

**Monitoring of the implementation of provisions of the Convention on the
Elimination of All Forms of Discrimination against Women (CEDAW)
in the Republic of Uzbekistan**

TABLE OF CONTENTS	Page
INTRODUCTION	1
ARTICLES 1–3: Definition of the discrimination against women, commitments on elimination of the discrimination, promotion of women’s advancement and improvement of their status	4
ARTICLE 4: Acceleration of the establishment of de facto equality between men and women	6
ARTICLE 5: Stereotyped conceptions about the role of men and women	7
ARTICLE 6: Prevention of women’s exploitation	8
ARTICLE 7: Participation in political and public life	10
ARTICLE 8: Representation of women at international level and their participation in the activities of international organizations	11
ARTICLE 9: Citizenship	11
ARTICLE 10: Education	12
ARTICLE 11: Employment	13
ARTICLE 12: Equal access of health services	14
ARTICLE 13: Welfare payments and social benefits	15
ARTICLE 14: Women living in rural areas	16
ARTICLE 15: Equality before the law and in civil court cases	17
ARTICLE 16: Women’s rights in marriage and family life	18

INTRODUCTION

Uzbekistan ratified the Convention on the Elimination of all Forms of Discrimination against Women (CEDAW) on 31 August 1995. The government of the Republic of Uzbekistan presented before the Committee one national and two periodical reports on the country’s implementation of the Convention on the Elimination of all Forms of Discrimination against Women, the latest of which was presented in August 2004.

The periodical reports highlighted specific programs, activities, and major initiatives undertaken by the government from January 2001 to August 2004 aiming to improve further the status of women, as well as they outlined the planned future priorities in the activities of government in this field. This report discusses the major changes in the legislation, policies and programs that occurred during the reporting period.

Since the ratification of CEDAW, the Republic of Uzbekistan developed a series of national mechanisms with a view to assist the observance of women’s rights

outlined in the Convention. One of priority areas in the state policy of the Republic of Uzbekistan is legal, economic, and social protection of motherhood and childhood, creating conditions for improving women's social and financial status, promoting women's participation in the reforms in all areas of public life and in the country's modernization.

This policy is implemented by the means of Laws of the Republic of Uzbekistan, Decrees of the President of the Republic of Uzbekistan, government decrees, and state programs aiming to improve women's political, economic and social status. In the first place it is worthwhile to mention the mechanisms and provisions envisaged in the Constitution of the Republic of Uzbekistan on prohibition of discrimination on the basis of sex: *Article 18 – All citizens of the Republic of Uzbekistan have equal rights and freedoms and are all equal before the law without any distinction made on the basis of sex, race, nationality, language, religion, social origin, beliefs, personal or public status.*

Article 46 – Women and men have equal rights.

During the past years of independence, in the framework of implementation of the legislative acts and norms on the protection of motherhood and childhood, a complex of well-directed measures was implemented in the Republic in the following areas:

Establishment and improvement of legal framework for protection of the interests of family, motherhood and childhood taking into consideration the application of the advanced international experience;

Creation of economic conditions for consolidation of families, material welfare of mothers and children, prevention of cases of neglected children and juveniles;

Formation of healthy young families, provision of free public support at childbirth and childcare, vaccination, as well as provision of all medical services to children free of charge;

Implementation of basic education program on the national scale, envisaging 12-year universal schooling for children, allocation of substantial funds for the state scholarships for boys and girls in higher and secondary specialized educational institutions;

Ensuring the state protection of socially vulnerable groups represented by disabled children, orphans, children in low-income families;

Establishing special conditions, along with the system of ethical norms and rules with respect to family, mother, and child in the society.

Following the recommendations of the UN Committee on CEDAW on implementation of the Convention's provisions in the national legislation, a series of measures are taken in the Republic aimed to overcome the recurrence of direct and indirect discrimination against women. As for the country in general, the National mechanism for the improvement of status of women is polished up at the level of legislative and executive powers; there has been developed and actively implemented a procedure for conducting monitoring and reporting on the implementation of CEDAW provisions that outline the country policy priorities complying with the provisions of the Convention.

The National Human Rights Center of the Republic of Uzbekistan jointly with state organizations, public organizations and NGOs, developed the Draft Law "On State protection measures of equal rights and equal opportunities for men and

women”, which had passed national and international expertise and in March 2006 was filed for consideration of the Legislative Chamber of the Oliy Majlis (Parliament) of the Republic of Uzbekistan.

In 2004 the country’s Parliament introduced the amendments into the Article 22 of the Law of the Republic of Uzbekistan “On elections to Oliy Majlis (Parliament) of the Republic of Uzbekistan” on 30% quota for women during the recommendation of candidates to the country’s parliament from the political parties.

At present among the deputies of the Oliy Majlis of the Republic of Uzbekistan 17.5% are women in the Legislative Chamber and 15% in the Senate. In representative bodies 12.5% of total number of deputies are women at regional level, 15% at district level, and 18.1% at city level. In the executive bodies women constitute 3.4% and in the judiciary – 22.7%.

Since January 2005 a group of women-parliamentarians was actively involved in the activities of public associations and non-governmental non-commercial organizations, implemented proactive work on improving the deputies’ gender awareness, lobbied the adoption of the Draft Laws “On the State protection measures of equal rights and equal opportunities for men and women in the Republic of Uzbekistan”, “On charitable activities” and so on.

The Women’s Committee of Uzbekistan is the largest women’s organization in the Republic of Uzbekistan and it has branches in all regions of the Republic. It initiates, coordinates and implements governmental policy, programs and projects aimed to improve women’s conditions.

