

EMHRN Executive Committee Meeting

Lisbon 16-18 March 2007

Minutes

To be approved

The EMHRN Executive Committee (EC) convened in Lisbon, Portugal, on March 16-18 2007. At the meeting, the EC members discussed amongst other the key developments in the Euro-Mediterranean region, in particular the Arab reform process, the ENP and the follow-up on the Action plan of strengthening the role of women in society adopted at the Ministerial meeting in Istanbul in November 2006. Furthermore, the reports from the Secretariat were presented, and the process of the preparations for the next General Assembly was launched. Finally, the EC agreed on a press release from their meeting. On March 18, the EC members, working group coordinators and conveners held a meeting in order to discuss a common working group culture, the working group as a methodology, as well as the challenges and difficulties that the different working groups face.

In relation to the EC meeting, on March 15, Kamel Jendoubi (President) met with Ambassador Ribeiro Menezes, Desk officer João Moura, member of the European Affairs Cabinet Raquel d'Orey, and Director general at the Interior Ministry Rita Faden to discuss the developments in the EuroMediterranean. Furthermore, on March 16, Kamel Jendoubi (President), EC members Wadih-Ange Al-Asmar and Maria De Donato, EMHRN Program director Marit Flø Jørgensen and Advocacy director Sandrine Grenier met with José Leitão from CIVITAS and with Joana Vieira da Silva from Comissao para a Igualdade e para os Direitos das Mulheres to discuss the human rights situation in the EuroMed region and the priorities under the Portuguese presidency.



PARTICIPANTS

Participants from the EMHRN Executive Committee (EC):

Kamel Jendoubi (President), Eva Norstroem (Vice president), Michel Tubiana, Maria De Donato, Birgit Lindsnæs, Moataz El Fegiery, Wadih-Ange Al-Asmar, Nina Atallah, Colm Regan and Rabéa Naciri.

From the Secretariat:

Sandrine Grenier (Advocacy director, Brussels), Marit Flø Jørgensen (Program director) and Maibritt Damgaard Nielsen (Executive secretary, rapporteur).

Absent:

Nizam Assaf (Treasurer), Iain Byrne (EC member), and Marc Schade-Poulsen (EMHRN Executive director) - all with notification.

DOCUMENTS FOR THE MEETING

1. Draft agenda
2. Minutes EC meeting Petra December 2006 (including minutes regarding the mandate of the working group on Palestine, Israel and Palestinians, and the mandate)
3. Progress report on the ENP
4. Follow-up on the Istanbul Action Plan on gender
5. News Exchange 5-7 (summary)
6. Work plan 2007
7. Document on EC members' liabilities
8. Financial report
9. Note on Statutes
10. Report on Turkey

11. Membership applications
12. Letters between the FIDH and the EMHRN
13. Document on the ENP

If you wish to consult the documents, please contact Maibritt Nielsen from the EMHRN Secretariat at mdn@euromedrights.net

FINAL AGENDA ADOPTED AT THE MEETING

1. Welcome, approval of minutes from last Executive Committee meeting and agreeing on meeting agenda
2. Political debate taking into account, also
 - a. Status on Arab reform initiatives
 - b. European security and migration policies
 - c. The ENP
3. Discussion of points for EC statement from meeting and electing drafting group
4. Reports from the Secretariat (including programs and advocacy)
5. Euro-Med Ministerial meeting in Istanbul on strengthening the role of women in society
6. Statutes – which amendments – which process?
7. Next EMHRN General Assembly (preliminary discussion)
8. Suggestions to dates and venues for EC meetings 2007
9. Member issues
10. Partnerships
11. Agreeing on an EC statement
12. Urgencies



Day 1, March 16 (Friday)

1. **Welcome, approval of minutes from last Executive Committee meeting and agreeing on meeting agenda** (Moderator: Kamel Jendoubi)

EMHRN President, Kamel Jendoubi welcomed the Executive Committee members to Lisbon. He explained that the Quartet had chosen Portugal as the venue for the EC meeting in order to prepare the Portuguese presidency of the EU and to meet with different NGOs in Lisbon as the EMHRN has currently no members in Portugal. He informed that after the meetings with the NGOs the organization, CIVITAS, had decided to apply for membership.

