

## Highlights of the October 2007 part-session

- ▶ **5 October 2007:** consideration and adoption of the report of Mr José Mendes Bota (Portugal, EPP/DC) on "Parliaments united in combating domestic violence against women": mid-term assessment of the campaign by the Parliamentary Assembly.
- ▶ **5 October 2007:** Regional seminar of the groupings C and F co-ordinated by Ms Carmen Quintanilla (Spain) and Ms Judith Diaz Delgado (Mexico).
- ▶ **1-5 October 2007:** PACE information stand on the Assembly action "Parliaments united in combating domestic violence" near the hemicycle and presentation of the cartoon exhibition "Por una vida sin malos tratos".

## 25 November 2007: male parliamentarians called on to help combat violence against women



White ribbon symbolising men's commitment to combating violence against women

Following on from the proposal of the rapporteur, Mr José Mendes Bota, a new Europe-wide initiative is being launched for the key date of 25 November 2007 (International Day for the Elimination of Violence against Women) on the subject of involving men in combating violence against women.

Steps which can be taken by national parliaments include setting up groups of male parliamentarians involved in combating violence against women, holding hearings or parliamentary seminars on the subject, statements being given by male parliamentarians in the media or schools and action by parliamentarians in connection with sports events.

To mark the event, the PACE will organise parliamentary activities on the same issue at the occasion of the Standing Committee's meeting on 23 November in Bratislava, in partnership with the Slovak Parliament.

For more information on this Europe-wide initiative, go to the campaign website [www.coe.int/stopviolence/assembly](http://www.coe.int/stopviolence/assembly) ("Male parliamentarians take action").



### France: 87 senators sign the PACE declaration on combating domestic violence against women

Mr Jean-Guy Branger, contact parliamentarian for France, has mobilised support in the French Senate for the Council of Europe campaign. Thanks to his awareness-raising efforts, 87 Senate members have signed the Parliamentary Assembly's online declaration. To date, a total of 191 signatures have been received. All parliamentarians who so wish are urged to sign the declaration (see <http://www.coe.int/stop-violence/assembly>).

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## Parliaments united in combating domestic violence against women

### Council of Europe Campaign "Stop domestic violence against women" (2006-2008)

*PACE Action Newsletter No. 4 – October 2007*

### Regional parliamentary seminars: fostering fruitful co-operation between national parliaments



The contact parliamentarians will shortly be holding a series of meetings within the regional groups set up by the Parliamentary Assembly to develop the pooling of experience at parliamentary level and promote work on legislation. These meetings will focus on analysing legislative deficiencies and the national parliaments' needs with a view to determining lines of work and improving national legislation.

The following timetable of meetings has already been drawn up:

- ▶ Strasbourg, 5 October
- ▶ Helsinki, 10 October
- ▶ Vienna, 16 October
- ▶ Sofia, 28/29 November
- ▶ Paris in December (date to be confirmed)

These meetings will also provide an opportunity to discuss the key measures approved by the Parliamentary Assembly on the basis of the report by Mr José Mendes Bota (Portugal, EPP/CD) on "Parliaments united in combating domestic violence against women": mid-term assessment of the campaign, which PACE will adopt on 5 October, with a view to pursuing the implementation of the Council of Europe campaign "Stop domestic violence against women".

## Seven criteria for a successful campaign

With a view to assessing the action taken by national parliaments to combat violence against women, the Committee on Equal Opportunities for Women and Men has recommended that parliaments adopt seven key measures to be given priority:

- ▶ making domestic violence against women, including marital rape, a criminal offence;
- ▶ regarding violence perpetrated between (former) partners as an aggravating circumstance;
- ▶ setting up sufficient numbers of safe emergency shelters;
- ▶ making provision to remove violent spouses or partners and take out protection orders against perpetrators;
- ▶ guaranteeing effective access to the courts and to protection measures for victims;
- ▶ allocating sufficient budgetary resources for implementing the law;
- ▶ monitoring the application of laws on violence against women passed by parliament.

Each parliament will be invited to assess its implementation of these measures by June 2008, with the aim of achieving the campaign objectives and thereby fostering improved protection of women victims of domestic violence.

## Portugal: first regional parliamentary seminar on the campaign in Bragança



Mr José Mendes Bota and the working group set up by the Portuguese Parliament felt that it would be appropriate to hold decentralised seminars in four of the Portuguese regions where more needs to be done in terms of combating violence against women. The first such seminar was held on 25 June 2007 in Bragança, an area in the north of the country where victim-support facilities and preventive

measures require improvement. Further awareness-raising initiatives are planned in the Algarve, Madeira and Santarém, three other areas where there is a serious shortage of victim-support centres. More details are available on the Portuguese Parliament's special website on the campaign: <http://www.parlamento.pt/violenciadomestica>



### Exhibition of caricatures " Por una vida sin malos tratos"

On the occasion of the regional parliamentary seminar of group C, Ms Carmen Quintanilla, contact parliamentarian for Spain and regional co-ordinator, will present during the October part-session in Strasbourg an exhibition of caricatures prepared by Spain's Ministry of Social Affairs and Labour on the theme of violence against women.



## Combating violence against women: the Parliamentary Assembly shows the way forward

Since November 2006, the Council of Europe has been committed to combating violence against women, including domestic violence. The pan-European campaign run by the Organisation, which will end in 2008, is fully supported by national parliaments and the Parliamentary Assembly, which had strongly advocated it. The time has come, at this half-way point in the campaign, to take stock of what we parliamentarians have accomplished and what remains to be done.

Over these last few months, MPs have shown that they can make a useful and effective contribution to the conduct of a Council of Europe campaign which is based on one of the cornerstones of the Organisation's work: respect for fundamental human rights. The campaign is fully in line with the recommendations adopted by the Assembly following its debate on the situation of human rights and democracy in April 2007.

I should like to pay tribute here to the commitment shown by numerous presidents and speakers of national parliaments who, in appointing contact parliamentarians or becoming personally involved in parliamentary activities undertaken during the campaign, have sent out a strong political signal. I should also like to take this opportunity to applaud the determination with which the members of the Committee on Equal Opportunities for Women and Men, the contact parliamentarians appointed for the campaign and many MPs across Europe have been mobilising resources, changing laws and attitudes in order to help to build a fairer society. We know that there is a long way to go before our campaign has any real impact. The Parliamentary Assembly intends to play to the full its role of providing impetus and to show the way forward – in Europe and beyond. The report submitted at this part-session by Mr José Mendes Bota offers us an initial appraisal, but also some practical pointers for our continued involvement. I urge you all to continue your endeavours and to implement the measures proposed in your parliaments.

*René van der Linden*

*President of the Parliamentary Assembly of the Council of Europe*

### Poland: Handbook for Parliamentarians now available in Polish

As part of the campaign to stop domestic violence, the Polish Parliament has had the *Handbook for Parliamentarians* translated into Polish. This positive initiative should help to inform members of the Sejm and the Senate more effectively and raise their awareness of the relevant issues still further.