

2

**4th UN Forum on Minority Issues
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Statement by Aslihan Tekin
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Thank you Madam Chair for the opportunity to speak, before all I would like to thank Minority Rights group for the opportunity to attend to this forum today.

My name is Aslihan Tekin I am President of TR PLUS Centre for Turkey in Europe. I am working with different civil society organisations and minority groups in Turkey on gender equality and EU accession process.

Turkey is a country composed of vast ethnic, linguistic and religious diversity. It is home not only to Turks, Kurds and Armenians, but also millions of Alevis, Ezidis and Assyrians. There are also Laz, Caferis, Roma, Rum (Greek Orthodox), Caucasians and Jews. Turkey has made some real steps towards EU accession process on standards of minority protection but much remains to be done.

In particular focusing on minority women we should first be aware of the fact that gender equality in Turkey is a very challenging policy area even though women are 52% of the population. Minority women's economic, social and cultural rights are there to be provided and supported by sustainable and strong policies with in the efficient gender mainstreaming strategies. Many working minority women are involved in low-income earning activities, frequently in the informal sector. This is a great challenge. When we need to speak about exact data on this aspect we unfortunately lack of resources and data therefore I would like to welcome recommendation number **17 on gathering accurate data for minority women's economic participation in the society together with recommendation number 76** for working minority women's on the field problems. Minority women having fewer opportunities than the majority women are directed to informal sector and they find themselves in specific low skilled and low paid sector. Therefore referring to recommendation number **79 and 80 and 82** together, I would like to stress that women belonging to minorities are looking forward to receive vocational training and related economic empowerment to prepare them to the economic and social life. Following a stronger open dialogue on minority women's problems we need to have capacity building programmes and vocational trainings for minority women that would enable a fostering economic market in the least developed regions of the country.

Not only for gender equality policies to be implemented effectively but also to specifically develop minority women's economic and social status in the society it is very important to recognise gender budgeting. Therefore we encourage the government to implement gender budgeting in the state national program not only for all policies but also specifically for minority women's participation to economic life.

I would also like to stress the importance of having representatives of minority women in the trade union bodies to have efficient machinery in the unions. Creating capacity in the trade unions would also create a wider platform for minority women to be represented and cooperate with and advocate before the State bodies. Therefore I would like to welcome the **recommendation no 94** and suggest bringing quotas for women and minority women in trade unions.

I Welcome the Governments effort, through organising workshops and an actual agenda on minorities in Turkey But for minority women in Turkey we need to overcome bigger challenges and efforts to be planned. I therefore make the following Recommendations:

State ownership together with private and public ownership and giving priority to minority women's specific problems on economic social and cultural rights should be stressed during the opened dialogue processes with different minority groups in Turkey. The government should guarantee non-discrimination in the practice of each of the economic social and cultural right. This fact will be supported once **anti-discrimination legislation** is implemented in Turkey¹.

Thank you madam chair for this opportunity again.

¹ See also, European Commission Turkey Progress Report 2011