The EC members went through the minutes and approved them with minor changes. In relation to the minutes, the EC members discussed the procedure for editing and publishing the minutes and agreed on a procedure for the future minutes from their meetings (see under Decisions).

Decisions:

- The minutes from the EC meeting in Petra on December 1-3 2006 were approved after minor changes.
- Regarding the process of approving minutes and making them public:
 - The EC agreed on having detailed minutes that reflect the debates at their meetings but without names.
 - The EC will get a deadline of two weeks to make comments and approve of the minutes.
 - The detailed minutes will be adopted at the forthcoming EC meeting.

2. **Political debate** (Moderator: Michel Tubiana)

- a. **Status on Arab reform initiatives**

The EC was informed that the general assumption in the region is that there is a set back of the Arab reform due to the deterioration of the security situation in Iraq, Lebanon and Iran. This has translated into more restrictions in the working environment of human rights defenders in the region.

b. European security and migration policies

The EC was informed that the EuroMed Ministerial meeting on migration will take place in December 2007. It was suggested that the EC prepare a position paper on the subject focusing on the developments in the Mediterranean region.

In relation to the EuroMed Ministerial meeting, it was noted that the Ministry of Internal Affairs in Lisbon is preparing for the Ministerial meeting. Three themes will be discussed: development and co-development from a pragmatic perspective (e.g. regarding financial transfers), circular migration (regarding the formula that will allow non-Europeans from the Maghreb and Mashrek to work legally in Europe for a certain period of time and afterwards return to their home country) and the security aspects.

c. The ENP

The EC members' attention was drawn to the distributed document on the ENP. It was noted that, at the moment, the EMHRN lacks a mechanism that allows the Network to have more analytical approach to the Action Plans and the ENP reports in order to ask questions to the EU Parliament and the Commission. It was suggested that the EMHRN should monitor the work of the Commission and make shadow reports. Pressure on the governments, however, should not only go through the Brussels office but also take place in each country. Finally, it was suggested to establish indicators to measure the human rights progress in every country.

It was noted that it was difficult to convince the countries in the South of the significance of the ENP and that the Action plan was not recognized in these countries as an important tool for advancing human rights. It was thus suggested to give more attention to other international frameworks in the region (such as the UN and the Arab League) and not only focus on the EU or national governments.

Others argued for the need to see the Action plan as a base and look at the middle and long terms, as currently no other alternatives or instruments are available. Furthermore, the impact on the EU institutions should be acknowledged as the institutions now recognize that civil society has mobilized due to the efforts of the EMHRN and the NGOs. It was thus important to continue to work with the EMHRN members, raise awareness and do training in the different countries in order to ensure a greater impact.

Finally, the EC members were informed about a series of dialogue meetings that are taking place between the National Human Rights Institutions in Europe and in the Arab region. In the last two years, the Danish Institute has tried to create a dialogue forum with Arabic institutions having a consultative status on different themes, for instance access to information, and antiterrorism legislation. Some actors within this cooperation may be useful for the EMHRN and its human rights agenda.

Decisions:

- To put on the agenda of the next EC meeting the Euro-Med Ministerial meeting on migration and to discuss what strategic priorities the EMHRN want to lobby for in this regard.

Suggestion:

- The EMHRN should reflect on establishing a mechanism to make a thorough evaluation of the EU communications, evaluation of the ENP

3. Discussion of points for EC statement from meeting and electing drafting group

The EC members agreed to make a statement from the meeting focusing mainly on the revision of the Constitution in Egypt and the Parliamentary assembly in Tunisia. A drafting group was elected and the statement from the EC meeting can be seen at www.euromedrights.net

Day 2, March 17 (Saturday)

4. Reports from the Secretariat (including programs and advocacy, and update on the EC responsibilities) (Moderator: Maria De Donato)

a. Reports from the Secretariat

The EC was presented with the Secretariat report with point of departure in the summary of the EMHRN News Exchange no. 5-7.

