

Asian University for Women
reception and signings ceremony
(στα αγγλικά)

Asian University for Women reception and signing ceremony	Wednesday, 30 January 2002
Comment by Anna Karamanou, Member of European Parliament, Chairperson of the Committee on Women's Rights and Equal Opportunities of the European Parliament	

Dear Ambassador, honourable guest, colleagues
and ladies and gentlemen,

Thank you for inviting me to share this event
with you. It is I believe a happy event, which
shows the idea and desire to take a little but
necessary step to gap the division between men
and women as well as between rich and poor. At
least the lesson of 11 September is that we need
to take every possible step to avoid that this
happens again.

As Kofi Annan said it in his Nobel Lecture on
December 10 2001 in Oslo, *"Today, in
Afghanistan, a girl will be born. Her mother will
hold her and feed her, comfort her and care for
her just as any mother would anywhere in the
world. In these most basic acts of human nature,
humanity knows no divisions. But to be born a
girl in today's Afghanistan is to begin life
centuries away from the prosperity that one
small part of humanity has achieved. It is to live
under conditions that many of us in this hall
would consider inhuman."*

In fact he might have spoken about many other
baby girls (or boys) born in Asia. Or many other
mothers who also do not have a chance to learn
their children human and dignified values.

That is why we need to heal the divisions in the
world and between Men and Women. That is
why we need to build alliances between the
industrialised and the developing world. Why we
need to build alliances that strengthen the

capacities in the societies. Why we need to level the playing field by filling the gaps between rich and poor and between Men and Women.

We know that we cannot take over and implement our understanding of rights and values in other countries. Nor shall we attempt to do so. But we are obliged continuously to ensure that everybody's rights all over the world is supported and protected.

As a European women I know how privileged we are compared to the rest of the world. That is also why we must make a special effort to ensure that other women also those in developing will have a chance to enjoy the rights of equality and human dignity.

I only know to well the need for a special effort for women coming from a background both as member of the Women's Secretariat of the General Confederation of Greek Workers (GSEE) and as Director of education at the 'ATHINA' Professional Training Centre (1992–1995).

And both in Greece and in the rest of Europe we know that it requires a determined effort on many levels and from time to time a special effort to ensure women's participation in society.

This is also the aim of the of the Committees on Women's Rights and Equal Opportunities as stated in the first paragraph of its responsibilities, the Committee shall work for: "the definition, the evolution and the implementation of women's rights in the Union and fostering women's rights in third countries".

I believe that this is what the Asian University for Women is all about – to be a place that foster women's rights.

This University is a special effort to educate at least some women who can function as inspiring leaders for the many. It such alliances that we

should build in order to build the future. I
therefore congratulate this project.