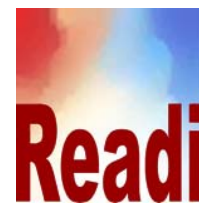


**SEMINAR: *Women in labor law
and work-family life balance
in the MENA region***



Welcome greeting

25 November 2010

Laura López de Ceraín

General Director of Immigration and Development Cooperation at Madrid City Council

Thank you very much once again for your invitation. It is indeed a great pleasure for me to attend, not only because it corresponds to me institutionally, as Macarena Cotelo said, as one of the financial backers, but because I personally share the focus of this organization within its programme of strengthening, awareness and further analysis of important topics.

We do indeed all know about READI, and from the outside you can see how it has been formed, in a strong way, as an open network, but also very focused on a range of topics in a given geographical area and with clear lines of action. And at Madrid City Council we have funded this seminar, like others in the past, as part of its policy of development awareness and education.

But we have to say here that, unlike other actions that have their reasons, but that do not maybe have the depth that these have, we are especially proud to support initiatives like this one because, firstly, they have selected topics that I consider to be the right ones. Last year we talked about education, today we are going to talk about the legal framework, the reconciliation of work, about a few countries in particular, about certain conditions, but I think that the importance is not only shown by the selection of subjects, but by the approach of the subjects.

I have had the opportunity to browse through the preparatory documents for this seminar, and they certainly are very carefully studied documents, totally rigorous, far reaching and very focused, and this really means that everyone makes progress. I.e. that this theoretical approach is on the one hand and at the same time very much in line with the practice of each of the countries in the region where they work, and I believe that this combination of theory and practice is essential for further progress on cooperation issues in a region with such a specific nature that is covered by both the FPSC and the READI, and that few Spanish NGOs study with such detail.

For those who do not know about Madrid City Council's history of cooperation, we have spent many years working and funding projects through NGOs, although not only through NGOs.

We ourselves only actually cover Morocco, in many cases with the Foundation for the Social Promotion of Culture, and in the area that you cover the main lines of action of the Foundation also coincide with ours. We have considered the work of women and children in Morocco as priorities, as basic points in order to further strengthen civil society, which is so important.

Last year we talked about education, this year we are talking about legal and employment issues, the legal framework, which is fundamental for progress in the area of women and reconciliation, but that without the cultural aspects, in a region like the one concerned, the triangle, would not I believe be complete: education, training, culture, education, legal framework and culture are essential to position the pillars for the development of women and society in general. This is why I think that the multidisciplinary views you also have are essential when we talk about these issues.

The legal framework is in my opinion of course a sine qua non, but it is not enough if there is no change or transformation of society or the cultural aspects; all changes and transformations are in my view derived from these coordinates. Fair equality, not only nominal or formal equality between men and women, should be based on the principle of equal recognition of equal merit. We know that issues related to women, and to the family, are factors involving fundamental changes. On behalf of myself and Madrid City Council I would like to welcome everybody who has come from third countries to this wonderful city of Madrid.