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The role of the Ombudsman in
Fight against Human Trafficking in Azerbaijan

Madam moderator!

Ladies and gentlemen!

Human trafficking is one of the forms of violence and as an international problem threatening to life of a person, resulted in severe violation of human rights and dignity.

Our country is also fighting against this international problem and therefore, created strong legislative framework. Azerbaijan joined to the international treaties dealing with fighting of human trafficking, including UN Convention on Transnational Organized Crime and its protocols on trafficking in persons and migrant smuggling, the Optional Protocol to the CRC on the Rights of the Child on the sale of children, child prostitution and child pornography, UN Convention for the Suppression of the Traffic in Persons and of the Exploitation of the Prostitution of Others, and CoE Convention on Action against Trafficking in Human Beings.

The National Action Plans of the Republic of Azerbaijan on Struggle against Human Trafficking (2004-2008, 2009-2013 and 2014-2018) were approved by the Presidential Decrees of 6 May, 2004, 6 February 2009 and 24 July 2014. Furthermore, the law on Human Trafficking approved on 28 June 2005, regulates the prophylactics, legal and organizational basis for the fighting against human trafficking, legal status of human trafficking victims, their protection and legal assistance.

Within last years, the Cabinet of Ministers of Azerbaijan adopted several legal normative acts dealing with human trafficking.

In accordance with the Presidential Order No. 433 dated 1 August 2006, there was created the Main Department on struggle against human trafficking at the Ministry of Interior with an independent status and currently the status of that department was improved.

According to the Action Plan, the Department for Combating THB, which is a special police unit, runs the anti-trafficking hotline for receiving the information about human trafficking offences, organization of rapid communication among the police bodies, for the shelter of victims of trafficking.

The National Coordinator on combating trafficking in human beings was appointed in order to provide institutional framework and for coordination of the setting up of the working Group on combating THB so as to ensure co-ordination among public actors.

Simultaneously, it is noteworthy that the country President approved the “National Action Plan on of the Republic of Azerbaijan on Struggle against Human Trafficking for 2014-2018” approved by his third Decree of 24 July 2014 for sustainability of measures taken against human trafficking, improving the legislative framework and institutional mechanisms, raising efficiency of mutual activities of public institutions and fulfillment of relevant international obligations by the State.

The abovementioned Plan provides the provisions about the purpose and principles of its implementation; strengthening the relevant legislative framework , preventive as well as prophylactic measures; prosecution of human trafficking offences; rehabilitation and reiteration of victims of trafficking; improving the assistance and protection of child victims or potential child victims of trafficking; the protection of victims of trafficking; coordination of the activities of partners to the Acton Plan, support to fight against trafficking and resources; improving cooperation in the related field; awareness on human trafficking; and financing of the Plan and also concrete measures have been determined by the Action Plan.

In line with international treaties dealing with human trafficking, which Azerbaijan is a part to, also in comply with the requirements of the CoE Convention on Action against Trafficking in Human Beings.

This should be noted that the National Action Plan approved last year has been adopted on the base of the UN Convention on Transnational Organized Crime and its protocols on trafficking in persons and migrant smuggling and the Protocols thereto, Protocol to Prevent, Suppress and Punish Trafficking in Persons, Especially Women and Children, and the Brussels Declaration on preventing and combating trafficking in human beings, CoE Convention on Action against Trafficking in Human Beings and other important relevant documents.

By the way, the Ombudsman office also was assigned for the holding events considered in the National Action Plan.

This should be noted that already over twelve years as the Ombudsman Office as an important institution in Azerbaijan has been operating.

During the terms of office of the Human Rights Commissioner conducted several measures for solution of different problems of the population and proposed relevant recommendations, out of which majority were taken into consideration.

I should say that Moreover, in purpose of ensuring the coordination of promotion of rights and main freedoms of various categories of population, the Ombudsman appointed the specialized adviser in fighting against human trafficking.

The Specialized advisers regularly analyze national and international legal normative acts concerned, and the current situation in the country, also propose recommendations for different areas and prepare action plans.

The measures for fighting against human trafficking by the Ombudsman were taken in the following directions such as improvement of the legislative framework, legal awareness, requesting the related public institutions with proposals to take preventive measures, protection of rights of victims of trafficking, and measures relating to support of such persons integration to society.

At the request of the Commissioner, the Criminal Code has been added a separate article on human trafficking that also followed by other recommendations on drafting legislative acts on women rights, gender equality, and prevention of domestic violence to improve the legislative framework.

At the initiative of the Commissioner, regular round tables and seminars on solution of human trafficking were held with participation of representatives of public institutions and civil society. At the same time, the Commissioner proposed holding range of seminars and trainings for preparing the specialists in shelters for victims of human trafficking. Also, the Ombudsman proposed wide awareness events on fighting against human trafficking covering the risk groups of the population and creating public monitoring group consisting of public and NGO representatives.

Moreover, Ombudsman also addressed the public bodies with specific recommendations for conducting preventive measures against human trafficking.

Recommendations like creating crisis centers for human rights protection, including women and children victims of trafficking; also shelters for released juveniles, children deprived from parental care are among the recommendations put forward by the Azerbaijani Commissioner.

The Azerbaijani Ombudsman requested the Ministry of Interior regarding the support in establishing the legislative framework regulating the legal situation of persons deprived of permanent place of residence due to various reasons, homeless, vagabonds, the begging children deprived of parental care, and to former convicted persons sheltered in stations, railway stations, vans and creating specialized shelters for such category of persons.

The Child Rights Resource Center created under the Ombudsman Office with support of the UNICEF took measures on studying and prevention of human trafficking.

In addition, the Ombudsman recommended preparing legal publications on fighting against human trafficking, organization of training-seminars, identification of human rights victims and preparation of questionnaires in order to assist to them jointly with the international organizations.

I think close cooperation and coordination of activities of the bodies dealing with combating human trafficking are necessary to more effective protection.

Thank you for your attention!