



Procedure file

Basic information		
INI - Own-initiative procedure	2005/2215(INI)	Procedure completed
Situation of women in armed conflicts and their role in the reconstruction and the democratic process in countries after a conflict		
Subject 4.10.09 Women condition and rights		

Key players			
European Parliament	Committee responsible	Rapporteur	Appointed
	FEMM Women's Rights and Gender Equality		14/12/2005
		PSE DE KEYSER Véronique	
	Committee for opinion	Rapporteur for opinion	Appointed
	AFET Foreign Affairs		25/01/2006
		PPE-DE HYBÁŠKOVÁ Jana	
	DEVE Development		
European Commission	Commission DG	Commissioner	
	External Relations		

Key events			
17/11/2005	Committee referral announced in Parliament		
25/04/2006	Vote in committee		Summary
03/05/2006	Committee report tabled for plenary	A6-0159/2006	
01/06/2006	Results of vote in Parliament		
01/06/2006	Debate in Parliament		
01/06/2006	Decision by Parliament	T6-0245/2006	Summary
01/06/2006	End of procedure in Parliament		

Technical information	
Procedure reference	2005/2215(INI)
Procedure type	INI - Own-initiative procedure
Procedure subtype	Initiative
Legal basis	Rules of Procedure EP 54
Stage reached in procedure	Procedure completed
Committee dossier	FEMM/6/31711

Documentation gateway

Committee draft report		PE370.262	17/03/2006	EP	
Amendments tabled in committee		PE371.894	04/04/2006	EP	
Committee opinion	AFET	PE370.244	20/04/2006	EP	
Committee opinion	DEVE	PE370.184	25/04/2006	EP	
Committee report tabled for plenary, single reading		A6-0159/2006	03/05/2006	EP	
Text adopted by Parliament, single reading		T6-0245/2006	01/06/2006	EP	Summary
Commission response to text adopted in plenary		SP(2006)2902	22/06/2006	EC	

Situation of women in armed conflicts and their role in the reconstruction and the democratic process in countries after a conflict

The committee adopted the own-initiative report by Véronique DE KEYSER (PES, BE) on the situation of women in armed conflicts and their role in the reconstruction and democratic process in post-conflict countries. The report highlighted the positive role that women play in conflict resolution and post-conflict reconstruction, and drew attention to the vulnerability and special needs of women and girls in conflict situations.

The committee said that in times of conflict women civilians, along with children and old people, are victims of all sorts of ill-treatment. In many cases violence against women constitutes not only physical and/or sexual abuse but also a violation of their economic, social and cultural rights. Victims of rape and sexual abuses in wartime are often stigmatised, rejected and mistreated and sometimes, in order to restore honour to the community, even murdered. MEPs emphasised the responsibility of all states to put an end to impunity and to prosecute those responsible for genocide, crimes against humanity and war crimes including those involving sexual violence against women and girls. They called for zero-tolerance of the sexual exploitation of children, girls and women in armed conflicts and refugee camps, and demanded severe administrative and criminal penalties for humanitarian staff, representatives of international institutions, peacekeeping forces and diplomats guilty of such exploitation.

The report also noted that, despite all the resolutions, appeals and recommendations adopted and made by various international and European institutions, women are still not fully involved in conflict-prevention and conflict resolution, peace-keeping operations and peace-building. It concluded that what was needed was not fresh recommendations but rather the implementation of existing ones, for example UN resolution 1325 of 31 October 2000 on women and peace and security. The committee supported the latter's recommendation that at least 40 % of the people involved in the whole peace process should be women, arguing that "quotas are currently the only way of allowing women to play a significant political decision-making role in national reconstruction processes, and to guarantee their political presence at the negotiating table". And it urged the EU to support measures to significantly increase the number of women at all levels in all European Security and Defence Policy missions.

The report also drew attention to the problem of female suicide bombers, many of whom are recruited after having been raped, and stressed that rape used as a weapon of war affects all women, irrespective of ethnic, religious and ideological differences.

Finally, the committee supported the due implementation of human rights clauses in agreements with third countries and of the principles of international humanitarian law and related international agreements with specific reference to women's rights and needs.

