



**Working Table I Meeting
Sofia, 17 May 2005**

PROGRESS REPORT

Introduction

GTF International Outreach and Presentation:

Since the last Regional Table Meeting in Skopje, the Gender Task Force has undertaken meetings with Donor and International Organizations in Geneva (December, 2004) as well as participated in the UNECE Regional Preparatory Meeting for Beijing +10 in Geneva, and the 49th session of the UN Commission on the Status of Women in New York (March, 2005). The SP GTF has also presented the *impact* of political empowerment of women in SEE on the battle against different forms of violence against women at the OSCE High Level Conference on gender in Paris (April, 2005).

In addition, the strategic consultative process undertaken with the Dutch Foundation KIT, has proven useful in providing impetus to integrating the GTF into a broader, European concept of advocating gender equality. A final regional strategic framework has been finalized in February 2005 and follow-up has been planned. The GTF foresees the next steps to include a Europe-wide meeting of Gender Equality / Women's Networks to discuss ways of improving cooperation and leverage in advocating a regional approach to gender equality in an EU/wider European context.

Recent Activities

Completion of the GTF Subregional Project: Gender, Trade Unions and Social Dialogue in Montenegro and Bosnia and Herzegovina

Final Conference on "Work and Pregnancy"
Sarajevo, Bosnia and Herzegovina, January 26, 2005

After a comprehensive examination of issues that workers with high risk pregnancy face, participants adopted a list of recommendations, aimed both at legislation and practice, which would strengthen pregnant women's rights and improve their position in the labor market and health care system. *Inter alia*, the conclusions sought definition of the term "risk pregnancy" and its criteria, specifying the treatment of risk pregnancy and including all the necessary medicaments to the essential list of medicines. Also, participants sought that an Action Plan for promotion of women's health on the state level should be created. The conclusions also asked for legislative definition of special working conditions for pregnant women in the workplace, as well as explicit prohibition of discrimination in Labor Laws, especially in issues like dismissal of pregnant women and duration of maternity leave.

In the context of completion of the SP GTF Project: ***Social Dialogue and Women's Empowerment in Trade Unions in Montenegro and Bosnia and Herzegovina***, GTF met with Jasna Petrovic, Head of the ICFTU CEE/CIS Women's Network. The project significantly impacted the women trade unionists involved therein and initiated legislative change in Bosnia and Herzegovina and improved social services in Montenegro. This project was funded by the Dutch Independent Trade Unions (FNV).

Next steps include implementation of a similar project in Serbia using know-how and lessons learned in the previous project. Likewise the GTF plans to hold an SEE Regional Conference on Gender, Social Dialogue and Trade Union Women's Empowerment in the fall, 2005. Both of these follow-up steps are pending arrival of committed funds from the Italian Government. Likewise the GTF plans to continue with work with the three main Trade Union Associations in Bosnia and Herzegovina and Montenegro with a Gender mainstreaming approach. Namely the GTF is adapting its empowerment program to the context of majority male-membership trade union branches, thereby addressing issues which are gender specific in these branches, as well as bringing in new skills and values of social dialogue into their work.

Recent National Advancements in Gender Equality in SEE

R. Macedonia

Participation of Women in the Local Elections 2005

Prior to local elections, the Macedonian Women's Lobby (WML) monitored the obligation of political parties to have at least 30% of women on their candidates' lists in the 2005 local elections. The result is that the percentage of elected women councilors more than tripled. 309 women out of a total of 1389 councilors were elected which amounts to 22.7%, one of the highest percentages in SEE.

Improvement of Working Conditions for Women

The campaign entitled "Improvement of Working Conditions for Women", which will take place throughout 2005, was promoted in the Parliament of the Republic of Macedonia on December 23, 2004. The campaign, initiated jointly by relevant Government, Parliament and Civil Society actors who function within the GTF framework, was started in order to address the poor working conditions that women face in many occupations. The purpose of the campaign is to locate problems, making them visible and to help their resolution, trying to improve the existing legislation.

Regulation of Maternity and Parental Rights

The Macedonian Women's Lobby (MWL) in co-operation with the Women's Section of the Macedonian Independent Association of Trade Unions and the Pediatricians Union organized a round table on the proposed reduction of maternity leave. The participants concluded that the duration of maternity leave as a minimum should remain 9 months, with possibilities for improvement with different modifications in the future, and that representatives from MWL and other co-organizers of the round table should be included in the working group on amendments to the Law on Employment.

Serbia

Eight-episode TV Documentary About Women and Society

On February 6th Radio-television Serbia (RTS) broadcasted the first episode of a new TV documentary series about women and society "Zrno postovanja" ("*A little respect*"). Eight 30-minute episodes will cover the subjects of violence against women, women and the economy, women and politics, women's health, women and trafficking, women and media, women and education, and position of Roma women in Serbia. The logistic support for the project was provided by Serbian SP GTF focal points and associates.

Family Law Adopted and Draft Law on Equal Opportunities enters Parliamentary Procedure

In Serbia, a new Family Law has been adopted which will come in effect on July 1, 2005. The Law includes women's right to abortion, embitters family leave regulations and for the first time ever defines and provides protection against family violence. The Serbian Draft Law on Equal Opportunities, jointly prepared by Governmental and parliamentary gender equality mechanisms, has recently entered parliamentary procedure and is currently being reviewed by political party caucuses.

Bulgaria

In 2005, in addition to the establishment of the first governmental and parliamentary mechanisms for gender equality in Bulgaria, the lobbying effort of a broad coalition of experts, NGOs and women MP's, ensured the enactment of the first Bulgarian Law on Family Violence.

Moldova

Following five years of work to improve women's participation in politics by the Gender Task Force, OSCE Mission in Moldova and a broad coalition of women activists from different political parties and NGOs, the percentage of women MPs went up 5 percentage points – from 14.5% to 19% after the March, 2005 elections.

GTF 2005-6 Priorities/ Future Plans

The SPGTF plans to undertake an evaluation with a focus on mid term sustainability of its efforts in the latter half of 2005, pending arrival of Italian funding. In 2005 the GTF will work on the following priority areas where funding has been approved

SEE Parliamentary Exchange on Gender / EU integration: SEE MP's undertake national public hearings and research on important legislative initiatives and receive SEE and European best practices through regional workshops. (funded by Germany)

SEE Roma Women's Empowerment: enabling Roma Women to participate and influence political and social processes of integration of Roma in their national, regional and European contexts. (to be funded by Norway)

Gender and Social Dialogue: trade unionist empowerment, gender mainstreaming in social dialogue and making inroads towards organizing SEE women in the informal economy in cooperation with ICFTU CEE/CIS Women's Network. (to be funded by Italy, FNV – Dutch Free Trade Unions)

Cross Border Cooperation (Southern Adriatic): using methodology developed in the DKMT 2003-4 Cross-border Euro Regional Cooperation project to work in the important triangle of Dubrovnik-Trebinje –Kotor.

SEE Ministerial Conference on Gender and European Integration

WT | GTF 02/05/2005