

**82nd session of the UN Committee on the Elimination of  
Discrimination against Women (CEDAW)**

*Geneva June 16, 2022*

**Dear Madam Chair,**

**Distinguished Members of the Committee,**

**Ladies and gentlemen,**

Today, on behalf of the Government of Azerbaijan, I am honored to present to you the Sixth Periodic Report submitted by Azerbaijan on the UN Convention on the Elimination of All Forms of Discrimination against Women.

This report was prepared by the Working Group on increasing the effectiveness of the cooperation with the UN human rights mechanisms.

The report reflects information provided by the relevant line ministries and State Committees, as well as the views of civil society as compiled Public Council of each respective government institutions.

We are represented here today with a high-level government delegation from all relevant Ministries and State Committees. The delegation is also supported by a highly-qualified team of professionals.

*The list of Azerbaijani delegation has been shared with you in advance.*

*PowerPoint presentation will be displayed with my introductory statement of which a printed version was shared with you.*

I would like to note that the concluding observations for the country positively impacted on the achievements in ensuring gender equality and eliminating all forms of discrimination against women over the past time. I thank you for this.

The activities in the country on **improving legislation** to ensure the rights of women, as well as **strengthening institutional mechanisms** have been continued during this period.

A 3-year National Action Plan (NAP) on the Prevention of Domestic Violence was approved in accordance with the Concluding Observations of the CEDAW Committee in 2020. We have done lots of activities within this NAP so far. In addition, a 10-year Children Strategy and a 5-year Action Plan on the implementation of the Child Strategy were also approved that year.

Raising awareness and strengthening inter-agency relations on eliminating gender stereotypes as well as improving legislation has also been on the main focus.

Thus, the Cabinet of Ministers approved the 2020-2025 Action Plan on the elimination of skewed sex ratio at birth.

In addition, “Rules for raising awareness among young people about the importance of family and marriage, the negative consequences of early marriage and consanguineous marriage in order to protect and strengthen it” paved the way to conduct effective measures in this field.

In 2020, a 4-year NAP to combat human trafficking was adopted.

Azerbaijani President approved a 10-year Employment Strategy in 2018 and a 5-year Action Plan for its implementation. The Strategy focused on forming a long-term state employment policy based on the determined economic priorities of the country.

In addition to the above-mentioned legal-normative acts, currently, we work on some important **draft documents**. These are the draft **NAP on Ensuring Gender Equality and the NAP for Ensuring Women Employment**.

Moreover, a draft NAP for the implementation of UN Security Council Resolution 1325 on “Women, Peace and Security” was also prepared.

The activities have been continued to strengthen the **institutional mechanisms** that were formed to ensure state gender policy.

Data from 11 Child and Family Support Centers that run under the State Committee for Family, Women and Children Affairs are on the presentation.

New buildings of the Child and Family Support Center were opened in three regions in 2019-21, and this year construction of a modern building will be started in recently liberated Aghdam district. These centers create more opportunities and offer community-based services for women in the regions.

As a result of recent economic and social reforms in Azerbaijan, **Agency for Development of Small and Medium Businesses** was established to take necessary measures in promoting the development of women's entrepreneurship activities.

The newly established **Social Services Agency** provides rehabilitation-oriented social services to vulnerable groups.

In 2021, the **Department of Social Rehabilitation for Victims of Domestic Violence** was launched at the Shelter and Social Rehabilitation Institution for Vulnerable People.

In addition, **3 Community Resource and 15 Women Resource Centers** provide employment and self-employment support services to women living in vulnerable and disadvantaged situations.

**Gender Commissions** have been established in municipalities to make systematic and coordinated work on gender issues.

"**Gender Azerbaijan**" e-portal was created for the people ensuring gender equality together with the German Agency for International Cooperation last year.

The measures such as adoption of NAP on prevention of domestic violence, as well as ratification of Lanzarote Convention and improving national legislation enable us to consider Istanbul Convention.

"Raising awareness of the Istanbul Convention and other gender equality standards in Azerbaijan" project is being implemented in

Azerbaijan by the Council of Europe. Government bodies, legal professionals, civil society and general public all benefit from this project.

The State Committee monitors gender equality and submits an annual report to the Parliament of the Republic of Azerbaijan in accordance with Gender (Men and Women) Equality Law. The Committee has already submitted two annual reports.

Azerbaijani Parliament has implemented important legislative reforms based on the Concluding observations of the CEDAW Committee. The Committee for Family, Women and Children Issues was established in the Parliament. In addition, our parliament works closely with international organizations on gender equality, violence against women and domestic violence issues.

**The Government of Azerbaijan takes important steps to improve women's access to justice.**

According to the Law of the Republic of Azerbaijan on “Advocates and Advocacy”, legal assistance is provided free-of-charge as needed.

