



## Statement: The Right to Live in a Clean, Healthy, and Safe Environment

### Esteemed delegates

<b>SLIDE 2</b>	<p>For decades, under the guise of development, Turkey has pursued policies in mining, energy, transportation, and urbanization that disregard the rights of natural ecosystems and people's fundamental right to live in a clean, healthy environment. The lack of effective implementation of environmental legislation, frequent legal exemptions favoring investors, inadequate monitoring, and limited public participation have led to environmental destruction and serious human rights violations. Chronic barriers to access to information, justice, and protest rights exacerbate these problems, weakening Turkey's democracy and its commitment to human rights.</p>
<b>SLIDE 3</b>	<p>The Turkish Constitution guarantees the right to live in a healthy and balanced environment. Environmental Law No. 2872 also mandates an Environmental Impact Assessment (EIA) for activities potentially harmful to the environment.</p> <p>However, systemic gaps and biased practices in the EIA process undermine its effectiveness. Loopholes allow investor companies to bypass comprehensive assessments, while amendments have consistently reduced the stringency of the EIA process to favor private interests. Startlingly, 9 out of 10 EIA applications from 1993 to 2023 received "EIA Not Required" decisions, effectively excluding them from meaningful public participation. Even in cases where public participation is mandated, it is often superficial, leading to widespread citizen lawsuits against EIA decisions.</p> <p>Adding to the issue is the reliance on private consultancy firms, hired by project owners, to conduct EIAs without independent oversight. This creates inherent biases, often ignoring or concealing critical environmental risks. Numerous mining disasters, including fatal incidents and severe ecosystem degradation, have occurred despite positive EIA approvals, highlighting regulatory negligence and the failure to act on scientific warnings.</p>
<b>Slide 5</b>	<p>The right to information, essential for environmental protection, is also being violated. Although Turkish law ensures access to information, public institutions frequently deny requests under the pretense of trade secrets or simply leave applications unanswered. Courts have repeatedly confirmed the public's right to such information, yet violations persist, limiting transparency and accountability.</p>

<b>Slide 6</b>	Access to environmental justice also remains severely limited. Common issues include the non-implementation of court decisions, expedited legal processes that undermine fair hearings, high expert fees, and jurisdictional obstacles. These challenges are compounded by a lack of public participation, restricted access to information, and insufficient health impact assessments for projects. Media outlets reporting on environmental issues are often suppressed or alienated, further hindering accountability.
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<b>Slide 7</b>	Environmental rights defenders in Turkey face systematic intimidation and criminalization. Accusations of terrorism, foreign collusion, and baseless allegations tarnish their credibility and aim to silence their advocacy. Such pressures, often propagated by state officials and media, contribute to an atmosphere of fear and suppression.
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<b>Slide 8</b>	<p><b>Recommendations:</b></p> <ol style="list-style-type: none"> <li>1. Ratify and fully implement the Aarhus Convention, the Espoo Convention, and the Optional Protocol to ICESCR by 2027.</li> <li>2. Set-up an independent and participatory Environmental, Health, and Human Rights Impact Assessments (EHHRIAs) for all major construction and infrastructure projects.</li> <li>3. Establish a legal framework ensuring public access to challenge projects that violate environmental or human rights standards.</li> <li>4. Amend the Legal Aid Law to provide free legal assistance for victims of environmental harm and eliminate excessive judicial fees and ensure courts are accessible to all affected communities.</li> <li>5. Repeal or amend laws used to criminalize environmental protests and advocacy.</li> <li>6. Establish an independent mechanism to investigate threats and harassment against environmental defenders, including academics and journalists.</li> <li>7. Require mandatory human rights, health, and environmental due diligence for businesses operating in high-risk sectors.</li> <li>8. Establish a National Action Plan on Business and Human Rights to hold corporations accountable for environmental damage.</li> </ol>
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## Statement on the Women’s Rights and Gender Equality

<b>Slide 9</b>	The second issue I will address is the alarming setbacks in women’s and LGBTI+ rights in Turkey, focusing on the erosion of the rule of law, the unlawful withdrawal from the Istanbul Convention, restrictions on freedoms, judicial harassment, and systemic gender inequality.
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<b>Slide 10</b>	<p>The government's 2021 withdrawal from the Istanbul Convention marked an unprecedented setback, undermining protections against violence and disregarding constitutional and parliamentary processes. The withdrawal, justified by discriminatory rhetoric, was unconstitutional and contravenes international law, particularly the Vienna Convention on the Law of Treaties.</p> <p>The impact of this withdrawal has been catastrophic. Violence against women has surged, with over 300 women murdered in 2021 alone. Mechanisms previously provided by the Istanbul Convention, such as effective investigations and victim support, are now weakened. Protective measures are inadequately implemented, and shelters lack capacity, leaving women and children vulnerable.</p>
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<b>Slide 11</b>	<p>Gender-based violence remains a pervasive issue. The Turkish Penal Code fails to define femicide or violence against women as distinct crimes, and judicial practices frequently allow perpetrators to benefit from reduced sentences. This culture of impunity is exacerbated by systemic victim-blaming and the absence of effective risk assessments for cautionary measures.</p> <p>In addition, systemic obstacles impede women's political participation. The lack of legal frameworks ensuring gender quotas and protections against political violence leaves women underrepresented in politics. Trustee appointments to local governments further undermine women's access to democratic processes, disproportionately affecting Kurdish women.</p>
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<b>Slide 12</b>	<p><b>RECOMMENDATIONS for URGENT ACTIONS</b></p> <ol style="list-style-type: none"> <li>1. <b>Reinstate and effectively implement the Istanbul Convention</b> to restore comprehensive protections against gender-based violence.</li> <li>2. <b>Remove restrictions on peaceful assembly</b> and ensure accountability for law enforcement abuses.</li> <li>3. <b>Guarantee judicial independence</b> and halt judicial harassment of women's rights defenders and independent associations.</li> <li>4. <b>Implement comprehensive anti-discrimination legislation</b>, including protections for sexual orientation and gender identity.</li> <li>5. <b>Increase the capacity of shelters</b> and improve conditions to provide genuine support for survivors of violence.</li> <li>6. <b>Introduce gender quotas</b> in political party laws and electoral frameworks to ensure equal representation.</li> <li>7. <b>Define femicide as a distinct crime</b> and end judicial practices that perpetuate impunity.</li> </ol>
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