

**Statement by the Delegation of the Republic of Azerbaijan**

**Tuesday, 24 September 2019. Working session 12  
Delivered by prof. Dr. Etibar Najafov, Head of the Department of  
Multiculturalism, Interethnic and Religious Affairs,  
Administration of the President of the Republic of Azerbaijan**

**Rights of persons belonging to national minorities**

Azerbaijan respects the right of persons belonging to national minorities to participation in public affairs, including participation in the affairs relating to the protection and promotion of their identity. Azerbaijan protects their rights within the framework of its multiculturalism policy.

Azerbaijani is one of a few states in the world in which multiculturalism is a state policy. Multiculturalism policy of Azerbaijan is manifested both in domestic and foreign policy of Azerbaijan.

In domestic policy it is seen in high level of relations between state and religion, as well as in protection of ethno-cultural values of all peoples living in Azerbaijan.

The high level of relations between state and religion is seen in the four following advantages:

1. Freedom of religion is guaranteed in Azerbaijan;
2. All religions, religious communities are equal before the Law;
3. The state provides all necessary aid including financial one to religious communities;
4. Interreligious relations are characterized by mutual respect and collaboration.

**As for the other manifestation of multiculturalism of Azerbaijan in domestic policy, this is reflected as was above noted in the protection of the ethno-cultural values of all peoples living in Azerbaijan.**

Azerbaijan has historically been a tolerant state. Since the ancient times the territory of Azerbaijan has been populated by different ethnic groups. It has been a multiethnic state in which rights of persons belonging to national minorities have been respected by the state. Representatives of national minority groups have never been discriminated by the representatives of the titular nation.

Presently there are representatives of 30 ethnic groups in Azerbaijan. Rights and freedoms of national minorities are protected in the Constitution: Article 21 (2) “*State language*”; Article 25 (3) “*Equality Right*”; Article 44 (1,2) “*Right for nationality*” ; Article 45 (1,2) “*Right to use mother tongue*”; Article 47 (1,2,3) “*Freedom of thought and speech*” and others.

**For the first time in the post-soviet space** Azerbaijan adopted the law *“Protection of rights and freedom of national minorities living in the Republic of Azerbaijan. State support to development of their language and culture”* (16- IX-1992).

**Furthermore, the Republic of Azerbaijan is a party to** international conventions on protection of national minorities: the Council of Europe Framework Convention for the Protection of National Minorities (signed on February 1, 1995, ratified on June 16, 2000); UNESCO Convention on Protection and Promotion of the Diversity of Cultural Expressions (signed on November 26, 2009, ratified on May 15, 2010), International Convention on Elimination of All Forms of Racial Discrimination (adopted on May 31, 1996 by UN General Assambly) etc..

### **Socio-economic development of regions inhabited mostly by national minorities**

The Azerbaijani government gives special significance to projects aimed to socio-economic development of regions inhabited mostly by national minorities. For that purpose the following **Presidential Decrees** were signed: “The State Program on socio-economic development of regions of the Republic of Azerbaijan” (signed on February 11, 2004), “Action plan on socio-economic development of regions, including Lenkoran, Astara, Lerik, Masalli and Yardimli” (signed on eptember 14, 2005), “On adoption of action plan on socio-economic development of Guba, Gusar, Khachmaz, Siyazan and Devechi” (signed on August 3, 2005), “Supplementary action plan on socio-economic development of Shaki, Balaken, Gakh and Zagatala” (signed on June 1, 2006). In accordance with these decrees very significant projects have been realized in the socio-economic field, education, health, ecology, culture.

Also by other decrees of the President **State Programs** on socio-economic development of regions inhabited mostly by national minorities for 2004-2008, 2009-2013, 2014-2018, and 2019-2023 were adopted.

### **Organizations and cultural centers of national minorities**

There are many organizations and cultural centers of national minorities functioning in Azerbaijan. **These organizations play an important role in the solution of social-economic and cultural issues of national minorities as well as in their integration into the society.**

### **Media in languages of national minorities**

The Government of Azerbaijan sponsors **radio broadcasts** in Kurdish, Lezghin, Talish, Georgian, Russian and Armenian.

Ethnic communities of Azerbaijan publish their newspapers and journals.

### **Education in languages of national minorities**

According to the Article 42 of the Constitution of the Republic of Azerbaijan each citizen has the right to education. *The Law "On Education"* of the Republic of Azerbaijan defines the equality as one of the main principles of education. According to the Article 5.2 of the mentioned law the state guarantees providing equal opportunities for each citizen and does not tolerate any discrimination, regardless to gender, race, language, religion, political views, nationality, social status, background and state of health.

