

**"6th regional conference & general assembly of the inter-African
Committee on traditional practices affecting the health of women and
children"**

Mesdames et Messieurs,

Dear ladies and gentlemen,

First of all I would like to congratulate the organizers for this big conference on this very important issue.

It is a great honour for me in my role of representing the European Union to speak today in front of members from at least 28 African countries. The European Union counts at this stage 25 Member States, soon 28 Member States (with Romania, Bulgaria and Croatia = 487 Mill.) with approximately 452 Millions inhabitants, a small figure compared to 76 Millions inhabitants only in Egypt and in Nigeria even 137 Millions.

As the European Union is already and even more in the future confronted to the challenge of MIGRATION, IMMIGRATION and as the EU is also a place of REFUGE (Asyl) the traditional practice of Female Genital Mutilation has to be tackled also within the EU.

The European Union and all the Members of the Committee on Women's Rights and Gender Equality in the European Parliament defend the fundamental rights, that's why in one of the last reports concerning Female genital mutilation of the European Parliament you will find the following quotation: *"any form of female genital mutilation, of whatever degree, is an act of violence against women, which constitutes a violation of their fundamental rights, particularly the right to personal integrity and physical and mental health, and of their sexual and reproductive rights; (...) such violations can*

*under no circumstances be justified by respect for cultural traditions of various kinds or initiation ceremonies"*¹

The European Parliament with their 732 members organize also regularly meetings with members of 77 ACP-countries - Africa, Caribbean, Pacific - the so-called ACP-EU joint parliamentary assembly - where female genital mutilation is on the agenda of the meetings and regularly follow-up's of each resolution voted in the ACP-committee are made.

By coincidence the 9th session of the ACP-EU joint parliamentary assembly will take place in BAMAKO, MALI on 16 - 21 April 2005.

With some figures I would like to continue:

In Austria, a very small country of the EU where I am coming from, approximately 8.000 women are victims of female genital mutilation - namely women coming from Egypt and Nigeria living in Austria - that is 0,1 percent of the Austrian population. In this occasion I would like to express my thanks to Mrs. Hadis from the African Women's Organisation in Vienna/Austria who was the initiator of a study giving amongst other this figures.

Some more figures - with which the European Commission is working with (issued from the World Health Organisation = WHO) on female genital mutilation show the delicate situation:

- approximately **135 million** girls and women worldwide are concerned from this problem
- **2 million girls a year** are at risk of mutilation, approximately 6000 per day

¹ European Parliament, Elena Valenciano Martinez-Orozco, Female Genital Mutilation, A 5 0285/2001.

- one or more forms of female genital mutilation are practiced **in 28 African countries**, essentially throughout the central area of the continent - you all here know much more about this facts and figures

The European Union wants to help third countries to raise awareness but also need information campaigns within Europe: for example our doctors should learn to recognize mutilation, to help circumcised and infibulated women give birth and to be able to give psychological and medical treatment to this women. Teaching Kits on FGM (as one of the programs of Mrs. Hadis from the African women's organization) should be spread out!

What is the European Union doing against FEMALE GENITAL MUTILATION:

- there is no legal base for combating violence within European law
- each Member State of the EU-25 has to tackle individually the problem of violence
- each member state legislate on violence or not; I will not enter into each law of the 25 Member States
- as consequence there is also no legal base within European Law on combatting **Female Genital Mutilation**
- but the European Union offers EU-fundings for projects with the aim to reduce this widespread practice

two very efficient and successful programmes are

1. DAPHNE-programm

2. fundings from EuropeAid

1. DAPHNE

This Programm aims at supporting organisations that develop measures and actions to prevent or to combat all types of violence against children, young people and women and to protect the victims and groups at-risk.

The Daphne II programme runs from 2004 until 2008 with a budget of EUR 50 million = US \$ 64, 7 Mill.

