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on the situation of women in North Africa
(2012/2102(INI))

Committee on Women's Rights and Gender Equality

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CONTENTS

	Page
MOTION FOR A EUROPEAN PARLIAMENT RESOLUTION.....	3
EXPLANATORY STATEMENT	16
OPINION OF THE COMMITTEE ON DEVELOPMENT	20
RESULT OF FINAL VOTE IN COMMITTEE.....	23

MOTION FOR A EUROPEAN PARLIAMENT RESOLUTION

on the situation of women in North Africa (2012/2102(INI))

The European Parliament,

- having regard to Articles 2 and 3(5), second subparagraph, of the Treaty on European Union (TEU) and Article 8 of the Treaty on the Functioning of the European Union (TFEU),
- having regard to Article 23 of the Charter of Fundamental Rights of the European Union,
- having regard to the Africa-EU Strategic Partnership - A Joint Africa-EU Strategy,
- having regard to the Commission communication of 21 September 2010 entitled ‘Strategy for equality between women and men 2010-2015’ (COM(2010)0491),
- having regard to the joint communications from the Commission and the High Representative of the Union for Foreign Affairs and Security Policy entitled ‘A partnership for democracy and shared prosperity with the southern Mediterranean’ (COM(2011)0200), ‘A new response to a changing Neighbourhood’ (COM(2011)0303) and ‘Delivering on a new European Neighbourhood Policy’ (COM(2012)0014),
- having regard to the Commission’s thematic and geographic financial instruments concerning democratisation and human rights (such as the European Instrument for Democracy and Human Rights (EIDHR) and the European Neighbourhood and Partnership Initiative (ENPI)),
- having regard the EU Strategy towards the Eradication of Trafficking in Human Beings 2012–2016 (COM(2012)0286),
- having regard to the resolution of the Parliamentary Assembly of the Council of Europe on ‘Equality between women and men: a condition for the success of the Arab Spring’¹,
- having regard to the United Nations Convention on the Elimination of All Forms of Discrimination against Women (CEDAW) of 18 December 1979, the United Nations Convention on the Rights of the Child of 20 November 1989 and the Optional Protocol to the latter on the Sale of Children, Child Prostitution and Child Pornography of 25 May 2000,
- having regard to UN General Assembly resolution 67/167 of 20 December 2012 on female genital mutilation,
- having regard to the Fourth World Conference on Women, held in Beijing in September 1995, the Declaration and Platform for Action adopted in Beijing and the subsequent outcome documents of the United Nations Beijing +5, +10 and +15 Special

¹ Resolution 1873 (2012), adopted by the Assembly on 24 April 2012 (13th Sitting).

Sessions on further actions and initiatives to implement the Beijing Declaration and Platform for Action, adopted on 9 June 2000, 11 March 2005 and 2 March 2010 respectively,

- having regard to the Protocol to the African Charter on Human and Peoples' Rights on the Rights of Women in Africa,
- having regard to the activities of the Parliamentary Assembly of the Union for the Mediterranean,
- having regard to the Istanbul-Marrakesh Process and the Ministerial Conclusions of the first and second Euro-Mediterranean Ministerial Conferences on 'Strengthening the Role of Women in Society', held on 14-15 November 2006 in Istanbul and on 11-12 November 2009 in Marrakesh,
- having regard to the conclusions of the Middle East and North Africa (MENA) regional dialogues between civil society, State actors and political leaders, held in June and November 2012 in Beirut and Amman, in the framework of the EU-funded regional project 'Promoting a common agenda for equality between women and men through Istanbul Process',
- having regard to 'Spring Forward for Women', the joint regional programme for the South Mediterranean Region, run by the Commission and UN Women;
- having regard to 'A report card on adolescents', the 10th edition of UNICEF's Progress for Children report,
- having regard to the UNDP Arab Human Development Report 2005 entitled 'Towards the rise of women in the Arab world' and the 2009 Report entitled 'Challenges for Human Security in the Arab Region', especially its chapter on 'The personal insecurity of vulnerable groups',
- having regard to its resolution of 17 February 2011 on the situation in Egypt¹,
- having regard to its resolution of 10 March 2011 on the Southern Neighbourhood, and Libya in particular²,
- having regard to its resolution of 7 April 2011 on the review of the European Neighbourhood Policy – Southern Dimension³,
- having regard to its resolution of 7 April 2011 on the use of sexual violence in conflicts in North Africa and the Middle East⁴,
- having regard to its resolution of 13 March 2012 on equality between women and men in

¹ Texts adopted, P7_TA(2011)0064.

² Texts adopted, P7_TA(2011)0095.

³ Texts adopted, P7_TA(2011)0154.

