

Statements

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Dear Chairperson, Ladies and gentlemen, I am pleased to be here today at the Conference on "Beyond the Horizon: a new era for the rights of the child" jointly organized by the Council of Europe and the Italian Presidency of the Committee of Ministers on the occasion of, the new Strategy for the Rights of the Child 2022-2027 by the Council of Europe.

In the first quarter of the 21st century, Türkiye has been one of the countries most affected by international forced migration movements due to humanitarian crises and instability. Our country has been a destination country of immigration and a safe harbor, with the effect of positive progress in socio-economic development, from its position as a country that has emigrated and transit features until recently within the international migration system.

Experienced migrations have been on the agenda of the world and especially Europe, not only because of the human tragedy they have revealed, but also because of the security problems they have created. Since the beginning of the humanitarian crisis that started in Syria in 2011, Türkiye has become the country that hosts the largest number of refugees in the world, with its entrepreneurial and humanitarian foreign policy approach, on the other hand, it has made efforts for an inclusive, transparent and accountable system to build a more just world.

More than 4 million refugees, mostly Syrians, live in Türkiye and nearly 2 million of these people are children. Children are the group that pays the heaviest price and carries the heaviest burden in the face of the crisis. Our country has undertaken the difficult task of providing services in accordance with the national legal framework, especially in the fields of health, education and social services, to foreigners under temporary protection and international protection applicants and status holders. In line with these, for Syrians and foreigners under temporary protection, international protection applicants and status holders;

- They are provided with access to health services through Immigrant Health Centers and units operating as part of Turkish public health centers. In addition, efforts to expand health services for those under temporary protection continue through the integration of Turkish doctors and nurses, as well as Syrian health personnel working in immigrant health centers and units.

- They are provided with free access to protective equipment, testing and medicines for COVID-19, regardless of whether they have social security or not.
- The inclusion of children in the education system is encouraged. More than 800.000 Syrian children under temporary protection are enrolled in formal education in Türkiye. Other complementary services, such as the Conditional Education Assistance for Education (ŞEY) program, state-sponsored school transportation and the provision of dormitories, has helped these children in distress to stay in education.

Despite the increased burden with the COVID-19 response, Türkiye continues to ensure that Syrians under temporary protection and international protection applicants and status holders have access to services within the scope of national systems such as health, education and social services.

Our country is also watching the war in Ukraine with concern. As in any conflict, women and children are at disproportionate risk. In this context, Türkiye has opened its doors to children at risk and their accompanying care personnel. Our country, on the one hand, continues its diplomatic initiatives for peace, with a perspective that puts the conscience in the center, on the other hand, it continues to protect the oppressed and the victims.

Distinguished participants, children are one of the most vulnerable groups in the world and they are becoming more and more vulnerable day by day. They are exposed to wars and conflicts that break out for reasons they do not understand and have no effect on, and are heavily affected as the most fragile part of this process. The risks and threats faced by children do not disappear in their destination countries. It is our shared responsibility to support displaced, migrant or refugee children in their country and around the world. Because no one is immune from the effects of multifaceted crises in the world.

Due to our geographical location, we are among the countries most affected by internal conflicts, wars and crises. At a time when the world is silent about these conflicts in our region, the Ukraine crisis has reminded the world that it should look back at people and take care of people.

On this Conference, it is important to remember the threats and challenges that children face every day. Whether they are refugees, asylum seekers or internally displaced persons, uprooted children need hope, opportunities and protection. It is our common responsibility to realize the rights and dreams of these children.

I would like to thank those who have contributed to the 2022-2027 Strategy Document on the Rights of the Child and wish to achieve new achievements in children's rights through this Conference. I would also like to express my gratitude to the Italy hosting the conference.