

**Comments of the Islamic Republic of Iran
On the Report of
The visit of Ms. Yakin Erturk,
The Special Rapporteur on the Violence against Women, its Causes
and Consequences**

Thank you Mr. President

At the outset I would like to express my government's appreciation for the visit of professor Yakin Erturk, the Special Rapporteur on violence against women, its causes and consequences. We do hope that this visit paved the way for a better understanding of the situation and contribute to the advancement of the Rights of Women in Iran. Positive trend and ever deepening insight with respect to the rights of women in Iran will only be strengthened and consolidated by fair, realistic and forward looking attitude on the part of International Human Rights Mechanisms.

A great deal of discussion and debate at the international level has been and still is addressing the issue of women's status in present day Iranian Society; however only a few among them have been able to avoid painting a grim picture of the situation of the women in Iran. It is in this context that the role of the Special Rapporteur becomes essential as an impartial arbiter to open a window to the United Nations Human Rights system to show what Iranian women have achieved over last couple of decades, by way of strength, optimism and courage and what challenges lies ahead to overcome and go forward.

The issue of women and their role in Iran has been on the agenda of every political, social and economic macro management policy of the society in the last 20 years. Only those who come from a highly patriarchal culture, can imagine how hard and painful could possibly be to break apart the deep-rooted male-dominant culture and to prepare the ground for women to rise for their rights. A persistent campaign of awareness raising, norm setting and institutionalizing the rights of women initiated and tirelessly followed by state and non-state factors has brought about the present situation where the issue of women has become one of Iran's most watched and thought about issues in the daily life. No political leader in today's Iran can afford to overlook women as a significant political constituency. The Special Rapporteur has unequivocally witnessed the participation of women and the importance of their role in the society after the Islamic Revolution. She has confirmed positive developments such as emerging civil society and active female students, journalists and lawyers and ratification of a number of legislations to

promote and protect the rights of women. Every effort to understand and analyze the situation of women in Iran must take into consideration this background. This is an ongoing process and unfinished business. However it should be noted that no "female dominated" sovereignty could be found around the Globe and "equality gap" is an international challenge, not a domestic deficiency in Iran.

On the substance of the report it must be said that no one can claim to be perfect and like in all other societies around the world. There is always room for improvement and progress. Wiping out all positive steps by allegations such as "continuing reports of violations of women's human rights", high rate of unemployment for women, restriction of political activities and the like downgrades the report to a political statement. Unemployment is a national economic problem targeting men and women alike. While women set up their NGO's, become members of parliament, are assigned to high ranking official posts such as vice-president, launch their campaign for their rights and so on, allegations on restriction on political activities for women becomes difficult to understand.

Regarding the issue of "honour crime" although it is not a phenomenon that is carried out only in Iran, it is to be noted that the issue has drawn much attention in the ongoing reform of the Judiciary and has been addressed properly. Subsequent to the measures taken by the relevant authorities, the number of such cases has been reduced dramatically and Iran suffers the least in the region of this legally, ethically and socially disturbing matter.

Early marriage has increasingly become an unwanted and undesirable act both in the viewpoint of the public and in the legal system. But it is true that in spite of reforms to prevent it, it remains one of the concerns of the Judiciary especially in remote areas and villages.

"Denial of fair public trial" has not been coupled with any evidence in the report. It should be noted that the Penal Code and the Civil Law have been originated from the Holy Koran and their provisions are acted upon in many other countries. Also it is worth mentioning that all proceedings are now with the presence of public prosecutor, the judge and the legal counsel of the accused.

In conclusion, the Islamic Republic of Iran is of the view that expanding the role of the women in all corners of the Iranian society is not an accomplished mission, but a noble goal that deserves to be at the

forefront of social development planning. At the same time it should be noted that the entire system of justice in Iran is based on the Constitution and derived from the Islamic Shariaa which enjoys the support of the people. Analyzing the situation in Iran or in any other society without taking into consideration the internationally recognized multiculturalism and diversity does not usher us to a fruitful conclusion. In this context, the recommendation of the Special Rapporteur will be carefully considered.

I thank you Mr. President