In an effort to maintain the pace of improvement in status of women, the Women’s Committee of Uzbekistan places high emphasis on five priority areas: women’s employment and economic welfare; women’s reproductive health and reproductive rights protection; women and their participation in social life, stressing women’s involvement in executive positions and decision making; as well as women and law, where special emphasis is made on the elimination of discrimination against women; women and education, stressing the improvement of professionalism and competence. The Committee also bears the principal responsibility for participation of the Republic of Uzbekistan in international events on women’s issues.

The key role of the Women’s Committee of Uzbekistan and its branches is to perform the following:

- cooperate with a view to provide the government with well-considered and representative advisory services in connection with identification, development and implementation of policy reflecting the variety of opinions and conditions pertaining to women;

- reflect the entire diversity of opinions expressed by women, based on consultations with women’s non-governmental non-commercial organizations, as well as other groups and organizations working on women’s issues;

- Act as an intermediary in the process of information exchange between the government and women’s sector;

- Analyze policy implemented with respect to particular fields representing a special interest for particular organizations;

- Create and support the effective administration mechanisms to ensure the execution of functions and duties of regional branches of the Women’s Committee of Uzbekistan.

In Uzbekistan there is a whole series of social, economic, political and legal instruments that assist to the improvement of status of women and to the elimination of discrimination against women.

The general principles on the elimination of discrimination are envisaged in the following:

- Family Code – *Article 2*. Equal rights of men and women in family relations;
- Labor Code – *Article 6*. Prohibition of discrimination in labor relations;
- Decree of the President of the Republic of Uzbekistan dated 2 March 1995 “On promoting women’s role in state and public structuring in the Republic of Uzbekistan”;
- National Platform and Action Plan on the improvement of status of women in Uzbekistan;
- National Action Plan on implementation of the recommendations of CEDAW Committee following the initial report of the Republic of Uzbekistan;
- Decree of the President of the Republic of Uzbekistan dated 25 May 2004 “On the additional measures to support the activities of the Women’s Committee of Uzbekistan”.

ARTICLES 1–3: Definition of the discrimination against women, commitments on the elimination of discrimination, promotion of women’s advancement and improvement of their status

Uzbekistan has a certain framework of legislative provisions, strategies and programs acting at the national level and aiming to improve status of women, as well as to protect their rights. Since the submission of the initial report of Uzbekistan, the institutional mechanisms on improvement of status of women continued to act and develop in the interests of protection of women’s rights. All levels of the government have special national mechanisms working on distribution of information and provision of advisory services on issues concerning the status of women, as well as monitoring and evaluation of the outcomes of the state policy and programs targeted at women.

Since 1999 until nowadays the Women’s Committee of Uzbekistan, the Ombudsman and the National Human Rights Center jointly with a number of NGOs have been preparing the informational materials on advancing the legal awareness of population. The purpose was to increase the awareness of women in Uzbekistan on the issues concerning human rights and their role in daily life in the Republic and the world. It aims to assist women in their fight for observance of human rights and in improving awareness of wider society about women’s human rights.

The country’s people believe that the most effective and reliable way to ensure the observance of human rights and to decrease discriminative action is to raise the awareness of society about individual rights and liabilities, and by that to promote greater tolerance and respect in the society. Two times a year the Women’s Committee of Uzbekistan initiates forums on the issues of implementation of the National Action Plan on Improving the Status of women, involving the representatives of ministries and departments, heads of law enforcement bodies, Ombudsman, NGOs and other interested organizations working in the field of human rights in Uzbekistan. These forums provide NGOs and other public organizations

with an opportunity to hear the opinions and proposals of interested partners. The forums also promote constructive dialogue between NGOs, public authorities and law enforcement bodies.

Establishment of the Institute for Studies of Civil Society became an important event in the life of civil society of the republic. One of priority areas in the activities of this Institute is to study the issues of more active involvement of women in the formation of civil society, as well as the establishment of the National Association of Non-governmental Non-commercial Organizations of the Republic.

In an effort to eliminate patriarchal stereotypes about women's role in the society and family, under proactive cooperation between state, public and non-governmental sectors, relevant spiritual awareness-raising and informational-educational campaigns are carried out among civil servants, law enforcement personnel, mass media, leaders of youth, women's, religious organizations, and national cultural centers.

In the framework of the aforementioned campaigns the mobile theatre studios, radio- and television trainings, talk shows and round tables are organized on the topic "Uzbekistan on the way to gender equality in light of Beijing Platform and Action Plan, Convention on the Elimination of all Forms of Discrimination against Women and Millennium Development Goals". Trainers and volunteers were trained on the issues of further promotion of gender equality. In August 2004 the Women's Committee of Uzbekistan organized and held the national conference on improvement of National Mechanism for Improving the Status of Women. In order to participate in the conference and exchange knowledge and expertise, the activists of women's committees and other NGOs, citizens' self-governance bodies, civil servants, intellectuals and entrepreneurs were invited from all regions of the country. The conference made positive contribution into the development of effective methods for achieving positive results in all areas of women's social support.

With a view to increase the awareness of parliamentarians, civil servants, mass media staff and NGO activists, statistical books with the main gender indicators have been published once in every two years since 1998. The latest such statistical book was published in Uzbekistan in 2005, under the title "Gender equality in Uzbekistan: Facts and Figures. 2000-2004". It provided relevant information in the context of gender both for the country as a whole and at regional level. The statistical book demonstrates diagrams indicating the dynamics in gender statistics based on 176 indices reflecting various aspects of gender development and gender balance (information on this publication is available at the following web-site <http://www.cer.uz/index.php?lang=2&menu=114>). This publication is targeted at a wide circle of users – public authorities, staff of academic institutions and public organizations, professors and other interested individuals. The publication was prepared by the State Committee on Statistics of the Republic of Uzbekistan in cooperation with the Women's Committee of Uzbekistan, using the data obtained from the ministries, departments and public organizations.

