

Tullia Romagnoli Carettoni: “women have skills they cannot recognize, their potential is enormous under every sky”

Interview with Maria Paola Azzario Chiesa, President of the International Mediterranean Women’s Forum.

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The second half of the last century saw numerous fights for civil rights and gender equality having an happy ending in our country. An important protagonist of these fights has been the Senator and professor Tullia Romagnoli Carettoni, with her deep involvement as politician and parliamentarian. Particularly in the Sixties and Seventies, her involvement had often been decisive for the approval of the reform of the new family-code, the finding of a shared text of the law concerning the ending of civilian effects of marriage (divorce), the reaching of the endorsement for the parental leaving assurance and the voluntary interruption of pregnancy (abortion). Tullia Carettoni always supported these themes in her struggles as part of a cultural fight aimed at overturning the ancient conception of women as submitted and inferior to men in the family and in society.

This cultural approach to female issues accompanied Tullia Carettoni also when she met women from different Countries. Indeed, in her long life, Tullia Carettoni travelled a lot both for official mission regarding the various institutions she was part of, ISIAO and UNESCO committee for instance, and for political interest, meeting different and, sometimes, complex situations.

These experiences probably inspired her the foundation, in 1992, of an association, the Mediterranean Women’s Forum, whose mission is in “ *promoting collaboration and experiences sharing between women from the Mediterranean region, in order to create, purpose and realize sustainable solutions to improve the actual global conditions of women, specially in the Mediterranean basin*”.

To deepen the topic, I met professor Maria Paola Azzario Chiesa, the current President of the International Mediterranean Women’s Forum, already present at those times.

A. C. -Where, how and why this association was born?

M. P. A. C. - In 1992, in Valencia, UNESCO, in collaboration with the Institute for Women of Valencia, organized the Forum named *Culture and its transmission*, inviting female leaders, coming from all Mediterranean Countries.

During the works of the Forum we highlighted many issues and started to define which were the goals to pursuit, such as the full equality of rights for men and women and the ending of discriminations. The women attending the forum underlined a transversal crisis, involving economical, social, political and cultural aspects. The resulting frame painted an extremely weak feminine condition.

A. C. - How many Countries joined the initiative and how many representatives are present in the Forum?

M. P. A. C.- Data are available on the Declaration, approved at the end of the works.

The assumptions, directly proposed by Tullia Carettoni, were:

“The world is today suffering from a multidimensional crisis (economical, social, political and cultural) which is particularly dramatic in many regions of the Mediterranean area and it contributes to make female conditions weaker. Mediterranean women, therefore, increase their calling for the recognition of their fundamental role in political as well as in social, economical and cultural processes. Women participate in society evolution through attitudes of humanity, peace, justice and tolerance. Our Forum, worried by this crisis, wants to prefer cultural actions to promote comprehension between Mediterranean peoples. This perspective, although majoritarian, cannot make us to forget the interest of promoting economical development and the satisfaction of social and political necessities.”

Later on in the document, we find some clarifications concerning the necessity of respecting Human Rights for everyone, and concrete purposes:

- 1) to create a common space for reflection and action that will be able to raise awareness and inform the public opinion, whoever will take decision on a national and International level, UN, about the issues faced by the Mediterranean Women, in order to guarantee the freedom and freedom of speech for women.
- 2) To perpetrate meetings in order to create a pressure group to help the increasing of woman condition in the Mediterranean area
- 3) To make public the results of the Forum in Valencia.

All the 135 participants, coming from 16 Countries such as France, Italy, Spain, Portugal, and, from the Southern part, Algeria, Tunisia, Israel, Morocco, Lebanon, signed their commitment to operate in order to accomplish the objectives.

How testing the results of the work? Tullia Carettoni made concrete point 3 of the Declaration by creating an International association, the International Mediterranean Women's Forum, that shall meeting every two years in a public International Congress, hosted in a fellow Country, in order to evaluate progresses obtained at national level , *in loco* challenges and to develop new collaborations.

That is how the **International Mediterranean Women's Forum - reseau UNESCO** was born and its primary objective was, since the beginning, to support, through dialogue, cooperation and sharing of experiences between Women of the Mediterranean basin, aimed at finding sustainable solutions to increase female conditions.

