

**Statement Delivered by HE Ahmet Davutoğlu, Prime Minister of the Republic of Turkey
Advancing Gender Equality and Empowerment of Women and Girls for a Transformative
Post-2015 Development Agenda - High-Level Thematic Debate
Trusteeship Council, 6 March 2015**

HE Sam Kutesa, President of the General Assembly,
HE Ellen Johnson Sirleaf, President of Liberia,
HE Kolinda Grabar Kitarovic, President of Croatia,
Executive Director of UN Women, Ms. Phumzile Mlambo-Ngcuka,
Distinguished guests,
Ladies and gentlemen,

It is a great honor for me to address such a distinguished audience on this very special occasion as the only male Head of State/Government in this very special session, and more importantly, as the father of three lovely daughters.

At the beginning, I want to congratulate Madam President of Liberia, for Liberia being Ebola-free as of yesterday. Concerning the Ebola outbreak, Turkey continuously provided financial and in-kind assistance, especially to the most effected countries. Recently medical supplies worth \$1.2 million has been donated in three equal parts to Guinea, Sierra Leone and Liberia in January. Our Government has decided to scale up our support up to a total of \$5 million through bilateral and multilateral channels including the UN, WHO and the African Union.

Let me first start by congratulating the upcoming International Women's Day. I do reiterate on this very special day that we aspire to build a better future for humanity. We must make every effort to support women. Women and girls around the world play a determining role in social progress, economic growth and development. Advancing gender equality and empowerment of women and girls have a dramatic impact on the well-being of our societies and sustainable development.

As reaffirmed by the international community at the World Summit in 2005, the full and effective implementation of the Beijing Declaration and platform for action adopted during the United Nations' 4th World Conference on Women in 1995 is essential for attaining and upholding the millennium development goals. Fully cognizant of the vital importance of gender equality and empowerment of women, Turkey welcomes the establishment of the UN Entity for

gender equality and the empowerment for women, UN Women in 2010 as a historic step towards accelerating the work of the UN in this field in a more coherent, better coordinated and better resourced manner. Turkey supports UN Women and all its initiatives.

We very much welcome the decision of UN Women to open a regional office in Istanbul, which will be responsible for Europe and Central Asia. We believe that the office in Istanbul will contribute to our global efforts. I invite all ladies here to visit Istanbul in the coming days and weeks.

Dear participants, although advancing gender equality and empowerment of women and girls are amongst the most important tasks before us today, main reasons standing in the way of empowerment of women continue to remain in many parts of the world. Limited choices, inequalities and restricted freedoms for women including in education, health, social protection, decent work, livelihood and economic opportunities, constrain their living standards. Therefore we deem the current discussion an important step in addressing existing requirements for overcoming the immense problems women still face in today's world. The society and the governments need to eradicate the underlying causes of inequalities that lead to poorer societies undermining the social structure and educational opportunities. Education of girls stand out as an area where we need to dedicate significant attention. And with this understanding, Turkey, together with Canada and Peru, pioneered the "International Day of the Girl Child" initiative at the UN. We strongly believe that ensuring the schooling of girls and closing the gender gap in education is the best way to empower girls and prevent them from being forced into early marriages.

We, in Turkey, achieved a record increase in all levels of education for girls over the last decade. The ratio of girls to boys in primary schools has reached to 101% with a 90% percent increase in the last decade.

This improvement was possible thanks to two initiatives. The first is the campaign carried out at national level in cooperation with the civil society and public administrations. The other one is the conditional education assistance, where girls receive a higher rate of scholarship than boys.

Distinguished participants, women and girls suffer not only from inequalities but also from violence in all phases of life, in many parts of the world. Unfortunately, the failure to recognize the rights of women, leads to perpetration of gender based violence. Globally, much more needs to be done to put an end to this vicious-circle. Since the adoption of the landmark UN Security

Council Resolution 1325 on Women, Peace and Security, there has been progress across a broad range of issues for the protection and promotion of women's and girls' rights, especially in conflict affected situations and protracted crisis. Here I salute all women in refugee camps, who had undergone these crises and escaped from this type of violence.

However, these steps are not sufficient to overcome new menaces and worsening situations including, in particular, civil wars and failing states. It is therefore important to recognize the importance of protecting women and supporting them during the conflict and post-conflict situations; to increase the participation of women and to incorporate gender perspectives in peace and security building efforts.

The international committee should pay a particular attention on how to prevent and respond to sexual based violence, which is often used as a weapon of war, a strategy to deprive human beings of their most basic rights, their safety, security and dignity. Obviously, the elimination of the root causes of conflicts is the best way to prevent this terrible crime.

Turkey actively continues to provide vast contributions to the efforts to achieve protection and promotion of women's and children's rights in conflict affected situations and in the aftermath of natural disasters. We believe that the international community should keep this issue high on its agenda and continue to work on comprehensive solutions. Violence against women is a flagrant violation of human rights, which cannot be justified on any social, cultural or religious grounds whatsoever. We should be doing our utmost to prevent this crime at all levels.

As for Turkey, we have carried out extensive legislative and practical protective work for combating violence against women. We recognize that there are still challenges ahead to eradicate the problem but we are very much resolved to maintain our efforts to this end. At the international level, Turkey is party to the UN Convention on the Elimination of all Forms of Discrimination Against Women and its Optional Protocol. Turkey actively contributed to the elaboration of the Council of Europe Convention on Preventing and Combating Violence Against Women and Domestic Violence, also known as the Istanbul Convention. And it is the first country that signed and ratified the convention, which happened during my term as the Foreign Minister and Chairman of the Ministerial Community of the Council of Europe.

