PERMANENT MISSION OF GREECE
GENEVA

URGENT

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NOTE VERBALE

The Permanent Mission of Greece to the United Nations Office at Geneva and other International Organizations in Switzerland presents its compliments to the Office of the High Commissioner for Human Rights and reference made to the latter's letter, dated 18 September 2011 (seeking information on violence against women and girls) has the honor to forward the asked information provided by the Greek Government (Ministry of Interior).

The Permanent Mission of Greece to the United Nations Office at Geneva and other International Organizations in Switzerland avails itself of this opportunity to renew to the Office of the High Commissioner for Human Rights the assurances of its highest consideration.

Geneva, December 6, 2011

To:
-The Office of the High Commissioner for Human Rights
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Pages attached: 4

OHCHR REGISTRY
- 7 DEC. 2011
Recipients: X, B, G, D
The General Secretarial for Gender Equality (G. S. G. E.) of the Ministry of Interior, as the competent state entity regarding combating violence against women and girls, is working on the elimination of gender inequalities and the achievement of substantive gender equality in all aspects of our society.

This National Programme for Substantive Gender Equality 2010-2013 has been drafted with four strategic goals in mind:

1. Protection of all women’s rights through the promotion of gender equality and the orientation of interventions towards groups of women facing multiple discrimination.
2. Prevention and combating of all forms and types of violence against women.
3. Support of women’s employment and their financial independence.
4. Utilisation of cultural creation in order to highlight the goal of gender equality.

In the preparation process of this Programme, methods and good practices of international and European organisations were used, according to which the following shall be developed in parallel:

A. Specialised equality policies addressing women or men in sectors in which they are underrepresented,

B. Cross-cutting interventions, throughout the range of public policy, so as to tackle gender-based discrimination in each and every field of policy implementation.

Such a two-pronged approach to the promotion of gender equality has been utilised since 1995 (UN Beijing Platform for Action, and European Committee Announcement on gender mainstreaming).

The Programme includes measures, such as: improvement, enhancement and implementation of legislation; development of affirmative actions for certain groups of women; gender mainstreaming public policies, including economic ones; enhancement of administration mechanisms; empowerment of civil society and women’s organisations as well as the organisation of campaigns to sensitise public opinion in order to prevent and change gender-based stereotypic roles.

The National Strategic Reference Framework (N. S. R. F.) 2007-2013, Operational Programme (OP) “Public Administration Reform”, is the central funding framework of these policies and activities. In order to make use of the scientific knowledge on gender issues and active citizens’ experiences, this Programme is informed by and interacts with the scientific community, research and gender studies, as well as with civil society, women and feminist organisations. Constant consultation and accountability, particularly important for the improvement of policy
quality and effectiveness, require the enhancement of gender equality institutions, as well as the implementation and monitoring of gender equality policies. In order to ensure transparency and credibility in the implementation of this Programme, an in-depth analysis of goals achievement and effectiveness of actions shall be conducted. This assessment shall be reflected in Annual Activity Reports. Ongoing and systematic consultation with civil society on Programme implementation shall be supported by bodies and structures that coordinate the activities of all jointly competent government agencies.

The Programme is structured on three pillars. They entail, respectively:

a. proposed legislative regulations to improve family law, reform and enhance legislation addressing violence and introduce new provisions aimed at substantive gender equality;

b. G. S. G. E. specialised gender equality policies (interventions in selected areas of public policy and creation of policy making institutions, structures and bodies); and

c. interventions by other Ministries and public agencies which foster gender equity via public policies (mainstreaming policies).

FIRST PILlar
IMPROVEMENT, ENHANCEMENT AND IMPLEMENTATION OF LEGISLATION

1. Amendment of Family Law.

Family Law shall be amended so as to be fully harmonised with the constitutional Principle of Gender Equality and the protection of women’s rights within the context of the unequal economic and social conditions under which most women currently live. Indicatively, proposed provisions shall address the following issues:

- Re-introduction of permanence of spouses’ surnames.
- Modernisation of the legal provisions on adoption.
- Ensuring alimony payment.
- Unification and expedition of court procedures vis-à-vis hearing of Family Law cases.
- Children’s last name acquisition to ensure gender equality.
- Issues of parental responsibility in divorce cases.
- Amendments in the cohabitation agreement.