Today, the Forum is a UNESCO and UN NGO and continues its activities. Some of the protagonists changed since 1992, nowadays UNESCO is represented by Mrs Gunser Corat, vice-Director for Gender Equality , who extended participation to Women from the Balkans, maintaining its headquarters in Turin, hosted by the Centre for UNESCO in Turin.

- A. C. When the Forum moved to Turin, a General Secretariat was created and assigned to you, and thank to your work the Association strengthened the cooperation with UNESCO. Could you explain the reason of this passage and the changes from the institutional point of view?

M. P. A. C.- Valencia considered not to have the ability to host the Forum anymore in 1996 because of money lack, still remaining member of the association. Tullia Caretoni hardly wanted the continuation of this experience, so she asked to our mutual friend Gian Giacomo Migone to ask me if the Centre for UNESCO in Turin, founded and chaired by me, was available to host the Forum. A meeting was fixed in December 1996, at the National Commission in Rome: in that occasion, I met Tullia for the first time.

As specialist of Social Sciences, I was often at the Commission, so the President Caretoni Romagnoli wasn't a new face. Therefore, since that meeting, our relationship was mainly formal.

During the meeting between her, Gian Giacomo Migone and me, I had been convinced by Tullia's passionate arguments, her deep wish not to lose all the reached objectives and to expand the Forum to a global dimension. With curiosity and unconsciousness, I accepted.

An incredible adventure begun, that gave me unforgettable experiences, always supported by Caretoni-thought:

"Women have a capacity they cannot recognize, their potential is enormous, under every sky; it is necessary to help them to dialogue, to share concrete experiences and the world will gain culture and peace"

In those years the will to open and try new paths was strong, especially in an International perspective. I talked about a possible moving of the Forum in Turin firstly with Mercedes Bresso, president of the Province of Turin, who was immediately enthusiastic. After that, the adhesion and contribution of by the Major and the Piedmont Regional Administration came in consequence. A virtuous example of collaboration between three main institutions - Regional administration, Centre for UNESCO in Turin-ONLUS and Italian National commission for UNESCO- was born.

On Friday, 17th October 1997 everything was ready for the public presentation of the Association called Mediterranean Women's Forum and its fundamental personalities: Tullia Caretoni, Wassyla Tamzali (UNESCO), Eleonora Artesio, Maria Magnani Noja, Mercedes Bresso, Marina Udith Astelarra (Spain), Emna Ben Miled (Tunisia), Anissa Benzakour (Morocco), Silvia Fajarnes (Spain), Esther Fouchier (France), Carmen Tomas (Spain), Lourdes Alonso Beltza (Spain), Khadija Amiti (Morocco), Hanan Awwad (Palestine), Naget Khadda (Algeria) - Soheir Louty Ali (Egypt), Nouzha Skalli (Morocco), Mazal Renford (Israel), Diana Culi (Albania), Sonia Ib-brahim Atiyah (Lebanon), Awatef Ketiti (Tunisia), Chrissanti Laiou-Antoniou (Greece), Zarana Papic (Former Yugoslavia), Cecilia Xuereb (Malta), Emel Dogramaci (Turkey), Aman Kabbara Charani (Libanon), Maria Paola Azario, (Italy).

Nevertheless, male personalities were protagonists too: Gian Giacomo Migone, president of the Foreign Affairs Commission of the Senate of the Republic, Valentino Castellani, Major of Turin, Vladimir Kouzminov, Director of UNESCO's office in Venice.

In respect of equal opportunities I quote some parts of Gian Giacomo Migoni's speech in that occasion:

"The reasons why I accepted the request made by Tullia Caretoni to move the headquarter of the Forum in Turin are...First of all, I liked the paradox "Mediterranean Turin", since I believe that you cannot have an European attitude without feeling Medi-

terranean. The mix Women and Mediterranean is fundamental for this tormented by tensions and difficulties sea...I believe that women have a fundamental duty: to represent an equilibrium point between identity and integration in this situation where richness is composed by diversity, which risks to be destroyed by disintegration...”

Institutional changes were massive: thanks to an International team work we could make the Association be recognized as NGO with UNESCO and ECOSOC consultantif Status.

We realized initiatives in all the joining Mediterranean Countries, and brought related results and documents to the annual Conference in New York: at the Glass Palace, we presented for 14 years our results to the world committee of female NGOs.