In 2000 the awareness-raising campaign made a start under the title "Increasing the gender sensitivity of civil society of the Republic of Uzbekistan in the issues of violence against women". It framed the preparation of informational package, organization of seminars and round tables with the leaders of women's, youth and religious organizations, as well as mass media. The mobile theatre studios organized

in the framework of the campaign do currently cooperate with the bodies of central administration and local self-governance on a permanent basis, as well as demonstrate their performances to wider audience, especially in rural areas.

In 2001-2004 the Women's Committee of Uzbekistan jointly with the Ombudsman and a number of NGOs developed a package of informational resources ("Handbooks" and "Guidelines") for educating the staff of public institutions on the promotion of gender issues – for providing methodological support in the implementation of programs on observance of women's equality.

At the same time, in spite of the recommendations of the Committee on the Elimination of Discrimination against Women, the national legislation does not provide a clear definition of the term "discrimination against women". This issue is a subject of current targeted activities of the parliament, implemented jointly with women's non-governmental organizations, broader community and scholars.

ARTICLE 4: Establishment of de facto equality between men and women

Women achieved equality to men in a number of sectors of Uzbekistani society, in particular, in equalizing the number of men and women graduating from basic schools and entering universities, especially on legal and medical majors. Remarkable positive shifts have been observed in a series of areas of public life where women were usually underrepresented. For example, in the area of vocational and technical education, in executive positions in public service and at the level of decision making.

With a view to accelerate the establishment of de facto equality between men and women, the government supports measures ensuring the consideration of gender issues in all fields of activities undertaken and assists the development of solutions for specific gender-related issues. The governmental policy lies in ensuring the support of measures taken in the area of education, aimed to change the thinking stereotypes, as well as in the implementation of initiatives directed towards the achievement of specific results. This particular approach, rather than establishment of abstract quotas and target assignments, is the most effective way to ensure equality between men and women.

In March 1995 following the initiative of the Head of the State a position of Vice Premier was introduced in the Cabinet of Minister, to administrate the Structure on Social Protection of Family, Motherhood and Childhood. (By doing that the government strives to increase the representation of women in decision making bodies). All relevant letters, appeals and applications addressing the government are usually passed for consideration of the aforementioned Structure. Relevant positions of Deputy Hokims were established in regions, districts and cities. New institution of public administration plays a key role in consulting the government on the issues of development of strategies and policies in the fields that are vitally important for women.

In 2000 the Women's Committee of Uzbekistan in close cooperation with NGOs and other major interested parties developed the National Action Plan for the implementation of Beijing Platform and Action Plan until 2005 on execution of the recommendations of the Special Session on Women's Status of the UN General Assembly ("Beijing+5"). "Beijing+5" is directed towards current activities and

progressive initiatives – such as establishment of social partnership involving the bodies of public administration, local self-governance, mass media, entrepreneurs and NGOs.

At the same time, the Draft Law “On the State protection measures of equal rights and equal opportunities for men and women in the Republic of Uzbekistan”, filed with the country’s parliament by the National Human Rights Center of the Republic of Uzbekistan, is still under consideration.

ARTICLE 5: Stereotyped conceptions of the role of men and women

After the presentation of the first National Report of Uzbekistan and following the recommendations of the Committee on the Elimination of Discrimination against Women, the country has witnessed proactive activities supporting the initiatives directed towards the elimination of stereotyped conceptions of the role of women and men, impeding women to fully expose their creative and spiritual potential. The implementation of priority objectives of the National Platform and Action Plan is targeted towards the elimination of stereotyped conceptions of the role of women and men that have fatal consequences.

The Women’s Committee of Uzbekistan holds quarterly round table meetings with the interested ministries and departments to discuss the issues concerning the implementation and monitoring of the National Platform and the Action Plan, including the issues on the elimination of gender stereotypes. Manuals on gender education course were prepared for educational institutions.

In general it can be stated that at present there are all necessary measures and efforts undertaken in the Republic with a view to form in the public mind a modern democratic understanding of the role of men and women in the political, socio-economical, and humanitarian development of society.

One of the ways to change understanding and established stereotypes within the people is their awareness-raising and education. “Informational starvation” largely affects rural population. That is why a foreground objective of the state enterprises, institutions and organizations, mass media and NGOs of the republic is to increase the legal awareness and gender sensitivity of the Uzbekistani people. In order to achieve this objective a research project under the title “Studies into more active involvement of women in the formation of civil society”, implemented by the Institute on the Studies of Civil Society, holds a series of continuous seminars. They are dedicated to the alteration of current social and cultural models of behavior for men and women aiming to eliminate prejudices and stereotypes about the traditional roles of women and men in the society.

With the assistance of public administration bodies, NGOs of the republic organized and held debates, discussions, round tables, forums, seminars, games and trainings among youth on the topics related to gender sensitivity, with a view to alter the established patriarchal stereotypes and approaches to the role of girls and women in the society.

Image of women in mass media

In accordance with the Article 29 of the Constitution of the Republic of

Uzbekistan, “Everyone has a right to freedom of thought, expression and belief. Everyone has a right to search, obtain and distribute any information, except for that against the existing regime and in case of other exceptions envisaged by the Law. Freedom of opinion and its expression may be restricted by the Law, for the reason of state or other secret”.