2. Law on combating violence against women.

Violence is a harsh expression of social inequality. Violence against women is gender-based violence, since it is inextricably linked to the victim’s and offender’s gender. New legislative provisions on combating violence against women shall place emphasis on awareness and protection measures for victims. They shall refer to all forms of violence committed against women, physically, psychologically, verbally and morally. In parallel, legislation shall focus on safeguarding victims’ rights, such as their right to be informed and to free legal assistance, their right to employment and social insurance, their economic rights, etc.

The preparation of a Unified Bill on violence against women reflects the cross-sectional character of gender violence and is an internationally accepted method for
legislative addressing of the multiple and complex aspects of such criminal activities that penetrate all aspects of everyday life. More specifically:

**Domestic violence:** improvement of Law 3500/2006 on domestic violence and enhancement of the framework addressing domestic violence by creating support centres for victims and offering them temporary refuge.

**Employment-related violence:** improvement and enhancement of Law 3488/2006 in relation to the implementation of the principle of equal treatment of men and women in labour market access, with a special chapter on sexual harassment and violence in the workplace.

**Social violence:** improvement and enhancement of legislation addressing crimes such as rape (Law 1419/1984) and human trafficking (Law 3064/2002 and P. D. 233/2003). Ratification of the Council of Europe Convention on Action against Trafficking in Human Beings. (Warsaw, 2005) and of the European Council Convention on Violence against Women, which is currently being elaborated, shall be included in the Bill.

In addition, some cross-cutting issues shall be also addressed:

- Enhancement of the G. S. G. E. institutional role (Counselling Centres) in the confrontation of violence against women in all of its forms and protection of the victims,
- Expansion of provisions on legal assistance to victims in cooperation with Bar Associations,
- Establishment of a National Observatory on combating violence against women.

**SECOND PILLAR**
**SPECIALISED POLICIES FOR GENDER EQUALITY**

**A. Public policy fields**

**A1. Violence against women**

Violence against women in all its forms, such as maltreatment by husbands/partners (sexual, physical, psychological, economic, verbal), illegal trafficking in women for sexual/financial exploitation, rape and sexual harassment in the workplace comprise conspicuous violations of women's fundamental rights. Gender violence continues in every country and civilisation, leading to deaths of women as well as serious physical and psychological losses in the lives of women, their families and society in general. Although most societies forbid violence, in reality violence is often covered up or tolerated.

Prevention and combating of violence against women in our country is the subject of the National Programme for prevention and combating of violence against women 2009-2013, as announced in November 2009. This Programme includes actions, such as the creation of Counselling Centres and Shelters in the capital city of each Region, the operation of a National Emergency SOS Telephone Line, the running of awareness-raising campaigns to prevent violence, etc.
The development of G. S. G. E cooperation relations and networks with civil society (NGOs, women's organisations, regional initiatives, local and regional government, mass media, professional unions and associations, etc) enhances the effectiveness of actions for combating violence, facilitating abused women to "break the silence" and access G.S.G.E. Counselling Centres for assistance.

A2. Multiple Discrimination

Women's fundamental rights are seriously threatened when gender discrimination is aggravated by other kinds of discrimination such as that based on nationality, physical ability, social isolation, etc.

Through its Counselling Centres, G.S.G.E. offers consistent and reliable information and publishes related information brochures.

In cooperation with international NGOs and other organizations such the Office of the United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees and the Greek Council for Refugees, G.S.G.E. develops actions for women and girls immigrants and asylum seekers, who are more vulnerable and are in jeopardy of experiencing domestic violence, trafficking, etc.

The G.S.G.E. has cooperated with the U.N. High Commission for Refugees and the Ministry of Citizens' Protection at the preparation of a Manual in favour of female refugees of all ages, addressed to employees in immigration services. The official presentation of the Manual (entitled "Guidelines for protecting Women and girls during first entry/reception in Greece and the asylum procedure) was made during a conference organized on 20-6-2001, on the occasion of the World Day for Refugees.

G.S.G.E. cooperates with "EPANODOS" (a private entity) run by the Ministry of Justice, Transparency and Human Rights to create training programmes for women detainees and former detainees. These provide an opportunity for them to generate income and improve the conditions for their integration into their family, society and the labour market after their release.

The establishment of G.S.G.E. Counselling Centres in all Regions shall provide the opportunity to support other groups of women that face multiple discrimination as well, such as drug addicted women, homeless women, Roma women, etc.

A3. Reproductive and sexual health

In collaboration with the General Secretariat for Youth and the General Secretariat for Public Administration, a campaign is about to launched to inform youth (men and women) about sexual health. It will focus especially on contraception, aiming to diminish the recourse to abortions, as their percentage remains at high levels in our country.