

CHECK AGAINST DELIVERY

ADDRESS

BY

H.E. MS. FATMA ŞAHİN

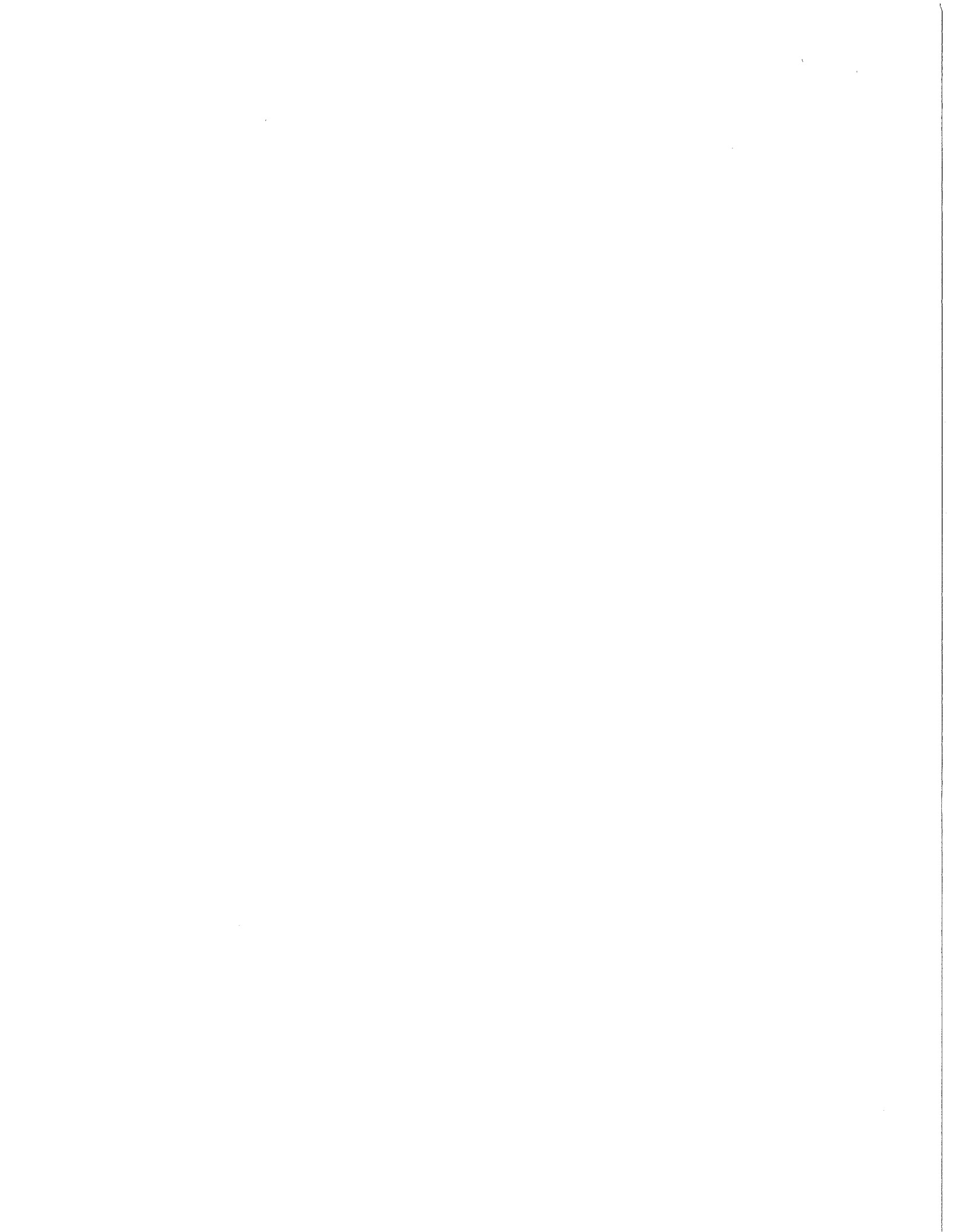
MINISTER OF FAMILY AND SOCIAL POLICIES

OF THE REPUBLIC OF TURKEY

TO THE

**GENERAL DISCUSSION OF THE 57th SESSION OF THE
COMMISSION ON THE STATUS OF WOMEN**

NEW YORK, 5 MARCH 2013



Madame Chair,

Distinguished Delegates,

It is an honor and privilege to address you on the occasion of the 57th Session of the Commission on the Status of Women, convening under the theme "Elimination and prevention of all forms of violence against women and girls". I believe that fruitful deliberations on this important topic will provide an invaluable insight to enhancing the situation of women and girls around the globe.

Madame Chair,

Despite national and international efforts to combat violence against women and the increasing awareness in this area, women and girls continue to suffer in large numbers from harmful and customary practices, early and forced marriages, crimes committed in the name of honour and other forms of violence.

This is not only a public health issue, but also an obstacle hampering social and economic development.

Acts of violence against women and girls are a reflection of a mentality, which aims to put women in secondary positions in society and impose control over them.

Both the causes and the consequences of violence against women must be dealt through a multi-dimensional prism. Its elimination is only possible with a joint, decisive struggle and an integrated approach, involving all segments of the society. Thus, we must employ an interdisciplinary understanding, putting together all relevant institutions and agencies, with a view to addressing the aspects of prevention, protection, and punishment in the policy making process.

Distinguished Delegates,

I wish to stress that Turkey is the first country to ratify the Council of Europe Convention on Preventing and Combating Violence against Women and Domestic Violence, known as the Istanbul Convention. This is a testimony reflecting our willingness and resolve in addressing and preventing violence against women and setting it as a top priority.

