

Fight against extremism: achievements, deficiencies and failures

Mr CEBECİ (*Turkey*) – Thank you, Mr President. Dear colleagues, I would like to thank our colleague Mr Agramunt Font de Mora for his report on a highly pressing topic that is on the agenda of today's Europe. As a truly pan-European forum, our Assembly is best fitted to address that growing problem, which afflicts most member states of the Council of Europe. In that regard, I welcome Mr Agramunt Font de Mora's report as a good basis for our discussion on that alarming issue.

Today's European political and social scene has been tainted by extremism manifesting itself in various forms, such as racism, xenophobia, terrorism and religious extremism. Emerging in a multiplicity of forms, extremism has a complex character, and despite its multifaceted nature, all its forms have one thing in common: they all target the human rights and democratic values on which European societies stand. They do so by trying to divide our societies through stereotyping and the exploitation of ethnic, religious or social differences. Following the grave consequences of the recent economic crisis, and the growing social unrest that followed, extremist discourse now penetrates politics more easily, and extremist acts of violence have been on the rise.

Given that alarming situation, it is essential to identify, first and foremost, what is an extremist discourse or movement. I believe that our rapporteur has done a very good job of defining extremism and bringing to the fore the most striking extremist movements in today's Europe. Representing a country that has suffered gravely from terrorism, I am particularly thankful to him for having correctly incorporated terrorism as a form of extremism by rightly referring to the PKK terrorist organisation.

That being said, the rapporteur could have gone a step further and widened the scope of religious extremism, instead of singling out only one form of it. We all acknowledge that, in today's world, religious extremism can by no means be associated with one particular religion – that is, in most cases, Islam.

Mr Agramunt Font de Mora also laid out in his report a wide range of inspiring ideas and potential measures to fight extremism on all fronts. The Council of Europe has an impressive set of mechanisms and expertise with which it can react effectively to the challenge of growing extremism in Europe. Given its pan-European nature, the Council is indeed a great asset in our common fight against extremism in Europe and, even, beyond. I am confident that a co-ordinated and focused approach, steered by the Committee of Ministers, towards better and deeper co-operation among the Council's relevant bodies could make a major difference in achieving the goal of fighting extremism.

I shall conclude with a caveat: the fight against extremism is essential, but it should be conducted with full respect for human rights, and it must never turn into a witch hunt. As our rapporteur points out in the report, the fight against Islamist extremist groups may inadvertently provoke the stigmatisation of Islam and lead to Islamophobia, so we must be very careful about that. Indeed, our Assembly stated in the resolution: “It is inadmissible to incite intolerance and sometimes even hatred against Muslims.” It falls to our governments and respective parliaments to reject political statements and decisions that provoke fear and hatred of Muslims and Islam.

Mr TEKELİOĞLU (*Turkey*) – Mr President and dear colleagues, I would like to express my appreciation to Mr Agramunt Font de Mora for his report on a matter of huge importance. The fight against any form of extremism is vital for the survival of our democracies, but the question that we should ask, as is emphasised in the title of the report, is this: what are our achievements in the fight against extremism, and what are our failures?

In the last decade, following the 11 September attacks, public discussion concentrated on religious extremism and the terrorist attacks perpetrated by the followers of fundamentalist groups. The terrorist attacks eventually led to reactions and measures to prevent terrorism. However, although those measures attempted to combat extremism and terrorism, they paved the way for racist and xenophobic tendencies against one part of our population, namely Muslims.

Rather than protecting individuals of the Muslim faith from extremism, societies have been tempted to associate Islam with extremism. Rather than preventing our Muslim believers from falling into the hands of extremist ideologies, societies have created an atmosphere where Muslims are perceived as extremists and even terrorists.

Dear colleagues, it is unacceptable to associate terrorism and extremism with any religion or belief. The identification of those scourges with a particular religion will no doubt lead to serious discrimination, intolerance and the stigmatisation of believers of that faith, to the detriment of the freedom of thought, conscience and religion. We all know that such identification has been counter-productive and misleading. It has not helped us in our fight against extremists; on the contrary, it has resulted in an upsurge in religious intolerance and discrimination among our peoples.