A. C. In which occasion did you meet senator Tullia Romagnoli Carettoni?

As I already said I often met her while working in the Social Science committee. Met her in the sense of “understand her thought and her depth”, happened mainly during starting reflections for the projects of the Association, during the numerous travels, during ISIAO meetings or, recently, in her house, while reading and translating her speeches. I cannot say I finished to know her...the more I read her speeches, the more they seem contemporary to me.

A. C. You have been the closer person to Tullia Carettoni in launching the idea of the forum, since you deeply know the purpose. You knew her position, her thought about the consideration and respect for culture - uses, costumes, unwritten rules- of the Countries that the Forum would start to work with, despite some of those had problems in approaching western culture. Could you explain her position?

Tullia had already travelled a lot when we started working together: her deep conviction consisted in being sure that there are worthy talents everywhere, who deserve to be enlightened in order to mix themselves and create a new reality, a new way of thinking, able to face the challenges of an experimenting present and future.

“*Metissage*” was the most used word, an explanation-needed concept, that unfortunately has no translation in Italian! It was necessary, she said, to build new nets with components from different nature and origin.

For many years she nourished faith in possible changes in Italy, affirming that the different cultures the Country collects could be a winning mixture of energy and strength. She motivated us with this kind of quotes:

“It’s true we are the last in many realizations, but it’s even true that the last ones, if they can observe carefully others’ mistakes, they can be able to avoid them and reach more easily the objective!”

In the meeting kept in her house in 2016, she received us wearing a golden kimono, a present of the thousands she received during her missions around the world. She gave us an enlightened exam of the current political life quality and spurred us to “*build virtuous nets*” with colleagues coming from Africa, that she well knew and loved. She said:

“They are man and women full of vital Energy, that we are in lack of. They wish a decent life, they are young and still hope in a better future. Go on with finding new kinds of hospitality and involvement that can raise both your and their minds in common projects that can save them, you and your grandchildren from horrible wars.”

It has been our last *vis-à-vis*, so I consider it her testament, her heritage.

A. C. Topics analyzed by the Forum during its activity are various, but I noticed that next to the theme of rights, particular attention had always given to female job, sciences and new technologies. According to you, which are the hot topics, or better, which ones were the most followed and shared by participants and how would you describe Tullia Caretoni’s position about?

M. P.A. C. The topics addressed and debated have been: equal opportunities, rights, education, advance of female job, migration, all of those were touching because the World was standing them. There was nothing organized to fill empty spots, topics raised by necessities brought by members, and the meetings were the occasion to research, debate and find solutions. Tullia had never done anything accidentally or “to spend time”. Even when walking or visiting markets in NY and Turin, the challenge was to “read” what was happening around us by asking to ourselves: what does it teach to me? How to improve it? How can you find a branded dress in a pile of tatters? (she was a master in this too!)

I can tell you some of the principal activities Tullia and I organized since 1997, which attest interests and necessities of the moment through the chosen topics for studies, debates and researches.

The first topic had probably been the most developed: launched in Turin in 1997, it was *Women and Science*.

The reason why was extremely clear to Tullia: scientific culture is an integral part of development process, that had seen and continues to see women being forgotten protagonists of it, or hidden by more celebrated male figures. Science couldn’t be deprived by the unique contribution given by female thought, with the male one. She often said: “I am not feminist, but I deeply believe that half of the sky plus one, cannot be part of World government”.

To give concreteness to ideas, we organized in Turin in January 1999 the III MWF focused on *women, science, biotechnology: what does the future hold for the Mediterranean*, even because of the necessity to be ready for the World conference of UNESCO *Science in XXI Century: what possible future?*, set in Budapest the same year. 350 female scientists coming from more than 21 Mediterranean Countries took part to the congress in Turin, hosted by the Chambers of the City Hall. Opening speeches were assigned to famous names: with Tullia Caretoni, the philosopher Gianni Vattimo, Minister for Equal Opportunities Laura Balbo, Foreign Affairs Minister Susanna Agnelli, assistant Director General for sciences UNESCO Maurizio Iaccarino, the director of UNESCO office for the science Vladimir Kuzminov, the president of Foreign Affairs Commission Gian Giacomo Migone.

Questions asked by the Congress were not targeting just a small group of interested people, but the entire National and International community.

The debate, divided in topic-based workgroups, resulted very interesting and meaningful both for the importance of scientists participating and because analyzed problems had been faced with a totally female perspective.

The conclusion of the works became the base for the *Turin convention*.