Freedom of Association

There had been a working group meeting in Copenhagen on March 3-4. At the meeting, there was a discussion on the development of indicators and how to link them to information on the country level. The resource persons on country level who will give information to the researchers on the report have nearly all been identified. The report is due to be ready in September. The EMHRN has ensured a new project with the EU that starts in September 2007 and Danida has agreed to slightly modify their contract so the projects would fit together.

Justice

There had been a seminar in Beirut on the independence of the judiciary on 10-11 March. The next seminar will take place in June (probably in Morocco) and will be on Tunisia. The EMHRN project on Algeria with Lawyers without Borders in Belgium has been blocked by the authorities. There is a currently a discussion about perhaps delocalizing parts of the project. The coordinator, Fabrice Liebaut, has suggested to hold a meeting in Copenhagen with Lawyers without Borders to discuss the possible modalities.

Women's rights and gender

The report on 'Change is Possible and Necessary' has been finalized and is now available on the web site. On the occasion of the International women's day, the EMHRN issued a press release to acknowledge the day, inform about the report and put forward recommendations on the follow-up on the Istanbul Action plan. The contract regarding the Gender Mainstreaming Kit (GMT) - training manual targeted at EMHRN members and NGOs in the region - has been signed and the first draft received. The first working group meeting will take place in Rabat on April 2-4. At the meeting, there will be a training of the working group members on gender mainstreaming. The training will be evaluated afterwards, and the input will be used for a second draft of the GMT. The GMT will be used at two sub regional training seminars in Maghreb and Mashrek.

Human Rights Education and Youth

The working group convened in Malta on February 23-25. Two researchers had made a mapping of the initiatives in the region that Colm Regan had rewritten in a more analytical way. The document will be made public on the web site and used for discussions on methodology on Human Rights Education once the case studies have been finalised. At the meeting in Malta, the working group members agreed on terms of references of the working group that will be submitted to the EC, and they elected a convener. The summer school will take place in July in Cyprus. The working group members took upon themselves a lot of responsibility in relation to the summer school which promises well for the delivery of the School, which will target organizations and individuals working with youth.

Palestine, Israel and Palestinians

The working group met in Berlin on February 23-25 and had advocacy meetings afterwards with the German Ministry of Foreign Affairs and the Parliament. Prior to the meeting, the working group had drafted a letter to Merkel on the concerns in relation to the German presidency and the dealings with Israel. As regards the second shadow report, the Dutch Ministry of Foreign Affairs had not yet released their report, and consequently the UCP had not released the EMHRN report. The production of the third Human Rights Review had started. Finally, the coordinator and the working group are cooperating with the Brussels office on doing training on the ENP in Israel and the OPT.

Migration

A new coordinator has been employed for the project, i.e. Chadi Sidhom, who will start working from the ADFM office in Morocco from April. The studies on the Mashrek have been delayed and consequently the contracts with the researchers have been extended with two months. The studies should be ready for the next working group meeting in Rome, which will focus on identifying a strategy and action plan for the group as well as a training seminar on externalization policies. The implementation of the study on violence of women in migration (joint project between the working group on migration and working group on women's rights) has been postponed until after the start of the new project coordinator.

Economic and Social rights

Marc Schade-Poulsen participated in a meeting in Madrid, however there were no updates on the result or the follow-up of the meeting.

Communication

New business cards for the EC members are being designed, a press release on the trial of member of the IHD and mayor of Diyarbakir has been released and a new newsletter issued, a logo for the HRE summer school has been designed and articles on the working groups of Human Rights Education and Palestine, Israel and Palestinians have been published on the web site.

Solidarity

The EMHRN has uploaded information on the trials against two Algerian lawyers at the web site.

Training

The EC was informed that the EMHRN is still in contact with Stefan Luetgenau regarding possible support from the Austrian Ministry of Foreign Affairs for the EMHRN expert training on EU human rights mechanisms.

ENP

Three seminars on the ENP for the EMHRN members and NGOs are currently being organized in Israel, Gaza and the West bank in cooperation with the working group on Palestine, Israel and Palestinians. At the seminars, the 3rd Human Rights Review will also be discussed.