⁴ Texts adopted, P7_TA(2011)0155

the European Union – 2011¹,

- having regard to its recommendation of 29 March 2012 to the Council on the modalities for the possible establishment of a European Endowment for Democracy²,
 - having regard to Rule 48 of its Rules of Procedure,
 - having regard to the report of the Committee on Women’s Rights and Gender Equality and the opinion of the Committee on Development (A7-0047/2013),
- A. whereas many women, in particular young women, were very much involved in the ‘Arab Spring’ in North Africa, participating, from the outset, in demonstrations, public and political debate and elections, taking an active part in civil society, in the social media and on blogs, among other things, and therefore were, and still are, key players in democratic change in their countries and in strengthening development and cohesion;
- B. whereas these countries are going through a process of political and democratic transition and of changing or adapting their constitutions, in which women, whether parliamentarians, elected officials or civil society representatives, are actively and consistently involved; whereas the result of this process will shape the countries’ democratic functioning and fundamental rights and freedoms, and will have an impact on the status of women;
- C. whereas the role played by women in revolutions is no different from that which they are required to play at times of democratic transition and state rebuilding; whereas the success of these processes is entirely contingent on the full involvement of women at all levels of decision-making;
- D. whereas women in these countries have, albeit unevenly, become more present in higher education, civil society organisations, enterprises and institutions in the past decades, even if, under dictatorial and paternalist regimes, the effective implementation of rights was limited and women's participation was subject to various restrictive conditions;
- E. whereas women’s rights represent one of the most debated issues in the present political process and are women’s main concern, as they face the risk of a backlash and intimidation, that may reduce the chances of achieving the goal of a shared democracy and equal citizenship status;
- F. whereas several common gender issues, such as girls’ and women’s rights as an integral part of universal human rights, equal rights and compliance with international conventions are at the heart of the constitutional debates;
- G. whereas women’s representation in politics and in decision-taking positions in all sectors varies from one country to another, but is disappointing as regards the percentages involved when compared with the great involvement of women in the various uprising movements and in the elections that followed and the increased proportion of highly

¹ Texts adopted, P7_TA(2012)0069.

² Texts adopted, P7_TA(2012)0113.

educated women;

- H. whereas the renewed EU Neighbourhood Policy should place greater emphasis on gender equality, empowerment of women and support for civil society;
- I. whereas at present the EU's specific support for gender issues in the region stands at EUR 92 million, of which EUR 77 million at bilateral level and EUR 15 million at regional level;
- J. whereas, among the EU bilateral programmes the most significant is to be implemented in Morocco, with a budget of EUR 45 million for 'Promotion of equality between men and women', and whereas in Egypt a project of EUR 4 million is to be implemented by UN Women, while in Tunisia and Libya UN Women is implementing bilateral programmes for women in preparation for elections;
- K. whereas the socio-economic situation, especially the high level of youth and female unemployment, and poverty, often leading to the marginalisation of women and making them increasingly vulnerable, was one of the leading causes of the upheavals in the region, together with the aspiration for rights, dignity and justice;
- L. whereas many acts of sexual violence were committed on girls and women during and after the uprisings across the region, including rape and virginity tests used as a means of political pressure against women, inter alia by security forces, and sexual harassment in public; whereas gender-based intimidation is increasingly being used by extremist movements; and whereas surveys show that more than 80 % of Egyptian women have experienced sexual harassment;
- M. whereas the situation of migrant women and children is even more critical due to the insecurity in some parts of the region and the economic crisis;
- N. whereas the risk of trafficking in human beings is increasing in countries in transition and in areas where civilians are affected by conflicts or where many refugees or internally displaced persons are to be found;
- O. whereas one fundamental issue in the constitutional debates is whether Islam should be defined in the constitution as the religion of the people or of the state;
- P. whereas the December 2012 Egyptian constitutional referendum failed to secure the necessary degree of popular participation or a consensus across the board, with the result that questions have remained unanswered and there is still some latitude of interpretation regarding major constitutional issues, including women's rights;
- Q. whereas the parliamentary dimension of the Union for the Mediterranean (UfM) and the Istanbul-Marrakesh Process are among the best tools for lawmakers to exchange on all these issues and the Parliamentary Assembly of the Union for the Mediterranean includes a Committee on Women's Rights, which must be properly used;

