

'The Istanbul Convention is a lifeline for women and girls and an essential component of the human rights framework in Europe'

***Statement by the President of GREVIO, Marceline Naudi
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The Council of Europe Convention on Preventing and Combating Violence against Women and Domestic Violence (Istanbul Convention) is a lifeline for women and girls in Europe and of fundamental importance in achieving their equality with men and boys. Without the full recognition that violence is perpetrated against them because they are women, they will be held back and their potential denied. A decade ago, this concern prompted 47 governments to develop the most comprehensive set of legally binding standards in order to collectively lift up their policies and legislation to higher levels of prevention and protection - and to ensure that no form of violence against women remains unaddressed. Today, this recognition is being, more and more, called into question.

GREVIO, the independent group of experts mandated by the Istanbul Convention to assess the level of implementation of the convention's standards in its state parties, has the privilege of working with governments towards the full implementation of this treaty. It does so for the benefit of women and girls and for society at large. It does so on the basis of dialogue that aims to find workable solutions for an enhanced implementation of the convention's many provisions. It is sad to see that dialogue around the Istanbul Convention has been made more difficult by fear that has grown out of misinterpretations of the convention's aims and purposes.

The aims of the Istanbul Convention are clear, and they are simple: it is a treaty that places a comprehensive set of obligations on state parties to keep women safe from gender-based violence and to ensure perpetrators are held accountable. Building on decades of action to achieve equality between women and men and to end violence against women, it is ambitious, and it is far-reaching. It is ambition that helps us achieve our goals, not fear. But in order to achieve our goals, we need to believe in them, collectively. It is with the women and girls in Turkey, the rest of Europe and beyond in mind that I stress the need to work towards our common goal of preventing and combating the many forms of violence they experience every day. This is best done on the basis of legally binding standards that ensure the highest level of protection and a common space of zero tolerance towards violence against women.

Women's rights are human rights - the world over. The Istanbul Convention has become an essential component in the European human rights framework. Ahead of the tenth anniversary of its opening for signature I call on all of us to use this tool to offer women and girls more protection from violence, not less.