The main types of violence addressed by the projects are: slavery, sexual violence, gender violence, trafficking in human beings, commercial sexual exploitation, violence in the workplace ... and female genital mutilation.

3% of the funded projects are projects linked to the fight of female genital mutilation.

Main impact of these projects on women was the increased awareness of their situation. The transfer of good practice from one part of Europe to another, from one group to another is another important aspect.

Even if it is not a specific objective of the Daphne Programme, projects funded under Daphne did have a documentable impact on legislation or on authorities.

2. EuropeAid

- The European Commission also manage "external aid" in developing countries. On 2001 the Commission set up the **EuropeAid** Cooperation Office in order to implement external aid instruments.
- EuropeAid ensures that Community (i.e. European Union) external aid in third countries is implemented effectively.
- As the European Union has a long-standing commitment to promoting gender equality

- as gender discrimination is a violation of human rights, an obstacle to social and economic development the European Union integrated the gender aspect also in his development-cooperation combined with specific measures in favour of women.
- EuropeAid can fund actions regarding the fight on "female genital mutilation" on the ground of three budget lines within the European budget. Fundings are possible
 - under the budget line of the European initiative for Democracy and Human rights
 - under EuropeAid budget line for gender
 - under EuropeAid budget line for health

budget line of the European Initiative for Democracy and Human rights

- In 2004 the amount of € 500.000,- (US \$ 647.150) has been spent for projects for female genital mutilation; a call for proposal under the topic of "torture" has been launched, the EC has received 104 proposals, only **6** proposals were projects linked to the fight on female genital mutilation;
- this fact shows, that there is a lack of information for possible funding possibilities within the European Union;
- in 2005 and 2006 the European Commission foresees to launch campaigns with the title "promotion of a culture of fundamental right

(droits de l'Homme)"; under this forecoming call for proposal campaigning projects against female genital mutilation will also be funded

EuropeAid budget line for gender

- in 2005 and 2006 "violence against women" will be the topic of several funding possibilities within the European Union
- in 2005 the amount of € 2, 43 Million and in (US \$ 3,15 Mill)
- in 2006 the amount of € 1, 48 Million (US \$ 1,92 Mill)
- will be dedicated to projects which are trying to change attitudes and behaviours regarding girls, that means also fundings for projects on female genital mutilation

EuropeAid budget line for health

- a recent call for fundings (call for proposal for funding) had the topic on "activities of sensibilising regarding problems on sexual and reproductive health" ;
- the EC tabled € 17 Millions (US \$ 22 Millions) for this initiative - a high amount - 211 projects has been presented to be funded, only **one of** this 211 projects concerns directly the fight against female genital mutilation
- once again: the EC offers possibilities for fundings of projects on female genital mutilation; there are still to less projects on female genital mutilation!!

(some words on a possible participation in a call for proposal for EU-funding)

- find a convenient call for proposal for EU-funding on female genital mutilation on the homepage of the European Union: http://europa.eu.int/comm/europeaid/index_en.htm
- non -governmental organisations - are eligible for EU-fundings, sometimes also public institutions or state authorities can be eligible
- partnerships are strongly recommended
- you have to fill in and join documents in due time and fullfill other criterias like for example an annuel report of the organisation and the financial situation

In my closing remarks I would like to insist on the following recommendations:

- The International Day of Zero Tolerance of Female Genital Mutilation should be an event commemorated all over the world on local, regional, national and international level.
- The European Commission has to improve its Communication strategy what fundings belong
- but also the several countries where FGM is still practiced should show its interest in European Development Policy and should ask for information on EU-fundings
- Mobilize religious leaders, civil society and professionals of both sexes who were opposed to the practice - find more persons like Waris Dirie in the anti-FGM-campaign
- it is up to us women to fight against this violation of fundamental rights and to avoid that such traditional practices are transposed to other generations. Values and attitudes have to be changed through

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education, information and communication - also through MOTHERS,
AUNTS and GRANDMOTHERS

Thank you for your attention.