Signatories of the document, edited under TC and Maria Magnani Noja coordination, were engaging at National and International level to:

- Create a regional scientific observatory called *Women and Science of the Mediterranean*;
- Support cooperation and sharing projects;
- Develop contacts between scientific institutions in several Countries of Mediterranean basin and fund raising for research and education

At National level, the aim was to increase the presence of women in scientific and technology field and advise the civil society about consequences science has on men and women lives.

We can find inside the Declaration an express belief of Tullia Caretoni: “*science and technology are the base for progress, but it does not grow and become widely handled without women’s consensus.*”. The congress held in Turin in 1999 has been considered by UNESCO one of the four preparatory forums of Europe and USA Region for Budapest.

The World General Conference held in Budapest in June 1999 saw the participation of an Italian delegation composed by Tullia Caretoni, president of the Mediterranean Women’s Forum and of Italian national Commission for UNESCO, myself as general secretary, vice Director Iaccarino, professor Margiotta Broglio as president of Social Science committee of UNESCO Commission. The Senator Caretoni moderated the round table concerning the results obtained by the six Regional Fora *Women and Science* realized by UNESCO in South America, Africa, Asia, Europe and Mediterranean area and USA.

Thanks to a close collaboration of women and men, a strong wish to insert the point “advancing of women in Science” (forgotten in preparatory document) and long nights of refining the purpose, the Italian delegation obtained the insertion of art. 90 in the Action Plan of the Conference, asking for a concrete commitment by Governments, scientific community, NGOs and civil society to reach the following objectives:

- Promoting access to girls and women to scientific education at any level;
- Improving conditions for hiring, maintaining and career progression of women in every research field;
- Launching, in partnership with UNESCO and UNIFEM, National, regional and global campaigns aimed at increasing the awareness of female contribution in science and technology, in order to destroy the existing gender stereotypes between scientists, policy makers and the civil community;
- Undertaking research, supported by gender-based data collection and analysis, reporting constraints and progress in expanding the role of women in science and technology;
- Monitoring implementation of projects, reporting their effectiveness through public available evaluations;
- Guaranteeing appropriate female representation in Forum and decision makers committee at National, regional and International level;

- Creating an International net of women scientists;
- Perseverating in reporting the contribution of women in scientific and technologic field.

Art. 90 was the representation of the successful conclusions sent by the MWF to Budapest: questions raised by women and inequalities they were forced to suffer had finally the attention they deserved and they were asking for an effective change, as the thought closing the Paragraph says:

“In order to sustain these initiatives, Governments should create appropriate mechanisms, where they do not exist yet, to propose and monitor the introduction of necessary changing in policies with the intent to reach these objectives”.

art. 90 aimed at two objectives:

- 1) creating education courses about science and technology for a female public
- 2) creating an International web-net of women scientists that refers to UNESCO

To satisfy the first objective, the cooperation between Rome, the Ministry of Foreign Affairs and National Commission, and Turin, Forum secretariat UN Campus and ILO, gave birth to the project *Women, science and development*, approved by the Italian Ministry of Foreign Affairs, that involved for three years women coming from Albania, Algeria, Egypt, Jordan, Lebanon, Morocco, Palestine, Tunisia, Turkey and Syria.

Between January and June 2000 details of the project had been defined and scientific contents decided for the six expected courses, for a total of 80 participants. The courses included an accommodation in UN Campus in Turin for two weeks for 5 representatives for every eligible Country. At the end of the training period, every national group should had conceived a Pilot educational program to promote with the support of self-founds in their Countries. One year later, a week of evaluation would follow, and then meet again in Turin to discuss about successes and failures and to publish the goals gained by countries.

Every Country had right to fill application for two courses.

For the second objective, the Forum took part in March 2000 to the extraordinary board of the General Assembly of the United Nations and the Commission for advancement of female condition to present the results of its works and strengthen collaborations with extra-European countries. It has been the first step to IPAZIA!

Both the experiences shown Tullia's diplomatic abilities: her capacity to convince Ministries and institutions, ambassadors and cultural institutes had been fundamental for success. I followed her, learning how to face a new culture or lifestyle by an always enthusiastic travel-companion, who really appreciated me, even when underlining my mistakes in order to avoid them in the future!

For the realization of the courses we needed applicants relevant in universities, hospitals, laboratories, NGOs, who were available to spend two weeks in Turin, training in sanitary field, both to learn how to create pilot programs and to spread what received in Italy and to use new technologies.

