I wish to thank the parliaments that have contributed to the funding of the activities of the Parliamentary Network “Women Free from Violence”. This is a tangible sign of their determination to prevent and combat violence against women and domestic violence. These voluntary contributions have enabled us to produce a Handbook for parliamentarians, entitled Council of Europe Convention on preventing and combating violence against women and domestic violence (Istanbul Convention), available in 14 different languages, together with visibility material (poster, leaflet, newsletter), to organise a series of exchanges of views on themes such as the role of parliamentarians and parliamentary networks in eradicating violence against women and refugee women and in the promotion of the Istanbul Convention; and to promote actively the signature and ratification of the Istanbul Convention, namely through the organisation of parliamentary seminars (Belgium, Bosnia and Herzegovina, Italy and Portugal).

The Network needs your support to speed up the entry into force of the convention. If you wish to support us with a voluntary contribution, please contact Ms Géraldine Gremet (geraldine.gremet@coe.int, tel. +33 9 20 21 49 82), Project Manager, or Ms Elodie Fischer (elodie.fischer@coe.int, tel. +33 3 90 21 56 34), Co-Secretary of the Committee on Equality and Non-Discrimination.

I thank you in advance for your co-operation and support.

Mendes Bota
Here are some quotes from the keynote speakers:

Mr Gilbert Saboya Sunyé, Minister for Foreign Affairs of Andorra and Chair of the Committee of Ministers of the Council of Europe

- “It is very encouraging to hear so much praise about the Istanbul Convention as the most advanced legally binding treaty, an excellent tool to bring an end to violence against women and domestic violence. The Istanbul Convention is indeed a pragmatic, advanced and sophisticated tool. But its value cannot be proved by displaying it on a shelf. A tool is made to be used. The Council of Europe will continue to join forces with the United Nations, the European Union and other regional organisations so that women across the world can feel the real meaning of our mission and community of values.”

Ms Gabriella Battaini-Dragoni, Deputy Secretary General, Council of Europe

- “We need to do so much more. Words now have to be translated into action. I would like to thank Ms Puri who referred to the Istanbul Convention as primus inter pares among instruments targeting elimination of violence against women.”

Ms Najat Vallaud-Belkacem, Minister for Women’s Rights and Political co-ordinator of the Council of Europe

- “It’s high time for action”. Ratification in France will also go hand in hand with a series of measures to bring our legislation into line with several provisions in the convention, including those on forced marriages and genital mutilation.”

Mr Jean-Claude Mignon, President of the Parliamentary Assembly of the Council of Europe

- “I encourage those countries which have not yet done so to sign the convention as soon as possible. Declaring efforts to combat violence against women and domestic violence in Europe and beyond.

Ms Michelle Bachelet, former Executive Director, UN Women

- “There can be no peace, no progress as long as there is discrimination and violence against women”