Furthermore, seminars on the ENP are planned in Morocco for autumn 2007 in cooperation with EMHRN members in Morocco. In Egypt, the Action plan has been adopted but the process has been criticized by the NGOs. In Jordan, the second EU-Jordan sub-committee meeting has taken place and the NGOs were consulted, and in Lebanon the Action plan has been adopted. Finally, no human rights subcommittee has been created on Israel so far. However, an ad hoc working group has been created and will meet for the second time under the German presidency.

The EC was informed that the EU report on Human Rights in the World is currently being discussed in the European Parliament. The EMHRN has made many comments to the report, which will be discussed next week in the European Commission. It was noted that the German Presidency will focus on Central Asia, and the Portuguese Presidency on projects in Eastern Europe and not the Middle East.

Finally, the EC was informed about the new EU financial instrument (ENPI) which has been adopted after a lot of lobbying efforts by the Brussels office in cooperation with other Brussels-based NGOs to allow that NGOs that are not recognized by their governments may get financial assistance. The regional budget under the ENPI will decrease but the national budget will increase, and 25% of the budget will be allocated to observation/monitoring of elections by the EU Commission.

The EMHRN staff was thanked for their great efforts, and it was suggested that EC members should follow up on their own decisions and not wait for the Secretariat to inform them of what to do, or wait for the next EC meeting. As the Secretariat has a big workload, the EC members should be active and support the Secretariat.

The EC members thought that the EMHRN should seek more coherence and synergies between the different projects. It was suggested to make a short overview of the activities every 3 months. The report should be analytical and include the major advances, challenges, obstacles faced and allow the EC to discuss the work in a more comprehensive way. In relation to the activities, each working group should answer a series of questions, for instance: how can this activity or this report contribute to promote equality or awareness raising of human rights? It was noted that all ToR of studies were to be screened by the project coordinator for gender. The need for all working groups to prepare a clear policy paper was also stressed

It was furthermore noted that the Commission is determined to have some implementation follow-up mechanisms in order to evaluate the Action plans under the ENP. It was suggested that the EMHRN should develop a monitoring system to hold the Arab governments responsible for their commitments.

It was also proposed that a set of criteria for choosing researchers for the EMHRN reports should be developed as the EMHRN is increasingly using researchers; the EMHRN should look at the capabilities of the researchers to a larger extent and not only their origin (one from the North and one from the South). The EC was reminded about the new procedure where the names of the researchers are forwarded to the EC before accepted. Likewise, the need for the EC members to be informed if a funding application was sent to organizations etc. in their country was strongly stressed.

It was noted that the EMHRN's communication strategy towards the South is weak and it was suggested to find funds for a communication officer in the South. The EC was reminded that the EMHRN had started to reflect on a communication strategy and that the first step had been to hire the communication officer. However, the EMHRN members would also have to be more active in terms of communication and contribute to the analysis of the situation in the Arab world.

Finally, it was noted that in relation to the research made in working group on Human Rights Education, the conclusion was that the biggest obstacle for involving young people in EMHRN's activities is the governance structure of the member organisations that does not facilitate the involvement of young people.

5. Euro-Med Ministerial meeting in Istanbul on strengthening the role of women in society

The EC was presented with a draft of a position paper and recommended to endorse the analysis and the recommendations. It was explained that the EMHRN had put a lot of efforts in the work on gender issues and that the work had been taken into account by the Civil Forum in Marrakech and at the Euro-Med ministerial meeting in Istanbul where several recommendations were included in the Action plan adopted at the meeting. The position paper made an evaluation of the Action plan and came with recommendations for the implementation and follow-up of the Action plan. The importance of having a common platform to promote gender equality in the region was stressed, and it was noted that it would be a shame not to use the opportunity of the Action plan to put forward a strong statement on the implementation of the Action plan.

The EC agreed to endorse the position paper after presenting different suggestions for further recommendations and ideas on future EMHRN work on the issue.

