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Working session 5

Madam moderator!

Ladies and gentlemen!

Protection of rights of vulnerable groups of the population, including women and children are among key priorities of the State policy. The State created legal framework as well as effective human right protection mechanisms with a view to protection of women and child rights.

Since regaining its independence the Republic of Azerbaijan joined almost all essential international documents on the protection of women's rights. The Government of Azerbaijan has made certain achievements in the sphere of gender policy.

President of Azerbaijan signed the Decree "On Implementation of the National Gender Policy in the Republic of Azerbaijan". This act envisages the ensuring of equal representation of women and men in all state structures of the Republic; providing the refugee and internally displaced women with working places by preparing the relevant state program; reviewing the legislation with taking into account the gender aspects.

Protection of the women rights and ensuring gender equality are one the priority issues of the Ombudsman's activity. The Commissioner cooperated with state agencies and civil society organizations for ensuring the equal participation of women in all spheres of public and political life, especially in the decision-making process. This process created broad conditions for improving the state of women, establishment of efficient national mechanisms on ensuring gender equality, monitoring of the legislation and conducting of open dialogue on gender equality.

Upon the Commissioner's initiative, along with the subject on human rights, the subject on "Introduction to Gender" was integrated to the curriculum of the Law Faculty of the Baku State University. The lectures on "Gender and Ensuring Equal Opportunities", "International and National Legislation on Gender Equality", "Cultural, Economic and Social Aspects of Gender" and other topics were delivered to students.

The Ombudsman together with the representative of civil society organized educational seminars and trainings on women entrepreneurship, gender equality, domestic violence, human trafficking and early marriages. As a result, thousands women received information on their rights what in its turn lead to the increase of their activity.

Regular visits were paid to the prison for women of the Penitentiary Service. The legal educational events were organized here. Moreover, their problems, living and detention conditions, health, psychological state were studied; complaints were reviewed. The Commissioner attached importance to the issue of pardoning detained women. During previous years, women were also among pardoned prisoners.

The UN Treaty Bodies, Universal Periodic Review, Council of Europe and other international organizations highly evaluate the activities of the Commissioner in the sphere of women's rights and assess them as positive experience. In 2012, the OSCE Office for Democratic Institutions and Human Rights published the Handbook for "Human Rights Institutions on Women's Rights and Gender Equality" Women's rights and development strategy, cooperation with civil society, increase of the opportunities of women's rights protection in member state and other issues were reflected in the book.

I would like to note that the Commissioner pays more attention to gender equality and initiatives aiming to restore the violated rights of women. So, it has been launched 16 day campaign activity from of 25th November-the International Day for the Elimination of Violence against Women to 10th December – International Day of Human Rights aimed at human rights advocacy and fighting against gender based violence at national, regional and international levels. In the framework of this campaign it has been organized hearings at the Parliament and public hearings of the Ombudsman in Baku and regions of the country and trainings for state and civil society institutions.

In July of 2015, at the initiative of the Ombudsman and in connection with the UNFPA it has been held a conference devoted to 11th July- World Population Day covering Jalilabad city and surrounding 9 other regions. According to participants such events will accelerate the protection of child and women rights and the prevention of domestic violence.

Although children's rights are an integral part of human rights, these issues require special attention and protection. It is observed that children gradually transform from objects of human rights to independent subjects of this field, as well as provision of children's interests become priority issue for families and state policy.

Taking into consideration these principles, the UN Declaration on the Rights of the Child of 1959 and the UN Convention on the Rights of the Child of 1989, serving as basic documents in the development of international and national legislation on children's rights protection, were adopted.

As a result of social, economic and legal reforms initiated and implemented within the country in recent years, the protection of human rights, including children's rights has become an integral part of the state policy. Ensuring the protection of these rights on a state level, a number of important laws and state programs were adopted and are being successfully implemented.

The Republic of Azerbaijan joined a number of international treaties on children's rights protection, including the Convention on the Rights of the Child in 1992, its Optional Protocols in 2002 and several ILO Conventions. The adoption of

these documents gave an impetus to the improvement of relevant field of national legislation.

The rights and interests of children are also protected by the Constitution of the Republic of Azerbaijan (Articles 12, 17, 25, 27, 42 and etc.) and are guaranteed by the state. In accordance with the international treaties on children's rights protection joined by Azerbaijan, various legal reforms have been implemented in national legislation system.

