
Joint statement in response to Turkey's withdrawal from the Istanbul Convention

Delivered by Ambassador Bräutigam, Permanent Representative of Germany to the OSCE, in the 1307th OSCE Permanent Council meeting on Thursday 25 March 2021

Madame Chairperson,

I would like to make this statement on behalf of the following countries: Andorra, Austria, Belgium, Canada, Croatia, Czech Republic, Cyprus, Denmark, Estonia, Finland, France, Greece, Iceland, Ireland, Italy, Latvia, Luxembourg, Malta, Monaco, Montenegro, the Netherlands, North Macedonia, Norway, Romania, Portugal, San Marino, Serbia, Slovenia, Spain, Sweden, Switzerland, United Kingdom as well as my own country Germany.

Under this current issue, we would like to focus on Turkey's withdrawal from the Council of Europe's Convention on Preventing and Combating Violence against Women and Domestic Violence, commonly known as the Istanbul Convention.

We deeply regret Turkey's decision to withdraw from the Convention. The Istanbul Convention is the most far-reaching legal instrument we have to prevent and combat violence against women and domestic violence, as well as to ensure protection for victims and bring perpetrators to justice.

This is today more important than ever, as violence against women and girls has increased worldwide as a result of the many conflicts where women are the primary victims, and in particular, in connection with the COVID-19 pandemic.

The Istanbul Convention has had a positive effect on the lives of women and girls and their communities. According to GREVIO, the monitoring body of the Istanbul Convention, implementation of the Convention has led to improvements in particular with regard to legislation, practices, support services, training of professionals and awareness raising.

Turkey's decision to leave the convention is a setback to the collective effort to eliminate violence against women and girls and the fight against domestic violence. It is regrettable because it weakens the protection of women and girls in Turkey.

Turkey was the first member state of the Council of Europe to ratify the Convention in 2012. The Convention was opened for signature during the Turkish chairpersonship 10 years ago.

International standards are the backbone of gender equality and human rights. That is why Turkey's withdrawal is a disappointment also from the point of view of our common rules-based multilateral order, which is the basis for all human rights protection

In addition, at the OSCE, there is an extensive body of commitments and activities aiming to end violence against women and girls. MC decision 4/18 provides a solid basis for our work, including in addressing the root causes of gender inequality and violence.

We call on the Turkish government to reconsider its decision and to renew its commitment to the Convention. We join those urging the Government of the Republic of Turkey to continue protecting and promoting the safety and rights of all women and girls on the basis of international human rights law.