STATEMENT
by
H.E. Mr. Halit Çevik
PERMANENT REPRESENTATIVE OF TURKEY TO THE UN

on
"Social Development"
(Item 27)

at
United Nations 68th General Assembly
Third Committee

8 October 2013, New York
Thank you Mr. Chairman,

At the outset, I would like to congratulate you, Mr. Chairman, upon your election as the Chair of the Third Committee and extend our appreciation to the Secretariat and the Bureau for their tireless efforts. We look forward to working with you during the Third Committee and beyond.

Mr. Chairman,

Despite notable progress made in the last decades in the field of social development, particularly in issues related to youth, older persons, children, women and disabled people, there is still much to be done.

Turkey takes the challenges in the area of social development very seriously. We have become party to all major international conventions and are in the process of fully integrating them into our national legislation. We have been fine-tuning our legal framework and launching ambitious social programmes through a people-based approach; in order to make sure that every segment of the society lives in dignity and manages to fulfill their potential.

Mr. Chairman,

Ensuring the Access of disabled persons to basic services such as education, health, employment and social and legal support through inclusive approaches, and including them into decision-making processes is of paramount importance. The situation and rights of disabled persons, including children, must be incorporated into global development processes, particularly into the post-2015 development agenda. The recent High-Level Meeting on the realization of the Millennium Development Goals and the post 2015 development agenda has been a positive step in this direction and we would like to thank all of those who have worked in its organization.

Ageing is another challenge confronting us no matter where we stand on the development scale. We urgently need to raise awareness regarding the rights of the elderly and work on social development agendas that take into account the new
demographic realities and the needs of the ageing population. In Turkey, government and civil society are working hand in hand in order to adjust to the changing demographic environment, through constitutional and legal amendments and the implementation of social policies.

Turkey believes that social development will remain incomplete without a firm commitment to furthering women's rights. I am pleased to say that my country was among those who mostly fulfilled its own national commitments and goals established in accordance with the Cairo Conclusions of the Conference on Population and Development and Millennium Development Goals even before the expiration of the set deadlines regarding reproductive health and rights. Turkey has recently pioneered the preparation and signature of a Council of Europe convention on preventing and combatting violence against women and domestic violence. We wholeheartedly support the work of UN Women in achieving gender equality and empowering our women and girls. We hope to be of greater service to this effort by hosting the regional office of UN Women for Europe and Central Asia in Istanbul.

Finally, factoring in the youth is essential for the future of a country. Providing proper education and decent employment opportunities are vital for addressing the issues of the global youth. Turkey has adopted many measures in this area in the recent years, such as the abolishment of higher education fees, the reduction of the age of candidacy for general elections and their inclusion in key decision-making processes.

Mr. Chairman,

In order to achieve better social development and ensure that every person enjoys their right to be fully included in the society, education is key. Equal opportunity in education has development implications and helps building healthy and democratic societies. Education is also important for combatting discrimination, improving knowledge on human rights and creating inclusive societies.

The inclusion of civil society, the media and the private sector into decision-making and implementation processes of social development policies is not only useful in terms of benefitting from the expertise and resources they bring, but also contributes to awareness-raising in the society.

Finally, we must bear in mind that economic hardship and conflict increases social and economic vulnerability. In this respect, we believe it is essential to extend support to conflict-prone and developing countries in the area of social development.

Thank you.