The Constitution guarantees that mass media conduct its activities freely and without censorship. At the same time, the Constitution envisages the responsibility for the authenticity of circulated information.

Five laws and a whole series of by-laws were adopted in the Republic, regulating the activities of mass media, legally securing the rights and responsibilities of journalists. In accordance with those, as well as following the foreground priorities of the National Platform and the Action Plan, a comprehensive work on reflecting the image of new woman of Uzbekistan is implemented in mass media outlets, culture and art of the country.

With a view to promote the status of women in modern society, to secure the protection of women’s honor and dignity, arrangements were made to publish special women’s newspapers, magazines and other editions – their number grew from 5 to 20 since 2001. A series of radio and television programs dedicated to women’s issues were created; a unified program on involving the civil society into discussions about gender issues for all types of mass media was developed.

Mass media widely explains both women’s rights and responsibilities, and the national and international legislation in the area of equal rights and equal opportunities, other issues of society’s gender awareness; scientific and journalistic articles are published; a popular “Encyclopedia for Women” was published.

However, one of the shortcomings of how mass media illustrates women’s topics is in the insufficient compliance of publications and programs with the modern gender approaches. In particular, it is a question of such criteria and principles of work as equilibrium, competence and informative nature. As such, the analysis of certain television programs demonstrated that the emotional factor of the program dominates over the informational factor, content and balance of views. Quite often we can point to the lack of serious and comprehensible commentaries by specialists and experts in various fields. Oftentimes the references to an opinion of certain expert do not ensure a general persuasiveness of the overall presented material.

The system of professional training of journalists working on women’s topics requires serious improvement. The individual recommendations of journalists, based on their opinion alone, disaccord with the legally secured women’s rights, and bear subjective nature, not substantiated by a deep knowledge of the matter. Meanwhile, the journalist must refer to the commentaries and advice of competent experts using the data provided by organizations dealing with these issues.

Article 6: Prevention of women’s exploitation

In Uzbekistan the trafficking in women and sexual slavery of women and girls is viewed as one of the forms of violence and gross violation of women’s rights, and is regarded as a criminal offence. The public opinion recognizes that the trafficking in human beings is a transnational criminal activity requiring coordinated efforts from all international community for its elimination. In this connection the government

calls for close cooperation with other countries (with regional partners in particular) in their fight against this terrible phenomenon.

A special concern in the country is given to the reported cases of trafficking in women. For the most part and as a rule, the girls go abroad under the guise of tourists through the tourist firms. They are recruited abroad as waitresses, housemaids etc. It is not rare that young women are repeatedly re-sold to other owners. Women arriving abroad in this manner oftentimes do not have any identification documents or have the forged ones. Illegal status aggravates their stay on the territory of a country and complicates the provision of assistance by the Ministry of Foreign Affairs of Uzbekistan.

Since 2001 besides the state organizations, non-governmental organizations also started conducting activities in the area of increasing the awareness of young girls and women on the issues of trafficking in women for the purposes of sexual exploitation. During this period a series of programs were created on youth radio and television channels; talk shows were organized, as well as live question-and-answer sessions on the topic of trafficking in human beings were held. Discussions, seminars, and round tables are held in the educational institutions and labor collectives to explain the risks of illegal labor migration. NGOs, in their part, jointly with the state and law enforcement organizations have published bulletins and brochures in large amounts on the given matter, to be distributed within larger groups of population, especially youth. Public associations conduct preventive activities on the issues of illegal labor migration in close cooperation with the law enforcement personnel, other interested ministries and departments.

“Telephone hotlines” were established in all regions of the Republic, providing 24-hour, free of charge and anonymous consultations on the risks of illegal employment abroad. One single example can ascertain the proactive work of non-governmental organizations on the prevention of illegal export of people for sexual exploitation: from November 2002 until July 2003 only one NGO received more than 3,000 telephone calls on their “hotline”. All people who called were provided with competent consultations.

As many as 24,190 telephone calls were received from January 2004 to January 2006 on the “hotlines” concerning all issues related to illegal labor migration. NGOs of the Republic jointly with the law enforcement bodies prevented 27 cases of illegal trafficking of people for the purposes of sexual or other exploitation, out of which 22 were women and 5 – men. During the past two years necessary assistance was provided with a view to return 500 victims of trafficking to Uzbekistan. The Rehabilitation Center was established for this group of people, where shelter and rehabilitation services were provided to more than 90 young women; medical and psychological support was delivered to 152 victims. All victims in the Rehabilitation Center are provided with legal and other required assistance.

NGOs jointly with the state organizations produce documentaries, popular short videos, aimed to prevent trafficking in human beings. NGOs engage in active cooperation with NGOs from other countries on prevention of illegal labor migration and return of trafficking victims to their homeland. For example, jointly with Israeli NGO “Woman for woman” and relevant ministries of these two countries, assistance was provided to return more than 230 young women to Uzbekistan.

Jointly with the Foundation for Women 12 young women were returned from

Thailand to their homeland. During the past two years over 350 legal proceedings were instituted; 229 people were brought to criminal liability.

At the same time the national legislation, namely the disposition of Article 135 of the Criminal Code, does not yet cover the whole spectrum of issues in prevention of trafficking in human beings and protection of trafficking victims, especially women. Non-governmental organizations initiate the consideration of these issues in the country's parliament.

