

Thank you, Madam co-chairperson. I am representing Abkhazians in Turkey on behalf of the Istanbul Caucasus Culture Association.

Firstly, I would like to emphasize that Abkhazians¹ in Turkey have been living in harmony with ethnic groups in Turkey since the establishment of the Republic. It is worth noting that Abkhazians have been employed in both the public and private sectors without facing any negative discrimination, including high-ranking positions in government and have been Currently, elective Abkhaz language courses are offered in schools under the Ministry of National Education. While these positive practices are valuable, they do not imply that Abkhazians in Turkey have no issues in relation to realising their rights.

In this context, the historical and humanitarian ties of Abkhazians in Turkey with their ancestral homeland, Abkhazia, are disrupted due to the existing political crisis.² The transportation to Abkhazia, can only be carried out through the Russian Federation but not by Turkey, making it nearly impossible due to visa requirements and high transportation costs. As a result Abkhazians in Turkey, are unable to reach their relatives maintain their kinship and build and sustain economic relationships and cultural ties integral to their identity. Furthermore, there is a significant problem concerning the recognition of documents of Abkhazia. Many Abkhazians in Turkey have been unable to register their new-borns, unable to attend the funerals of their relatives, or have lost their right to education. This is a serious barrier for social inclusion for Abkhazians in Turkey.

I outline my suggestions for the resolution of the issues faced by Abkhazians in Turkey as follows:

Reinstate the previously existing ferry services between Trabzon and Sukhum to facilitate travel between Turkey and Abkhazia.

Restart the mobile consular services that were previously implemented in Abkhazia for the documents related to birth, death, marriage, and education.

I hope these suggestions contribute to addressing the challenges faced by Abkhazians in Turkey. Thank you.

¹ Abkhazians are one of the indigenous people of the Caucasus. Following the Ottoman-Russian Wars, they exiled to the Turkish territory in the late 1800s along with the other Caucasus communities.

² Abkhazian-Georgian War in 1992-1993 after the collapse of Soviet Union. Abkhazia is still a frozen conflict area.