

WRITTEN QUESTION E-2477/03
by Miet Smet (PPE-DE)
to the Council

Subject: Women's rights in Afghanistan

The Taliban's seizure of power in 1996 went hand in hand with a spectacular decline in the situation of Afghan women. Women were subjected to extreme psychological and physical repression in the form of a partial or total withdrawal of medical care, education, opportunities to earn a living and freedom of movement.

Many had hoped that the end of the Taliban regime would usher in a new era for Afghan women. In the European Parliament resolution of 5 September 2002¹ it was stressed that absolute priority must be given to the situation of women in Afghanistan. Members of the European Parliament also asked for a new Afghan government to adopt and implement effective measures to improve the situation of women. The European Union also wishes to contribute to this process, and has provided for part of Europe's support for Afghanistan to be targeted directly at specific women's projects.

But a year and a half after the Bonn conference the situation of women is anything but favourable. In the country, where three-quarters of Afghans live, nothing has changed for women. This has been confirmed by Members of the European Parliament who participated in the EP delegation to Afghanistan: since the fall of the Taliban women's rights have improved only in Kabul, and over the whole country only 30% of girls go to school.

How does the EU react to this continuing violation of women's rights? Which specific women's projects in Afghanistan are being funded by the EU? As well as supporting specific women's projects, is the EU taking other steps to improve the situation of women? What proportion of the European budget for Afghanistan is used entirely for the benefit of women?

¹ P5-TA(2002)0407.