Article 7: Participation of women in political and public life

Participation of women in public and political life is one of the most important instruments in the achievement of gender equality. Ensuring the active participation of women in administration and at the level of decision making is one of the foreground objectives. Since 1996 the government livened up the activities on increasing the number of women appointed to the high rank positions in administrative bodies and decision-making authorities.

Since 2002 the state, public and non-governmental organizations jointly with mass media outlets carried out activities on improvement of the national mechanism for incorporation of gender equality in all spheres of public and social life.

At the same time the representation of women at the level of executive bodies yet does not fully correspond to a high level of their professional background and occupational activity (share of women on the executive positions at local level is about 4%).

Participation of women in non-governmental non-commercial organizations (NGOs)

Non-governmental non-commercial organizations, and, first of all, women's organizations, make significant contribution into the development of civic initiatives, including those related to increasing the role of women in various spheres of society life. Their number increases year by year – from 2 NGOs in 1991 to 84 NGOs in 2006, working in all regions of Uzbekistan.

Women's NGOs proved that they are the most active among non-commercial organizations, and effectiveness of their activities was mainly determined by the acuteness of transition period problems and objectives for overcoming those. Women in rural areas were largely dedicated to performing economic projects – establishment of small enterprises, micro-crediting, creation of credit unions, promotion of marketing for development of handicrafts and so on.

Urban women were focusing on educational programs, including those for rural women, publishing activities (bulletins, brochures, study guides on civil education, agitation posters), research projects, foundation of crisis centers and so on. The aforementioned projects were initiated for involving women in economic and public sphere. Important factor here was that these programs were both developed and administered by women.

NGOs have two objectives: current and long-term. The former was directed towards the provision of assistance to orphans, support of families that lost their bread-winner, support of the disabled and their families.

The latter objective lies in the protection of civil and political rights, civil and legal education, training of women-leaders, women's socialization and so on.

Subsequent to the growth in quantitative parameters, the qualitative changes occurred in the activities of women's NGOs. During the very first years of their activities, NGOs mainly cooperated following a vertical principle: donor – NGO – target group. Afterwards, there appeared a necessity to cooperate horizontally. This included round tables, conferences, seminars, corporate projects. NGOs provide women with an opportunity for self-fulfillment through the engagement in proactive work.

Unlike political parties, NGOs cannot engage in any political activities. However, this does not mean that they cannot participate in livening up the country's political life and in assisting in the involvement of people into politics, as well as in promoting their interests in the upper layers of administration. In contrast to political parties that usually stand against each other, NGOs may cooperate with several political parties simultaneously. It is more common among women, rather than among men, not only to strive for leadership, but to desire achieving consensus between the opposite views. Perhaps, these differences in motivation of men and women for leadership actually allocated the areas of their concentration in the country's public and political life. All these facts prove that non-governmental organizations and movements can assist to the broader participation of people in the country's political and public life.

Article 8: Representation of women at international level and their participation in the activities of international organizations

Since 1991 the representatives of Uzbekistan participated in a number of international forums – the Fourth World Women's Conference (Beijing, 1995), Sessions 43-50 of the Women's Commission of the United Nations Organization (New York, 1996-2006); Special Session on Women's Issues of the United Nations' General Assembly ("Beijing+5", New York, 2000).

The country's government took a number of measures aimed to ensure a wider participation of women's NGOs in international activities. In particular, in the framework of preparation to a special session "Beijing+5", the Women's Committee of Uzbekistan established a partner network with NGOs, organized trainings and events to assist effective participation of NGOs in the activities of the UN and other international organizations.

Women-parliamentarians and women's NGO leaders of Uzbekistan participate in meetings, conferences and trainings organized by the OSCE, World Bank, Asian Development Bank etc.

Article 9: Citizenship

The legislation of the Republic of Uzbekistan in the area of citizenship does not envisage any discrimination made on the basis of race, color, sex, language, religion, political or other beliefs, national and social origin, or property status. Women are provided with rights equal to men with respect to acquisition, change or retaining of citizenship. Neither marriage to a foreigner, nor change in a husband's citizenship

entail automatic change in a wife's citizenship, make her a stateless person and force her to acquire her husband's citizenship.

Article 10: Education. **National objectives in the area of education**

The special National Program for Personnel Training was developed and has been implemented in the country. Conditions were created in Uzbekistan for women to obtain education and increase their qualification. Every second specialist having higher or secondary education is a woman. Gender equality in the educational sphere is secured by the Constitution of the Republic of Uzbekistan, Article 46. The main principles of the country policy in the area of education at modern stage are the following:

- Humanistic, democratic nature of education and training;
- Continuity and succession of education;
- Mandatory nature of basic secondary and accessibility of secondary specialized, vocational and higher education;
- Accessibility of education within the state educational standards;
- Encouragement of learning, talent.

A peculiar feature of Uzbekistan's social development is a rather high level of education and absolute accessibility of basic secondary education to all citizens of the Republic, regardless of sex. It is widely acknowledged that the country's population is almost absolutely literate.

The system of continuous education was introduced in the Republic. The Law on Education was developed and adopted (1997), envisaging equal rights for women and men in terms of choosing profession and obtaining education in any educational institution. Organizational basis was created and a complex of norms and legislative acts was adopted in the framework of implementation of the National Program of Personnel Training; the state educational standards were approved and adopted, along with the state requirements to all types of education.

New generation of textbooks was developed and published for basic secondary and secondary specialized, vocational education; packages of methodological guides and recommendations for the teachers in pre-school institutions, basic schools, academic lyceums and vocational colleges were prepared.