The Council of Europe has on several occasions expressed concern about growing intolerance towards Muslim communities and the inaccurate portrayal of Islam as a threat to European societies. [Recommendation 5](#) of the European Commission against Racism and Intolerance, dated April 2005, on combating

intolerance and discrimination against Muslims, deserves to be mentioned in this regard. To counter the prejudice that is manifesting itself in various guises – mainly through discriminatory acts, violence and harassment – a number of recommendations have been made to European governments. I echo the rapporteur’s call to member states to follow the suggestions made by ECRI.

Implementing the necessary socio-economic integration policies is vital in combating extremism. Policies particularly directed at the elimination of any manifestation of discrimination on grounds of religious belief in accessing education, employment, housing in mixed areas, or public services, and in democratic participation through citizenship, should be developed. Our Assembly’s work on intercultural dialogue is another asset that we can use effectively in the fight against extremism. Regrettably, we observe that such work has lost its impetus lately.

Colleagues, the fight against extremism cannot be won by means of stricter laws and discriminatory discourse; in most cases, those things have turned out to be counter-productive when it comes to ensuring the peace and welfare of our societies. Instead, we should rely on human rights, tolerance towards diversity and integration with “the other” in our efforts to defeat extremism. Thank you.

Mrs KELEŞ (*Turkey*) – The report on the fight against extremism is a biased report on an important subject. When the rapporteur and members of the Assembly discuss a report on such an important subject, they should be careful not to give the wrong impression. They should reflect what they really think in the report and in their discussions.

The rapporteur may not have wanted to single out Islam as the only religion that has fundamentalism. However, the first sentence of the summary states that “in recent years, Europe has witnessed an upsurge of certain forms of extremism, such as Islamic fundamentalism, racism and xenophobia, and separatism.” Does that sentence mean that there is fundamentalism only in Islam? Do people who are involved in racism, xenophobia and separatism have no religion, or are they all Muslims?

I thank the rapporteur for mentioning the PKK among the terrorist organisations. In paragraph 3.4 of the report, which covers separatism, the PKK is also named as a separatist group, which members and leaders of the PKK recently admitted. Draft resolution 4 states that “it is urgent to work out an international legal mechanism with a view to stopping all forms of financial support to extremist groups.” The same statement also appears in draft resolution 13.1.6. That is important, because the more financial support that extremist groups receive and

the more sophisticated weapons that they use, the more radical their terrorist activities become.

In paragraph 10 of the draft resolution, the term “Islamist extremism” is used again. It says that states are confronted by the challenge of dealing effectively with that threat while countering the risk of stigmatising Islam as a religion. I appreciate the sensitivity about not stigmatising Islam as a religion, but to mention “Islamist extremism” and to talk about dealing with that threat effectively without mentioning any other religious extremism, is enough to stigmatise Islam.

It is important to formulate clear and sustainable immigration policies accompanied by appropriate integration policies and to work out an international legal mechanism with a view to stopping all forms of financial support to extremist groups. However, it is also vital not to economically exploit less developed countries and not to try to create minorities based on ethnic and religious differences among the citizens of another country, where having the same economic, social and cultural rights is vitally important in achieving a friendly, stable and prosperous world.

The second paragraph of the introduction to the explanatory memorandum clarifies why the rapporteur has returned to the term “Islamic fundamentalism”, despite the fact that Mr Berényi and others initiated the report following a motion that covered only racist extremist groups and parties. Should a report not reflect the content and scope of the motion? I think that it should, because a rapporteur is appointed according to the motion. Of course, that is true only when the rapporteur is not prejudiced in favour of a subject that they want to squeeze in, as was the case with the rapporteur of this report.

Mr AÇIKGÖZ (*Turkey*) – I thank the rapporteur for addressing such a controversial cross-cutting issue. Growing intolerance towards diversity in Council of Europe member states proves how timely it is to turn our attention to this sensitive matter.

The report elaborates priorities for more effective action in combating terrorism. However, it provides a misleading and incomplete picture of some forms of extremism that are currently on the rise.

Associating extremism with Islam under the label of “Islamic fundamentalism” does not recognise the increasing political extremism in Europe, which leads to a climate of suspicion and hatred as well as incitement to violence against those who hold different beliefs.

The Council of Europe Commissioner for Human Rights has noted with concern in his reports growing Islamophobia in member countries. However, we are still discussing the implementation of those recommendations. We have not managed to advance, but the challenges faced by our societies today have grown and become much more alarming.

The main task before us is to distinguish between extremist groups that purport to act in the name of religion and true believers. Islamophobia is a result of that confusion.