#### ***Here are some statistics on schools in national minority languages:***

There are above 340 comprehensive Russian schools, 10 comprehensive Georgian schools in Azerbaijan.

#### ***Education in languages of other national minorities***

Schools in Hebrew (1 school I- XI classes, 59 pupils)

Schools in Lezgin (101 schools I- IX classes, 13590 pupils)

Schools in Talysh (252 schools, primary classes, 20908 pupils)

Schools in Avar (19 schools primary classes, 1695 pupils)

Schools in Sakhur (4 schools primary classes, 585 pupils)

Schools in Udi (3 schools primary classes, 154 pupils)

Schools in Kurdish (1 school primary classes, 28 pupils)

Schools in Khinalig (1 school primary classes, 104 pupils).

Thus, in 382 schools above 37 000 persons belonging to national minorities learn their native language.

The Ministry of Education *opened vocational schools and colleges* in regions mostly inhabited by national minorities. The vocational schools play important role in employment of youth living in the regions. As for colleges they provide the regions with professional cadres specialised in the field of education, agriculture, tourism, communication technology, culture etc..

**The Department of Interethnic Relations, Multiculturalism and Religious Issues of the Presidential Administration** initiated the teaching of the course *"Introduction to Multiculturalism"* for undergraduate students and *"Azerbaijan Multiculturalism"* for graduate students as **mandatory courses** in all higher educational institutions of the country. In addition, the course *"Azerbaijani Multiculturalism"* is also taught in 21 foreign universities.

Textbooks on Lezghin, Talish, Kurdish, Tat, Avar, Tsahur native languages" (for the 2nd year), *"Talish Language"* (for the 3rd and 4-th years) have been published. *"On Teaching Talish language"*, *"Azerbaijani-Talish school dictionary"*,

“Lezghin-Azerbaijani-Russian dictionary”, “Methodology on Alphabet of Tat language” were published and distributed to schools as additional aid to teaching languages of national minorities. Textbooks on “Udin language” (“Nanay muz” for the 1-st, 2nd, 3rd and 4th years) were published in 2010-2016.

### **National minorities in state management**

There is no official statistical data on the number of national minorities employed in state management, because the Law of the Republic of Azerbaijan **does not specify** the necessity of including information about ethnicity of a citizen into his/her identity card. Nevertheless, it is obvious that ethnic minorities are well represented in legislative, executive and judicial branches of power. Absolute majority of national minorities are employed in government institutions in the regions densely populated by national minorities.

### **NGOs dealing with national minorities**

There are about 50 NGOs, national cultural centers, social unions and societies dealing with socio-economic and cultural issues of national minorities. These organizations have been applied for financial aid from the Council on State Support to NGOs under the President of the Republic of Azerbaijan.

For the 4-th Grant Competition in 2019 the Council financed 17 projects of NGO’s dealing with national minority issues. Total amount of money spent for the projects is 159 623 manat (93 620 USD).

These projects are aimed to preserve cultural heritage of national minorities, support activities of communities, sponsor anniversary events, host forums and congresses, encourage socio-economic development of national minorities, promote intellectual breakthrough, and arrange their rest and leisure time more effectively.

Alongside with local NGO’s the Council financed also projects of foreign NGO’s dealing with national minorities living in Azerbaijan. Here are some of such foreign NGO’s projects:

1. The European Jewish Society (Switzerland) worked on the project titled “Jewish life and culture of tolerance in Azerbaijan”. For the period of their work the representatives of the European Jewish Society conducted the field research in Azerbaijan exploring the life of the Jewish community in Azerbaijan. They prepared “The Last Jewish City of the World” video and demonstrated it on Jewish News One (JN1) channel. As another outcome of this Project there was hearings in the EU Parliament on the topic “Jewish life and culture of tolerance in Azerbaijan”;

2. Human rights Without Frontiers (Belgium) worked on the Project titled “Ethnic Diversity Management Model in Azerbaijan and Propaganda of Tolerance Culture as an Example of Coexistence”.
3. The Geneva Centre for Democratic Control of Armed Forces (DCAF) implemented the Project titled “Azerbaijani Multiculturalism and Shared Values of Secularism”.

Baku International Multiculturalism Centre (BIMC) has implemented the projects related to protection and development of cultures of national minorities. **In 2015 the Advisory Council was established in BIMC.** Among members of the Council are representatives of national and religious minorities. The main policy of the Advisory Council is to ensure efficient participation of minorities in the social and cultural life of the country. Also BIMC in its quarterly **journal “Multiculturalism”** publishes literary works of representatives of national minorities living in Azerbaijan.