

**Response to Special Rapporteur Ertürk's presentation  
on her mission to the Netherlands  
by Ambassador at Large for Human Rights mr. Piet de Klerk  
Geneva, 20 March 2007**

Mr President,

My delegation would like to thank Professor Ertürk for her presentation, in particular regarding her mission to the Netherlands. Her mandate is an important one. As last year's Secretary-General's in-depth study clearly states, violence against women persists in all countries of the world. All governments, including my own, should step up their efforts to eliminate all forms of violence against women. The Netherlands therefore co-tabled a resolution on the intensification of efforts to eliminate all forms of violence against women in last autumn's Third Committee. We hope that the adoption of this resolution in the General Assembly, with consensus, will lead to more action on the part of individual States and the United Nations as a whole. We believe that Professor Ertürk's work in fulfilling her mandate can play a crucial role in this respect.

Mr President, as the Netherlands Foreign Minister, Maxime Verhagen, stated last week, my government welcomes all the recommendations Professor Ertürk made, and will take them to heart. Please allow me to give you a few examples.

- 1) My government will give equal opportunities policy a new boost, in particular by adopting a new plan agreed on by all ministries. The mechanism for coordination between ministries will be strengthened as well.
- 2) As regards domestic violence, the Netherlands Ministry of Justice will examine its policy which is formulated in gender neutral terms in the light of the Special Rapporteur's recommendation on gender specificity. In addition and in line with the Special Rapporteur's recommendation, my government has recently presented a bill to parliament requiring a comprehensive risk assessment on the basis of which potential perpetrators of domestic violence may be banned from their homes for a period of ten days.
- 3) Professor Ertürk also investigated our prostitution policy. As indicated in her report, this policy is currently being evaluated. Of course Professor Ertürk's recommendations will be integrated into my government's response to this evaluation.

4) As regards human trafficking, I am happy to inform you that my government has started the procedure for parliamentary approval of the Council of Europe Convention on Action against Trafficking in Human Beings. We hope to ratify this Convention within four months.

5) Finally, in reaction to Professor Ertürk's observation, I can confirm that in our asylum procedure a woman who runs a genuine risk of becoming a victim of violence, such as sexual violence, female genital mutilation and/or honour crimes, in her country of origin, can be granted a residence permit for asylum, based on article 3 of the European Convention on Human Rights.

Mr President, let me conclude by thanking Professor Ertürk once more for visiting the Netherlands. As an independent expert, she has held a mirror up to us. Full cooperation with mandates like hers is indispensable for the fulfilment of human rights obligations worldwide. Special Mechanisms are invaluable instruments of the Human Rights Council and the independence of their mandates should therefore be preserved.

Thank you.