Extremist discourse by European leaders and political parties has undoubtedly provided fertile ground for Islamophobic, discriminatory and intolerant tendencies against Muslims. I join the rapporteur in calling for ethics committees to be set up within political parties and parliaments with the right to sanction their members for racist, xenophobic and Islamophobic behaviour and discourse.

I also want to repeat the rapporteur's call for more efforts to be made to fight against Islamophobia and to combat the negative stereotyping of Islam and Muslims in our societies.

In conclusion, I once again thank our rapporteur, who has touched on a very sensitive subject. I urge all Council of Europe member states to take the measures underlined in the resolution and recommendation.

Mrs MEMECAN (*Turkey*) – Mr President, dear colleagues, I congratulate the rapporteur, Mr Agramunt, on this objective, comprehensive and timely report. He examines many forms of extremism which threaten Europeans today. He rightly points out that we should focus on preventing these extremist movements rather than having to fight against them after they go underground, get out of hand, get organised and become violent.

Today, my biggest worry for the future of Europe and Europeans, next to climate change, is the rise of extreme nationalism or ultra-nationalism. I feel alarmed and lose hope every time an ultra-nationalist political party becomes popular and is eventually considered normal. Europe's history is full of painful experiences which have been the result of similar ultra-nationalistic, racist movements. I am worried that Europe is shifting backwards.

Every European should be as alarmed as I am. We should question what this trend is doing to our societies, and where it is leading us. All of these hateful speeches, arrogant styles and intolerance towards the "other" are seeding negative energy, negative thoughts and fear to the young generations and preparing them for futile conflicts and violence.

It should not be acceptable for a modern-day French leader to use nasty words and take shameless actions against some humans just because they are Roma. It should not be acceptable for a modern-day Swedish politician to be against some other humans just because they are Muslims. It should not be acceptable for Hungarian politicians to be anti-Semitic. It should not be acceptable for every single politician in Bosnia and Herzegovina to base his campaign on the promise to protect one ethnic group from the other. How will Europe be a powerful player among the future global superpowers with so much pessimism, segregation and chaos as a consequence? Concerned European politicians, activists, liberals and democrats should take the initiative and do something about this.

Criticising is not enough. “Unity in diversity” is a great concept which the European Union has chosen as its motto. It is the antidote for ultra-nationalism, racism, intolerance, negative attitudes, xenophobia, Islamophobia and all other phobias. It simply implies respecting each other for whoever you are, which is possible. This motto must be popularised and internalised through educational programmes, youth exchanges, cultural activities and the creation of a greater possibility of dialogue among peoples.

With these thoughts, I hope that Mr Agramunt’s report can provide guidance for the member states in combating extremism. Thank you.

Mr KOÇ (*Turkey*) thanked Mr Agramunt Font de Mora for the effort he had put into his report and asked to make a point of distinction. Religious extremism was not caused by religious doctrines. Rather, religious extremism arose when faith groups were subjected to adverse socio-economic conditions. Extremism could be found across the political spectrum and manifested itself differently, depending on people’s character. Many extremists found resonance with disaffected elements of society and political leaders were failing to tackle this. It was particularly worrying that some political leaders had begun to use overtly discriminatory language. Such language was contrary to the values of the Council of Europe. The focus of political action should be on supporting minority groups rather than discriminating against them. The Council should also examine the link between extremism and religion. It was important to consider the different contexts of this phenomenon. The best way forward was to consider ways of working together against extremism. The report cited the scourge of terrorism as one of the forms of extremism that was undermining society. He wanted to remind colleagues that the author, to whom Mr Slutsky had referred earlier, had been convicted for terrorist actions and not political ideology.

Human rights and business

Mr CEBEÇİ (*Turkey*) – Thank you, Mr President. Distinguished parliamentarians, I commend our rapporteur for his work on this report. He has taken on an issue which requires serious attention. The report examines the place of international corporations with regard to human rights protection, with a view to exploring ways of enhancing corporate responsibility in this area.

Human rights protection requires constant vigilance. Protection methods must evolve in parallel with new developments so as to not leave individuals vulnerable to abuse. Multinational corporations are powerful entities in the modern world order. Some decisions that corporations take to make profits can affect people all over the world. Their impact on the welfare of individuals, and on the prosperity of communities as a whole, is substantial. Multinational corporations with assets and resources that sometimes surmount the GDP of states have the ability to influence state policies. We should be concerned about the fact that the responsibilities of such fully fledged actors in international relations are not properly identified.