At the beginning applicants were not eligible because of their incapacity to spread the principal message: the advancing of women conditions. They were all daughters of Ministries and Princes!

We considered with Tullia that was necessary to meet available people personally, to select them on the basis of how relevant were their competences and capacity to engage themselves in an action of dissemination in their Countries, at the end of their training.

Tullia entrusted me this delicate duty since she “already did hers” and traveling in two people would have taken too many resources from the Project! I started to conduct my missions alone in Lebanon, Morocco, Tunisia, Algeria to select candidates for the first French-speaking course, which ran from September to October, 2000.

20 shortlisted women from five Countries took part to the Course, held in UN Campus in Turin with the partnership of the City of Turin, ILO, University of Turin and Polytechnic of Turin and UNESCO office of Venice, International experts and Centre for UNESCO in Turin. Works have been enriched with presentation and evaluation of group works and closed with the preparation of a National plan by every National group. Shortlisting for the English-spoken Course took place from 20th to 26th October 2000, in Jordan. The English Course took place from November to December 2000. Candidates were from Egypt, Turkey, Albania and Palestine.

All the course-related program had been realized with the sponsorship of the Ministry of the Foreign Affairs and in partnership with Italian National Commission for UNESCO, the ITC/ILO, the Women Medical Association and the University of Turin.

A. C. Talking of science, the Forum gave birth to an interesting IT initiative called IPAZIA, symbolically named as a woman scientist, martyr for thought freedom, associated to the symbol of UNESCO. What is it?

M. P.A. C.-Specific aims of IPAZIA were, basically, to encourage the creation of scientific-based links between Countries not only from Mediterranean area, but from the entire world, including China and Vietnam, to make possible the real and virtual meeting between women scientists, giving them a mean to periodically meet themselves online (despite it could seem a recent history, diplomatic relations and technologic possibilities were far different from Millennials generation!) in order to share information not only about their scientific results, but also about their consideration, a women and scientists, by their male colleagues.

IPAZIA became a point of arrival of the previous diplomatic strategy and Tullia Caretoni and I conducted action, under the umbrella of the Forum, approved and supported by UNESCO and Italian National Commission for UNESCO, since 1998.

As meaningful precedents, in addition to the presentation I did at the Glass Palace of the UN in March 2000, it is important to mention the agreements Tullia Caretoni made with Yu Wei, at the time the Chinese Ministry of Education (she was an internationally known biologist who received the Health Ministry during SARS epidemic.) about the joining of China to the program.

Moreover, in the same year, in December, thanks to Tullia, the agreement between Italian and Vietnamese Governments for review of bilateral scientific and technological cooperation have been signed, including the extension to Vietnam in the International Net of women scientists.

I would like to tell you about one of the many, apparently casual, events Tullia was able to invent in order to let me continue with activity planning. After her travel to China, she told me that perhaps there could be some sequel... In March 2001 Mrs Yu Wei made me call by her secretary to announce she was coming to Turin, on her way to Geneva, and wished to visit the headquarters in Turin to check our work. Tullia told me I was able to face it by my own and her presence was unnecessary...

For the first time of my life, I dealt with a visit of a female Ministry, coming from a Country not yet deeply known. I made use of the experience of the UN Campus' functionaries, so I organized the visit. The Ministry spent three days in Turin and, with checking all the Forum documents and visiting the Campus, she joined with enthusiasm the tour I prepared for her through the main institution of the city: University, Polytechnic, Cancer research centre of Candiolo, City hall, Region and more.

At the end of the three days, before getting on the car towards Geneva, she shook my hand and, while smiling for the first time in three days, she said: *"I think I can trust you, I invite you with President Caretoni in China, just bring three to five Italian scientists for a bilateral Round Table, but you can ONLY speak about environment, it is a big issue in our Country"*. She left and maintained her promise, the following June we organized the first Round Table of the Program Women and Science, in the meantime renamed IPAZIA.

Why? Coming back from a travel in New York, during an endless waiting at the airport before the boarding, Tullia, since that moment silent and pensive, said to me: *"What do you think if we upgrade our program of advancement of Women in Science naming it IPAZIA and we launch it on the Internet?"*. I was excited because of the name, even though it was not so popular as it is now: I think that the film and the books written after the creation of our program could be considered, at least partially, credit for the success IPAZIA gained in the World.

