

SESRIC- WORKSHOP ON
“THE ROLE OF WOMEN IN DEVELOPMENT OF OIC MEMBER STATES

Açılış konuşma metni – Kadının Statüsü Genel Müdürü Gülser USTAOĞLU

Esteemed Representatives and Distinguished Participants,

It is a great pleasure for me to address you at this workshop titled “The Role of Women in Development of OIC Member States” organized by OIC and SESRIC. I would like to extend my respectful greetings to representatives of OIC member states, OIC subsidiary bodies and international organizations and experts participating in this event from various parts of the world.

I believe the outcome of this workshop during which current progress in women’s status in OIC member states will be discussed will provide significant input to The Sixth Ministerial Conference on the Role of Women in Development of OIC Member States which is going to take place in Istanbul likewise, hosted by our country and the Ministry of Family and Social Policy between 1st and 3rd November 2016. Accordingly, I would like to mention briefly the activities we, the General Directorate on the Status of Women of the Ministry of family and Social Policy have been carrying out to empower women in our country.

Significant achievements have so far taken place in Turkey in many fields ranging from education to health and employment to combating violence against women. Many aspects of the national legislation have been amended particularly in the Constitution, Turkish Civil Code, Turkish Penal Code and Labor Act to consolidate the egalitarian nature of the laws.

Distinguished Participants,

Turkey has made significant progress in women's labor force participation and women's employment particularly in the last decade, thanks to the comprehensive policies and practices in place for promotion of women's employment in all fields. The rate of women's labor force participation, which had been 23.3 percent in 2004, rose up to 31.5 percent in 2015.

This resolution on Turkey's part is also supported by the steps taken in the international arena. Considering the fact that women's role in economic life cannot be strengthened solely through the steps to be taken by the government, Women 20 formed as an engagement group under G20 and focusing on promotion of economic growth in a gender-responsive and inclusive manner was brought into action under our G20 term presidency in 2015.

In this context, efforts have been maintained decisively in scope of the objectives of balancing work and family life and preserving family and dynamic population structure, to promote women's participation in decision-making mechanisms and employment in our country.

Distinguished Participants;

Significant progress has been made lately in Turkey in the school enrollment rates of women and girls. Women's rate of illiteracy has diminished in years. While the gender ratio had been 93 percent in the school year of 2005-2006; it rose to 101 percent in primary education and 103.20 in secondary education in the school year of 2015-2016. The progress was made possible by the conditional cash transfer for education of girls applied in scope of a policy of temporary special measure, as well as the campaigns and projects run nationwide and at mobilization.

Turkey has obviously been successful in reducing the rate of maternal mortality as a result of its tailored health policies.

This success has been appreciated on various international platforms. The sustainability of this success will continue being a basic objective of our state for women's health and well-being.

We are proud to note that 97 percent of our women have access to pre-natal care services and deliver their babies at hospitals.

Distinguished Participants;

As it is known, Turkey has adopted an “open-door” policy, by protecting the people forced to leave their lands, homes and countries due to the conflicts in the geography nearby – on the border.

We provide over two and half millions of Syrian people whom we have hosted under temporary protection in our country with the same services and opportunities as those available for our own citizens. 260.000 Syrian citizens are sheltered in 26 temporary protection centers and they have access to psycho-social support services alongside security, accommodation, food, health, clothing and education assistance to cater for their basic needs.

The elderly, the disabled, children, women and men accommodated in shelters are considered separately and assisted as much as the circumstances allow. They are referred to the relevant authorities based on the outcome of the individual interviews. The Syrian people outside these centers are also protected by temporary measures and have access to education and health services and opportunities.

In scope of the *Helping the Helpers Trainings* organized primarily for our psycho-social support personnel working with the Syrian under temporary protection and for the whole staff working at the camps, awareness has been raised among the staff members about such themes as violence against women, gender equality and early marriages. The Syrian women living at the camps

were likewise involved in similar awareness activities and over one million copies of brochures printed in Arabic and English on violence against women, marriage age, civil marriage and women's rights were handed out in the cities with camps.