Decisions:

- The EC endorsed the Position Paper on the Ministerial Conclusions on "Strengthening the Role of Women in Society", including a recommendation for the governments in the region to lift reservations to the CEDAW.
- A proposal to develop indicators to evaluate the implementation of the Action plan in annual reports should be put on the agenda for the working group meeting on Gender in Morocco in April.
- Rabéa Naciri to make a paper on a monitoring/ advocacy strategy for the next EC meeting.

6. Statutes – which amendments – which process? (Moderator: Colm Regan)

The EC members were reminded that they had agreed on a working methodology for the amendment of the Statutes at the last EC meeting in Petra and that, at the next EC meeting, a draft of the statutes should be ready for the EC members to endorse and hereupon be sent to all EMHRN members for comments. The comments received would be inserted and a final draft would be forwarded to the members to be adopted at the GA.

The EC members went through the document point by point and decided on the different amendments to the Statutes:

Institutional extent of the EMHRN's mandate

It was explained that this was a question of whether the EMHRN should work with institutions as the UN and the Arab League - and not a question of an enlargement of the geographical mandate. The EC members agreed that it could bring complementarity to the work of the EMHRN to enlarge the mandate of the Network.

Eligibility of membership (question of individual members, number of members per country)

It was suggested to invite individuals as experts or resource persons to work on specific issues within the EMHRN instead of having individual members. The idea of establishing a Council was put on the table; however some EC members expressed their reservations in this regard and drew the EC members' attention to the fact that there might a risk of confusing the Council and the EC. In addition to this risk, it might be difficult to find the

funds to cover the functioning of the Council. As regards the individual members, the EC members agreed to reflect on the possibility of ensuring a transition period.

As regards the limit of numbers of members per country, the EC members were in favour of keeping the limited number of members. It was noted that the EMHRN should have a more proactive approach and contact the organisations that would be interesting for the Network to have on board, but still make sure to respect the parity between North and South.

Regarding the criteria for admitting new members, the EC should forward suggestions for criteria that should be discussed at the next EC meeting.

Leadership (gender parity, number of EC members)

In Petra, the EC had agreed that parity between North and South should be preserved and that there should be a restriction on number of terms that EC members can serve on the EC. As regards gender parity, the EMHRN should strive at ensuring it at all levels (EC, GA, membership), however, it was also noted that it might be difficult to always ensure it.

Regarding the number of the EC members (12 or 13 including the President), it was agreed that the number of the EC should stay as it is (12 including the President), that the EMHRN should seek parity between North and South among the other EC members and that the President should be elected by the GA.

Limit of number of terms (individuals or organization)?

The EC members discussed whether the limit on the number of terms applies to the individuals or the organisation they represent and reached the conclusion that the decision should be made by the GA. However, it was noted that the EMHRN should ensure that some organisations do not become members of the EC automatically.

General Assembly

It was noted that the GA is currently held every two years, that the EC is renewed every two years and that there is a risk that all EC members will leave at the same time. According to the current election system, an EC member who has served two mandates of two years each and want to run another time, can only obtain one additional mandate of two years. If the EC member has had three mandates already, he or she cannot run for President. In order to ensure some continuity, the current system should be changed, the EC members agreed.

Decisions:

Institutional extent of the EMHRN's mandate

- The EC endorsed that the EMHRN can extend its mandate to UN and Arab Ligue frameworks in relation to these institutions' dealing with EuroMed issues.

Eligibility of membership

- Individual member: EC agreed on eliminating individual membership.
- A paragraph on how to mediate the departure of the current individual members should be included in the next draft on the amendments of the Statutes.
- Membership; Limit of members by countries: EC decided to keep the principle of restriction of number of members in each country in order to work efficiently. However, there should be some flexibility in the criteria that allows the EMHRN to respond to the reality on the ground.
- Parity between North and South: The EC accepts parity as a principle.
- Criteria: The EC decided that each EC member should provide their suggestions for criteria in writing.

Leadership

- The EC accept parity between North and South on the EC.
- Number of members of the EC: the EMHRN will stay with 12 members including the President.
- Election of the president: EC agreed that the President should be elected by the GA directly.
- Gender equality: EC accept gender parity as an obligation to strive for at all levels and all activities of the EMHRN.

