carina **Hägg**, Mr Ilie Ilaşcu, Mrs Fatme Ilyaz, Ms Nataša Jovanović, Mrs Birgen **Keleş**, Mrs Krista Kiuru, Mrs Irine Kurdadzé, Mrs Angela Leahu, Mr Terry **Leyden**, Mrs Mirjana Malić, Mrs Nursuna **Memecan**, Mrs Dangutė Mikutienė, Mrs Ilinka Mitreva, Mr Burkhardt Müller-Sönksen, Mrs Christine Muttonen, Mrs Hermine Naghdalyan, Mrs Yuliya **Novikova**, Mr Mark Oaten, Mr Kent Olsson, Mr Jaroslav Paška, Mrs Maria Agostina Pellegatta, Mrs Antigoni Papadopoulos, Mr Claudio Podeschi, Mrs Majda Potrata, Ms Maria del Carmen **Quintanilla Barba**, Mr Frédéric Reiss, Mrs Mailis Reps, Ms Maria Pilar **Riba Font**, Ms Jadwiga Rotnicka, Mrs Marlene Rupprecht, Mrs Klára **Sándor**, Mr Giannicola Sinisi, Ms Miet Smet, Mrs Darinka **Stantcheva**, Mrs Tineke Strik, Mr Michał Stuligrosz, Mrs Doris **Stump**, Mr Han Ten Broeke, Mr Vasile Ioan Dănuţ **Ungureanu**, Mrs Tatiana **Volozhinskaya**, Mr Marek **Wikiński**, Mr Paul Wille, Mrs Betty Williams (alternate: Baroness **Gale**), Mr Gert Winkelmeier, Ms Karin S. **Woldseth**, Mrs Gisela Wurm, Mr Vladimir **Zhidkikh**, Mrs Anna Rodoula Zissi.

NB. The names of those members present at the meeting are printed in bold.

See 36th Sitting, 3 October 2008 (adoption of the draft recommendation, as amended, and draft resolution); and Recommendation 1847 and Resolution 1635.