Women's rights

1. Calls on the authorities of the countries concerned irreversibly to enshrine in their constitutions the principle of equality between men and women in order to state explicitly the prohibition of all forms of discrimination and violence against women and girls, the possibility of affirmative actions and the entrenchment of women's political, economic and social rights; calls on lawmakers in those countries to reform all existing laws and to incorporate the principle of equality into all projects or legislative proposals that could lead to discrimination against women, for example in the area of marriage, divorce, child custody, parental rights, nationality, inheritance and legal capacity, in line with international and regional instruments, and to entrench the existence of domestic mechanisms for the protection of women's rights;
2. Calls on the national authorities to guarantee equality between women and men in penal codes and social security systems;
3. Highlights the fact that equal participation by women and men in all spheres of life is a crucial element of democracy and that women's participation in governance constitutes a precondition for socio-economic progress, social cohesion and equitable democratic governance; strongly urges all countries, therefore, to make gender equality a priority in their democracy promotion agendas;
4. Stresses that the ongoing transitions in North Africa will only lead to democratic political systems and societies once gender equality, including the freedom to choose one's way of life, is achieved;
5. Calls on the national authorities in North Africa to fully implement CEDAW, the protocols thereto and all international human rights conventions and hence to withdraw all reservations to CEDAW; also asks them to cooperate with UN mechanisms protecting girls' and women's rights;
6. Recalls the open debate among Islamic women scholars with a view to interpreting religious texts in a women's rights and equality perspective;
7. Recalls the importance of guaranteeing freedom of expression and of religion and pluralism, including through the promotion of mutual respect and of interfaith dialogue, in particular among women;
8. Encourages states to engage in an inclusive, wide-ranging and voluntary debate with all stakeholders, including civil society, social partners, local women's organisations, local authorities and religious leaders, and to ensure that women's rights and the principle of equality between men and women are protected and upheld;
9. Recalls that no monotheistic religion advocates or can be used to justify violence;
10. Calls on the North African countries to adopt laws and concrete measures prohibiting and laying down penalties for all forms of violence against women, including domestic and sexual violence, sexual harassment and harmful traditional practices, such as female genital mutilation and forced marriages, especially in the case of underage girls; stresses the importance of the protection of victims and of the provision of specific services; welcomes the recent campaign against domestic violence launched by the Tunisian

Minister for Women and Family Affairs, and the ongoing commitment to this cause on the part of Morocco, which in 2012 organised its tenth national campaign to tackle violence against women;

11. Recalls the double discrimination faced by lesbian women and calls on national authorities in North Africa to decriminalise homosexuality and to ensure that women are not discriminated against on the basis of their sexual orientation;
12. Stresses the importance of fighting impunity with respect to all violence against women, in particular sexual violence, by ensuring that such crimes are effectively investigated, prosecuted and severely punished, that minors are adequately protected by the judicial system and that all women have full access to justice, without religious and/or ethnic discrimination;
13. Calls on national governments to provide sufficient training to ensure that justice operators and security forces are properly equipped to deal with sexual violence crimes and their victims; also underlines the importance of a gender-sensitive transitional justice system;
14. Condemns the use of all forms of violence, particularly sexual violence, before, during and after the uprisings and its continuous use as a form of political pressure, and as a means of oppressing, intimidating and degrading women; calls on national justice systems to prosecute these crimes with adequate measures, and stresses that the International Criminal Court could intervene if no judicial action is possible at national level;
15. Points out that, during and after the uprisings, women in North Africa have faced increased vulnerability and victimisation;
16. Calls on the North African countries to develop a strategy for victims of sexual violence during and after the uprisings, which provides the victims with adequate reparation, and economic, social and psychological support; calls on the authorities of the North African countries to give priority to bringing the perpetrators to justice;
17. Condemns the practice of female genital mutilation which is still in use in some areas of Egypt, and calls on the national authorities to reinforce the implementation of the ban and on the Commission to establish programmes aimed at rooting out the practice, including through the involvement of NGOs and health education; stresses, furthermore, the importance of awareness raising, community mobilisation, education and training, and the need to involve national, regional and local authorities and civil society, as well as religious and community leaders, in combating the practice of female genital mutilation;
18. Commends the fact that more and more states in the region have decided to raise the legal age of marriage for girls over the past decades (16 in Egypt, 18 in Morocco and 20 in Tunisia and Libya) and condemns any attempt to lower it again or to limit the impact of such reforms as early, and often forced, marriages are not only detrimental to girls' rights, health, psychology and education but also perpetuate poverty, adversely affecting economic growth;
19. Stresses that discrimination or violence of any kind against women or girls cannot be

justified on grounds of culture, tradition or religion;

20. Underlines the need, especially when creating new health policies, to ease access to health and social protection and services for women and girls, particularly with regard to maternal, sexual and reproductive health and rights; calls on the national authorities to fully implement the ICPD, the Programme of Action and the UN development and population agenda and draws their attention to the conclusions of the report by the United Nations Population Fund (UNFPA) entitled ‘By choice, not by chance: family planning, human rights and development’;
21. Stresses the importance of specific actions to inform women about their rights and the importance of cooperation with civil society and state agencies in preparing reforms and implementing anti-discrimination laws;

