

Reminder regarding the United Nations' (UN) Group of Friends, established for the elimination of violence against women and girls: We are closely following the coalition -of which Turkey is an Executive Council member- and its commitments.

On April 2020, Antonio Guterres, secretary-general of the United Nations underlined the destructive effects of the pandemic in regards to gender-based violence and domestic violence, and [invited](#) the nations to take the necessary steps to put an end to these acts of violence, which were increased as a result of the pandemic. During the following months, 146 member states and observers signed a declaration and [declared](#) their commitment to an action plan of 6 urgent steps, designed to end domestic violence worldwide. To act on this commitment, 78 member states and observers including Turkey [launched](#), in a virtual event on December 7, 2020, the coalition called The Group of Friends^[2] within *Spotlight Initiative's*^[1] secretariat to eliminate violence against women and girls with the help of national and international NGOs.

We recognize the significance of Turkey being a member of the steering committee that leads the Group of Friends, a coalition that serves as a platform to share information, develop policies and coordinate the actions to be taken to eliminate gender-based violence and domestic violence. Hearing all 6 members of the steering committee underlining their commitment and motivation to act on their plans to eliminate gender-based violence in the initial meeting were encouraging.

Representatives from 78 countries stated that the success of this new initiative should be measured not with the number of meetings organized or reports published, but with the amount of coordinated, comprehensive action taken to make a concrete difference. Regarding this, it is important to remember the words of Ms. Bilge Koçyiğit, Deputy Permanent Representative of Turkey to the UN: ***“Despite the tough road that lies ahead, we are determined to intensify our efforts to eliminate gender-based violence.”***

The intentions and the actions of Turkey regarding the worldwide elimination of gender-based violence is quite valuable. Nonetheless, to reach this goal, effective policies and a holistic approach to eliminate gender-based inequality on a national level is needed first. One of the most important steps to take to achieve gender equality and eliminate violence against women and girls is to implement comprehensive policies, and this can only be done with the active and effective contribution of NGOs to these processes, most importantly feminist and LGBTI+ organizations. As we leave 2020 behind, a year during which İstanbul Convention, a treaty against violence against women and domestic violence, for the preparation of which Turkey was also effectively involved, was being debated at the governmental level while the constitutional rights of women, girls and LGBTI persons as equal citizens were continually being violated, we are calling for the Group of Friends to take the necessary actions to protect and improve the acquired rights of women in Turkey and all around the world and achieve gender equality, and we are hoping that these commitments will actually be realized and the actions taken for this international commitment will impact law authorities and administrative bodies in the country. And we would like to declare to the public that we will be closely following the activities of the coalition.

This reminder was written by Women for Women's Human Rights - New Ways Organization, and supported by Beijing+25 Women's Platform.

[1] Spotlight Initiative is a global, multi-year partnership between the European Union and the United Nations, aiming to eliminate all forms of violence against women and girls by 2030.

[2] Groups of Friends are coalitions of United Nations (UN) member states, banding together to further and actualize certain goals and outcomes related to specific issues or situations.