



Strasbourg, 6 May 2021

Declaration

of the Committee of the Parties to the Council of Europe Convention on Preventing and Combating Violence against Women and Domestic Violence (Istanbul Convention) on the 10th anniversary of the opening for signature of the Istanbul Convention

Celebrating ten years of joint efforts to prevent and combat violence against women and domestic violence: ten principles for a renewed decade of action

The Committee of the Parties to the Istanbul Convention,

On the occasion of the 10th anniversary of the opening for signature of the Istanbul Convention,

Recalling the unanimous adoption of the Istanbul Convention in 2011, in order to join forces to set comprehensive standards to prevent and combat violence against women and domestic violence;

Having regard to other international and regional instruments aiming to eliminate violence against women, including the United Nations Convention on the Elimination of All Forms of Discrimination Against Women ("CEDAW", 1979) and its Optional Protocol (1999) as well as General Recommendation No. 35 of the CEDAW Committee on gender-based violence against women, the Inter-American Convention on the Prevention, Punishment and Eradication of Violence against Women ("Convention of Belém do Pará", 1994), and the Protocol to the African Charter on Human and Peoples' Rights on the Rights of Women in Africa ("Maputo Protocol", 2003); and welcoming the joint efforts of the Platform of Independent Expert Mechanisms on Discrimination and Violence against Women (EDVAW Platform) to build synergies and strengthen institutional cooperation in promoting the implementation of these instruments;

Taking account of the case law of the European Court of Human Rights in the field of violence against women, which formed the basis for important standards set out in the Istanbul Convention, and welcoming the growing body of case law of the Court which refers to the Istanbul Convention standards;

Recalling that the Sustainable Development Goals, adopted by the United Nations, include the elimination of all forms of violence against all women and girls by 2030, and encouraging all Council of Europe member States to make an active contribution to their implementation;

Welcoming the initiatives taken in the framework of the Generation Equality Forum to mark the 25th anniversary of the Beijing Declaration and Platform for Action ("Beijing+25"), by reaffirming the value of multilateralism as well as rallying concrete, ambitious and transformative commitments for the furthering of women's rights generally and the eradication of gender-based violence against women specifically;

Welcoming the European Union Gender Equality Strategy 2020-2025 which presents the Istanbul Convention as the "benchmark for international standards" in the field of violence against women and calls on its member states to ratify and implement it;

Recalling that violence against women constitutes a serious violation of human rights, a form of discrimination against women, and a major obstacle to the achievement of gender equality;

Mindful that women and girls belonging to disadvantaged groups, such as migrant women, asylum seeking and refugee women, women belonging to national minorities, women with disabilities, LGBTI women, girl children, older women, homeless women, women in rural areas, women in prostitution and women using psycho-active substances, tend to experience multiple and intersecting forms of discrimination, especially when they are exposed to or become victims of gender-based violence against women;

Expressing its deep concern at the spreading of false narratives about the content and objectives of the Istanbul Convention, as well as of discourses questioning the advancement of women's rights and equality between women and men, and stressing the need for states parties and all other relevant actors to engage in constructive, fact-based dialogue with all sectors of society in order to re-focus on the aims and purposes of the Istanbul Convention as a goal to unite behind;

Condemning any steps taken to move away from the standards of the Istanbul Convention;

Recalling the need to support and uphold a rules-based international system;

Recognising the added value of the Istanbul Convention and its monitoring mechanism to prevent and combat violence against women and domestic violence in states parties, including the crucial work of the Group of Experts on Action against Violence against Women and Domestic Violence (GREVIO) in evaluating the implementation of the Istanbul Convention through independent expertise and constructive dialogue;

Recognising the challenges arising from the ongoing COVID-19 pandemic and its social and economic impact, in particular on women;

Having in mind the recommendations the Committee has addressed, based on GREVIO's baseline evaluation reports, to states parties in view of the implementation of the Istanbul Convention;

1. Reaffirms the essential role of the Istanbul Convention in preventing and combating violence against women and domestic violence, as the most far-reaching and comprehensive set of standards to tackle this issue;
2. Welcomes the number of ratifications and calls on those Council of Europe member states that have not yet ratified the Istanbul Convention to do so; also welcomes the growing interest, among Council of Europe non-member states, in this treaty and invites those states to ratify it;
3. Praises the remarkable impact of the Istanbul Convention which has led and continues to lead to numerous advances to prevent violence against women and domestic violence, protect victims, and prosecute perpetrators on the basis of integrated policies;
4. Acknowledges the major contribution of the Istanbul Convention monitoring mechanism in preventing and combating violence against women and domestic violence by providing tailored-made guidance as well as opportunities for states parties to learn from each other and exchange on best practices;

5. Welcomes the important role that civil society organisations, in particular women rights' NGOs, play in preventing and combating violence against women and domestic violence, and calls on member states to recognise, encourage and support their work, including through sustainable funding opportunities and institutional cooperation mechanisms;
6. Expresses deep concern at the persistence of obstacles to the prevention and elimination of all forms of violence covered by the Istanbul Convention, including challenges arising from the COVID-19 pandemic, as well as the spreading of false narratives about the Istanbul Convention and the attempt to weaken the multilateral and legally binding international system protecting women against violence;
7. Highlights the potential for sustainable change through the full implementation of the principles and requirements of the Istanbul Convention, which provide a powerful framework for overcoming obstacles and moving forward, by devising and implementing measures to counter violence against women as a persistent barrier to full equality between women and men;
8. Urges states parties to intensify their efforts to promote and fully implement the Istanbul Convention so as to realise this potential and respect, protect and promote the right of women and girls to live a life free from violence, including for women and girls facing multiple and intersecting forms of discrimination;
9. Calls upon states parties to embed equality between women and men as well as the eradication of violence against women and domestic violence in their collective efforts to build back better after the COVID-19 pandemic and beyond, by making this objective a priority, mobilising the necessary financial and human resources, and leading by example in building a society free from violence against women and domestic violence;
10. Reiterates its determination to pursue exchanges and co-operation among members and observers of the Committee, as a necessity for addressing common challenges as well as strengthening and accelerating efforts in the next decade to eliminate violence against women and domestic violence, in order to contribute to the fulfilment of women's rights.