

# The Republic of Turkey

## Positions for the Population Fund Executive Board

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### **I. Restoring Sexual and Reproductive Health in Post-Conflict Regions**

The Republic of Turkey recognizes that sexual and reproductive health and education, physical access to healthcare providers and services, and maternal and infant mortality rates are urgent issues among all Member States. In recent years, Turkey has made considerable strides in the implementation of policies that improve the sexual and reproductive health among its citizens and in surrounding regions. The Turkish Republic houses the Disaster and Emergency Management Agency (AFAD), which manages the UN Population Fund's response to the needs of Syrian refugees and other displaced peoples, including reproductive health services, hygiene kits, and maternal health and support. In 2011, all 600,000 registered refugees in Turkey were provided primary, secondary, and tertiary level health services by the government for free. Of the 22,000 Syrian babies born in 2013, 7,500 of them were born in refugee camps in Turkey.<sup>1</sup> Due to the unprecedented number of refugees seeking asylum in Turkey, it now has the largest refugee population in the world. It has become apparent that there is an incredible need for other Member States to accept refugees and join Turkey in a joint effort to improve sexual and reproductive health for people in regions rebuilding themselves post-conflict.

Recognizing the importance of proper women's healthcare, the Republic of Turkey has been making efforts to improve reproductive rights and healthcare access for over 40 years. In stark contrast to the policies of surrounding Member States, abortion within the first trimester has been legalized in Turkey since 1983. Due to the improvement of prenatal and postnatal care, the maternal mortality rate of 70 deaths per 10,000 births by 1998 was reduced to 19 deaths per 10,000 births by 2008. Furthermore, the infant mortality rate of 52.6 deaths per 1,000 births in 1993 was reduced to 17 deaths per 1,000 by 2008.<sup>2</sup> Article 14 of the Universal Declaration of Human Rights states that "Everyone has the right to seek and to enjoy in other countries asylum from persecution."<sup>3</sup> For this reason, Turkey's largest humanitarian organization, the Turkish Red Crescent Society, has offered healthcare, aid, and assistance to its citizens in rural areas, refugees from other regions, and to vulnerable people groups in surrounding Member States since it was established in 1923.

The Republic of Turkey recognizes the sovereignty of every Member State over its own internal affairs, and therefore does not wish to demand that other Member States make drastic changes in their current sexual and reproductive health policies. Turkey's goal for this committee is to have other Member States follow in their footsteps in a worldwide effort to improve healthcare systems in regions affected by conflict. Going into committee, Turkey hopes that all Member States are willing to embrace the universal human right to asylum, and therefore proposes that itself and other Member States reform their healthcare systems by expanding access to quality healthcare services in communities with a high concentration of displaced people. Turkey hopes to achieve this through the usage of funding from the United Nations Population Fund Executive Board that would partner with humanitarian organizations already established. Turkey plans to further their partnership with the Turkish Red Crescent Society to increase the amount of healthcare providers in the rural, eastern part of the Member State where they are not as numerous and widespread. These centers would ideally exist across all Member States with large quantities of displaced people and would provide prenatal and postnatal care, family planning services, and the treatment and diagnosis of sexually transmitted infections and reproductive health illnesses. Turkey looks forward to working with the committee to allow asylum seekers and other displaced peoples the equal opportunity to the highest possible level of health.

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<sup>1</sup> United Nations. UN Population Fund Activities. *Turkey Country Programme Evaluation*. New York, 2014. Web. 16 Oct. 2019. [https://www.unfpa.org/sites/default/files/admin-resource/TurkeyCPE\\_Report.pdf](https://www.unfpa.org/sites/default/files/admin-resource/TurkeyCPE_Report.pdf)

<sup>2</sup> Dundar, Munis, Asli Subasioglu Uzak, and Yesim Karabulut. "Healthcare in Overview of Turkey." *EPMA Journal* 1, no. 4. Aug 2010. Web. 16 Oct. 2019. <https://www.ncbi.nlm.nih.gov/pmc/articles/PMC3405350/>

<sup>3</sup> United Nations. UN General Assembly. *Universal Declaration of Human Rights*. 10 Dec. 1948. Web. 16 Oct. 2019. <https://www.un.org/en/universal-declaration-human-rights/>