- Terms on the EC applied to individuals or organisations: EC decided to let the GA decide between the two options. The EC agreed on limiting the terms of individuals, but wanted to retain flexibility to have the active organizations on board, without risking that some organizations become eternal members. If someone resigns from their organization, the organization can appoint someone else to replace the person on the EC.
- General Assembly: EC decided to put forward amendments to the statutes so that the GA is only convened every 3 years.
- Election of EC: EC decided to put forward amendments to the statutes so that the terms of the EC members fit the time frame of the GA (every three years) and that a transitional arrangement is made, so that the EMHRN can change to a system where half of the EC members are elected at each GA.
- Election of President: EC decided to put forward amendments to the statutes so that the term of the President, as President, is limited to 2 three years periods (even if (s)he has previously served as ordinary member of the EC).

In general

- The EC endorsed the principle of reaching decisions by consensus

Left to be done until the next EC meeting:

- Criteria: a paper to be prepared for the next EC (each EC member to send proposals to criteria).
- Transition phase (GA to take place every 3 years): a proposal of the transition phase to be made.

7. Next EMHRN General Assembly (preliminary discussion) (Moderator: Nina Atallah)

The EC initiated a preliminary discussion on how to prepare the next EMHRN General Assembly that should be held before December 2008.

Decision:

- Kamel Jendoubi to prepare a paper as a basis to discuss the preparations of the GA at the next EC meeting.

8. Suggestions to dates and venues for EC meetings 2007

The EC members discussed the dates and venues for the coming EC meetings. Kamel Jendoubi stressed the importance of the presence of the EC members at the 10th anniversary in December 2007 that will be celebrated in Brussels.

Decisions:

- 28-30 September 2007 in Slovenia (first choice, due to the presidency) or Turkey (second choice, to involve Turkish NGOs).
- 14-16 December 2007 in Brussels (EC meeting and celebration of the 10th anniversary of the EMHRN). Sandrine Grenier to check the agenda of the Brussels institutions.

9. Member issues:

a. Eva Norström's trip to Turkey (report and discussion)

Eva Norström informed about her trip to Turkey in the beginning of February following the decision of the EC to discuss concrete ways of cooperation with the EMHRN member, Human Rights Association, in Turkey and other NGOs in Turkey. At the meeting with the Human Rights Association, she learned that the organization feels marginalized and would like to be consulted by the EMHRN to a larger extent, in particular as Turkey is a key country in the region. Eva Norström mentioned some suggestions to improvement of the cooperation between the HRA and the EMHRN; in particular she thought it would be a good idea to invite Yusuf Alatas for an EC meeting and to invite a young representative for the summer school organized by the working group on Human Rights Education as a starting point. The HRA is also interested in participating in the meeting of the working groups on Freedom of Association, Gender, Migration and Human Rights Education.

Decisions:

- Invite Yusuf Alatas to the next EC meeting.
- Encourage application of Turkish NGOs to the summer school.
- Encourage application of Turkish NGOs to the working groups.

- Write a letter to the IHD informing them that the issue was discussed at the EC meeting, that Eva Norström prepared a report, and that Yusuf Alatas is welcome to attend the next EC.

b. Membership applications

The EMHRN had received two membership applications since the last EC meeting in December 2006, i.e. from Al-Marsad and from the Mediterranean Institute for Gender Studies.

Decisions:

- Al-Marsad: EC postponed the decision to the next EC meeting in order to consult the EMHRN's Syrian members and to get information on Al-Marsad's sources of financial support.
- Mediterranean Institute for Gender Studies: EC will recommend to the GA to ratify their membership.

10. Partnerships

- Relations with the EuroMed NGO Platform

Michel Tubiana briefed the EC members about the latest developments in the EuroMed NGO Platform.

Decisions

- The EMHRN should follow-up with the EU Commission on their support policies and respect for the diversity of civil society actors.
- The EMHRN should actively participate in the next General Assembly of the Platform GA.

11. Agreeing on an EC statement

(See above, 3. Discussion of points for EC statement from meeting and electing drafting group)

12. Urgencies

(No urgencies were put forward at the meeting)

