

Delegation from the Republic of Turkey
Position Paper for the United Nations Entity for Gender Equality and the
Empowerment of Women (UN-Women)

The topics before the United Nations (UN) United Nations Entity for Gender Equality and the Empowerment of Women (UN-Women) are: Eliminating Child, Early, and Forced Marriage by 2030; and Supporting the Involvement of Women in Governance and Decision Making. Given the importance of women's equality in society and politics and the work of UN-Women, the Republic of Turkey is committed work for the goals of the UN to ensure the fundamental rights of women and children. In with the above-mentioned themes, we are ready to work together at the international level to further advance the empowerment of women and the protection of children together with the other member states and to jointly seek cross-border solutions.

I. Eliminating Child, Early, and Forced Marriage by 2030

Although child weddings and forced marriages are formally prohibited by law in the Republic of Turkey, we are struggling with a worrying rate of child marriages. The problem is also aggravated by the Syrian refugees, as many Syrian refugees hope for some security and stability through early marriage. The difficulty in preventing child marriages lies in the fact that it has a long tradition in society and is often carried out unrecognized by the state in religious ceremonies. According to an official report, supported by the Turkish government, one third of all marriages are child marriages in the Republic of Turkey. In figures this means that between 2002 and 2014 approximately 500,000 children were married- the estimated number of unreported cases is even higher. Girls are twenty times more likely than boys to be affected by child marriages. This is also reflected in the consequences for education. According to the official report, 82% of all child brides are illiterate and 97,4% of all school drop-outs due to marriages are young girls. The steadily increasing demand for official permits to marry girls younger than 15 years is also alarming. According to statistics from Hacettepe University, the increase in such requests for marriage permits was 94%.

Despite these sobering figures, the Republic of Turkey has taken some steps in recent years to improve the situation of women and children regarding child and forced marriage. The Republic of Turkey agreed early on to support the international fight against women at the international level by acceding to the Convention on Elimination of All Forms of Discrimination Against Women (CEDAW) in 1985. In order to maintain this development, the Republic of Turkey ratified the Convention on the Rights of the Child in 1995, ensuring a minimum age of 18 years for a legal marriage. Also, the Republic of Turkey has committed to eliminate child, early and forced marriage by 2030 in line with target 5.3 of the Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs). We fully support the efforts of the UN, which is why the Republic of Turkey co-sponsored the GA resolution 68/148 on child, early and forced marriage in 2013 and the GA resolution 69/148 in 2014. Furthermore, in the same year, together with many other member states, we signed a joint statement at the Human Right Council (HRC 27) to maintain awareness of CEFM in the Council and to call for its resolution. Signing and ratification of Council Europe's Convention on Preventing Combating Violence against Women and Domestic Violence (Istanbul Convention), abolishment of the available Law on combating violence against women (Law No 4320) and enactment of the Law No 6284 on the Protection and Prevention of Violence against Women, which is broader and more comprehensive in scope on March 8, 2012 reinforced the legal regulations and legal grounds. It is not only on the international level that the Republic of Turkey has supported the elimination of CEFM. We have also made changes at national level to support the objectives. On the one hand, the new Ministry of family and Social Policy was founded in 2011 to protect and support women and children, which last decided in 2017 to reduce the rate of child marriages from 5% to 1%. On the other hand,

a National Plan of Action on Violence Against Children is currently being developed to enable girls to attend school as long as possible in order to prevent child marriage. Regarding to the fact that the Republic of Turkey still combating high rate of child marriages and the aggravation of the problem by the Syrian refugee crisis in Turkey, the Republic of Turkey wishes to stress that the protection of children is one of the most important tasks of the present time. Although great work is already being done at regional level by non-governmental organizations such as UNICEF and the Republic of Turkey itself, it is still essential to work with other member states to promote the elimination of CEFM.

II. Supporting the Involvement of Women in Governance and Decision-Making

It is still a worldwide problem that women are not sufficiently involved in Governance and Decision-Making process. This is not a particular problem for so-called developing countries but affects almost every country in the world. In order to improve the situation of women in the political structure and decision-making process, an international approach is needed to enable women worldwide to participate equally in politics and decision-making.

As has been shown in the past, the participation of women in political activities has steadily increased in the Republic of Turkey. The Republic of Turkey also officially supports the participation of women in the political decision-making process by signing the Universal Declaration of Human Rights (UDHR) in 1948. In order to counter discrimination against women in political area, the Republic of Turkey decided in 1985 to accede to the Convention on Elimination of All Forms of Discrimination against Women (CEDAW). The Republic of Turkey has recorded significant improvements with respect to the Millennium Development Goals (MDGs). We have witnessed several progresses in protection women's human rights and women's economic empowerment and social status. When the improvements recorded by the Republic of Turkey with regard to the education in terms of the MDGs are examined, it is seen that the Republic of Turkey accelerated its activities with regard to increasing women's and girl's education. Since the approval of the Beijing Declaration and Platform for Action (BPfA) in 1995, the Republic of Turkey has recorded a significant number of institutional progress. The Equal Opportunities Commission for Women and Men was established within the Turkish Grand National Assembly in 2009. The Commission was established to monitor the international improvements recorded countrywide and worldwide with regard to protection and promotion of women's right and achievement of gender equality, to inform the Turkish Grand National Assembly about these improvements, negotiate the works and activities assigned to them, submit opinions to expertise commission on the draft laws and proposals submitted to the Turkish Grand National Assembly. The increased participation of women in the processes of Governance was most recently reflected in the practical framework in the Republic of Turkey for the election of the new parliament, in which 103 women out of a total of 600 seats were elected. That's a clear sign that the influence of women in politics will be increased in the next term.

The Republic of Turkey sees the importance of increasing women's participation in the political process and in decision-making, so that women and men are equally represented politically. We are certain that the participation of women in the political process must be further strengthened and supported worldwide. The Republic of Turkey is sure that the work of UN-women will help to achieve the goals of improving women's participation in Governance and Decision-making, for example by promoting the education of girls more widely.