



**Speech by the Ambassador Aurélie Bouchez,
Head of the European Union Delegation to Kazakhstan
at the V ASTANA ECONOMIC FORUM - 23-24 May 2012
Panel session: "Women's Leadership in the modern world"**

Let me begin by saying that it is a great pleasure and privilege for me to attend the "Central-Asian Congress of business women" today. I would like to express my appreciation to the organisers of this conference for this excellent initiative. The topic of our discussion here today is of very high importance, as gender policy and women's rights are of the key importance for the EU Human Rights policy.

The changes introduced by the **Lisbon Treaty** in the field of women's rights and gender equality mainly concern two issues: the affirmation of the very principle of gender equality and the EU policies in the field of gender equality. The gender equality and non-discriminatory principles are now strengthened, because they are made more visible than in the previous treaties.

Further, the Treaty of Lisbon gives the Union a direct involvement in combating inequalities between man and woman and fighting different types of discrimination or violence against women; in particular, it contains an explicit reference to domestic violence against women. Member States agreed on a Declaration highlighting their political commitment to combat domestic violence. This Declaration provides that "*the Conference agrees that, in its general efforts to eliminate inequalities between women and men, the Union will aim in its different policies to combat all kinds of domestic violence. The Member States should take all necessary measures to prevent and punish these criminal acts and to support and protect the victims.*"

It is also stated that the Union shall prevent and combat all kinds of trafficking and sexual abuse of women (Art. 69 TFEU).

Moreover, the **EU gender equality strategy** was adopted 21 September 2010. It spells out a series of actions based around five priorities: the economy and labour market; equal pay; equality in senior positions; tackling gender violence; and promoting equality beyond the EU.

The EU has also adopted **the Guidelines on violence against women and girls and combating all forms of discrimination against them** as a part of comprehensive package of EU Human Rights Guidelines in 2008, which mark the EU's clear political will to treat the subject of women's rights as a priority and to take long-term action.

The **Court of Justice of the EU** takes the view that the principle of equal treatment derives from various international instruments and from the constitutional traditions common to the Member States. It is a fundamental value of the union. The Court has acknowledged the existence of a principle of non-discrimination which must be regarded as a general principle of European law (*Case C-555/07, Küçükdeveci v Swedex GmbH & Co. KG*)

EU-INTERNATIONAL FORA

The EU also pursues a twin-track approach on **gender equality in development cooperation**:

- measures specifically designed to tackle gender inequalities;
- incorporation of gender issues into all aspects of development policy;

The crucial significance of gender equality in development policies is recognized in various policy documents among others in:

- The 2005 **European consensus on development** (where Gender Equality is identified as a cross-cutting issue)
- The 2007 **Commission Communication on Gender Equality and Women's Empowerment in Development Cooperation**. The 2007 paper on equality and empowerment was the first step towards a coordinated European approach to promoting gender equality and empowering women through development cooperation. In particular, it describes how gender equality can be furthered through new forms of aid such as budget support and sector-based aid, which are starting to replace traditional methods of supporting individual projects.
- The 2010 Commission Staff Working Document **EU Plan of Action on Gender Equality and Women's Empowerment in Development**. It is an operational document that seeks to accelerate the achievement of the MDGs and other international development goals.
- The Council also decided that a progress report regarding the implementation of the plan would be presented and discussed **annually and a mid-term review** would be conducted in 2013. The first implementation report covering 2010 and 2011 was issued in November 2011.

A very important milestone for promotion of gender policy and women's empowerment was a **signature of a new partnership agreement between EU and UN Women on 16 April 2012**, aimed at strengthening the cooperation between the two organizations. The cooperation of the EU and UN will primarily focus on ensuring women's representation in decision-making in the fields of economics, politics and justice worldwide, as well as better access for women to work and social opportunities.

The EU also participates in the **UN Commission on the Status of Women** and is an active supporter of a resolution on renewed efforts to eliminate all forms of violence against women.