Women’s participation in decision-making

22. Emphasises that women’s active participation in public and political life, as protesters, voters, candidates and elected representatives, shows their willingness to exercise their rights as citizens to the full and to fight to build democracy; points out that recent events in the Arab Spring have shown that women can play important roles in revolutionary events; calls, therefore, for all the necessary steps to be taken, including positive measures and quotas, to ensure progress towards women’s equal participation in decision-making at all levels of government (from local to national, from executive to legislative powers);
23. Considers it of the utmost importance to increase the number of women participating in the drafting of laws in national parliaments with a view to ensuring more equitable legislative practices and a genuine democratic process;
24. Supports the idea of many women parliamentarians in these countries that women’s rights and gender equality and the active participation of women in political, economic and social life by enhancing their skills and combating discrimination could better be promoted and implemented in legislation with the establishment of a women’s caucus or a special parliamentary gender equality committee, where one does not yet exist, to deal with the issue and ensure gender mainstreaming in parliamentary work;
25. Insists that, as in Europe, the representation of women should be enhanced at all levels of decision-making, particularly in institutions, political parties, trade unions and the public sector (including the judiciary), and stresses that women are often well represented in a number of sectors but that are less present in high-level positions, partly due to the persisting gender discrimination and stereotypes and the glass ceiling phenomenon;
26. Considers that a democratic transition requires the implementation of gender-sensitive policies and mechanisms that ensure women’s full and equal participation in decision making in public life, be this in the political, economic, social or environmental sphere;
27. Highlights the important role of education and the media in promoting changes in attitudes across society and adopting the democratic principles of respect for human dignity and partnership for both sexes;

28. Stresses the importance of bringing more women into peace negotiation, mediation, internal reconciliation and peace building processes;
29. Stresses the importance of establishing and funding training courses to prepare women for political leadership, and of any other measures which would help to empower women and to ensure that they participate fully in political, economic and social life;

Women's empowerment

30. Commends those countries, like Tunisia and Morocco, where efforts in favour of girls' education have been stepped up; reaffirms, nevertheless, that better access to education and remedial-catch up education, and especially to higher education, should be provided for women and girls; points out that some efforts remain to be done to eradicate women's illiteracy, and that emphasis should be placed on vocational training including courses to promote women's digital literacy; recommends the inclusion of gender equality in the education curricula;
31. Stresses that the governments and parliaments of North African countries should make it a priority to ensure that girls have access to high-quality secondary and higher education, given that this is a means of boosting development and economic growth and guaranteeing democratic stability;
32. Calls for policies taking account of the specific situation of the most vulnerable categories of women, including girls and, disabled women, as well as migrants, members of ethnic minorities, homosexuals and transsexuals;
33. Highlights the fact that much more should be done to ensure women's economic independence and encourage their participation in economic affairs, including in the agricultural and service sector; points out that economic independence for women empowers their resistance to violence and humiliation; considers that exchanges of best practice should be fostered at regional level between entrepreneurs, trade unions and civil society, in particular to support those women who are most disadvantaged in rural and poor urban areas;
34. Calls on the governments of the North African countries to encourage and support more female participation in the labour market and to take all the necessary measures to prevent gender discrimination in the work place; emphasises the need for tools that can enable women's access to the labour market in areas traditionally closed for them;
35. Recognises the role of the media in the promotion of issues regarding the situation of women and their role in society, as well as their influence on the attitudes of citizens in their countries; recommends the drawing up of an action plan aimed at supporting women in the media, both as a professional career path and as an opportunity for monitoring how women are represented on television, through the production of television programmes and the use of the new media (the internet and social networks) in order to encourage the political participation of women and propagate the notion that tradition and equal opportunities can be made to work harmoniously together;
36. Recommends that steps be taken to monitor the process of women's empowerment,

including with regard to respect for their rights as workers, in particular in industrial and service sectors, in rural and industrial urban areas, and to promote female entrepreneurship and equal pay;

37. Points out that there is a positive correlation between the size of a country's SME sector and the rate of economic growth; believes that micro-finance is a very useful tool to empower women, and recalls that investing in women also means investing in families and in communities and helps to eradicate poverty and social and economic unrest, and strengthens social cohesion in addition to giving women greater economic independence; recalls that micro-finance goes beyond credit and also implies management, financial and commercial advice and saving schemes;
38. Calls on national public authorities to devise framework policies on micro-finance in order to counter unintended consequences, such as over-indebtedness, which women may face owing to a lack of information or relevant legal provisions;
39. Encourages North African countries to establish support mechanisms for women entrepreneurs, including through the provision of relevant information, legal protection, and professional advancement and management training courses;
40. Encourages the empowerment of women through exchange projects that will allow women's organisations and individual female researchers from different countries to meet and to share experiences and lessons learnt, enabling them to come up with strategies and actions that can be replicated while taking account of differing needs and places of origin;
41. Underlines the importance of ensuring that programmes and actions for women's empowerment in the region are based on three levels of intervention: first, at institutional level, by pushing for gender equality through reforms in the legal framework and new pieces of legislation, including the provision of technical support; secondly, by supporting civil society organisations that can advocate in favour of women's rights and help increase their participation in the decision-making process; and, thirdly, by working directly at local community level, especially in rural areas, with the aim of changing social behaviours and traditions and opening up spaces for women in the social, economic and political life of their communities;