In 2019, the State Committee, Azerbaijan Bar Association, and the UN Country Office in Azerbaijan signed a tripartite **Memorandum of Understanding** on the provision of legal assistance to the victims of domestic violence.

Recently Penitentiary institutions for women and juvenile prisoners have been constructed and modernized.

A hotline ‘860’ has been launched to accept calls on grounds of domestic violence jointly with the UNFPA.

*All government agencies have either “Call Center” or “Hotline” (21 Hotline and 22 Call Center).*

**Dear Committee members!**

I would like to emphasize that we do our best to increase the representation of women in elections by implementing various projects with regard to **gender equality, equal and balanced participation of women in social and public life.**

I want to inform you that a woman was appointed to the position of the First Vice-President of the Republic of Azerbaijan in 2017.

The newly elected speaker of Azerbaijani Parliament is also a woman.

*The number of women MPs and women in municipalities has increased since last report.*

In 2020, women prosecutors were appointed in two districts, and the number of women lawyers has tripled, reaching 18% in the last four years.

The Government of Azerbaijan undertakes concrete measures to promote women and girls' empowerment and their participation in public and political life in the rural and urban parts of the regions. NGOs are also involved in this activity.

During 2018-21, the Agency for State Support to NGOs of the Republic of Azerbaijan allocated around 1.4 million AZN to NGOs for the implementation of 200 projects.

In addition, "Curriculum for Gender Equality in Civil Service" and "Guidelines governing the activity of people in charge of gender equality" were published.

The Government of Azerbaijan has identified the **provision of quality education services** to the population, in particular women, as a strategic direction.

This year President approved a 5-year State Program for the Education of Youth at Prestigious Universities of Foreign Countries. I want to note that 30% of the applicants who won the scholarships in the previous State Program were women.

Increasing women's knowledge and their engagement in ICT grant easy access to education, employment and other services.

The first "Gender Equality Hackathon", organized and implemented jointly with international organizations such as EU, UNFPA and UN

Women. The hackathon aims to encourage and educate young people to develop innovative solutions to gender equality.

Just recently for the first time 'Teknofest Aerospace and Technology Festival' has been held in Azerbaijan. 40% of Azerbaijani participants were women and girls.

I also want to note that before publication, textbooks are evaluated on a variety of criteria, one of which is *Ensuring a sensitive approach to gender, race, ethnicity and religion*.

Meetings with high school students conducted by the government agencies and NGOs encourage girls to pursue careers in engineering and ICT as well as boys to pursue careers in education and culture. Meetings with parents are also organized in this regard.

**Dear Committee members,**

One of the key priorities of the state employment policy is to increase employment opportunities for women and to create conditions for their participation in the labor market.

The share of women in the total employed population is 48.3%. The share of women in the civil service is 27.5%.

Activities have also been carried out to increase the number of women in small and medium enterprises, and currently they account for 21.4% of individual entrepreneurs.

Measures have also been taken to **empower women in rural areas**. More than 270 women from 12 regions involved in agricultural activities receive information on agriculture, financial resources and enable their access to markets within the framework of the project of the FAO-Azerbaijan Partnership Program on "Improving women's economic empowerment".

**Azerbaijan Rural Women's Association** was established with the participation of women farmers operating in the villages of Azerbaijan in 2019.

Today there are 44 Women Development and Enterprise Groups in 16 regions with 540 women within the Association's project. These groups are equipped with training on financial literacy and business as well as life skills.

In 2020, we faced a global crisis caused by the spread of the **COVID-19 pandemic**, which resulted in the loss of life and serious negative consequences.

The Government of Azerbaijan took extensive measures to protect the health of the population, and most importantly, provided direct social support to the population during the pandemic. A socio-economic stimulus package worth **\$2.7 billion** was released in order to protect the health of the population and prevent the loss of jobs.

*Around 50% percent of population has received both doses of vaccines. I would like to specifically note that vaccination for target group is over 90%. During the pandemic, **13 modular hospitals** and **one regular hospital** were built, towards ensuring a resilient health system.*

Currently, COVID-19 restrictions were lifted in the country.

As you know, Azerbaijan promoted global solidarity in combating the pandemic. Holding a Special Session of the UN General Assembly and resolutions on ensuring equitable and universal access to vaccines are vivid examples of this.

Azerbaijani territories had been under 3-decade long Armenian occupation. This occupation seriously affected the internationally protected rights and freedoms of Azerbaijani women and children.

During a time of pandemic, 44-Day Patriotic War between Armenia and Azerbaijan ended with a historic victory of Azerbaijan and occupied territories of Azerbaijan were liberated. I should note that as a result of latest Armenian military aggression against Azerbaijan, 93 civilians, including 12 children and 27 women were killed.

