

Dear Colleague,

2010 is a significant year for gender equality. At the global level the 15-year review of the implementation of the Beijing Declaration and Platform for Action will take place. At European Union level violence is recognised as a human rights violation and many policy instruments are currently being revised and can be improved to target violence. In several Member States new tools are being created to offer women greater protection. In addition, the Council of Europe is working on a framework convention covering the severest and most widespread forms of violence against women in Europe.

The European Parliament will celebrate this year's International Women's Day with an event which will bring together European and national parliamentarians from our corresponding committees. The theme for this year is violence against women. I believe that through direct contributions from national parliamentarians we can facilitate the process of creating a political and legal environment in which violence against women is eliminated.

Our meeting will be opened by the President of European Parliament, Mr Jerzy BUZEK. Ms Bibiana AÍDO ALMAGRO, Minister for Gender Equality of Spain (tbc), Ms Mara CARFAGNA, Minister for Equal Opportunities of Italy and Ms Inés ALBERDI, Executive Director of the United Nations Development Fund for Women (UNIFEM) will address the meeting.

Representatives of Parliaments in the 27 EU Member States, candidate countries and the Council of Europe are invited to attend. I would be very honoured if a delegation of two Members (or four Members from bicameral legislatures) from your Parliament could attend this event on Tuesday, 16 March 2010 from 9h00 to 12h30 in the hemicycle of the European Parliament in Brussels. Should you be unable to attend, we would welcome any written contribution which can be distributed to the participants.

The practical details including the draft programme for the meeting will be forwarded to your Parliament's Representatives/Services directly responsible for relations with the European Parliament.

Please do not hesitate to contact our services for any further information at the following e-mail address: ip-femm@europarl.europa.eu

I look forward to hearing from you,

Yours sincerely,

Eva-Britt SVENSSON