European Neighbourhood Policy / EU action

42. Stresses that the ENPI should put women's rights, gender equality and women empowerment at the heart of its programmes, as they are one of the key indicators to assess progress in democratisation and human rights; considers that gender equality should be prioritised in each country strategy paper and national indicative programme;
43. Calls on the Commission to continue and to strengthen the mainstreaming of gender issues in the various EU interventions, whatever their core topic, and encourages the Commission to continue to cooperate with international organisations as implementers, such as UN Women;
44. Encourages the Commission to adopt a gender mainstreaming approach when drafting country roadmaps for engaging with civil society organisations in North African

countries, with the aim of reducing gender inequities and creating the conditions for the equitable participation of women and men in decision-making processes;

45. Calls on the VP/HR to deepen the dialogue with Arab regional institutions so as to ensure that they play a leading role in mainstreaming women's rights and related policies across the region;
46. Calls on the VP/HR and the Commission to implement the joint work programme on cooperation signed with the League of Arab States, in particular regarding women's empowerment and human rights;
47. Calls on the Commission to reinforce the financial envelope providing support for women in the region; believes that this support should continue to take into account both the specificities of each country and the common problems affecting them at regional level, e.g. at political and economic level, seeking complementarity between regional and bilateral programmes;
48. Calls on the Commission to encourage the development of leadership programmes for female opinion leaders and for leaders in the business and finance sector and to provide further support for existing programmes in this area;
49. Considers that women's rights and gender equality should be adequately taken into account in the commitments made by partners in accordance with the 'more for more' principle of the renewed Neighbourhood Policy; calls, therefore, on the VP/HR and the Commission to develop clear criteria in order to guarantee and monitor progress, through a transparent and inclusive process, including in consultation with women's rights and civil society organisations;
50. Calls on the EU Special Representative for Human Rights to pay special attention to women's rights in North Africa, in line with the reviewed EU Human Rights Strategy;
51. Highlights the importance of encouraging the participation of women in the electoral process and calls on the authorities of the countries concerned, therefore, to adopt constitutional provisions entitling women to participate and removing the obstacles preventing them from participating in the true sense; calls on the EU to work closely with the national governments in order to provide them with best practices regarding the training of women regarding their political and electoral rights; recalls that this should be done throughout the electoral cycle through assistance programmes and should be closely monitored by the EU EOM, if need be;
52. Calls on the Commission to continue monitoring the way in which North African countries are implementing the recommendations on women's rights made by EU election observation missions and to submit a report to Parliament;
53. Calls on the VP/HR and the Commission to address discrimination against women workers' rights in labour law when holding political and policy dialogue meetings with North African countries, in line with the 'more for more' principle, and to promote women's participation in trade unions;

54. Calls on the Commission and other donors to promote programmes aimed at ensuring equal access to labour markets and training for all women, and to increase the financial resources allocated to support capacity-building for women's civil society organisations and networks at national and regional levels;
55. Urges the Commission to highlight positive examples of female entrepreneurship involving women from North African countries, or from organisations comprising female European and North African entrepreneurs, including in the technological and industrial sectors; calls, therefore, on the Commission to establish means of disseminating the relevant information so as to ensure that the fullest possible use is made of the experience gained in order to promote and raise awareness of the development potential of such activities in communities which have less dynamic economies;
56. Calls on the Commission, when conducting impact assessments with respect to countries with which a 'deep and comprehensive free trade agreement' is under negotiation, to take into account the agreement's potential social impact and potential effects on human rights, especially on the rights of women, including in the informal sector;
57. Calls on the Commission to support measures to ensure that the specific needs of women in crisis and conflict situations, including their exposure to gender-based violence, are immediately and adequately met;
58. Calls on the VP/HR and the Commission to guarantee an enabling environment for civil society to freely operate and participate in democratic changes when holding political and policy dialogue meetings with North African countries;
59. Calls on the Commission to reinforce the staff dedicated to gender issues in the EU delegations of the region and to guarantee that women and NGOs are involved in the consultation process around the programming;
60. Welcomes the fact that UN Women has set up offices in North Africa and encourages the EU delegations in the countries concerned to further work with the UN offices to produce measures to guarantee gender equality and promote women's rights in the wake of the Arab Spring;
61. Calls on the Commission to encourage the creation of and to finance counselling centres and 'women's houses', where women can obtain advice on any issue, from political rights to legal counselling, through health and protection against domestic violence, as a holistic approach is helpful to women but also more discreet when it comes to violence;
62. Encourages national authorities in North Africa to set up awareness raising programmes on domestic violence in combination with the development of refuges for women who have, or are presently experiencing domestic violence;
63. Calls on the authorities in North African countries to ensure suitable medical and psychological support, free legal services and access to justice and to complaint mechanisms for female victims of and witnesses to violence;
64. Recalls that support for civil society, NGOs and women's organisations should also be

provided through the UfM mechanisms; calls on the Commission to facilitate cooperation between women's organisations in the EU and their counterparts in North Africa;