It is a major humanitarian responsibility for us all to ease the suffering of the displaced people. Only one out of twenty immigrants who end up in our country after being forced out of their homes and countries can get access to international support. Turkey is aware of its responsibilities at this point and does more than its share. However, countries of the world should do their share for the sake of humanity and future.

I would like to indicate that it is unacceptable for the states accumulating the large part of wealth to evade responsibility when it is time to share the burden and that we have to respond to the global issues from the perspective of justice rather than equality.

Distinguished Participants;

As you all know, a serious phenomenon unfortunately existing in all parts of the world despite all the international commitments, legal arrangements and policies in place is violence against women.

Combating violence against women has evolved into an issue for which the state has assumed responsibility and a campaign run with the support of all the relevant stakeholders adhering to the principle of "zero tolerance" towards violence against women. Our state has put up an all-out struggle to prevent violence against women and protect victims by adopting legal and administrative measures in all fields.

Turkey is among the primary signatories to and the first to ratify the Council of Europe Convention on Preventing and Combating Violence against Women and Domestic Violence, which is a key document regarding violence against women and was submitted for signatures in 2011 in Istanbul.

Shortly after the ratification of the Convention, “The Law Nr.6284 on the Protection of Family and Prevention of Violence against Women” designed based on the Istanbul Convention in a process of wide social participation comprising NGOs, bar associations and universities took effect in 2012.

The Law provides for detailed definitions of violence and victims of violence in line with the Convention. Civilian and law enforcement authorities are hereby entitled to issue injunction orders for prompt and effective response to the cases.

The Law envisages opening of Violence Prevention and Monitoring Centers working 24/7 based on a one-step system to run versatile services and nationwide extension of the centers after a process of pilot practice in 14 cities. Currently, the Violence Prevention and Monitoring Centers are active in 49 cities. They run a wide range of services for the victims of violence including financial assistance, legal support, psycho-social support, employment support, accommodation, crèche support and education and training etc.

The number of women’s shelters considered a building block of the national efforts to combat violence against women had been 43 in 2011 and was raised to 101 through painstaking efforts. The number reaches 137 with those owned by the NGOs and municipalities added.

We are aware of the fact that discrimination against women and violence against women evolving on the axis of discrimination cannot possibly be eradicated solely through legal and administrative arrangements. Within this framework, various trainings are organized in cooperation with all the relevant stakeholders

to improve awareness and responsiveness of the staff members working in the public institutions/organizations responsible for delivery of services for women exposed to violence.

Distinguished Participants;

I'd like you to know we are honored to re-host The Ministerial Conference on the Role of Women in Development of OIC Member States for its sixth session, just like we hosted the first session in 2006 in Istanbul. As is common knowledge, it is the common goal of us all to review and strengthen the texture of the OIC Action Plan for Advancement of Women (OPAAW), the foundations of which were laid at the First Ministerial Conference held in Istanbul and adopted at the Second Ministerial Conference held in Cairo in 2008. I believe the two-day workshop will contribute tremendously to fulfillment of this goal.

In scope of the Sixth Ministerial Conference, a special session titled "Women's Forum" is going to be organized as was decided within the framework of the Final Communique of the Thirteenth Islamic Summit Conference. The Forum is planned to take place with the theme of "Advocacy and Solidarity among Muslim Women for Women's Empowerment in the OIC Member States". One of key routes to women's empowerment and development using their economic, social and cultural rights is advocacy both by us and representatives of state and other stakeholders. Advocacy will obviously be effective only if the activities are carried out at both national and international levels.

It is our sincerest hope within this framework to lead the way for the mechanisms to perform advocacy and counselling tasks under the roof of OIC, such as "Women's Council", which our President, His Excellency Recep Tayyip ERDOĞAN recommended to be constituted, in his remarks at the Thirteenth Islamic Summit Conference.

Distinguished Participants;

As I conclude my remarks in the belief that this workshop held ahead of the Sixth Ministerial Conference will produce significant added value, I would like to extend my gratitude to all contributing to the organization of this event and particularly to the officials and staff of OIC and SESRIC and my warmest and sincerest regards to each and every one of distinguished participants.