



II CONFERENCE

Cooperation for Development and Non-Governmental Organisations. Working in the Middle East, Region of Conflicts. Women and Human Rights

Madrid, 25th November 2009

Introduction:

Since its creation in 2006, the *Centre for Middle Eastern Studies of the Foundation for the Social Promotion of Culture* (CEMOFPSC, Centro de Estudios de Oriente Medio de la Fundación Promoción Social de la Cultura) has sought to *convert into theory* the experience of working on the ground, and to promote research into and multidisciplinary analysis of Middle East related matters, with the intention of contributing to a better understanding of the different cultures and peoples and, therefore, to peace-building.

After three CEMOFPSC seminars on the political situation in the region (*"Hope for Peace in the Middle East?: UNIFIL"*, *"Religion: Dimension Absent from Politics and Diplomacy in the Middle East"* and *"The Middle East, Fragmented Societies, What Future?"*), the CEMOFPSC organised a two-day seminar on *Cooperation for Development and Non-Governmental Organisations. Working in the Middle East, Region of Conflicts*, which aimed to present a general view of the role of cooperation in the Middle East by analysing the policies and work strategies employed by donor countries and international and national NGOs, the difficulties involved in executing and coordinating projects, and the complementarity between work methods. The conclusions of this conference were embodied in a publication.

In the forthcoming seminar on cooperation for development, the CEMOFPSC aims to assemble experts from different countries in order to deal with the issue of women's

participation in the field of development, with special emphasis on their role in promoting the application of human rights and resolving conflicts.

This issue is being debated in the United Nations as part of the process of reviewing its internal structures to bring them more into line with the interests of women. The most significant change in this adaptation process is expected to relate to the situation of women who live in areas of conflict. One of the UN commitments in this respect is to consider that women in civil society, especially in countries of conflict, have to make their voice heard, not only through the *ad hoc* consultative process, but also through a formal decision-making process whose motto is: "Nothing About Us Without Us".

Indeed, women who live in areas of conflict are usually excluded from decision-making and peace-building processes, as is proved by their meagre participation in UNO programmes such as: refugee flow management or situations of violence against women during wars, kidnappings, rapes, etc.

The permanent war situation in Palestine, Lebanon, Israel, Egypt, Jordan and Syria in recent decades has had an unequal effect on the situation of women in each one of these countries. Together with their children, they have often been targets of war, mutilated, disabled or killed. They have been forced to flee their homes, with the consequences of uprooting that this entails, or to live in refugee camps for long periods of time. These traumatic experiences have physical and psychological consequences which have not been fully defined.

The aim of this seminar is to analyse, step by step, the most pressing needs of women -and their families- who live in war and post-conflict situations, and to try to provide a view of the role they could play in peace-building.

To this end, women, the organisations that represent them and a range of international experts will be given the chance to express their views, in order to establish cooperation priorities in these situations. Furthermore, the conclusions of this conference will be used to prepare an action programme adapted to reality.

With these conferences, the CEMOFPSC also aims to establish contact with organisations interested in reflecting on cooperation for development in the Middle East, whereby it is hoped that they will be encouraged to join the Network created by the CEMOFPSC and participate in the CEMOFPSC's activities and programmes.

The speeches and the conclusions of this conference will be published via digital and written media, the purpose of this dissemination being to spread awareness and knowledge of the specific problems facing the societies of these countries, so that the shared experience can benefit cooperation for development. It will provide another opportunity to make Spanish society aware of its necessary contribution to peace-building.

Structure and thematic organisation:

This seminar will be divided into two sessions. The first will begin with speeches given by experts who will outline the general themes and then open the second session with the debate. Each session will have moderators and rapporteurs, all of them experts who will introduce the speakers and rapidly summarise the most representative ideas.

The sessions will be held behind closed doors and conducted in accordance with the work guidelines of a development cooperation organisation. The sessions will centre around the following topic: *Cooperation with women in the Middle East: a region of conflicts*.

Participants:

There will be a maximum of 20 participants, comprising:

1. Cooperation agencies: official agencies.
2. European and international NGOs.
3. Local NGOs: local partners of international NGOs (members of the READI and others).
4. Civil society: aid beneficiaries, private sector, local councils.
5. Experts and consultants who work on the ground.

The participating countries and organisations will be: Spain, United Kingdom, Italy, Lebanon, Palestine, Syria, Egypt, Jordan, Israel, the United Nations and the European Union.

Visibility:

The leaflets, posters and publication of the minutes will clearly and visibly reflect the identity of the seminar funding bodies.

Technical organisation:

Languages: A simultaneous interpretation service in English and Spanish will be provided by the organising body.

Organisation of the panels:

The speeches will be 15 minutes long.

We kindly ask speakers to send their speeches to the Technical Secretary's Office before 15th November for their subsequent publication. Speakers are also requested to attach a brief curriculum vitae (half a page).

Accommodation and living expenses in Spain:

The Technical Secretary's Office will take care of the attendees' accommodation and living expenses in Madrid during the course of the seminar. The Technical Secretary's Office will contact all attendees shortly.

Contact:

CEMOFPSC
C/ Huertas, 71 - 5º Drcha.
28014 – Madrid (España)
www.fundacionfpssc.org

Tel.: 00 34 91 344 01 76
Fax: 00 34 91 344 03 66
cemofpsc@fundacionfpssc.org