The network of schools is expanding; new types of educational institutions – academic lyceums and vocational colleges – were established and put into operation. By the beginning of the academic year 2004-2005 as many as 65 academic lyceums and 827 vocational colleges were operating in the educational system of the Republic. 30.5 thousands students were learning in the academic lyceums, out of which 35.9% were girls. Vocational colleges provided education to 757.6 thousands students, including 47.3% of girls. As many as 2.6 thousands teachers were employed in the academic lyceums of the Republic, of which 76.2% were women. Vocational colleges had 40 thousands teachers in the staff (59.5% of which were women).

The system of higher education of the Republic is represented by 63 higher educational establishments. The number of students in them is 263.6 thousands. Out of the total number of students in higher educational institutions 40.7% are women.

Starting from the academic year 1999-2000 the higher education system of the Republic has been making a transfer to a multi-level system. Specialists have been trained taking into consideration the international standards in the area of education. In accordance with them the higher education now has two traditional levels: bachelor's course and master's course. The number of students enrolled to the bachelor's program in the academic year 2004-2005 made 54.2 thousands, 44.2% of which were girls. Among the students enrolled to the master's program 34% were girls. In the Republic of Uzbekistan the educational system in general covers 7.3 million students, including 3.5 million women, which makes 48.2% of the total number of students.

The choice of major of studies greatly varies between men and women in educational establishments. Girls prefer education, healthcare, while boys give their preference to industry, agriculture, construction etc.

Targeted activities are implemented in the Republic for general and professional training of talented children and youth abroad. Special foundations and programs are created for these purposes. Uzbekistan has adopted the Program for the Support of Basic Schools; total expenditure on education is about 8% of GDP (as to this indicator, the Republic is close to the leading countries of the world).

Article 11: Employment

The legislation of Uzbekistan prohibits any discrimination on the basis of sex and envisages a comprehensive system of measures on protection of women's rights on the labor market.

The Labor Code of the Republic of Uzbekistan secures legal mechanisms for social protection of women in the field of employment. As such, in accordance with the Article 68 of the Labor Code, the state provides additional protection measures to: individuals in need of social protections, those facing difficulties in search of job and unable to compete on the labor market on equal conditions (including single parents and parents having many children under the age of 14, or disabled children); young people that just graduated from the educational institutions; disabled persons and individuals in pre-retirement age; specialized enterprises, including enterprises for disabled persons. In line with the Article 224 of the Labor Code it is prohibited to refuse women in employment and decrease their salary for any reasons related to pregnancy or availability of children. Individual articles of the Labor Code of the Republic of Uzbekistan provide additional benefits and protection measures to women with children.

In accordance with the national legislation of Uzbekistan women get equal pay with men for equal work. The Ministry of Labor and Social Protection of Population jointly with the Council of Ministers of the Republic of Karakalpakstan, regional Hokim's Offices and Tashkent City Hokim's Office are responsible for ensuring equality in the field of employment and the elimination of discrimination. Individual articles of the Labor Code emphasize the additional protection measures for women and individuals busy with family duties: Article 224. Protection measures at employment of pregnant women and women with children; Article 225. Occupations where the application of women's labor is prohibited; Article 226. Transfer of pregnant women to less difficult work and work that does not allow for the effect of

unfavorable production factors; Article 227. Transfer of women with children under two years of age to less difficult work and work that does not allow for the effect of unfavorable production factors. Article 228. Restriction of women's labor at overnight and overtime work, weekends and duty trips; Article 228/1. Right of women that have children under three years of age and are employed at organizations and institutions financed from the budget to a contracted duration of working hours; Article 229. Establishment of half-time work for women and individuals busy with family duties; Article 230. Additional day off; Article 231. Benefits provided to women in establishing the order of annual leaves; Article 232. Additional leaves for women with children under twelve or disabled children under sixteen; Maternity and childbirth leave; Article 234. Child rearing leave in case of children under two and under three years of age; Article 235. Leaves for individuals that adopted newborns or became guardians of those; Article 236. Breaks for breastfeeding; Article 237. Protection measures for pregnant women and women with children at discharge of the labor contract; Article 238. Protection measures and benefits for people rearing children without mother; Article 233. Maternity leave.

Women constitute over 44% of economically active population. The level of women's economic involvement is quite lower than that of men – 63.2% against 78.5% respectively. In the aforementioned traditional spheres where women's labor is applied, such as healthcare, education, culture, art, science, the share of women varies from 73.0% to 75.0%.

In an effort to assist the job placement of unemployed population, including women, the labor authorities at local level organize Jobs Fairs on a regular basis jointly with employers (enterprises and organizations), Women's Committee and "Kamolot" Public Movement of Youth. Over 1,000 such fairs are held every year, where over 150.000 vacancies are announced.

The State Program for the Development of Out-work was developed and implemented in the country. By that as many as 400 thousand women are provided with jobs annually. With a view to regulate the situation on labor market, to support small and medium businesses, and to create new vacant positions, the Employment Support Foundation allocates funds for the development of family business through bank credits every year.

Mass media places a special attention to women that are managers of small and medium business enterprises (businesswomen). An example demonstrating that is the "women's wing" of the ruling party – Movement of Entrepreneurs and Businesspeople of the Liberal Democratic Party of Uzbekistan, as well as the Business Women Association of Uzbekistan. Credit unions, established by non-governmental organizations, were also largely occurring. Their activity is aimed at providing support to women-entrepreneurs.

Yet, due to the difficulties related to a transition period, there is still a problem of women's unemployment, especially in excess manpower districts of the country.