Situation of women in armed conflicts and their role in the reconstruction and the democratic process in countries after a conflict

The European Parliament adopted a resolution based on the own-initiative report drafted by Véronique DE KEYSER (PES, BE) by 315 votes for, 23 against and 67 abstentions. Members highlighted the positive role that women play in conflict resolution and post-conflict reconstruction. They also draw attention to the vulnerability and special needs of women and girls in conflict situations and women as perpetrator of violence. In general terms, the report stressed the need to mainstream a gender perspective into peace research, conflict prevention and resolution, peacekeeping operations, post-conflict rehabilitation and reconstruction and to ensure a gender component in field programmes.

Women as war victims: Parliament emphasised the importance of access to reproductive health services in conflict situations and refugee camps, both during and after conflicts. Such services include the need for women to have the possibility of giving birth in hospital without the prior authorisation of a male relative, or terminating unwanted pregnancies, and to have access to psychological help. All States have a responsibility to put an end to impunity and to prosecute those responsible for sexual violence against women and girls, such as rape, sexual slavery, forced prostitution, enforced pregnancy, enforced sterilisation and any other form of sexual violence of comparable seriousness. States must recognize and condemn these crimes as a crime against humanity and a war crime and in this regard. These crimes should be excluded from amnesty provisions. In addition, stopping the use of child soldiers in conflicts, including small girls, who are subjected to full-blown sexual slavery was a priority. Parliament urged that long-term psychological, social, educational and economic programmes be set up for these children. It condemned violence against women in all circumstances but called for zero tolerance of the sexual exploitation of children, girls and women in armed conflicts and refugee camps, and demanded severe administrative and criminal penalties for humanitarian staff, representatives of international institutions, peacekeeping forces and diplomats guilty of such exploitation.

Women as peacemakers:Parliament highlighted the positive role that women play in conflict resolution and in post-conflict reconstruction and in particular in disarmament, demobilisation and reintegration (DDR) programmes. It supported all those recommendations which, since UNSCR 1325 (2000), have sought to improve the lot of women in conflicts, and called on the Council and Commission to incorporate and implement these recommendations, particularly those made in its resolution of 30 November 2000 into all their policies. However, despite all the resolutions, appeals and recommendations adopted and made by various international and European institutions, women are still not fully involved in conflict-prevention and conflict-resolution, peace-keeping operations and peace-building. It is not fresh recommendations that are called for, but the drawing-up of a practical action programme with the identification of the means necessary for its carrying-out, and assessment of the obstacles to and monitoring of the results of implementation. Parliament called for an annual report to be submitted to the European Parliament on the implementation of the programme. It went on to point out the persistence of discrimination against women with regard to access to capital and resources such as food and education, to information technologies and to health care and other social facilities. Women's involvement in economic activities is of crucial importance in order to support their socio-economic position in post-conflict societies.

Women and war:Parliament drew attention to the problem of female suicide bombers and stressed that rape used as a weapon of war affects all women, irrespective of ethnic, religious and ideological differences. Women who have been raped are socially stigmatised, excluded and even killed.

Parliament went on to make a series of recommendations. These include the following:

- greater participation by women in diplomacy and Member States' diplomatic services, and training women within those services in negotiation and mediation techniques, thus creating registers of women who are qualified for peace- and security-related posts;

- the concepts of transitional justice to be applied in peace processes and the transition to democracy and the rule of law, while respecting victims' rights, the dignity of female witnesses along with the participation of women in committees of inquiry set up for the purposes of reconciliation, and the incorporation of gender mainstreaming in the measures adopted by these committees;

- recommendations should be limited to what is essential, namely urging the institutions to seek synergies on the specific action to be taken with other international institutions pursuing the same objectives, and to make the best possible use of the new financial instruments of the 2007-2013 financial framework as incentives and means of leverage;

- that Parliament investigate the problem of suicide attacks by women, and launch a study of the issue culminating in a conference bringing together not only specialists but also other people with a knowledge of gender issues from the countries concerned and Islamic religious leaders;

- it is essential that the Commission retain the European Initiative for Democracy and Human Rights as a specific instrument within the 2007-2013 financial framework. The instrument has in the past ensured the success of calls for tender and budgetary headings specific to women's rights, without requiring the agreement of the governments in place;

Finally, Parliament supported the due implementation of human rights clauses in agreements with third countries and of the principles of international humanitarian law and related international agreements, with specific reference to women's rights and needs.