

COUNCIL OF EUROPE COMMITTEE OF MINISTERS

DECLARATION ON EQUALITY OF WOMEN AND MEN

(Adopted by the Committee of Ministers on 16 November 1988
at its 83rd Session)

The Council of Europe member states,

1. Recalling that equality of women and men is a principle of human rights, upheld as a fundamental right in many international instruments to which they have subscribed and secured by national constitutions and laws;
2. Mindful of their undertaking, by virtue of the Statute of the Council of Europe, to observe such fundamental rights;
3. Convinced that the betterment and progress of humanity absolutely depend on due consideration of the aspirations, interests and talents of both sexes;
4. Observing that in present-day society inequalities between women and men persist *de jure* and *de facto*;
5. Aware that sex-related discrimination in the political, economic, social, educational, cultural, and any other fields constitutes impediments to the recognition, enjoyment and exercise of human rights and fundamental freedoms;
6. Convinced that resolute overall policies should be pursued for the effective achievement of equality between women and men, such policies to involve the authorities, groups and individuals,
 - I. Reaffirm their commitment to the principle of equality of women and men, as a *sine qua non* of democracy and an imperative of social justice;
 - II. Condemn all forms of sexism, as they have the effect of perpetuating the idea of superiority or inferiority of one of the sexes, and justifying the preponderance or dominance of one over the other;
 - III. Deplore the under-utilisation of human resources by the community resulting from the persistence of sexist attitudes and behaviour patterns;
 - IV. Welcome past and present activities aimed at the achievement of equal rights and opportunities for women and men at worldwide, regional and national levels;
 - V. Assert their resolve and undertaking:
 - a. to pursue and develop policies aimed at achieving real equality between women and men in all walks of life;
 - b. to continue work in the Council of Europe to further the effective achievement of equality between women and men;
 - c. to promote awareness of the imperatives of democracy and human rights in respect of equality of women and men;
 - VI. Declare that the strategies to be applied for this purpose must enable women and men to receive equal treatment under the law and equal opportunities to exercise their rights and develop their individual

gifts and talents. These strategies should provide for suitable measures — including temporary special measures aimed at accelerating *de facto* equality between women and men — relating to the following in particular :

- a. protection of individual rights ;
- b. participation in political, economic, social and cultural life ;
- c. access to all levels of the civil service ;
- d. access to education and freedom of choice in education and initial and further vocational training ;
- e. rights of couples ;
- f. eradication of violence in the family and in society ;
- g. rights and duties with regard to children ;
- h. access to all professions, occupational advancement, and remuneration ;
- i. promotion of economic independence ;
- j. access to information ;

VII. Stress the importance for the achievement of the above-mentioned strategies of informing and educating people in a suitable way, and making them realise the injustices and adverse effects of inequalities of rights, treatment and opportunities, together with the need for unrelenting vigilance in order to prevent or remedy any act or form of discrimination founded on sex ;

VIII. Invite the member states not yet having done so to become parties :

a. to Protocol No. 7 to the Convention for the Protection of Human Rights and Fundamental Freedoms and to the European Social Charter and its additional Protocol ;

b. to the United Nations Convention on the Elimination of All Forms of Discrimination against Women ;

and to apply the Nairobi Forward-looking Strategies for the Advancement of Women adopted by the World Conference to Review and Appraise the Achievements of the United Nations Decade for Women : Equality, Development and Peace (Nairobi, Kenya, 15-26 July 1985).