65. Calls on the Commission to support the efforts in Northern African countries towards building deep and sustainable democracy based on respect for human rights, fundamental freedoms, women's rights, principles of equality between men and women, non-discrimination and the rule of law; stresses the need to support the development of active citizenship in the region through technical and financial support to civil society in order to help create a democratic political culture;
66. Calls on the Commission to ensure full transparency in trade negotiations, including on all background information, based on which trade agreements are proposed; stresses that women's groups and civil society organisations should be actively engaged all along the process;
67. Calls on the Parliamentary Assembly of the UfM to dedicate a session every year in March to the situation of women in the region;
68. Calls on the Commission to promote the reinforcing of the Istanbul-Marrakesh process and to support programmes that promote dialogue between civil society and governments in the Euro-Med region;
69. Believes that the newly established European Endowment for Democracy (EED) should devote special attention to women's involvement in the democratic reform processes in North Africa, by supporting women's organisations and projects in gender-sensitive areas such as encouraging intercultural and inter-religious dialogue, combating violence, generating employment, promoting cultural and political participation, extending equal access to justice, health services and education for women and girls, and preventing or ending existing discrimination against women and violations of women's rights;
70. Urges the Commission and the Member States, and especially the EU Anti-trafficking Coordinator, to take into account and have a common front in the coordination of EU external policy activities in the framework of the EU Strategy towards the Eradication of Trafficking in Human Beings 2012–2016; considers that North African national authorities should, as and when possible, be encouraged to liaise with other states in the region to combat trafficking in human beings;
71. Calls on the Commission to support women's projects and strengthen women's networks in universities, the media, cultural bodies, the film industry and other creative sectors, and insists on the importance of enhancing cultural relations between both shores of the Mediterranean, including through the social media, digital platforms and satellite transmission;
72. Calls on the governments and authorities of the Member States to put women's rights at the centre of their bilateral diplomatic and trade relations with the North African countries;
73. Calls on the Commission to strengthen higher education exchange programmes, such as Erasmus Mundus, and to encourage the participation of young women; calls also for the

development of interregional cooperation (be it through twinning or ‘peer-to-peer’ exchanges) between regions from the northern and southern Mediterranean;

74. Calls on the Commission to encourage the participation of young women in bilateral educational mobility programmes like Erasmus and to develop interregional cooperation between universities and regions in the northern and southern Mediterranean;
75. Welcomes the Mobility Partnerships insofar as they facilitate exchanges and help to manage migration in a human and dignified way;
76. Instructs its President to forward this resolution to the Council, the Commission and the governments of the Member States.

EXPLANATORY STATEMENT

Since the end of 2010, a wave of protests and demonstrations swept across North Africa and the Middle East, changing the face and nature of the region from within. Regardless of women's position in these regions, they actively participated as demonstrators, organisers, and leaders in these movements, serving as crucial agents of change alongside their male counterparts. Today, they continue to fight for representation in the newly formed assemblies and governments and for equal rights in their new constitutions.

Success of these revolutionary protests, commonly known as the Arab Spring, has for a number of reasons varied across the different countries. This report focuses on four countries in North Africa: Egypt, Libya, Morocco, and Tunisia. Despite differences among them, they have all been affected by a regime change, elections and a redrafting of their constitution.

The aim of this report is: (1) to highlight the achievements women have attained in Egypt, Libya, Morocco, and Tunisia; (2) to underline the commitment of women in civil society, NGOs, media and political parties to support the democratic transition (3) to point out the continuing difficulties and potential pitfalls women still face in their quest for equality in these countries, despite their involvement having been crucial to the success of their own demonstrations; (4) to highlight how the EU instruments should be used to support women's rights and gender equality in these countries in the democratic process.

In the decades preceding the uprisings, women in Tunisia and, to a certain extent, in Egypt, Morocco and in Libya, obtained rather advanced legislation for the protection of their rights. Still in practice the achievement of genuine gender equality was limited by the repressive nature of the regimes, the lack of law effective implementation and by traditional perceptions of the role of women. Even worse, progresses achieved in women's rights were used as propaganda for the autocratic regimes, especially in Libya and also in Egypt. Moreover the participation of women to public life was conditioned to their membership of the ruling party.

In Tunisia civil society is very strong and already was under the Ben Ali regime, especially women's rights organisations. Nevertheless during the Arab Spring many were surprised by the important role women played and by their intense participation to the demonstrations in Egypt, Libya and Tunisia. Women then gained a large visibility during the revolutions. They often paid a high price for their participation, especially in Egypt and Libya where an alarmingly high number of cases of sexual violence and intimidations were reported.

After the uprisings, the challenge for women was to translate their civic fight into political action and participate in elections. The results varied from one country to another. It mainly proved that the voting system adopted by the electoral law affects female candidates positively or negatively.

The election law in Libya required political parties to file closed zipper lists that included alternating male and female candidates both horizontally and vertically. This gave a good result with women getting 32 seats out of the 80 allocated to political parties (out of the 200 of the new National Congress). The other 120 seats were allocated to individual candidates

and only one woman was elected (out of 89 candidates). The Libyan law was adopted taking into account the Tunisian experience where the lists were only alternating vertically.

The experience of Tunisia shows that the fragmentation of the political landscape weakened the quota system. Nevertheless the female representation in the National Constituent Assembly is still significantly above the regional - and European level - with 27% - as it was the case before the revolution, but in free elections.