The UNESCO General Assembly, during the General Conference in October 2003, pointed the success of the results obtained by the Program *Women and Science*, held in Turin, with the assumption of a resolution that recalled the importance of the new program IPZIA. The Study and Research Centre IPAZIA was born and UNESCO allowed us to use its logo.

Tullia Caretoni underlined, even in that occasion, the importance of the program both under a scientific point of view and, especially, under a cultural perspective, recalling that women are *"custodians of immaterial cultural property such as traditions, tales, costumes...And in name of this they must talk to each other, they need to find their common consciousness, in order to decide what to do in life and in science..."*. She continued remembering that the mentality that killed Ipazia is still living with us and its first victims are women, firstly women who want to study, work, become scientists.

She underlined again that *"today's link between scientific progress and female condition is a necessary factor for sustainable development"*. We need to remember that, in

those years, UNESCO launched Gender mainstreaming, which aims to create projects focused on the role of women. Moreover, UNESCO recalled that it was finally time to consider women not as objects of development processes, but like an essential subject for an egalitarian rules based development.

I begun found raising in order to completely realize the ambitious IPAZIA program and permit to guarantee IT connections, but also missions and bilateral and multilateral meetings with Countries Tullia considered the most crucial for advancing of women.

After Budapest in September 2000, we went to Melbourne and Sidney, where we kept a total of 12 conferences, so much was the enthusiasm of those women were shown hearing progresses of the Conference and consequent projects.

Round tables and Seminars were always more frequent: the most important, next to the ones held in Australia (200) and in China (2002), they were carried out in 2003 in Lebanon and in Morocco and were focused on the topic *Poverty and subsistence: quality and responsibility of female contribution in problem solving*, that gathered all the women scientists who participated to the Courses in Turin and integrated in IPAZIA.

Then, we passed to Western Africa, in Burkina Faso, for a three days meeting between the professors of UNESCO chairs for women of Western Africa and from there, we went to New York, in 2005, to gather Italian women scientists working there and to evaluate their conditions of immigrant scientists in periods running from 20 years to 6 months. It was a real success, they confessed it was the very first time an Italo-European association showing care about them, immigrant scientists in searching of job and possibility to sign their researches!

IPAZIA results can be described as follows:

- the website that gathered almost 4000 women engaged in scientific, technological and environmental research;
- 20 study prizes, 2 per year, entitled to Francesca M. Buzzetti given in 10 years in favor of young female researchers who proposed projects for women in emerging Countries;
- training internships in science, development and peace field;
- a documentation Centre linked with the Centre for UNESCO of Turin's library, managed in partnership with Universities and International Research Centres associated to IPAZIA. The Centre offers videos, book and files to consult, everything produced by the sector Women and Science of International organizations and NGOs.

The Forum could not miss to face such an important and actual issue as migrants. Afterwards, the Mediterranean sea had always been a migration sea, but it had never hosted a mass phenomenon like the one of the last years is. In this massive exodus, women and children are the weak actors, often victims of smugglers and shipwrecks. TC approached the issue talking about difficulties of integration of women and fundamentalism.

During the International Seminar held in Turin 5th-6th April 2003 named Women, migration and intercultural dialogue: Turin and Mediterranean, TC told during her speech: *"Migration of people, population, workers, is one of Mediterranean's characteristics. The Mediterranean region had always been characterised by this kind of events. We have a great meeting that sees a not new phenomenon in the history, but that had ne-*

never been so wide. Migration is important for many reasons: because it is the meeting between different people who come from different societies and educations and that even by a clash meeting can give birth to new orders, to society transformations. Migration means moving of creative people, because they work and are not invaders armies. They are people, despite their desperation, bringing cultural inspirations through dialogue and common life..."

The topic had been retaken during the Fifth Forum named Women, migration and cultural dialogue, held in Athens, 23rd-26th October 2003.

In the preface, we can read:

"The Forum chose this topic for its fifth congress to enlighten the role played by immigrant women as actresses of mediation and dialogue between populations of the Mediterranean through their fight for reconnaissance of their fundamental rights and dignity and it does not concern their social and cultural condition or Country of origin. This claim of immigrant women, as the gathering of women, is the only one able to create a common belonging and an active solidarity between the two coasts on Mediterranean sea's Countries. It is the only one that allow to realize the project of a peaceful space on Mediterranean, based on an equal division of sources and on respect of different cultures".

Moreover, it is premised that "It is not regarding the temporary integration of workers, but of towns and citizens with rights and duties towards the hosting Country".