As profits are naturally the most important goal for corporations, damaging results can arise, such as child labour, forced labour, violation of freedom of association and infringement of rights of property. Many industries leave many environmental problems in their wake. While large corporations are able to profit, the costs of environmental, and other, damage must mostly be borne by local populations. To a great extent, these violations take place outside Europe. However, as the report illustrates, the subsidiaries of Europe-based multinational corporations are either alleged to have either committed or been complicit in such abuses as unfair labour conditions, environmental destruction and the displacement of indigenous communities, to name just a few. Moreover, bringing these cases before European courts is usually difficult.

Multinational corporations should be required to observe globally the standards that Council of Europe members follow and promote. Their responsibility to universal human rights should not be confined to within the geographical boundaries of Europe.

The Council of Europe has the institutional capacity and experience to make substantial contributions to the ongoing discussions on human rights and business. Its current human rights and legal standards cover a wide range of issues of direct relevance to business activities and, as stated in the report, are recognised as the most advanced at international level. This puts the Council of Europe in the best position to begin developing a new framework of guidelines for businesses on human rights. The Council should also co-operate with other

international organisations already working in this field. We must swiftly explore the human rights responsibilities of businesses in order to eliminate shortcomings.

Finally, on behalf of the European People's Party, I welcome the recommendations in the report, which presents a vision of the role that the Council of Europe might be able to play. Thank you.

Mrs TÜRKÖNE (*Turkey*) – The emergence of multinational corporations has introduced a new aspect to the issue of the protection of human rights. I commend the rapporteur, Mr Haibach, for having prepared a well-researched report. The report draws our attention to the place of the international business sector in the protection of human rights, which is an important yet under-regulated issue.

Corporations are designed to turn labour and raw materials efficiently into goods and services, and thereby enhance profits and power. With that drive for further profits, there is often a disregard for human rights, which has affected a number of Council of Europe member states. However, the most outrageous violations occur in developing countries, including, but not limited to, the use of forced and child labour, the violation of freedom of association, infringement of property rights, infringement of environmental rights and breaches of the right to privacy.

The employment of controversial private military and security companies in areas of conflict around the world raises serious issues about human rights. The privatisation of war and the lack of accountability of such companies subverts even basic notions of universal rights. Immune from the usual constraints and regulation of traditional armies, those companies, which are little more than mercenary outfits, can cause abuses. Furthermore, the motivation of private military and security companies can be questioned on the ground that their sole aim is to provide services in exchange for profit, as opposed to the classic function of state military and law enforcement agencies to protect and serve the public.

It is a moral obligation for the Council of Europe, which enshrines human rights as one of its core values and has accumulated immense experience in protecting those rights, to take up a leading role in the field of corporate responsibility and accountability with regard to human rights. Multinational corporations, which have the resources and ability to affect the lives of individuals, the prosperity of communities and even the policies of states, are powerful actors in the current world order. That said, there is considerable scope for multinational corporations to have a positive impact on the well-being of communities and individuals. As

actors on the stage of international relations, multinational corporations should observe the standards that Council of Europe member states follow and promote. We should begin by investing ethically, refusing to work with corporations associated with abuses and demanding that firms uphold human rights standards.

As the rapporteur has pointed out, alleged abuses often take place outside Europe, and bringing such abuses before European courts is usually difficult. It is imperative that multinational corporations observe those standards not only in Europe but wherever they operate. Council of Europe values are universal; there is no place for double standards.

The protection of human rights is traditionally considered to be the responsibility of states. However, the domestic laws of many states fail to impose adequate sanctions with respect to human rights on multinational corporations. International law is not enforced effectively, and the existing frameworks do not appear adequately to protect individuals from potential human rights abuses by companies.

The Council of Europe, with its institutional capacity and experience, is in the best position to begin the development of a new framework for businesses on human rights. I welcome the recommendations in the report, which can guide our efforts in addressing those issues and cover that new dimension in the protection of human rights.

Strategy, governance and functioning of the Council of Europe Development Bank

Mr KOÇ (*Turkey*) commended Mr Elzinga's work and thanked Mr Ruiz Ligeró. During the current slowdown, the role of multilateral banks could be decisive in stimulating growth. Turkey contributed one fifth of the Bank's equity. It would be positive if the Bank were to become even more efficient. The Bank was currently negotiating to increase its capital to meet the strategic objectives contained in the 2010-14 plan and this required that capital was raised as soon as possible.