The results of the elections in Egypt were very disappointing. In the November 2011-January 2012 elections, only eight women (1.6 %) were elected; two more were among the 10 members of the parliament appointed by the Supreme Council of the Military Forces (SCAF), bringing the overall share to 1.9%. In the Shura Council elections held in January-March 2012 women won five out of a total 180 seats (2.8%).

These results are of paramount importance because the building of democracy entails the full participation of women but also because the newly elected assemblies in Egypt, Libya and Tunisia are in charge of drafting new constitutions. The drafting or revision of the Constitution is indeed a core component of the political debate. The current constitutional situation in North Africa reminds of the one in post-war Europe. The biggest challenge ahead for women in Egypt, Libya and Tunisia is to ensure that women participate actively in the bodies responsible for drafting the new constitution and to guarantee that democracy and women's rights and gender equality are clearly stated in the constitution. To that end, women should organise themselves inside the assemblies, for instance in caucus gathering representatives from all political parties, as it's happening in Tunisian parliament.

The dialogue between women on the values and principles underlying the future constitution, and beyond, should also encompass the participation of women from different backgrounds and religions.

After the elections in these countries, with the exception of Libya, Islamist parties arrived in power, sometimes in coalition like in Tunisia. Some members of these parties and movements outside them symbolically focus on women's rights and put pressure on governments to challenge any idea of equality between men and women. The question of gender equality is at the heart of the public and constitutional debates and crystallises passions. The status and place of women in society is currently almost shaping a societal choice and has a tendency to oppose 'modernists' against 'traditionalists'. It is then very importance at that stage to avoid that risk and a too strong bipolarisation. A solution could be to create institutional support that offers opportunities to build bridges between women from different horizons to find compromises.

The impact of the Arab Spring was rather different in Morocco. In the wake of the uprisings in the neighbouring countries, a huge demonstration took place on 20 February 2011. A revision of the constitution was conducted and adopted by referendum in July 2011. Subsequently an Islamist party, the PJD (Party for Justice and Development) won the general elections in November 2011.

The whole issue in these countries is the shaping of political Islam within these societies which are very different from the Gulf States for instance. It will also depend on how political

Islam succeeds to develop a governmental doctrine in North Africa building in the *acquis* of the past.

There is indeed a large spectrum of combinations possible between Islam and the universality of Human rights. The Tunisian Constituent Assembly is trying to find a compromise. Such a thing is not impossible as demonstrated by article 19 of the Moroccan constitution, revised in 2011, which states that men and women enjoy an equal footing on civic, political, economic, social, cultural and environmental rights and freedoms¹. The new constitution was approved by referendum.

The discussions around the drafting of a new constitution are proving to be particularly difficult in Egypt. Despite lively and sophisticated debates among the members of the Constituent Assembly, reaching compromises between the Islamist and non-Islamist members has proven to be an elusive feat. Furthermore, the stark absence of a critical mass of women in the democratically elected People's Assembly weakens women's voice in the constitutional process despite a vivid civil society where women are very active.

Libya remains a post-conflict country with very specific problems and has no real State structures on which to base its reconstruction. The tribes still play a major role in stabilising the country and women that are involved in public campaigns for peace and national reconciliation must be included in the negotiations bodies.

In the four countries the process is still ongoing and is experiencing both progress and setbacks; thus, the final result still remains uncertain.

The role of women in North Africa can also be assessed through their economic and social empowerment. Actually in Tunisia, Morocco, and Libya women are, since years, very well represented as university students (40-60%)², entrepreneurs or participants in economic activity (over 25%)³, etc. In countries like Libya where access to public life was completely blocked women managed to be relatively well represented in economic and social life and now represents about 17% of elected parliamentarians in the National Congress, but only 2 out of 24 Ministries.

The EU has a role to play through its renewed Neighbourhood Policy. By supporting the building of democratic regimes and economic and social development, the EU could be instrumental in helping its Southern neighbours achieving what the popular uprisings were calling for: more democracy, more freedom, and more justice. When conducting its actions the EU should not forget that there is no genuine democracy which would not take into account half of the population. Gender equality and women's rights should therefore be among the EU priorities and progress in that field should be taken into account when

¹ "L'homme et la femme jouissent, à égalité, des droits et libertés à caractère civil, politique, économique, social, culturel et environnemental, énoncés dans le présent titre et dans les autres dispositions de la Constitution, ainsi que dans les conventions et pactes internationaux dûment ratifiés par le Royaume et ce, dans le respect des dispositions de la Constitution, des constantes et des lois du Royaume. L'Etat marocain œuvre à la réalisation de la parité entre les hommes et les femmes. Il est créé, à cet effet, une Autorité pour la parité et la lutte contre toutes formes de discrimination"

² UNESCO Institute of Statistics. Tertiary Education

³ ILO - UNDP Institute of Statistics, Economic Activity

evaluating the commitments of partners under the ‘more for more’ approach. To that end, women and women organisations should be involved in the negotiation process with the authorities when deciding on the priorities and programmes in the framework of the European Neighbourhood Partnership Instrument (ENPI).