In the Declaration it was asked to:

"At international level:

- to ratify 1949 UN Convention about Convention for the Suppression of the Traffic in Persons and of the Exploitation of the Prostitution of Others, and the sequent Protocol linked with the international UN Convention against transnational financial criminality of Palermo 2000;
- To fight against circulation of dirty money and to eliminate the bank secret

At Euro-Mediterranean level:

- to open frontiers to people circulation;
- To open access to new employments for women through training and information;
- To consider in bilateral agreements the case of women victims of sexual crimes, combined weddings, genital female mutilation, honor crimes;
- To insert in European Constitution and in bilateral agreements men-women equality principle, with democracy and human rights, and to make it being a conditional clause in trans-mediterranean cooperation;
- To free and encourage female creative potentialities and economically support all the exchange and intercultural initiatives

At national level:

- to create services and to adopt measures aimed to reconstruct integrity of women victim of exploitation; to strengthen and to coordinate their cooperation with NGOs and international organizations in order to identify, adopt and apply international, national, administrative and regulamentary legislative measures. In schools, to introduce an approach to diversity of cultures and review school manuals with the double point of view of immigrants and women;

- To respect their international efforts regarding women rights, specially the ones taken from CEDAW*:
- To apply in civil law the law concerning wedding housing, whether it is conform to art. 16 of CEDAW;
- To identify immigrant women rights and guarantee that they can benefit of a legal status, proper and independent from the one of their husband;
- To spread information about the conditions of residency permit in immigrant mother tongue and to ensure juridical and social protection of people, in the effort of a possible regularization of their condition.

Moreover, we, as participants, are committed to:

- support and participate to efforts aimed to neutralize communitarian tendencies that come up in social tissue and equally support associations of women of every origin that encourage cultural exchange and a common reflexion on society subjects;
- support origin and hosting Countries' associations in their activities for women entitled to migration about rights and duties of peoples of hosting countries;
- Denounce and persecute authors of crimes more than victims, to bring the public attention on violent men in order to prevent violence;
- Always consider culture, creation and traditional knowledge in our activities.

We leave to readers and researchers to evaluate how many of these statements are still valid and how many have been achieved.

A. C. By reading reports of the initiatives the Forum did during the years, the theme of meeting and dialogue between different cultures regularly and insisting comes up as tool of collaboration. Which results do you have after 25 years of activity? Social and political conditions of some of the Mediterranean Countries deeply changed from 25 years ago, often for the worse. A complex overview to which even the Forum has to deal with. As president of the association how do you judge this situation and what position will the Forum take in the future?

M. P. A. C.-Today's world is suffering from a multidimensional crisis (economical, social, political and cultural crisis) particularly dramatic in some regions of the Mediterranean basin, since it contributes to weaken female condition even more. Mediterranean Women revenge, in growing measure, the reconnaissance of fundamental role they play in political, social, economical and cultural processes. They participate to societies evolution throughs more human, peaceful, justice-oriented and tolerance behavior. Our Forum, disturbed by this crisis, means to prefer cultural action to encourage comprehension between Mediterranean populations.

This perspective cannot make us forget the interest to promotion of economical development and the satisfaction of social and political requests of peace, participation, democratization, respect of diversity and equal opportunity, professional as well as personal, between men and women. These are the values that are necessary to put at service of peoples in order to achieve actions in harmony and operate towards a prosper and happy future.

Every culture contributes with a view to understand the world, a world that gave and continues to give an answer to millions needs of men and women in communities of the

* Committee on the Elimination of Discrimination against Women

Mediterranean. All human beings are equal and have the same rights, so that no cultural model is superior to others, Culture, often instrumentalized by local powers, is the only bearer of any other necessary transformation for the consolidation of values we defend. Moreover, we cannot forget that cultural sector is the one in which women action is inserted par excellence, due to their active role of cultural producers and transmitters.

Today's crisis has gravely deteriorated Mediterranean regions increasing the fracture between North and South. It created conditions for a strong refuse of other's culture. At this point xenophobia and racism come up, with a wrong interpretation of traditions, finishing in tensions that can bring even to physical violence and questioning about the common Mediterranean culture. In this context, it becomes harder for women to fight for their rights.

A worrying fresh outbreak about war and violence is perpetrating in these years in some areas of the Mediterranean. The gravest aspect concerns the fact that principal victims of violence is the civilian society, in particular women and children.

