



PERMANENT DELEGATION OF NORWAY
TO THE OSCE

STATEMENT REGARDING
TURKEY'S WITHDRAWAL FROM THE ISTANBUL CONVENTION

Delivered by Ambassador Anne- Kirsti Karlsen at the Permanent Council
Vienna, 25 March 2021

CHECK AGAINST DELIVERY

Madame Chair,

We have aligned with the statement given by Germany but would like to add some additional comments.

We are deeply concerned about the ongoing mobilisation against the Istanbul Convention in parts of the OSCE region. The substantial increase in reported violence against women and girls during the COVID-19 pandemic comes on top of already-existing high levels of violence. Withdrawing from the Istanbul Convention is therefore a step in the wrong direction. We need more cooperation and commitment to combat violence against women and girls, not less.

In this regard, we very much welcome the interest of Kazakhstan in signing the Convention and appreciate the Council of Europe's recent response in the form of an invitation.

There is no undertone or "hidden agenda" to the Istanbul Convention. The Convention was the result of long multilateral negotiations among member states and is based on tested policies and legislation which have produced positive results.

The Convention prohibits discrimination on many grounds to ensure protection and support for all victims of violence, irrespective of any characteristics they might have or whether they are married or in any other relationship.

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The principle of non-discrimination is founded on other legal instruments, first and foremost the European Convention on Human Rights. Turkey's recently launched Human Right Action Plan is notably based on this Convention.

Madame Chair,

The structural nature of violence against women is gender-based. This form of violence against women is a manifestation of historically unequal power relations between women and men, power relations created over time. It is the social connotation of "woman" that makes her a victim. Understanding the influence of such prejudice, customs and traditions enables governments to adopt a "gendered understanding" of violence as required by the convention.

Beyond legal obligations, the convention also gives an important political signal to society that violence against women and domestic violence is unacceptable. Domestic violence has unfortunately increased in all countries during COVID-19.

We support the voices in Turkish society who strongly regret the decision to withdraw from the Convention.

Furthermore, we call on the governments of all OSCE participating States to focus on strengthening the protection and promotion of the safety and rights of all women and girls, including by committing to the full implementation of the Istanbul Convention.

Violence against women and domestic violence is unacceptable and is not subject to impunity. It is not a private matter for the family alone to solve – it is a public matter - it is a state responsibility to provide safety and justice for all.

Hence, Norway will continue to promote the Istanbul Convention as an important tool to protect vulnerable persons from domestic violence.

Thank you