The structures of the Union for the Mediterranean (UfM) are another tool to foster dialogue and strengthen networks between universities, researchers, journalists, entrepreneurs and NGOs.

This report is based on a public hearing, a delegation to Tunisia and the consultation with several women elected in the countries concerned, experts and NGOs.

23.1.2013

OPINION OF THE COMMITTEE ON DEVELOPMENT

for the Committee on Women's Rights and Gender Equality

on the situation of women in North Africa
(2012/2102(INI))

Rapporteur: Corina Crețu

SUGGESTIONS

The Committee on Development calls on the Committee on Women's Rights and Gender Equality, as the committee responsible, to incorporate the following suggestions in its motion for a resolution:

1. Urges every North African country to step up efforts aimed at promoting equal access for women to education, medical assistance, justice, public media and political life;
2. Encourages the empowerment of women through exchange projects that will allow women's organisations and individual female researchers from different countries to meet and to share experiences and lessons learnt, enabling them to come up with strategies and actions that can be replicated while taking account of differing needs and places of origin;
3. Draws attention to the major challenge of eradicating illiteracy among women, and calls for a better assessment of the causes of school drop-out; stresses the importance of ensuring the representation of good female role models in schools;
4. Asks for the elimination of all forms of discrimination against women in legislation currently in force in North African countries, and stresses the importance of the active involvement and participation of women in both political life and civil society organisations, as well as in drafting of laws; emphasises the importance of informing and coaching women and men from all different backgrounds and societal groups about equal citizenship and electoral rights;
5. Calls on the Commission and other donors to promote programmes aimed at ensuring equal access to labour markets and training for all women, and to increase the financial resources allocated to support capacity-building for women's civil society organisations and networks at national and regional levels;

6. Urges the Commission to highlight positive examples of female entrepreneurship involving women from North African countries, or from organisations comprising female European and North African entrepreneurs, including in the technological and industrial sectors; calls, therefore, on the Commission to establish means of disseminating the relevant information so as to ensure that the fullest possible use is made of the experience gained in order to promote and raise awareness of the development potential of such activities in communities which have less dynamic economies;
7. Asks the authorities in North African countries to take sustainable measures to overcome the gender pay gap, fight against the increasing feminisation of unemployment and also to strengthen social protection in situations which are gender-related and, in particular, in connection with motherhood;
8. Calls for the heritage and cultural, religious and other traditions of women, such that they do not affect women's dignity, freedom and security, to be respected; believes that priority should be given to efforts made to improve the position of women in the communities in which they live, in accordance to their needs and the circumstances they face;
9. Encourages the Commission to adopt a gender mainstreaming approach when drafting country roadmaps for engaging with civil society organisations in North African countries, with the aim of reducing gender inequities and creating the conditions for the equitable participation of women and men in decision-making processes;
10. Calls on the authorities in North African countries to ensure suitable medical and psychological support, free legal services and access to justice and to complaint mechanisms for female victims of and witnesses to violence.

RESULT OF FINAL VOTE IN COMMITTEE

Date adopted	22.1.2013
Result of final vote	+: 22 -: 0 0: 2
Members present for the final vote	Thijs Berman, Michael Cashman, Corina Crețu, Véronique De Keyser, Nirj Deva, Leonidas Donskis, Charles Goerens, Filip Kaczmarek, Miguel Angel Martínez Martínez, Gay Mitchell, Norbert Neuser, Bill Newton Dunn, Maurice Ponga, Birgit Schnieber-Jastram, Michèle Striffler, Alf Svensson, Keith Taylor, Eleni Theocharous, Patrice Tirolien, Anna Záborská, Iva Zanicchi
Substitute(s) present for the final vote	Enrique Guerrero Salom, Gesine Meissner, Judith Sargentini

RESULT OF FINAL VOTE IN COMMITTEE

Date adopted	19.2.2013
Result of final vote	+: 24 -: 0 0: 4
Members present for the final vote	Regina Bastos, Andrea Češková, Marije Cornelissen, Iratxe García Pérez, Zita Gurmai, Mikael Gustafsson, Mary Honeyball, Sophia in 't Veld, Teresa Jiménez-Becerril Barrio, Constance Le Grip, Astrid Lulling, Ulrike Lunacek, Elisabeth Morin-Chartier, Krisztina Morvai, Siiri Oviir, Joanna Senyszyn, Joanna Katarzyna Skrzydlewska, Marc Tarabella, Britta Thomsen, Anna Záborská, Inês Cristina Zuber
Substitute(s) present for the final vote	Izaskun Bilbao Barandica, Minodora Cliveti, Silvia Costa, Anne Delvaux, Mariya Gabriel, Nicole Kiil-Nielsen, Doris Pack, Licia Ronzulli, Angelika Werthmann