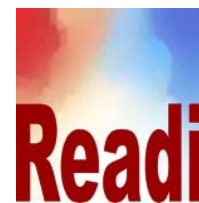


**SEMINAR: *Women in labor law
and work-family life balance
in the MENA region***



Welcome greeting

25 November 2010

Percival Manglano

Director of Development Cooperation of the Autonomous Community of Madrid.

Thank you very much, and I would first of all like to welcome you. I know you have come from countries from all around the Mediterranean arc, Lebanon, the Palestinian Territories, Morocco, Tunisia and Mauritania, welcome to Madrid. I would like to thank and congratulate Ms Pilar Lara and all the team at the Foundation for the Social Promotion of Culture for organizing this seminar, and for the work they do in general with the Autonomous Community of Madrid in the Palestinian Territories, although generally really, throughout the, Mediterranean.

Ms Laura López de Ceraín was talking to you just now about decentralized cooperation. As you know, Spain is a very decentralized country, and that means that both public authorities as well as regions or cities fund development cooperation projects, and due to how the system is designed this means that what we do, above all, is to provide funding to NGOs. What we want to do is to support the initiatives of civil society, its most common expression being the NGOs.

I would say that the Foundation for the Social Promotion of Culture is an exemplary NGO in the kind of cooperation that we are involved in. In the case of the Autonomous Community of Madrid, we have worked with the Foundation for many years. Since 2004 we have provided more than 3 million euros for

funding FPSC projects. Initially in Latin America: Bolivia, Paraguay; but focused on the Palestinian Territories since 2008. Some representatives are here, including the President of Cáritas Jerusalem, who are members of the Foundation in the Palestinian Territories.

The projects we are undertaking are very much focused on education. Education is a priority for Spanish cooperation in general, as it is of course for Madrid cooperation.

In the case of the Autonomous Community of Madrid, we allocate about 30% of funds to cooperation and it is the most important segment of our cooperation. And within education, the most important part is probably the basic level, primary and secondary education, including literacy, etc. And this is the case because we understand education to be the sector that best ensures opportunities.

If we somehow interpret development cooperation and development in general as the process of creating opportunities and expanding areas of personal freedom, education, and especially basic education, is absolutely critical, especially for women. If there are large differences in opportunities between men and women in many countries in the world, this difference in opportunities is often based on education: how many families are there where the boy goes to school and the girl stays at home to help with housework or other chores.

The effort to extend educational opportunities to women is absolutely vital to make progress in creating opportunities for everyone in society, and that basically means making progress in development. Education is vital in our cooperation, as well as for the promotion of the rights and freedoms of women, with which it overlaps perfectly. Through education, but also through many other initiatives such as income generation and the protection of basic rights like the right to property. There are still societies where women have no property rights. So we believe that initiatives along these lines are very important, and we fund them through NGOs.

But the work we do with the NGOs not only involves carrying out projects in countries, it is also about raising awareness, which is precisely what brings us here to this meeting today. Awareness understood as informing Madrid society in general, and cooperation partners in particular, to advance in the joint reflection that will ensure ever better cooperation. I think we are deceiving ourselves if we think the world of cooperation works perfectly well, that there are no types of challenges. All of us involved in cooperation are aware that we must do a better job than what we are doing.

Challenges posed by poverty in the world still exist, and so cooperation has to make an ongoing effort to improve results in an effort to reduce poverty in the world. Clearly it is not only cooperation that will reduce poverty in the world,

there are many more factors that contribute to this, but cooperation is one of the agents involved, and we have to be self-critical and reflect together to define the broad outlines with a view to achieving this goal.

These types of meetings that focus on very specific aspects, such as women and employment law, are of great interest and will allow us to advance towards the development of societies.

Finally, I would like to give a special mention to the next person who will provide the keynote address after these opening words, Ms Jocelyne Khoueiry, another example of cooperation at the Autonomous Community of Madrid, in Lebanon in this case, and also focused on education and women's rights, this being the only project that the Autonomous Community of Madrid has in Lebanon, and one which we expect to be very successful.