

HUMAN DIMENSION IMPLEMENTATION MEETING
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Protection of human rights in Azerbaijan
and activities of the Ombudsman in this field

Mr. Moderator
Ladies and Gentlemen,

I would like to underline that legal reforms for efficient protection and promotion of human rights and freedoms in Azerbaijan as a secular, democratic and legal state are underway.

In the recent years, human rights reforms in Azerbaijan have become more profound, very significant legal norms, national action programs and strategies have been adopted. Those norms establish an effective protection of the rights of the marginalized group and facilitate to development of human rights situation. For example, the Law on the Rights of Persons with Disabilities (PWD) regulates the basis of state policy for PWD and identifies state obligations on protection of their rights, elimination of disability causes and all forms of discrimination against disability, rehabilitation of such persons, creating all conditions for their full participation and social integration in society, their active involvement in the decision-making processes of strategies and programs related to them, promoting full respect for and equal protection of their rights and freedoms, and regulate the relations emerging in the field of protection of their honor and dignity.

Another important legal document is the Law on Employment, which identifies legal, economic and institutional basis and state social security issues of the employed and those, who are seeking job.

Azerbaijan always focuses on the protection of child rights, healthy development as issues of state priorities. In terms of ensuring the age appropriate information for children, the Law on Protection of Children from Harmful Information, dated 30 October, 2018 regulates the protective

measures of children from harmful information and the relations emerging in this context.

In the recent years, one of the laws adopted in relation to the effective protection of human rights is the Law on Mediation, adopted on 29 March 2019. So, this Law regulates the public relations emerging in the organization of mediation as one of the alternatives to dispute resolutions and establishes purpose, principles, rules to implement and a status of mediators.

I'd like to note that the Commissioner of Azerbaijan closely participated in the drafting processes of the abovementioned legislative norms, regarding what, the Ombudsman also put forward her proposals, which have been also taken into consideration.

Furthermore, the Working Group, which includes also the Ombudsman, drafted the National Action Plan on Eliminating and Combatting Domestic Violence in Azerbaijan for 2019-2023, the National Action Plan on Gender Equality for 2019-2024, Azerbaijan National Strategy for Children for 2019-2029, which are expected to be adopted in the coming days.

As a result of the state policy and institutional public administration reforms made in Azerbaijan in last years, it has been created "ASAN Service" and DOST agency as national trends, which facilitate to transparent activity of state bodies, increasing citizen satisfaction and welfare of people. Currently there are 15 ASAN centers that enable citizens to save their time using all public services in one common place. Today ASAN Service in Azerbaijan equals to a citizens satisfaction.

The public-legal entity "Sustainable and Operative Social Security" (DOST Agency) and its centers, established on the basis of the Presidential Order on "Additional measures for Improve the management in the Fields of Employment, Labor, Social Protection and Security of Population" dated 09 August, 2018, and became the next national trend within a short period of time have a great role in increasing the quality of services to people in the fields of employment, labor, social protection and security, increasing transparency, application of innovations, speeding up the transfer to e-services, elimination of bureaucratic hindrances, and in increasing citizen satisfaction.

Currently, the first DOST Center intends to serve over 100 thousands of people in a year and in 26 different types of services, including employment, disability and social protection fields based on single window system. These services include pension and social insurance, social allowances and pensions, disability, medical expertise and providing with prosthetic-orthopedic means, social service and child adoption issues, labor relations, employment services, socio-legal, socio-pedagogical, socio-psychological, social services, bank and notary services. Thus, the Center allows citizens to benefit from all services of the competent ministry through

one single window. The citizens also will be provided with advice and information in relation to concerned questions . Also, on the basis of the citizens' phone or online requests, they will be served through mobile and other means.

Simultaneously, I avail myself of opportunity to share with you some good experiences of the Azerbaijani Ombudsman in the field of human rights protection.

The Azerbaijani Ombudsman is empowered to refer to the Constitutional Court and the Parliament to challenge the constitutionality of laws and to make recommendations on shortcomings in legislation with a view to check the inconsistency with human rights and freedoms, or whether those norms may violate the rights of citizens of Azerbaijan, improve the legislation by amendments or adopting new laws, ratifying international treaties, analyzing and reviewing the existed statutory laws and through improving human rights standards. Both powers are stipulated in the Constitutional Law and Constitution accordingly. Along flows of proposals made in the annual reports up to date, the Azerbaijani Ombudsman also recommends to adopt draft laws on “Juvenile Justice”, “Protection of Children from Corporal Punishment”; “Education of Elderly Persons”, “Reproductive Health”, as well as to ratify the Istanbul and Lanzarote Conventions.

The Ombudsman raises the legal awareness of the public by various means, including annual conferences, training-seminars, and the peer-to peer project. For example, the peer-to-peer project “Hierarchic Education on Child Rights” in secondary schools, child rights painting exhibitions, journalist essay competitions, publishing brochures, leaflets, books, manuals in child-friendly and accessible language, producing enlightening videos on child rights and victims of the war; child and human rights month-long campaigns, contributing to teaching “Human Rights”, “Introduction to Gender” at the university; public hearings in regions and annually giving opportunity to university students to have internship with the Ombudsman Office.

Azerbaijani Ombudsman in cooperation with international organizations, particularly with the UN and its specialized agencies and Secretariat (OHCHR) makes contributions to UPR mechanism by her complementary reports on UPR recommendations to the State; furthermore Ombudsman actively involved in preparation process of the State Report under UPR.

Azerbaijani Ombudsman Office is participating in CoE/EU Partnership Projects for Good Governance II (PGG) “Strengthening the Access to Justice through non-judiciary redress mechanisms for victims of discrimination, hate crime and hate speech in EP countries and in the Project on “Improving the efficiency and quality of the judicial system in Azerbaijan” as well as in the

CoE “Action Plan for Azerbaijan for 2018-2021”, which covers human rights issues of various categories of population, where the Ombudsman is indicated as one of the main partners.

The Ombudsman Office, Azerbaijan Bar Association and OHCHR jointly organized Capacity Building trainings on Increasing Knowledge and Skills in Monitoring, Evaluation and Accountability of CSOs and lawyers by use of UN Human Rights Mechanisms” in different districts of our country

Azerbaijani Government has created several Working Groups for the implementation of Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs) and Ombudsman Office staff is represented in each of the Groups. The Ombudsman is actively involved in implementation and preparation processes of two SDG Voluntary National Review Reports along with local NGOs.

Ombudsman Office regularly organizes annual international conferences of ombudspersons in Baku (which presently amounts to 16), accompanied by annual memorandums and declarations and which opened a space for exchanging human rights experiences not only theoretically, but also practically through visiting several important public authorities to get information about how to improve the quality of public services to citizens. Examples of such visits were conducted to DOST centers and “ASAN” services as innovative mechanisms for more accessible and effective network of public services to citizens

EU experts in the frame of the TAIEX and Twinning projects highly appreciated the human rights work of the Azerbaijani Ombudsman carried out in line with Paris Principles.

Thanks for your attention!