In order to incorporate Istanbul Convention to domestic legislation, the Law on Protection of Family and Prevention of Violence was put into force on March 20, 2012, in accordance with the provisions included in the Convention. This is a breakthrough piece of legislation as it is the first

law in Turkey that defines and tackles domestic violence by broadening the scope of the previous legislation to cover all women victims regardless of their marital status as well as other members of the family.

Distinguished audience,

Women are the drivers of development, sustainability and peace in the world. Now is the time to seriously take into consideration the enormous development impact of women's participation in all three dimensions of development, namely social, environmental and economic.

One thing is for sure: We cannot achieve the transformative Post-2015 Development Agenda without having women on board; half of the global population. Overcoming inequalities and discrimination is the very key for global sustainability and eradication of poverty. Gender inequality is the major obstacle to sustainable development. Hence, gender inequality and meaningful empowerment of women and girls should be at the center of our actions. While crafting the new development agenda in the coming months, we have the opportunity to do so. We should seize that opportunity.

Turkey renders full support to the inclusion of gender equality to the Post-2015 Development Agenda by setting a transformative standalone goal to achieve gender equality, women rights and women's empowerment and by mainstreaming gender into other goals through appropriate targets and indicators.

Mindful of the link between achieving sustainable growth and gender equality, Turkey, as the President of G20 this year, proposes to launch the Women-20 (W20) Outreach Group. We believe that, once established, the W20 will support G20's efforts to achieve inclusive growth and raise the profile of gender issues. Moreover, at the Brisbane Summit of G20, it was agreed to reduce the gap in participation rates between men and women in G20 countries by 25% by 2025. This will bring more than 100 million women into the labor force and significantly contribute to our efforts to reduce unemployment and inequality. As the President of G20, we will pay due attention in monitoring the implementation of that agreement.

Ladies and gentlemen,

At every effort, whether international or national, strong participation and collaboration of civil societies are important. The inclusion of civil society, media and the private sector into decision

making and implementation of social development policies is not only useful in terms of benefiting from the expertise and resources they bring, but also in terms of its contribution to raising awareness in the society.

In Turkey, government and civil society initiatives walk together to achieve goals set by the Millennium Development Goals. As a result, Turkey was among those who mostly fulfilled national commitments and goals established in accordance with the program of action of the international conference on population and development and the MDGs.

Distinguished participants,

Now allow me to give you some figures regarding what we do and achieve in Turkey on the prevention of discrimination against women, combating violence against them and raising women's participation in labor force. One of the basic principles of the Turkish Constitution is the equality between women and men before the law. The state is responsible for ensuring that this equality is upheld in practice. A new definition has been introduced in our constitution through an amendment in 2010, which allows for positive discrimination for women so as to strengthen equality in practice.

In recent years, regulations which include discriminatory provisions against women have been eliminated in Turkey. In an effort carried out in cooperation with the UN and the Commission for Equal Opportunities for Women and Men of the Turkish Parliament, 31 laws have been reviewed from a gender perspective and all discriminatory provisions in laws have been identified. Raising awareness is one of the most important ways to prevent discrimination against women. In this context, training activities have been provided for 183 thousand law enforcement staff, medical professionals, judges, public prosecutors, religious officers, student and communication faculties and other public officials on gender equality and combatting violence against women.

I have already mentioned Turkey's contribution to the Istanbul Convention and the importance we attach to its implementation.

Following the ratification, the law on the Protection of the Family and Prevention of Violence Against Women has been put into force with provisions compatible with this convention. A sub-commission on the examination of practices on prevention of violence against women was set up within the Turkish Grand National Assembly. The national action plan on combatting domestic violence has been updated for the period 2012 - 2015. 131 Women Shelter Centers are operational as of December 2014, providing service to almost 3400 women. Violence Prevention

and Monitoring Centers provide service in 14 provinces to support female victims of violence. We consider that violations of human rights cannot be justified on social, cultural or religious grounds. We are fully committed to this paying utmost effort to prevent these murders in the society. The Turkish Penal Code penalizes such killings with aggravated life imprisonment.

With regards to women's employment, the rate of women's participation in the labor force in Turkey has risen to 38%. Within the framework of the national employment strategy, the aim is to raise the rate of women's participation in the labor force to 41% by 2023. The Women Employment Action Plan is being prepared in cooperation with the ILO. A significant improvement was achieved in women's representation rate in the Turkish Parliament in recent years. This rate was 4.4% in 2002, then it rose to 9.1% in 2007, and finally to 14.4% in 2011, which is the highest representation ever in Turkish history. We will be having another election in June and we hope this ratio will exceed 20%.

Moreover, while there were no women serving as Metropolitan Municipality Mayors in 2009, female candidates won 10% of Metropolitan Municipalities and became Mayors as a result of the local elections in 2014.

When it comes to prevention of still born babies. Turkey is among the top 10 successful countries in 2008. We spare no effort to continue this success. Furthermore, numerous mother-care facilities have been established.

Distinguished participants,

In conclusion, we hope that today's discussion and our increased combined efforts will provide a significant contribution to support gender equality as well as to redouble our efforts for the empowerment of women. A strong nation should be built on the notion of strong women and family. Therefore, continuous efforts including by men and boys towards solving women's and girl's problems are crucial. An educated, strong and qualified woman is the key to success in all spheres of life. We should continue to work to strengthen women's part in societies. This requires a multi-dimensional approach and a continuous endeavor.

I should thank, like to thank once again everyone who has contributed to this significant effort for supporting women in the world and wish all of you every success in this important mission.

Thank you very much.