

## SIE statement on Afghanistan

The crisis in Afghanistan is a tragedy that goes beyond its borders. Last months have led to a devastating increase of violence towards women in communities and in families. Soroptimist International of Europe (SIE) call the European community to take appropriate measures to safeguard women's rights and humanitarian needs of the people of Afghanistan.

In recent years women in Afghanistan have achieved a lot in education, employment, freedom of movement, political representation and leadership. In 2009 their efforts resulted in the adoption of Afghanistan's Elimination of Violence Against Women Law. Afghan women, doctors and nurses represent a crucial part of the healthcare system in Afghanistan. Women are lawyers, judges, journalists, writers and in education. The young generation of women and girls has moved Afghanistan towards greater equality. Now that women's rights and democracy are threatened, we should all stand up for these women.

Due to the situation, Afghan citizens are fleeing and seeking for asylum.

- We, the European community expect States to cooperate in solidarity, to share the burden and provide lacking support (where governments and specialised NGOs fail or cannot do it);
- All asylum seekers should have the right to access a fair determination of asylum status procedure in compliance with the Geneva Convention of 1951 and its 1967 Protocol trusting the UNHCR's mandate and recommendations for such a scenario as guardian of the rights of refugees;
- We call States to accept the condition of women and girls as "*de per se*" to grant at least the status of humanitarian protection and accept the obligation of non-deportation for all asylum seekers applying (it's also called a "*non-return advisory*" or "*non-refoulement*" for all asylum seekers until there is safety);
- States should accept that when fleeing away from their homes in an emergency, the majority of persons does not carry any passport or document of identification and nevertheless the asylum procedure shall apply (based on general guidelines);
- Women and their children, as well as caring parents and persons, when arriving, should never be separated and have the guarantee of family reunification along the asylum determination procedure. Unaccompanied children, elderly and persons with disabilities should be prioritised and treated according to the International legal specific frame for their condition;
- Upon arrival, specialised NGOs should be present at all stages, with accurate translators and special psychological support for the most vulnerable. Soroptimists are called to offer expertise and support side by side with these NGOs and relevant Governmental bodies.

Silence and inaction are not an option.