Article 12: Equal access to health services

Protection of health of mothers and children belongs to the areas of activities prioritized by the state. Maintaining and strengthening women's health is one of the most urgent objectives of the healthcare system in Uzbekistan. At the same time the

principal attention here is given to the issues of reproductive health, protection of motherhood and childhood, decreasing the harmful effects of environmental conditions on women. Life expectancy is 74.1 years for women, and 69.9 years for men. (For comparison: in 1999 life expectancy was 72.7 years for women and 68.1 years for men).

Special attention is now given to the provision of medical services to rural women (over 63% of country population live in rural areas). Owing to the implementation of the Rural Infrastructure Development Program, a network of medical stations was created and medical assistance/obstetrician stations are being re-profiled. The creation of rural medical stations is a key element of the healthcare reform in the Republic.

The health of mother and child is the main indicator in the level of socio-economic welfare of the country. Comprehensive programs were developed and have been implemented in the country aiming to recover the health of women in childbearing age and children, involving many ministries, departments, charity foundations, public organizations.

An important result of the implementation of health recovery programs targeted at women in fertile age was the decrease in infant mortality. Infant mortality rate in 2004 made 16.2 deaths per 1,000 live-born children.

A clear-cut tendency in the decrease of the number of abortions was observed in the Republic. Abortion is no longer the main method for preventing the undesired pregnancy. Greater preference is now given to the modern contraceptive measures.

One of the sensitive indicators characterizing women's health and level of healthcare development is maternal mortality rate. From 1991 (before gaining the independence) to 2004 this rate decrease almost 2.5 times in the Republic (from 65.3 to 29.4 per 100,000).

Nevertheless, in spite of the measures undertaken in this area, the level of maternal and infant mortality remains quite high.

Article 13: Welfare allowances and social benefits

As it is well known, one of the main principles supporting the common reform strategy of the Republic in the conditions of transition period is a strong social protection. In action it is implemented by a provision of transfers in monetary or in-kind form to certain groups of population through the systems of social insurance and social protection. At present the social support to the population of the Republic is provided in the framework of two large programs: for families with children and for low-income families.

With a view to reinforce individual-based approach to social support and to decrease the administrative expenditure related to its provision, Uzbekistan took a decision that had no analogues in the world practice. Since 1994 in case of the low-income families support program, and since 1997 in case of the program of support to families with children, the funds allocated from the budget are distributed by local self-governance bodies – mahallas.

Significant support to socially vulnerable groups of society is provided in the form of low-income family grants, made available from the state budget funds (just as assistance to families with children under sixteen). The main criteria in making the

decision on provision of such assistance is an average family income per capita – as a rule, not exceeding the amount of the established minimum wage. Other additional characteristics are also taken into consideration, such as the property status of family members, their labor market status, effectiveness of using the homestead land allocated for agricultural purposes, composition of family.

The following types of grants, benefits and allowances are provided to families with children and are included in the unified system of the state assistance to families: monthly allowances to families with children under sixteen; monthly child attendance allowance for mothers (before the child reaches the age of two); extraordinary grant at childbirth; maternity allowance (126 calendar days in total).

The pension system in Uzbekistan provides women with substantial advantages and benefits. The Law of the Republic of Uzbekistan “On state pensions provision to citizens”, that entered into force on 1 July 1994, does not make any distinction between citizens on the basis of sex. This law envisages three types of pensions: retirement pension, disability pension and pension in case of losing a breadwinner. The age requirement for women to retire was established as 55 years. (In 1999, which was proclaimed the Year of Woman in Uzbekistan, this age was decreased to 54 years by the Decree of the President I.Karimov).

In contrast to pensions, the social benefits are established in fixed amounts and do not require certain number of years of service. They differ only depending on a category of persons in need of such support. The system of social benefits distinguishes two categories of people in need of the state support: disabled persons with disability status I and II; single aged citizens, including women over sixty.

Article 14: Women living in rural areas

The Republic of Uzbekistan considers the improvement of rural women’s conditions to be one of priority state objectives and takes all necessary measures to ensure the implementation of the CEDAW with respect to women residing in rural areas of the Republic.

The State Rural Infrastructure Development Program has been developed and is implemented in the Republic, where a special attention is given to ensuring the participation of women in the rural areas development on the equal basis with men.

The program provides women with rights to access healthcare services, relevant medical services, consultations; to obtain education; to enjoy adequate living conditions, especially housing, sanitary services, water and electricity supply, communication services and transportation means; to access credits, loans, market system, relevant technologies and equal status in land and agricultural reforms.

Every year the Cabinet of Ministers summarizes the outcomes of the Program implementation and discusses its five key areas: telecommunications; establishment of social capital and social unity; development of economy and entrepreneurship; provision of services, including those in the area of healthcare, childcare, transportation, consulting and banking; development of skills and professional training. The discussion is followed by the development of recommendations that are then addressed to the interested ministries and departments, as well as regional state authorities for implementation and taking relevant measures.

One of the elements of this program is to investigate the needs of rural women

in order to assist to their employment and economic sustainability of farms and other agricultural establishments. Family support line is proactively implemented in the framework of the program, securing qualified social support for maintaining the family income at certain level; supporting expert consultations on issues of future viability of farms.

National conferences, contests are held and programs are implemented aiming to reinforce the partnerships between representatives of business circles, communities and public authorities with a view to advance the economic viability of rural communities.

Activities are implemented to build up a capacity in rural areas, create work places and stimulate the renovation of regions and rural areas.

In spite of that, significant number of rural women is occupied with underpaid seasonal jobs.

