



PERMANENT MISSION OF TURKEY TO THE UNITED NATIONS

CHECK AGAINST DELIVERY

**STATEMENT BY
THE DELEGATION OF TURKEY**

THIRD COMMITTEE

**AGENDA ITEM 71 (b), (c), (e)
HUMAN RIGHTS QUESTIONS**

NEW YORK, 31 OCTOBER 2005

Mr.Chairman,

At its 60th anniversary, the United Nations is at a critical juncture of reform. The outcome document adopted at the high-level plenary meeting of the General Assembly provides the basis of the substantial reform process, which is of crucial importance in enhancing the relevance, effectiveness, efficiency, accountability and credibility of the organization.

The reform agenda has reaffirmed the prime importance of human rights as one of the principal goals of the United Nations, together with peace and security, and development. The establishment of the Human Rights Council is at the heart of the human rights reform. Ongoing consultations regarding the specifications of the Human Rights Council provide the UN member states with the opportunity to present their views on different aspects of this new human rights body. Member states might have different perspectives, views and proposals regarding the Council. However, Turkey believes that, despite all these differences, we should aim at creating a body with enhanced status compared to the current Commission on Human Rights; a body which is representative, efficient and credible; moreover a body that will function in an atmosphere of cooperation and understanding instead of polarization, in our common endeavors of protecting and promoting human rights. We very much hope that these principles will provide the common ground in our work on the Human Rights Council.

Mr. Chairman,

The primary responsibility to promote and protect human rights lies with the states. For her part, Turkey has been exerting sustained efforts to this end. Turkey has been going through a comprehensive reform process in the recent years with a view to upgrading human rights standards to the highest level attainable by aligning fully the Turkish legislation and its implementation with the international norms.

The human rights reform policy which Turkey has been pursuing consists of three main pillars: Screening the Turkish legislation, becoming party to international human rights instruments and taking the necessary measures for full implementation. The ambitious reform process ensured substantial progress, *inter alia*, with regard to abolishing death penalty, fight against torture, reforming the prison system, freedom of expression, freedom of association and assembly, freedom of religion, functioning of the judiciary, civil-military relations, economic, social and cultural rights and anti-corruption measures.

As for the Turkish legislation, the adoption of the new Civil Code at the beginning of 2002 and the adoption of the new Penal Code which came into force in June 2005 have been among the benchmarks of the legislative reforms. The new Penal Code was the outcome of a comprehensive drafting process with the Council of Europe, coupled with the involvement of local and international NGO's. In fact, civil society has always been among the major contributors in the efforts for reform, as well as their implementation.

As for international documents, Turkey is now party to the all principal human rights conventions of the United Nations. The ratification process of the two optional protocols to the International Covenant on Civil and Political Rights are also under way.

The Government has taken important steps to ensure effective and full implementation of the reforms. Human Rights Education is an important component of these steps. In line with the national human rights programme for the period of 1998-2007, intensified human rights training for civil servants, particularly for the ones employed in the field of law enforcement, as well as a nation-wide public campaign to raise human rights have been launched and implemented. Comprehensive joint projects have been realized in conjunction with the Council of Europe and the European Union on human rights training for the security forces as well as the judiciary. Bilateral programmes with several European countries have also been initiated. A special monitoring group called the "Reform Monitoring Group" was established at the political level to overview the progress in the actual implementation of the reforms. Any shortcoming detected in the implementation process is being rectified in a determined manner.

Turkey is engaged in a constructive dialogue with the human rights mechanisms both at the UN and at the regional level. Turkey has been among the first group of countries which extended a standing invitation to UN special procedures. A number of special rapporteurs and special representatives have paid visits to Turkey, the last of which was the working visit by the Special Representative of the UNSG on the human rights of internally displaced persons in May 2005.

Mr.Chairman,

Before concluding, we would like to touch upon the report by the High Commissioner for Human Rights.

We thank the High Commissioner for her report presented to the current session of the General Assembly. The report, focusing on the Plan of Action, promotes new approaches to respond to today's challenges. The Plan of Action provides a clear vision as to the implementation of human rights norms and standards. We see merit in the call by the High Commissioner for a shift from standard setting to implementation. In this regard, we welcome the envisaged increase in the resources of the Office of the High Commissioner for Human Rights (OHCHR), which we believe will be instrumental in better discharging of the functions of the OHCHR.

Thank you.