



4 June 2012

Committee on Equality and Non-Discrimination

Turkey: setbacks on women's rights are not acceptable

At its meeting in Paris on 4 June 2012, the Committee on Equality and Non-Discrimination expressed deep concern at the announcement made by the Turkish Health Minister Recep Akdağ that legislation outlawing abortion in all circumstances would be presented by the end of June. Such an announcement has been accompanied by statements from high government officials, including the Turkish Prime Minister, equating abortion with murder and identifying abortion and “*elective caesareans*” as the causes for the slow population growth in the country.

Welcoming the fact that Turkey has been the first country to ratify the Council of Europe Convention on preventing and combating violence against women and domestic violence, the committee urged the Turkish authorities not to allow any setbacks on women's rights, including in the area of sexual and reproductive health.

The committee drew attention to Assembly Resolution 1607 (2008) on access to safe and legal abortion in Europe, in which it recalled that a “*ban on abortions does not result in fewer abortions but only leads to clandestine abortions*”, therefore putting at risk the lives of the women concerned. In the same text, the Assembly also “*affirmed the right of all human beings, in particular women, to respect for their physical integrity and to freedom to control their own bodies*” and added that “*the ultimate decision whether or not to have an abortion should be a matter for the woman concerned, who should have the means of exercising this right in an effective way*”.