Article 15: Equality before the law and in civil court cases

The national legislation of the Republic of Uzbekistan recognizes that women are equal to men before the law and ensures equality in civil court cases to all citizens regardless of their sex.

Furthermore, the issues of equality are foreground priorities of the state policy, the National Platform and the Action Plan on the Advancement of Status of Women in Uzbekistan.

Women of the country are provided with equal opportunities as men in terms of exercise of civil legal capacity. Women enjoy equal rights in concluding contracts and agreements, managing property and during court hearings.

The national legislation ensures equal rights to men and women in the freedom of movement and in choosing the place of residence. In the framework of the state strategy for ensuring the equality of women, a long-term project is being implemented, aiming to improve the national mechanism for provision of equal services in the issues of family institution consolidation, identification and consideration of children's interests.

One of the ways to fight inequality and violence against women is to conduct legal awareness-raising.

During the past two years NGOs of the Republic had organized and conducted 3 thousand seminars, round tables and other events aiming to improve the public understanding of women's role in social, economic, and political life.

With a view to promote gender equality, in addition to awareness-raising and educational centers, the NGOs of the republic started establishing legal centers for providing assistance and support to women that found themselves in difficult and complicated situation.

Crisis centers have been implementing their activities in Uzbekistan since 1996. They were established with the support of international organizations. The crisis centers advanced in their development in 1999, which was proclaimed the Year of Woman in Uzbekistan.

The main objective of the State Program during the Year of Woman was directed towards the further development and promotion of women, as well as it was provided with budget financing.

It is worthwhile to note the example of stable activities of family social support centers in the regions, located closest possible to the places of families residence and operating in the makhalla guzars (citizens' self-governance bodies). These centers provide legal, psychological and medical assistance to everyone who requests for it. At the same time young girls and women in these centers study various professions demanded in the region, and find employment afterwards.

At present more than 30 NGOs in Uzbekistan work on the issues of violence against women. With a view to implement practical activities in this area, over 20 Crisis Centers, help-lines, advisory and prophylactic centers, as well as family social adaptation centers were created.

Aside from provision of their principal services, these centers work on raising awareness of population on the issues of violence against women, ways to prevent it and about the existing types of assistance to victims of violence. In their work they strive to change the public opinion based on patriarchal stereotypes about the treatment of women.

At that a combination of practical work and scientific sociological research, along with preparation of methodological materials and study guides, allows not only for improving the quality of services provided, but is also reflected in advancing professional level of the organizations themselves.

The evolution of partnership between NGOs working in this area, law enforcement bodies, educational institutions, religious organizations and mass media are evidence of the establishment of civil initiative at local level, organization of counteraction forces against violence aimed to eliminate, avert it and prevent the offences.

On the whole NGOs implement awareness-raising campaigns on improvement of legal knowledge and informational field of civil society, establishment of non-violence policy in the society. The regional awareness-raising campaign "Life free of violence is our right", implemented since 2000, has provided substantial assistance in forming a firm negative attitude within the society towards manifestations of various forms of violence. Awareness-raising events took place in all regions of the Republic. It framed seminars on increasing the gender sensitivity of civil servants, religious figures, law enforcement personnel, youth and women's organizations, mass media and NGOs.

Article 16: Women's rights in marriage and family life

In Uzbekistan there is no discrimination between men and women in the areas identified in the paragraph 1 of the Article 16. Marriages of children are illegal in Uzbekistan. Family relations in Uzbekistan are regulated by the Family Code (in force since September 1998), which frames the practice of equal treatment of men and women. Equal treatment of women is maintained in the country both according to the law, and in action. In Uzbekistan men bear equal responsibility for raising children and taking care of them.

Issues pertaining to matrimony are regulated in Uzbekistan by the Family Code, which applies to men and women without any distinction. As a rule, it is forbidden to contract a marriage until the age of 18 in case of men, and 17 in case of women. In exceptional circumstances when one of the parties of expected marriage did not come

to the marriage age, but already attained 16 years of age, the executive bodies at local level may provide this person with the permission to contract marriage.

The Republic of Uzbekistan ensures the protection and support of Uzbekistani families in its most various forms (for example, single parents, low-income families, those left without bread-winner etc.) and in general they have access to a wide spectrum of financial and other assistance.

From the very first days of the country's independence, the State Program was designed aiming to distribute information and form the skills that would assist to the development of positive and stable family relationships.

The government supports the principles of equal access to property. Parties of lawful matrimony may conclude mutual financial agreements ("marriage contract") that have binding legal effect with regard to the property.

Uzbekistan ratified the Convention in August 1995. Since then a substantial work had been carried out with a view to promote the implementation of CEDAW provisions and articles by the citizens of Uzbekistan, and public officials in particular.

The Convention was translated into the country's official language and published in large number of copies.

The text of the Convention was circulated among the parliamentarians, civil servants, law enforcement personnel, employees of ministries and departments, public associations and non-commercial organizations, as well as mass media outlets.

There was prepared a group of national experts on CEDAW, who work in the regions and conduct monitoring over the implementation of the Convention at local level. Round tables on the issues of implementation, reporting and monitoring of CEDAW were held in all regions of the country. Video films and documentaries about the issues of CEDAW monitoring in Uzbekistan were produced and broadcasted on the national television channels.

Recommendations of the CEDAW Committee are circulated among all ministries and departments, local public authorities, country's parliament, bodies of self-governance, mass media, and NGOs.

Yet this area still has some problems that require profound research and taking relevant measures - such as, for example, increased number of early marriages and other issues.

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