Meanwhile, member states needed to agree on a strategic plan, and they had to show impartiality in selecting people to run the Bank. It was essential that the Bank's staff, based in Paris, came from a wide geographical area, given that it was devoting so much energy and resources to south and central Europe. It had

to be acknowledged that the Bank was a key instrument assisting the Secretary General in making the Council of Europe more relevant and visible. It had a key role in target states, including Turkey, and it ought to be central in promoting economic cohesion. The Bank therefore needed to reinforce its presence in target states.

Debate under urgent procedure: Recent rise in national security discourse in Europe: the case of Roma

Mrs MEMECAN (*Turkey*) – I congratulate the rapporteur, Mrs Anne Brasseur, on her objective and constructive report on this urgent issue. I thank Mr Greenway for his report, which highlights basic human rights principles. I congratulate the Secretary General of the Council of Europe on his call for a high-level meeting on this alarming issue. I also congratulate the Assembly on taking the recent shocking developments seriously and on having this urgent debate.

Concerns about national security are totally legitimate, but I am not sure whether the recent unfortunate treatment of the Roma was in any way about that. The way in which the Roma people are used to score domestic political points is not only unfair to the Roma, but harms the host societies as a whole. I am also deeply concerned that this might signal a new way of solving minority or immigration issues in Europe. It is scary. Hate words, insults and defamation should not be tools that politicians resort to in conducting their roles. No group of people should be stigmatised as “this” or “that”, kicked out or kicked around. No minority group deserves humiliation. Human dignity should be the highest priority.

Problems with Roma are real. Roma people have problems and some of them consequently become problems themselves. They are the most discriminated against, the poorest and the most hopeless. They have no security and sometimes they threaten the security of others. This has been going on for ages. Penalising them, telling them to integrate and blaming them has just aggravated the situation. It might be time to try a different approach if we truly want to address both the problems of the Roma people and the Roma problem. Problems can be resolved by dialogue, participation, common sense and the engagement of the parties involved. People should have hopes not hopelessness.

We in Turkey have given this approach a chance. We are taking our Roma people seriously. We have included Roma community leaders who care about improving the Roma quality of life in discussions. We have listened to them to understand and identify their needs and problems. We have discussed their rights and responsibilities and worked with them to achieve realistic outcomes.

Our prime minister launched the Roma initiative to recognise and honour the Roma, and announced a programme of finding short and long-term solutions to their needs. From all around Turkey, 15 000 Roma people attended this festive event.

We have not solved all the problems but there is now hope. There is progress with their housing, education and employment. Roma women's issues will be handled through the inclusion of Roma women in the process, starting at the end of this month.

I hope that Turkey's approach will inspire other European leaders. There might then be hope for the Roma and other minorities in Europe.

Debate under urgent procedure: Recent rise in national security discourse in Europe: the case of Roma

Mr TEKELIOĞLU (*Turkey*). – First of all, I would like to extend my sincere thanks to our rapporteur. She prepared an important report in a very short time, but on a very important topic. I also thank the Political Affairs Committee which proposed holding an urgent debate on this topic. This is a good example of how our Assembly can quickly react to urgent human rights problems in Europe.

As European parliamentarians, we often take pride in how developed human rights standards in Europe are. However, it is sad to witness that a particular group of Europeans are going through a human tragedy right before our eyes. These people who already suffer most from discrimination and prejudices are the Roma. In many European countries they still remain unwelcome. There is an unfortunate and unacceptable tendency to blame the whole Roma community for the wrongdoings of some of its members. This is pure stigmatisation. How can innocent people be held responsible for the wrongdoings of some, just because they are of the same ethnic origin? Is this not why our continent has suffered deeply in the past? Is this not why millions of mothers have lost their sons in devastating wars? How can we let a similar mentality rule in today's Europe?

The case of Roma in Europe is indeed a human rights crisis. It is a violation of the fundamental principle that human rights are for everyone. If we are here to defend human rights, then we must defend the rights of every single person without any discrimination. There must never be a situation where some can claim their human rights while a particular group is denied their most fundamental rights. If we let this happen, then we betray the fundamental values which we believe that we defend.

