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AYDIN SAFIKHANLI
Head of the Office of the Commissioner
for Human Rights (Ombudsman) of the Republic of Azerbaijan

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**“Activities of the Human Rights Commissioner of Azerbaijan
in the field of protection of child rights ”**

Madam moderator!

Ladies and gentlemen!

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 organisations, 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.

Jointly with UNICEF, the Office of the Commissioner periodically conducted monitoring in child care institutions to investigate the cases of violence against children. Since 2006, there have been taken preventive measures in the frame of this partnership and consequently, in different years, there have been conducted investigations to study the situation of the children in conflict with the law, PWDs and children with limited health capacities, in boarding schools and houses, as well as monitored the execution of the State Program on De-institutionalization and Alternative Care of the Republic of Azerbaijan for 2006-2015, also recommendations and suggestions were submitted to the corresponding bodies in order to eradicate the challenges existed in this field.

According to the CoE's transversal program "Building a Europe for and with children", the Ombudsman Office has launched joint consultations with the Research Institute of Obstetrics and Gynecology of Ministry of Health to promote the campaign on violence against children, declared in Rome, on 29 November 2010; consequently, the relevant recommendations were submitted to CoE.

We think the CoE Strategy on child rights for 2012-2015 must be promoted and held relevant events at the national levels in other states as well.

It is necessary to extend the family support services to eliminate the violence against children. It is noteworthy that we have some achievements in the concerned area. Thus, the country reached achievements in defending the interests of the children

as a result of the state policy and of measures taken by Mehriban Aliyeva, the Goodwill Ambassador of the UNESCO and the ISESCO, the President of Heydar Aliyev Foundation and the first lady.

I would like to note that by the Presidential Order dated 29 December 2012, there was approved the Development Concept “Azerbaijan 2020: look into future” which determined appropriate duties. The Concept 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, approved by the Presidential Decree dated 27 December 2011, 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.

The mass media plays a great role in decreasing the number of violence against children. The Azerbaijani Commissioner always monitors the sources provided by mass media regarding the violation of child rights and takes urgent measures in this regard.

Likewise, we addressed the appropriate bodies to broadcast the programs negatively influenced to the psychology of children at late hours or to give special notes warning parents to ban their children to watch such programs.

In 2012-2013years, in the frame of the partnership between the Azerbaijani Ombudsman Office and UNICEF with support of international expert held monitoring to evaluate the awareness of the responsible officials for elimination of violence and abuse against children and to learn the international experience in the concerned area, which resulted that we addressed the relevant bodies with suggestions.

This year, the Commissioner continues her monitoring in secondary schools, boarding houses, juvenile centers in the capital and districts of the country in the frame of the partnership with UNICEF.

Thank you for attention!