



4 March 2010

Subject: EPSCO Meeting 8-9 March 2010

Dear Excellency, Dear Minister Bibiana Aido,

On 25th of January you announced, at the European Parliament, that Spain will present a broad series of conclusions on "the eradication of violence against women in the EU" to the Employment, Social Policy, Health and Consumer Affairs Council (EPSCO) of March for approval. The EPSCO meeting will take place on the 8-9 March 2010 in Brussels.

You referred to the proposal to create a European observatory for gender-based violence which would collect data using a common methodology. This initiative is welcomed as data on gender based violence are lacking in the EU.

The European Parliament estimates that 500,000 women are living with Female Genital Mutilation (FGM) and 180,000 girls are at risk of FGM in the European Union. According to experts these figures are underestimated and do not take into account second generation and undocumented migrants. In a resolution voted on the 24 March 2009, the European Parliament itself called on Member States "to quantify the number of women who have undergone FGM or are at risk in individual countries, taking into account the fact there are as yet no figures available for many countries which likewise do not have harmonised data gathering systems."

Ahead of the EPSCO meeting, we would like to stress the need for data collection in the area of female genital mutilation and other harmful traditional practices supported by a rigorous methodology respectful of human rights, because we believe in a European approach to a problem that is widespread in Europe. We are calling on yourself and your colleagues to raise the need for inclusion of FGM and other harmful traditional practices in the work of the Observatory at the EPSCO meeting.

Yours sincerely,

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