A further priority is the implementation of **UN Security Council resolution**, which reaffirms the important role played by women in the prevention and resolution of conflicts, peace negotiations, peace-building, peacekeeping, humanitarian responses and post-conflict reconstruction. It also stresses the importance of their equal participation and full involvement in all efforts for the maintenance and promotion of peace and security.

Gender equality is one of the **UN's Millennium Development Goals (MDGs)**. It is also fundamental to reducing poverty and achieving other development goals.

EU-KAZAKHSTAN

Under the Lisbon Treaty an important principle has been established which may affect **third countries** in their dealings with the EU. This is contained in Article 10 TFEU: *“In defining and implementing its policies and activities, the Union shall aim to combat discrimination based on sex, racial or ethnic origin, religion or belief, disability, age or sexual orientation.”*

The EU has adopted local EU strategy for the implementation of EU guidelines on violence against women and girls and combating all forms of discrimination against them. The women situation in Kazakhstan is followed on the occasion of the EU local (Delegation and Embassies) meetings on Human Rights and during the meetings of the EU Delegation with local NGOs. Moreover, the EU-CA civil society seminar in 2010 was dedicated entirely on Women's rights.

Let me have a quick look on EU activities in the area of gender policy in Kazakhstan. In the period 2004-2011, EU Delegation implemented **a number of projects** focused on variety of issues, including related to women rights education; women and children's health, domestic violence and awareness raising of state authorities, NGOs and general public and access to justice for women. The most recent projects related to the following issues: SME, risk and challenges for women with AIDS/HIV, monitoring of gender issues as a part monitoring of the national human rights action plan and mother's and children's health.

1) Strengthening Tourism sector enhancing Business Intermediary Organizations capacity to assist tourism (2011-2012, € 484,679.00, CA Regional project).

The project is focused on enabling Kazakhstan and Uzbekistan to develop a network of qualified, environmentally-friendly tourism Small and Medium-Enterprises (SMEs) focusing on the participation of businesswomen. The development of small-scale private tourism enterprises, women based, should make this sector more competitive in both regions. The main activities include exchange of experience and best practice, study visits to the EU partners and training of BIO' s staff to enhance capacity of CA Chambers of Commerce in tools and methods to assist qualified tourist SMEs, with special focus on Women Entrepreneurs.

2) A model program against the spread of HIV/AIDS and TB in women prisons (2010-2012, € 132,374, KZ). The aim of the project is to improve the situation of prevention, diagnostics and rehabilitation treatment of patients with HIV/AIDS and TB amongst women in prisons. Main Activities include trainings on HIV/AIDS and TB transmission for women-prisoners and prison staff, carrying out a study on HIV/AIDS and TB in women prisons and legislative analysis in the sphere of medical services for women-prisoners. It will also include creation of patients' schools for women-prisoners and expert advice, guidance, and support for the transition of medical services of prisons from the Ministry of Justice to the Ministry of Health.

3) The EU is also funding a project **“Monitoring the National Human Rights Action Plan by Kazakhstan for 2009-2012 implementation progress”** 24 months in lengths project with EU contribution 240 000 EURO (total budget 300 000 EURO), started on 01/03/2011. The project is focused on more broad perspective, but gender policy is one of the important parts.

4) **“Support for Maternal and Child Health in Kazakhstan”** 26 months EU project with EU contribution 1,199,916.00 EURO was recently and successfully finished. It was implemented by WHO in partnership with the Ministry of Health of Kazakhstan with the aim to improve the health status of women of child-bearing age, infants and children, and thus assisted

Kazakhstan in achievement of the Millennium Development Goals, especially MDG 4 (reduce of child mortality) and 5 (improve maternal health).

FINAL REMARKS

I would like to conclude by stating that me, as an Ambassador of the EU, is strongly committed to follow-up the commitment of the EU HR/VP Ashton to promote gender equality and the advancement of women worldwide. I really look forward to working together with my Kazakhstani colleagues to make it a success in Kazakhstan.

Thank you very much for your attention.

THE END