

GTF Progress Report

Working Table One, Regional Table Meeting, Belgrade, May 30, 2006

January – June 2006

Introduction

The SPGTF has taken advantage of the momentum created over six years of intensive work with Civil Society, Governments and Parliaments throughout SEE, where the GTF is based as well as with Regional and International Actors. Such crosscutting work has ensured the GTF the ability to influence mainstream social and political processes towards the goals of Euro Atlantic Association and Integration, through securing balanced representation and active participation of women and men in SEE.

In recent months the GTF has successfully opened a direct dialogue with EU institutions, Commission, and Parliament which have already secured that gender equality in neighboring states be one of the six priorities of the new EU Roadmap.

Important GTF Activities

Parliamentary Cooperation

•**II. Regional Women's MP Meeting on Lifelong Learning**, Sarajevo, Bosnia and Herzegovina Sarajevo, 24 – 26, February 2006: MP's from 7 SEE Parliaments gathered to assess the progress made in integrating EU strategies for Lifelong Learning as well as good practices from EU member states for implementation. Participants noted that it is a positive development that National SAA Agreements include education issues and prioritize them, and that there is consensus that it is necessary to increase the state's budget for education. It is important to note that LLL has not been clearly seen as a necessary precondition to achieving sustainable development and gender equality. Expertise was provided by SP Expert, Petra Bläss and UN Expert Beate Schopp Schilling.

The Regional Workshop was followed by national hearings or meetings on the issue, initiated by parliaments and women MP's. Numerous publications have been produced as a follow-up activity, stressing the importance of LLL in the national context of each SEE country. This project has been funded by the German Foreign Ministry.

•**SEE Women MP Conference on Poverty Reduction Strategies**, Budva, Montenegro, March 31-April 2. Women MPs from Bosnia and Herzegovina, Montenegro and The former Yugoslav Republic of Macedonia, confirmed that each country does have a poverty reduction strategy or a development strategy, currently in the process of adjustment to MDGs outlined at the UN summit in September 2005. Female poverty was recognized as a special form of poverty that institutions fail to give proper attention to. Since this is an election year for all participating countries, it is a particularly good time for women MPs to work with citizens on this issue. This Conference is an integral part of the overall Italian Government funding to the GTF and presented a practical model for inter-parliamentary cooperation.

Social Dialogue

•**Social Dialogue and Trade Union Women's Empowerment Project in Serbia**

Over the past months the GTF has worked intensively with the two main Trade Union Confederations in 9 field seminars in Serbia (Nezavisnost and SSSS) in order to improve their capacities for initiating social dialogue, but also as a tool for overall empowerment and training of women trade unionists on Gender Equality and the role of Trade Unions as the oftentimes sole defence of workers' rights. This project and the Zagreb Trade Union Women Conference was funded through the Italian Donation to the GTF.

•**Conference: SEE Trade Union Women's Cooperation on Social Dialogue and Anti-discrimination** April 27-28, Zagreb, Croatia. Women Trade Unionists from 8 SEE countries and 13 TU Confederations met to coordinate their activities on anti-discrimination as well as to exchange best practices developed through the GTF on Social Dialogue over the past four years. The conference was organized jointly with the ICFTU /WCL Women's Network.

•**Social Dialogue and Gender Awareness in Trade Unions in Montenegro and Bosnia and Herzegovina.** This project started in December 2005 and continues on throughout 2006, based on the know-how developed in the GTF in close partnership with Trade Union Confederations in BiH and Montenegro and is funded by the FNV, Dutch Independent Trade Unions. The innovation in this project involves the equal participation of men and women in addressing gender issues, as well as the fact that participating Trade Unionists are from majority male trade union branches, metallurgy, police, lumber industry, etc. In the Fall 2006 social dialogue will begin on a theme of common interest to men and women trade unionists in each country.

Roma Women's Empowerment

•**Roma Regional Women's Empowerment Strategic Meeting**, Sofia, Bulgaria, March 24-26, 2006. Gathered 30 prominent Roma women and GTF Representatives to prepare strategic interventions for improving the quality of life of Roma in the countries of SEE. Campaigns, Research, Advocacy and Lobbying will take place based on the coordinated National Plans from April to July 2006 in 10 SEE Countries. This project is funded by the Norwegian Foreign Ministry.

SEE National Developments in Gender Equality

Quota in Election Law in The former Yugoslav Republic of Macedonia The Parliament of The former Yugoslav Republic of Macedonia has successfully adopted necessary amendments to its election law to strengthen the existing gender quota of 30% to include an ordering rule for candidate lists so that lists must distribute men

and women proportionately through the entire list, similar to the BiH and Kosovo election laws.

- Prior to the recent adoption of the **BiH Election Law**, a GTF-led coalition of Civil Society, Parliament and Government actors successfully prevented the attempt to eliminate the existing 30% quota for the minority gender on candidate lists. The Coalition's efforts to increase the quota, unfortunately, were not supported in parliament.

- At the beginning of 2006 in Moldova, **the Moldovan Parliament adopted the Law on Gender Equality**, thereby joining the majority of SEE Countries which have such a law in place.

- Also at the beginning of 2006, **the Bulgarian Government has established a Gender mechanism** which now makes for full coverage of gender mechanisms in all governments of SEE countries!

Other

- GTF Regional Evaluation** The GTF has undertaken an independent evaluation of its work in order to assess the GTF's **impact and relevance**. Prepared by Dr. Marijana Pajvancic, professor of constitutional law in Novi Sad, the evaluation will be distributed at the Belgrade Regional Table Meeting, to assist interested parties in receiving a better picture of the GTF's contribution and significance in SEE.

- NEW PROJECT: **GENDER MAINSTREAMING in SOUTHEAST EUROPEAN POLITICAL PARTIES 2006-7**. A new project has begun in 2006, funded by the Swiss Foreign Ministry to produce an analysis of current state of respect for gender equality in party structures and policies and recommendations for improvements and their readiness for gender mainstreaming and a follow-up region-wide field project for 2007.

Upcoming Events

- SEE Women's Ministerial Conference**, Dubrovnik, Croatia, July 5 -6, 2006. The Stability Pact, SPGTF, and the Croatian Government will co-host a SEE Women's Ministerial in Croatia this summer. Preparations have been undertaken and the presence of an EU Commissioner is expected to discuss gender dimensions of European Integration as well as Communication Strategies for preparing citizens to better understand and participate in Euro Integration and Accession.