It is not that everything is going wrong for the Roma community in Europe. Good things are happening as well. Allow me to share with you some positive

developments from my own country, Turkey. Turkish legislation has been completely reviewed in order to remove all provisions discriminating against the Roma. The Turkish Government has started a constructive dialogue with the representatives of the Roma community. As part of this dialogue, a government-sponsored workshop was held in December 2009 to address issues facing the Roma community. In March 2010, Prime Minister Recep Tayyip Erdoğan met with 15 000 citizens of Roma origin to listen to their complaints and to inform them of government plans to improve their situation.

Our Organisation, the Council of Europe, is best fitted to respond to the sufferings of the Roma. So far, the Council of Europe has developed a wide set of norms and standards for the protection of the rights of the Roma. No other organisation in Europe can better address this issue than the Council of Europe. Its truly pan-European character would allow the Council of Europe to deal more effectively with this pan-European problem. In this regard, I welcome the initiative of the Secretary General of our Organisation to hold later this month a high-level conference on the Roma issue. Supporting his brave initiative, I also urge our Secretary General to report back to the Assembly on the outcome of this conference. In light of the conclusions of the conference, we will welcome his guidance on how our Assembly can do more to eliminate the problems of the Roma community.

Before I conclude, I thank once again our rapporteur for her excellent work. I hope that our debate here today will inspire more positive steps in member states to improve the situation of the Roma in their territories.

Guaranteeing the right to education for children with illnesses or disabilities

Mr AYVA (*Turkey*) welcomed the first lady of Turkey, Ms Hayrünnisa Gül. They were celebrating the 60th anniversary of the European Convention on Human Rights which was a great step forward for humanity. Immediately after the Convention had been signed, a shift of values as regards humanity had started to happen. The Council of Europe had three very important values: democracy, human rights and the rule of law. Once these had been established, people were able to consider further rights. The rights of women and children were important, as was the right to education for all children. This was recognised in the United Nations Education for All programme for 2006-2015.

In reality, however, children with illnesses or disabilities faced serious obstacles in accessing education. All marginalised groups had difficulty accessing education. Children with disabilities and their lack of access was a particularly important issue. People had to believe that children with disabilities could be educated. This was vital. At present, the main problem was that people did not

know how to organise education for children with disabilities. In the course of the committee's consideration of this subject, it had become clear that inclusive education was the best way of educating children with disabilities. Certain sub-systems could be developed within this.

All groups should be treated in the same way and trained in the same environment, with equal access to opportunities. This was true of children with disabilities just as well as any other child in Europe and beyond. He wanted to thank the Social, Health and Family Affairs Committee for its support and the chairperson of the committee, as well as the committee secretariat. Important amendments had been presented.

He wanted to highlight an important point of the report. This was the necessity of believing that children with disabilities could be educated. A campaign, led by Ms Gül, had been launched in Turkey: the "Education Enables" campaign. Ms Gül had assumed an important position. She enjoyed the trust of the Turkish people and the Turkish people liked her. The office of the President was the highest office in Turkey and it was treated with great respect. It was important for other opinion leaders to support the initiative and work with it.

If the resolution was adopted much would change. If the document was not adopted then those children with disabilities who, right now, were considered a misfortune to their parents would be denied education. At present, many parents considered children with disabilities a burden. Administrators also considered children with disabilities a burden. However, if they received education these children could add value.

He was from a poor family and, without an education, he might not have stood in the Chamber today. He also had a slight disability, but he had been helped by many people in his career. He wanted to thank all those who had helped prepare the report.

The United Nations, the Council of Europe and the European Union should all organise similar campaigns. This would need the support of members of the Parliamentary Assembly. In Turkey it was said that someone who proposed an idea had to assume the mantle of carrying it forward.

Ms GÜL (*Patron of the Turkish "Education Enables" campaign*) – Mr President, and distinguished members of the Parliamentary Assembly of the Council of Europe, it is a great honour for me to make a speech in this Assembly, which is known as the school of democracy and human rights. I thank you all for this invitation. I would also like to share with you the fact that I am very much familiar with the work that you have been doing here. For almost

10 years, during the 1990s, my husband sat in these chairs just like you and served the principles of this Council. I used to come here with him and I remember the social and cultural activities of the committees. We always remember those years with pride.

Distinguished parliamentarians, if you do not mind, I will now continue in my own language.