One of the main directions of activities of the Commissioner for Human Rights (Ombudsman) of the Republic of Azerbaijan is to explore the situation on provision of children's rights, protect those rights, and restore violated rights. Since the very beginning of its activity, the Ombudsman has appointed an advisor in order to provide protection and advocacy of children's rights and coordinate the work on elimination of problems encountered by children. It is worth mentioning that afterwards Chiefs of Commissioner's Regional Centre's were appointed as Coordinators on Children's Rights.

The Commissioner conducts the analysis of complaints concerning the violation of children's rights and takes measures on the restoration of those rights.

Generally, with a view to reliable protection of children's rights, the Commissioner's activities are carried out in the following directions:

- Monitoring of the status of children;
- Preparation of proposals on improvement of national legislation on children's rights;
- Cooperation with relevant state bodies, non-governmental organizations, and international institutions;
- Conduction of educational activities.

For many years, the world concerns about elimination of the violence against children as a global problem. Therefore, it is necessary to have in the country a strong child protection system, the relevant legislative framework and services for further effective protection of the child rights and for elimination of the violence against them.

The Azerbaijani Ombudsman has always pays much attention to this issue and made several proposals to improve the child protection system and national laws, conducted monitoring to study the situation of children and cases of violence, also held awareness events in this regard.

I would like to note that The Development Concept "Azerbaijan 2020: look into future" considers drafting "Strategy of Azerbaijani Family", "National Action Program on Gender equality", Child Code and National Child Strategy among these duties. Also, the institute of "Family psychologist", help centers and shelters for victims of domestic violence are considered in the document. In addition to, the National Action Program on Raising effectiveness of the protection of human rights and freedoms in the Republic of Azerbaijan, also provides provisions about taking of several purposeful measures to eliminate the violence against children and in order to execute those duties, there have been conducted public hearings and taken measures in all regions of the country.

Under their competencies, the National Preventive Group of Ombudsman as a national preventive mechanism against torture, periodically conducted regular visits and monitoring to institutions, including boarding houses, child care institutions, TDPs in the police stations, in other words, all establishments where children can live or be detained to prevent discrimination against and violence against children in those institutions.

Upon the initiative of the Ombudsman together with the Ministry of Education, Hierarchic Human Rights Education Plan on teaching of human rights, including the rights of children, at secondary schools was prepared, approved and is still being applied.

In 2015, according to the annual action plan between the Ombudsman Office and UNICEF focusing on issues of child protection importance, it has been held child awareness events "Child Protection Mechanisms in Azerbaijan: challenges and solutions" with participation of local executive bodies of Ganja, Sheki, Guba and Jalilabad regions, representatives of the Commission on the protection of rights and issues of Juveniles, law-enforcement bodies, education and health institutions, social protection centers, municipalities, tutors at child care institutions and civil society institutions.

Ombudsman proposed several recommendations in order to eliminate the cases of violation, change the attitudes and thinking of people towards violence and approach the children as an individual at the national level.

I would like to mention that people worldwide hoped, XXI century will bring mankind peace, security, prosperity. But unfortunately numerous natural and manmade disasters, wars and armed conflicts, acts of genocide and ethnic cleansing are still resulted in huge losses of Human lives and gross violation of Human Rights. Women and children suffer first from the lack of shelter, food, access to health, education, and social services

Among one million refugees and IDPs in Azerbaijan each third are children.

When a 9 year-old boy Fariz was shot in his head by Armenian military sniper and 13 years old girl Aygun fell victim to the Armenia's inhumane and immoral policy and tragically died as a result of the explosion of a toy with an explosive device, which the Armenian side deliberately dropped into the river flowing to the village, over 310000 signatures of school children from Azerbaijan were collected and sent to UN Secretary General Special Representative for children in armed Conflict. At the International Conference on "Protection of Children's rights in emergencies", Baku Declaration was adopted on rendering urgent assistance to the children in war.

All of the children sufferings in war are the results of violation of the UN Convention on the rights of the child, of the Geneva Convention on "Protection of war victims" and other international legal acts. And all of them are fully ignored up to now by Armenian Republic. And unfortunately still international organizations keep silent.

Thank you for attention!