## II. Addressing Population Dynamics in the Context of Global Climate Change

The Republic of Turkey has had extensive experience reacting to drastic changes in population dynamics in recent history. The influx of refugees from conflict areas in the region has introduced several challenges to our disaster displacement infrastructure. The Republic of Turkey has been a safe haven for many of the refugees from these conflicts and is currently the largest refugee hosting Member State, providing for over 4 million refugees and persons of concern.<sup>4</sup> Conflict, however, is not the sole cause of displacement among the global refugee population. Some estimates predict that by 2050, between 150 to 200 million people are likely to be forced to relocate due to global climate change, further exacerbating future refugee hosting challenges.<sup>5</sup> It is our firm belief that addressing the needs and concerns of our current and future refugees in a sustainable and environmentally responsible way is our imperative for this conference.

The Republic of Turkey realizes that migration has, in recent years, accumulated a certain negative reaction in public discourse; as many are afraid and anxious about what these climate and conflict induced movements will lead to. There is a great fear among some in the global population that these migrants and refugees are simply using these crises as excuses to seek better wages and more opportunities in Member States who may have higher living conditions, thereby creating more competition for resources and benefits.<sup>6</sup> This view of climate and conflict based migration does not align with trends observed by the UNFPA who note that migration “can take a variety of patterns, such as short-term, short-distance and circular.”<sup>7</sup> Therefore, the Republic of Turkey believes that efforts must be made to make accommodations for these cyclically migratory refugee populations more environmentally sustainable. These proposed efforts would be in keeping with Sustainable Development Goal (SDG) 1: end poverty in all its forms everywhere, SDG 2: end hunger, achieve food security and improved nutrition and promote sustainable agriculture, and SDG 13: take urgent action to combat climate change and its impacts.<sup>8</sup>

Acknowledging the challenges before us and the Sustainable Development Goals that we have pledged to realize, the Republic of Turkey is looking forward to implementing a strategy for expanding on programs that develop green refugee camps. The United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees, with support from private companies, has made astounding progress in this field on small scale projects in Northern Africa. These projects include not only environmentally friendly facilities and practices, such as using renewable energies and locally sourcing shelter materials, but also social sustainability programs which help refugee populations contribute to their temporary host population and, eventually, their home population.<sup>9</sup> The Republic of Turkey is looking to implement similar programs in the much larger refugee camps in our Member State and in Member States in the surrounding regions. Realizing that this sort of endeavor will inevitably require funding that the Republic of Turkey cannot provide on its own, we have also been working on ideas that expand upon existing climate finance mechanisms like green bonds in order to ensure that these projects are financially sound. The Republic of Turkey is eagerly anticipating this conference and the opportunities that it will bring for all of our Member States to cooperatively address the challenges ahead.

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<sup>4</sup>United Nations. UN High Commissioner for Refugees. “Refugees and Asylum Seekers in Turkey.” 19 Oct. 2019. <https://www.unhcr.org/tr/en/refugees-and-asylum-seekers-in-turkey>.

<sup>5</sup> United Nations. UN Educational, Scientific and Cultural Organization. *Migration and its Interdependencies with Water Scarcity, Gender and Youth Employment*. Paris, 2017. Web. 17 Oct. 2019. [https://www.womenforwater.org/uploads/7/7/5/1/77516286/migration\\_and\\_its\\_interdependencies\\_with\\_water\\_scarcity\\_gender\\_and\\_youth\\_employment\\_unesco\\_wwap\\_2017.pdf](https://www.womenforwater.org/uploads/7/7/5/1/77516286/migration_and_its_interdependencies_with_water_scarcity_gender_and_youth_employment_unesco_wwap_2017.pdf)

<sup>6</sup> United Nations. UN Population Fund. *Population Dynamics and Climate Change*. New York. Web. 19 Oct. 2019. <https://www.uncclearn.org/sites/default/files/inventory/unfpa30.pdf>

<sup>7</sup> *ibid.*

<sup>8</sup>United Nations. “Transforming Our World: the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development: Sustainable Development Knowledge Platform.” Web. 21 Oct. 2019. <https://sustainabledevelopment.un.org/post2015/transformingourworld>.

<sup>9</sup> Land Life Company. “Building a Green Refugee Camp with UNHCR.” Web. 21 Oct., 2019. <https://landlifecompany.com/case/building-a-green-refugee-camp-with-unhcr/>.