I would like to note here that the Istanbul Convention is a milestone in combating violence against women. It is a product of a long lasting and persistent struggle, which initially started at grassroots and has acquired regional and global dimensions.

Our hosting of the event held on the occasion of the 30th Anniversary of the Convention on the Elimination of All Forms of Violence Against Women (CEDAW) in Istanbul under the auspices of my Ministry, is also an expression of our willingness to abide by our international commitments.

In Turkey, especially since early 1980's, the strong responsibility of the state in preventing violence against women has been emphasized, under the policy of "zero tolerance". Cooperation among relevant parties in this area has gained momentum ever since.

Necessary legal arrangements providing a basis for combating violence against women have been adopted, the legislation has been revised through integration of gender perspectives and employment of the "zero tolerance" principle. By the new millenium, the legal infrastructure was strengthened to include the principle of gender equality; through amendments to the Constitution, the Civil Code, Labor Code and the Turkish Penal Code.

In order to incorporate the Istanbul Convention to domestic legislation, the "Law No: 6284 on Protection of Family and Prevention of Violence" was prepared and put into force in accordance with the provisions included in the Convention. The Law sets an international example, as it provides comprehensive adjustments, which has strengthened the legal infrastructure and moved the activities on combating violence against women to a higher level.

The Law;

- Addresses all female, children and other family victims without any discrimination,
- Redefines the concepts of "violence", "domestic violence" and "violence against women" to include physical, verbal, sexual, economic and psychological violence;
- Regulates in detail the preventive and protective measures regarding the perpetrator and potential perpetrator,
- In order to enable a rapid and effective response, stipulates that civilian authorities and law enforcement officers can also respond to situations of violence, in addition to the family court judges,
- Ensures the confidentiality of the identity of the protected person and family members in formal records, taking their safety into account,

- In order to enhance the effectiveness and dissuasiveness of the Law, brings coercive imprisonment if a violation of restraining orders takes place,
- Establishes “Centers for Monitoring and Preventing Violence” offering support and monitoring services on the 7/24 principle, with pilot projects launched in 14 provinces,
- Enables usage of technical tools and methods by order of the judge, including safety buttons, for the first time in Turkey.

The Implementation Regulation of the Law, prepared in coordination with relevant public institutions and agencies, has entered into force on 18 January 2013. An electronic database was established to monitor the implementation of the provisions of the Law.

In addition to improving the legal infrastructure, The Committee on Equality of Opportunity for Women and Men has been set up within the Turkish Parliament in March 2009 and has been complemented with sub-committees to address issues such as “Early Marriages” and “Psychological Violence Exercised on Women due to Sex of Her Children, Bride Price and Traditional Marriages”. Close cooperation between the Committee and the Ministry of Family and Social Policies is maintained.

Another policy formulation tool is the national action plans. The “National Action Plan on Combating Violence against Women”, covering the years 2012-2015, was prepared with the participation of relevant public institutions and agencies, NGO’s and women research centers. The Plan foresees improvements in legal regulation; awareness raising, mental transformation; protective service delivery; delivery of health services and cooperation between relevant institutions/agencies.

Women shelters are leading institutions to protect and support women victims of violence. The number of women shelters has massively increased throughout the country in the recent years, reaching 113 in total, with an annual increase of 68%. Women counseling centers and hotlines are among other protection and support mechanisms.

Awareness building is as crucial as introducing legal arrangements and national mechanisms. The educational aspect has been a primary area of focus. Firstly, trainings and seminars have been conducted for various personnel who deal with victims of violence. 71.000 police officers, 65.000 health personnel, 336 family court judges and public prosecutors, 17.000 religious officers, 2.500 gendarmerie personnel, 531 local media personnel and communication faculty

students as well as 2700 civil servants and 6.500 high level executives have gone through such trainings.

As women's economic freedom is critical in combating violence against women and achieving gender equality, the year 2013 was recognized as "The Year of Women's Employment". A number of improvements are underway, such as maternity and paternity leave and flexible working models, to further enhance women's participation in economic life.

In line with the Istanbul Convention, research and database-building projects have been launched.

Turkey played a crucial role in the international recognition of 11 October as International Day of the Girl Child. This is another token revealing the importance Turkey attaches to the promotion of gender equality at the global level.

Promotion of gender equality and empowerment of women are among the objectives set up by the 2010 Millennium Development Goals Summit. Turkey has stepped up efforts to realize these MDG's by 2015. It is also necessary to mainstream gender perspectives in all of UN's objectives and activities in the following years.

Madame Chair,

I have touched upon some of our efforts to eliminate violence against women, based on the zero tolerance principle.

On the other hand, combatting violence against women requires a multilateral, sustained and resolute struggle. Exchanging best practices and knowledge is of great importance. In this context, I believe that the 57th Session of the Commission on the Status of Women will provide a significant contribution towards this end.

Madame Chair,

Prevention of violence against women is only possible if we stand together. The solutions we find will constitute a strong message to all women in the world who suffer from violence and expect our help.

The most visible demonstration of our determination to tackle this problem will be achieving consensus on the Agreed Conclusions in this year's CSW. Turkey spares no effort to make this possible. I am convinced that we all share these views.

It is our sincere wish that this year's Commission of the Status of Women will provide a strong response as decision-makers to the expectations of the women all over the world.

I would like to greet you all and express my strong belief that a world without violence and discrimination can only be possible through our sustained and joint efforts.

Thank you for your attention.

