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Working session 7

**The role of the Azerbaijani Ombudsman in the protection of women's
rights and ensuring gender equality**

Madam moderator!

Ladies and gentlemen!

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.

In order to launch the practical implementation of the above-mentioned Decree the gender focal points were appointed in the governmental structures. According to the Decree of the Government of Azerbaijan women should be appointed as one of the Deputy Heads of the Executive Power in all regions of Azerbaijan. This decree has already been implemented in large number of the regions.

Azerbaijan closely cooperates with UN Development Fund for Women (UNIFEM). Our cooperation with this organization realized thorough the regional project entitled, "Women for Conflict Prevention and Peace Building in the Southern Caucasus"

Azerbaijan closely cooperates with OSCE in the sphere of gender mainstreaming. During the recent years OSCE implemented several projects ("Women's leadership and political participation", "Prevention of violence against women") with the aim of empowering women in Azerbaijan.

Azerbaijan also cooperates with Council of Europe in the domain of protection of the rights of women. Our country makes use of the recommendations

of the CoE for the improvement of legislation from the gender point of view and also takes an active part in the work of the different bodies of CoE in the sphere of gender mainstreaming.

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.

The complaints on social, family and domestic violence, reproductive health and other issues were investigated. The measures on the restoration of violated rights were taken. 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.

Along with that, the lectures on contemporary aspects of human rights and gender problem were delivered to persons responsible for gender policy and active members of trade union organizations at the Academy of Public Administration, Academy of Justice and Academy of Labour and Social Relations. The existing legislation on improving gender equality mechanisms was analyzed, and gender expert evaluation was conducted.

The activities implemented within the National Action Program for prevention of gender-based violence and efficient coordination were strengthened. Within the implementation of the National Action Program, the Commissioner organized systematic events on the provision and promotion of the right of women to education, protection of their health, including reproductive health, and prevention and elimination of violence against women. Also, there were conducted the discussion on the best strategy for different management methods between women and men, better carrier models for women and men, elimination of cases of violation of gender equality principles in research and innovations as well as provision of equal opportunities for women and men in every spheres.

The Commissioner and the Institute's staff members 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.

It should be stated that positive experience of a few countries were shown in the publication as an example. Information on the activities of the Azerbaijani Ombudsman for the protection of women's rights and ensuring gender equality, systematic work of the Resource Center for Older Persons, including the protection of the rights of refugee and IDP, detained, disabled and lonely women as well as those facing domestic violence and legal, medical and psychological aid provided to them, were demonstrated as positive experience.

I would like to note that Azerbaijani Ombudsman has organized the XII Baku International Conference of Ombudsmen on "The Role of National Human Rights Institutions in Ensuring Women's Rights" devoted to 18 June-Human Rights Day and to 20th anniversary of the National Commission of the Republic of Azerbaijan for UNESCO, to Cairo Conference on Population and Development, the Beijing Declaration and Platform for Action and to the 35th anniversary of the Convention on the Elimination of all Forms of Discrimination against Women.

Thank you for attention!