

**HUMAN DIMENSION IMPLEMENTATION MEETING
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Working session 4

Tolerance and non-discrimination I

Statement by the Delegation of the Republic of Azerbaijan

**Distinguished delegates,
Ladies and gentlemen,**

Women's participation in decision-making processes on political, legal and executive levels, their access to social provisions, healthcare and medical service, education, programs on literacy development and social welfare implies their involvement in social-political activity and is one of the most important instruments to achieve equality with men.

Equal participation of men and women on the level of decision-making in political and social life is the main term to establish a democratic society based on the principles of equality and respect to human rights.

After declaring independence the Republic of Azerbaijan ratified 203 international agreements, 27 of which are related to the issues of women. The Government of Azerbaijan tries to achieve gender equality through obligations emerging from its legislation and international documents to which we are a party to.

By the Decree of the President of Azerbaijan dated February 6, 2006, a State Committee for Family, Women and Children's Issues was established on the basis of the State Committee for Women Issues. The Committee is the national mechanism to conduct family, woman and children policy in Azerbaijan. The State Committee pays special attention to the issues related to equal participation of women and men in decision-making. The Government of Azerbaijan takes certain measures to provide balanced participation of women and men in political and public decision-making to

ensure better implementation of its commitments emerging from international documents.

Coordinators (focal points) that are responsible for carrying out the gender policy in the ministries are part of the Inter-ministerial Council, which was created under the State Committee for Family, Women and Children's Issues. State Committee closely cooperates with the non governmental organizations.

The Government of Azerbaijan is carrying out series of reforms directed to realizing the goals of the Millennium Declaration. The integration of the gender policy in the general strategy of development of the country serves to increase the rationality of this strategy, fosters an equal distribution of benefits from programs that are directed to economic growth and well being of population.

The draft law on Gender Equality in Azerbaijan, is now under third reading in the Parliament. The objective of the law is to provide equal rights for men and women in all spheres of social life and eliminate all forms of gender discrimination. According to this law State shall provide equal representation of men and women in state administration and decision-making, create equal opportunities, provide gender equality and eliminate all forms of discrimination through legal, managerial and other instruments.

Like in other countries, cases of domestic violence are one of the main obstacles hampering democratic development in Azerbaijan. Violence against women is an obstacle to the achievement of the objectives of equality, development and peace. Violence against women both violates and impairs the enjoyment by women of their human rights and fundamental freedoms as it is mentioned in Beijing Declaration and Platform for Action. The long-standing failure to protect and promote those rights and freedoms in the case of violence against women is a matter of concern to our State. "Complex Program of the Republic of Azerbaijan to combat domestic violence in democratic society" is currently being elaborated. The objective of the Program is to decrease cases of domestic violence through taking special measures in different areas. Its main feature is influence domestic life of people, transforming to the form of tradition and due to this reason being invisible.

Creation of non-aggressive relations in society through strengthening human potential, morality enrichment, preferring good will to increase tolerance in interpersonal relations along with prevention of violence is very important. More resources are planned to be invested into the economy of the country in the next few years. The number of employed persons is also expected to be increased due to considered changes to the economic development. All these are parts of the combat against domestic violence.

A working group has been established to elaborate draft law on domestic violence. The draft is supposed to be completed by the end of this year. Later the draft will be discussed in Parliament.

The Government is concerned with increasing cases of early marriages which constitute the violation of human rights. There is little concrete information about their incidence because they are unregistered and therefore they are not recorded as part of any standard data collection system. However, although there is no data on early marriages disaggregated by regions, it is possible to hypothesize that the highest rate of early marriages is present in the southern part of the country.

Another working group has been established in order to prepare National Action Plan on Women and Family Problem. The working group consists of representatives of governmental, non-governmental and international organizations as well. The Draft Action Plan has been given to the discussion of NGOs. The final draft will be submitted to the Parliament for discussion.

The goals and targets set in the Beijing Platform and in the outcome document of the 23rd special session of the General Assembly of the United Nations, have found their reflection in the State Program on Poverty Reduction and Economic Development (2006-2015) and in the National Plan of Action on Women's' and Family's Problems and in other documents.

The State Program on Poverty Reduction and Sustainable Development foresee measures to develop women entrepreneurship, women employment and to find out the reasons of women poverty. Gender violence and violence against children, early marriages – these issues are reflected in the State Program on Poverty Reduction and Sustainable Development for 2006-2015.

Advancement of women is a critical factor for development, in particular with regard to the eradication of poverty. This approach was reaffirmed by the Millennium Declaration. It has been recognized that the promotion of gender equality and the empowerment of women have a direct impact on the implementation of the Millennium Declaration in all areas, including development, security and human rights. In line with this, Azerbaijan has continuously been integrating gender equality and empowerment of women as a cross-cutting issue into its development policy. The State Program for Social and Economic Development of the Regions of Azerbaijan for the years 2004-2008 aims at providing balanced economic development of our country and enhances *inter alia* favorable environment for women along with men in key spheres of development. Within the framework of this program the new employment strategy with special focus on women's employment was endorsed.

The reforms carried out over the last decade in the sphere of socio-economic development, education, health and institutionalization have made it possible to achieve macro-economic stability and dynamic economic development which in its turn have led to improving the living standards of population, including women and children.

The level of economic activity among men are 75,6 %, among women are 51,1 %. And the level of employment among men are 90% and among women are 87,8 % . The Strategy of employment (2006-2015) approved with the Order of the President of the Republic of Azerbaijan dated 26 October, 2005 includes actions concerning women's employment, such as assistance to women entrepreneurs in order to develop entrepreneurships, to provide gender equality in development of small business etc.

The essential policy of the Employment strategy elaborated with the Order 1068 of the President of the Republic of Azerbaijan dated October 26, 2005 is to provide the human resources with the jobs and to involve more women professionals into business life. A special attention has been paid to the integration of the women into the social life. It stresses the need to pay attention to the increasing of the professional level of the women, to the opening of additional job places available to women. Also it was pointed out that women having children should be given work places due to the Regulations and financially encouraged.

The State Committee for Family, Women and Children Issues along with UN Development Program and with the support of Norway Government is preparing the Report relating the Gender issues. It will help to understand better gender problems in the society and to include this issue in the National Development Plan.

But the main objective is achieved not only through improvement of statistical data. The objectives of gender policy are achieved through changing of public opinion, overcoming traditional stereotypes. This is a long-term strategy and it will be focused on educational programs.

Thank you for your attention.