

**INTERNATIONAL DEVELOPMENT COOPERATION MEETING ON
GENDER & MEDIA**

OPENING REMARKS

BY

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I'd like to personally welcome each of you to the International Development Cooperation Meeting on Gender and Media. It is a very special honour for Greece and the Secretariat General for Media & Communication to co-host this global event and we want, thus, to express our gratitude to UNESCO and GAMAG for letting us be an active part of this unique initiative: a gathering that will allow to exchange our thoughts and proposals about a crucial issue that we are all experiencing in our own social contexts. In a world that discrimination is a constant force that undermines peace and freedom, a fundamental trait of each person can be an instant divider. But who is the real enemy? And how many realize that there are ways to deal with it or even acknowledge its detrimental presence?

There is a reason why media is intrinsically linked to what we call "gender inequality". Media reflect our society and shape popular beliefs, while they construct it and deconstruct it through complex mechanisms each passing day. Media is about knowledge, media is about expression and media is about power. Today we are speaking about empowerment that is a push given to people in order to live freely among others and exercise their human rights. Women, in particular, need to get hold of this power by providing them equal access to information while we strive to raise awareness about how this information can be used. We know that there are many obstacles to overcome: women are often misrepresented, marginalized or even abused in the real and virtual world. A vital way to resist is to be part of these processes: not only accept what is given but take it or create it.

In Greece nowadays we proceed with the introduction of gender mainstreaming policies in many areas. Being specialized as Secretariat General for Media and Communication we encourage and incorporate such actions in the media field. As an indication we report that in Press and Communication Offices that we oversee abroad 35 women are employed, specialized as Press Attachés, (compared to 26 men) and 10 of them hold positions of responsibility. In our central premises we employ 236 women and 179 men whereas 10 women hold positions of responsibility comparing to 13 men: these are promising results, though there is still room for improvement. A further step towards achieving this goal could be the appointment of a specialized committee that will ensure an equal establishment plan for female and male employees in decision-making positions: a measure that we would like to see adopted in many entities belonging in the public or the private sector.

In our public service broadcasting network ERT S.A. that we have under our supervision there are numerous specialized TV, web and radio broadcasts that cover issues regarding gender equality and women empowerment such as programs that present women's life courses, their accomplishments and their struggles to achieve them. The radio program called "Exercise my Rights" for example is awarded two times for its activation in this field by women's organisations. Moreover, by establishing boards of social control and in cooperation with the Secretariat General for Gender Equality there is a major project for gender mainstreaming policies such as the creation of relevant codes of contact for

journalists and advertisers. Of course, this is only a brief description of measures which we believe that are indicative of the choices we have for promoting gender equality.

In closing I would like to stress that this is not a fight between women and men. Heading towards a fair media environment regarding gender equality means that men are liberated as well from oppressive standards of a supposed hegemonic masculinity. Women in their part are allowed to thrive and reach their goals through the same routes as men. There is still a lot that needs to be done to bridge the gender gap on media and especially through multiple targeted measures from our behalf as public authority. That is why we believe strongly in such initiatives and alliances such as GAMAG-and GAPMIL, that we are also partners- that unite nations to fundamental causes. And we believe even more at people's abilities to enact upon their freedom when fairer conditions are established. And this is something that is certainly worth to fighting for.