It is an imperative for the international community to take the responsibility to create necessary conditions for building a peaceful resolution within the belligerent groups. This peace agreement must respect cultures and human rights of all the populations involved through the traditional peaceful, respectful and tolerance value of women.

The Forum continued its activities despite institutional and Bank Foundations funds have been cut institutionally in 2006. We did not stop, the Centre for UNESCO in Turin and its members continued to guarantee the forum an headquarters and the functionality of the forum as commitment for Equal Opportunities.

We continue to dialogue with Italian and foreign associations, mainly online because of the costs and risks of traveling, especially for our members coming from the South. Their principal fear is not to be able to come back home.

An example of our tenacity was shown in 2014, when the Centre for UNESCO in Turin, in partnership with EFUCA, FICLU, the City of Turin and the Regional administration, organized the Congress named *Global ethic and Equal Opportunities: the contribution of women to the development of Europe and the Mediterranean*.

240 women participated from 16 different Countries.

Works had been split in three days and took place, once more, in the Chambers of the City Hall; themes analyzed were:

1. Women and culture and education;
2. Women and nutrition
3. Women and violence

Results obtained flowed in the *Final Turin Declaration 2014* and in Acts, collected and published in different languages, from the Centre for UNESCO in Turin. We launched as well a Contest to collect stories of the women who could not be present at the Congress.

The future of the Forum consists in what we promised to Tullia in December 2008, during her 90th birthday celebration: resist and improve!

We made her a surprise: since the dialogue between Israel and Palestine had always been considered by her a fundamental issue for the Mediterranean salvation, we invited her to come to Turin, in a freezing December, by saying that we wish to celebrate the 60th Anniversary of the Universal Declaration of Human Rights. It was true, but she didn't know the topic: with her total unconsciousness, we invited Israeli and Palestinian

women of the Forum in the historical Chamber of Viglione, of the Piedmont Regional Council, and let her direct the Seminar, that successfully ended, like every initiative conducted by her. I perfectly remember her speech, during which she told us that:

“The invitation to this meeting, beyond being an unforgettable birthday present, give me the assurance of the possibility to organize regular meetings among Israeli, Palestinian and Italian people [...] it is a pleasure for me to see that finally Arabic League became member of the Mediterranean Countries and Israel is at the Secretariat [...] I believe we must be conscious that during 2008 a lot of equilibriums felt down and it is necessary to find new ones, with new protagonists [...]

Economists tell us that the capitalism will survive after the storm, but it will be different and oriented to the productive world, so we must be prepared for a multiplication of protagonists in order to find global solutions. Israeli-Palestinian issue we are talking about today will find possible solutions. This renovation will be brought by women’s power, that always supported these values and fought for them, in the name of the pandemic illness called justicialism”

In the same occasion we organized for Tullia’s 90th birthday, a banquet during which the vice President of the Region of Piedmont, Placido, honored her with a medal.

She confessed, moved, that it was the most pleased gift for a person who spent her life serving the institutions.

Seminar Acts dedicated to her had been presented the following year, in 2009, at the *Salone del Libro*, the international book fair held in Turin, since Israel was the guest Country.

A. C. One last question. What kind of civil and cultural heritage left you Tullia Caretoni and what are you missing the most of her?

M. P. A. C.-I am missing...her elegance in treating people, themes and happenings, next to the elegance in her outfits.

Her capacity to get accurately prepared for every eventuality, her immediate perception of the kind of person or audience she was in front of and her ability to speak with everyone with a comprehensible language.

Her capacity to create emotions, consensus or dissensus with an interior strength that came out from her deep blue eyes, sometimes sweet, some other terrible: surely, always alert!

I miss the chance to dialogue with a person, a woman, able to listen and to give accurate suggestions.

The heritage she gave me is the one we built together: the deep and concrete conviction that gender equality must be combined with equal opportunities for everyone, no matter culture, language, gender or religion.

The conviction that democracy is an hard route, but the only possible for a sharing with no winner nor loser, but always more traveling companions.

I warmly thank Professor Maria Paola Azzario Chiesa for her availability, for the many pieces of information she gave us about the MWF activities and for having shared with us her personal memories of an inspiring Tullia Caretoni, founder and passionate supporter of an initiative that see women protagonists and keeper of fundamental values, today often forgotten. An important commitment to focalize her cultural, civic and political engagement.

Thank you so much Professor and good job!

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