(The speaker continued in Turkish)

In terms of human rights, there was unfortunately much still to be done for children and women in the world. Discrimination, violence and low rates of participation in education by girls remained very important in relation to the achievement of the Millennium Development Goals. Disadvantaged segments of society were also important for achieving the aims of the Council of Europe – democracy, human rights and the rule of law. The Convention on the Rights of the Child was the most widely accepted human rights agreement on the rights of children. But children continued to die from pneumonia, malaria, measles and malnutrition. Many children were never able to attend school, and many others were not protected against violence, discrimination and neglect. Girls were particularly likely to suffer such fates, and it was therefore essential to pay particular attention to the rights of girls. Most children who did not attend school were girls and girls often had no access to basic health services either.

The number of children with disabilities in the population was higher than most people might think, because such children were not always visible. They were still confined to their homes in some countries. The needs of people with disabilities were often not considered when living standards were improved, leading to great suffering and inequality. It had to be recalled that children were not disabled by choice, but nonetheless had to live with their disability.

Anybody could develop a disability at any time of their lives. Mr Hammarberg, the Commissioner for Human Rights, had said that this was ultimately an ethical issue, and a society which gave priority to its most vulnerable members was a good society. Being a good society could be achieved only through protecting children with disabilities, providing them with opportunities for education, and enabling them to be active members of society. This was achievable and some member states had accomplished it. In other member states and in other parts of the world, however, much still remained to be done. Governments needed to prepare the necessary regulations to implement conventions on the rights of children and people with disabilities. She urged all members of society to make greater contributions and sacrifices to assist with this task. It was important to mobilise civil society, which could help by demonstrating leadership.

Awareness had to be raised to overcome all obstacles to receiving education. It was important to raise awareness in the families and among neighbours of disabled children so that these children would not be isolated, and family members and others would not be embarrassed by them. Isolation was likely to result in obstacles for these children. It was necessary to demonstrate to parents of disabled children that their children could be more successful than their peers in areas in which they had talent. She believed in equality for all, and equality of treatment, respect and affection. That was why she had devoted herself to a range of social responsibility projects, including “Education Enables”.

In parallel with recent social, economic and cultural developments in Turkey, important progress had been made regarding human rights, especially for disadvantaged groups, such as women, children and the disabled. The opportunities provided for them had been reviewed and institutionalised. Special funds for people with disabilities existed, and assistance was available from municipalities and NGOs, providing enhanced facilities. The European Union accession process had provided an impetus for this development, as it had bolstered the democratic vision of extending fundamental rights in Turkey. Amendments made to the constitution had made positive discrimination possible so as to let people fully exercise their fundamental rights and freedoms. It was necessary to ensure that people with disabilities, their families and teachers, local authorities as well as society at large were aware that children with disabilities could be educated and active in all fields of social life.

“Education Enables” had had its inaugural meeting, supported by volunteers, at the Presidential Palace in April 2009. “Education Enables” raised awareness of the possibility of disabled children being educated alongside others. Such integrated education taught children to accept each other, and helped them to learn tolerance and how to live with differences. One of the greatest problems facing humanity was discrimination, and an integrated education system was important in fighting discrimination. Turkey’s governors had visited families with disabled children to inform them about state support available. They had explained that families could not protect disabled children by confining them to the home, which would leave them helpless when they had to be on their own. Some 24 000 families had been visited. Governors were persuading these families to send their children to school, and seminars had been held in 2 055 schools. Public awareness was growing through “Education Enables”.

Providing the necessary physical infrastructure and social environment to cater to these children’s needs was another pillar of the project: 877 special classrooms had been constructed and 14 new special schools had been built in

one year, mostly by philanthropists. The project had had positive feedback and the ratio of children with disabilities in education had risen by almost 30% in one year. But for her, changing the life of a single person with a disability, and providing them with a happy and honourable future, was the most rewarding thing.

Whether a child was born disabled or became disabled later in life, it should not be a hindrance to success. A good example was Mr Ayva, whose efforts to extend the rights of people with disabilities deserved the highest praise. On behalf of citizens with disabilities, she thanked him. Disabled people could contribute fully to society if they were given the chance of a better education, and this would create a better world for all mankind. She called on Europe to implement the measures in the report, thereby enabling children with disabilities to receive education alongside those without disabilities. The Council of Europe Disability Action Plan 2006-15 was crucial in safeguarding access to education and needed to be implemented by all member states. The universal priority was to ensure that the fundamental values of human rights, democracy and the rule of law prevailed in Europe and throughout the world. She extended her thanks to President Çavuşoğlu for inviting her, to the Social, Health and Family Affairs Committee, and all the parliamentarians.

Mr ÖZDEN (*Turkey*) – On behalf of the European Democrat Group, I congratulate my colleague, Mr Ayva, on his excellent work on such an important issue. As a Turkish parliamentarian, I know of his interest and enthusiasm in the promotion and protection of the rights of people with disabilities.

I welcome Ms Hayrünnisa Gül to our Assembly, and I thank her for her contribution to our debate as the patron of the “Education Enables” campaign. That campaign has increased awareness about this important subject in Turkey.

Mr Ayva’s report concerns a universal problem, which, unfortunately, no society has been able to eradicate. We have an obligation to make sure that no child is deprived of their right to quality education due to any disability or illness, and we must achieve that without implementing segregationist policies. Some member states have been better than others in coping with that problem, but Europe still has a lot to do on this issue.

Education is a universal right. Every child is entitled to it, and no illness or disability can be used as an excuse in that regard. Let us remember that education is not a privilege only for the lucky ones.

Discrimination, or even segregation, cannot be allowed because some children suffer from a certain illness or disability. We should encourage and train teachers, organise schools and establish education systems where all children are taught, educated and socialised together.

How can we expect people to treat others with illnesses or disabilities equally, if those with illnesses or disabilities spend their entire education in different classrooms or even in different schools? If people do not learn to live together at school, when and how can they learn to understand each other's needs and views? Inclusiveness is the key. To that end, individuals, the private sector, educational institutions, parents and all stakeholders need to be involved.

Wishes or good intentions are not enough. That is why, although general guidelines may be available, we need to carry out studies and collect data to assess each member state's specific needs and achievements. Inclusive, holistic approaches in schools will lay strong foundations for our societies. A society with a sense of belonging can be fostered only if children are brought up together. Such an approach will promote solidarity among our societies and lessen discriminatory attitudes. The core values of the Council of Europe – democracy, human rights and the rule of law – will be undermined if some of our children are kept apart and deprived of their right to education.

I conclude by calling on everyone to take this excellent report seriously and by thanking Mr Ayva for his great contribution to the promotion of the rights of people with disabilities.

Gender-related claims for asylum

Ms KELEŞ (*Turkey*) – This is a well-prepared report, which covers gender-based violence and gender-related persecution, as well as some policies and measures for solving or at least relieving the problems. Nobody has the right to ignore gender-based problems, as they are a serious issue for half the world's population. Gender-based harm or violence is seen, to different degrees, on all continents and in all countries. It changes from country to country according to their traditions and women's opportunities to access education and jobs. Gender-based harm and violence exists even during periods of economic stability and peace, and during war it is used as a weapon.

Acknowledging gender-related harm and violence and prioritising women's asylum claims represents an important step forward that will at least give rise to some kind of hope for women refugees. Usually, in countries where forced marriages and so-called honour crimes take place, women or young girls feel helpless because it is hard for them to hide their identity and go to another city

or town in order to protect themselves from men who wish to harm them, exert violence on them or kill them.

In under-developed or developing countries, there is high unemployment and jobs are limited. Even when such women are able to run away from men who harm them, after a while they feel obliged to return because they cannot earn and sustain a decent living. So, when they become refugees in another country, an asylum claim and some means of assistance and acceptance is just what is needed. We should also think about what can be done for women and girls who are not refugees.

There are problems for those who have to go to another country in order to conceal their identity and escape harm or violence. There should also be help for that group, through women's rights associations and shelters, which will know of desperate cases and be able to co-operate with the institutions responsible for refugees in foreign countries. In that way, the lives of women and girls who need protection but are not yet refugees will be saved.

In reality, a woman or girl who is exposed to gender-based violence or persecution is usually unable to go to another country as a refugee and claim asylum. But, women's rights associations and shelters can help them and, indeed, save their lives through co-operation with refugee organisations in other countries.

That situation will be realised only when we create a system of co-operation between shelters and institutions internationally. There should be international rules to save the lives of desperate women and girls, and to save them from underserved punishment. I congratulate the rapporteur on this important, comprehensive report and hope that we can find a solution for women in their country of origin.