*On the presentation you can see the damages, number of civilians who were taken as hostages, and missing people and uncovered mass graves in recently liberated areas of Azerbaijan.*

Azerbaijan considers the **advancement of women** as an important element of the maintenance of **international peace and security** and stresses the importance of a cross-dimensional approach on women peace and security agenda.

As the conflict is over, Azerbaijan entered into a new phase of post-conflict recovery, reconstruction and reintegration. In this time, peacekeeping, restoration and reconstruction works and the return of IDPs to their lands are an absolute priority for Azerbaijan.

Our country is ready to work together with relevant international partners, including the UN agencies that want to contribute to peace and stability in the region.

One main challenge for us is that our liberated territories are heavily mined. This poses a serious obstacle and slows down restoration and reconstruction plans of the Azerbaijani Government. Most importantly, it negatively impacts the realization of an inalienable right of hundreds of thousands of IDPs to return their homes safely and with dignity.

Although the territories were liberated, the number of civilian injuries and deaths as a result of regular mine explosions is increasing. Since the end of the conflict, about 200 people have become victims of mines.

The Government of Azerbaijan, including civil society organizations and international organizations worked with conflict-affected people to improve their psychosocial situation and provide them with legal assistance within the framework of a joint project.

Although the works have been done and positive results achieved, there is a great need for regular work on a number of existing issues which requires a long-term and comprehensive approach.

**Gender stereotypes, early marriage, sex-selective abortions** as the factors which slow down the process of ensuring full gender equality around the world, do also concern us.

Important activities are being carried out jointly with civil society in the field of combating stereotypes, ensuring equal opportunities, and promoting gender and culture equality, especially in the regions.



We conducted a study on the attitude of men to gender equality issues. Although the research shows that gender stereotypes still remain, it revealed a positive dynamic in ensuring gender equality.

Political parties organize regular meetings with gender focal points, NGOs, and human rights activists. We hold discussions about women's rights in the context of contemporary socio-political realities. I would also like to point out that the ruling New Azerbaijan Party has established a Department of Gender Issues which conducts awareness-raising events in the regions to combat gender stereotypes.

I would also like to inform you that a draft law has been prepared to provide 14-day unpaid leave for fathers on a paid basis.

New amendments have been prepared to Labor Code and relevant decision of Cabinet of Ministers to remove legal barriers to women's employment in Azerbaijan. With this a list of 674 hazardous professions and jobs for women will be decreased to 204. Even then these restrictions will only apply to pregnant women and women with children under one year of age in accordance with international standards.

Although the rate of early marriages has decreased, it has not yet been completely eliminated.

*We see a decrease in the number of early marriage cases and number of births to mothers under the age of 18.*

We use international experience extensively to implement gender policy with the support of international organizations. We implement projects in an area of preventing **sex-selective abortions**, giving value to girls in the family and society and combating gender-based violence.

I would also like to highlight two other important projects. These are "Economic Support for Entrepreneurship and Employment" project and EU-funded project on domestic violence.

All above-mentioned projects have a huge impact on increasing women's activity. This not only strengthens the legal framework for women's rights but also helps to increase our capacity and improve the work on women's empowerment in the regions.

In order to **provide women with quality medical services**, maternity hospitals in all regions, 17 specialized maternity wards and 137 women consultation centers currently operate in the country.

Azerbaijan ratified international documents on climate change, adopted a number of state programs, Development Concept, and National Strategy to ensure environmental integrity and sustainable development.

During the report period, Azerbaijani Government took important decisions to restore the liberated territories in ways that ensure sustainable development, and support investors who use environmentally friendly technologies and renewable energy sources in those areas.

In particular, "green" energy zone, "green" agriculture, "green" transport, "smart city", "smart village" plans in the liberated areas - will not only contribute to joint efforts to combat the effects of climate change at the regional and global levels, but also will affect the lives of people who return to these areas.

The Food and Agriculture Organization (FAO) implements a project on "Reduction of Food Loss and Waste in Region Countries". The main objective of the project is to contribute to the reduction of food loss and waste in national food systems and climate change.

Along with a part of state policy, multiculturalism displays as a stable way of life in modern Azerbaijani society. Azerbaijani President declared 2016 as the **Year of Multiculturalism**.

**Madam Chair,**

**Distinguished Members of the Committee,**

Today, state women policy in Azerbaijan is implemented in accordance with the country's commitments under international documents. Equal participation and opportunities for everyone is one of the main criteria for better development.

I would like to note that the above-mentioned activities are only a part of the efforts for the full implementation of CEDAW Convention which are

some examples that have been done for the implementation of the Convention. I also want to reiterate that we will continue to make every effort to eliminate all forms of discrimination against women.

I am sure that the discussions will be constructive and I want to assure you that the recommendations you will provide will help us to implement the Convention more effectively and fill possible gaps and problems.

In the end, on behalf of the Azerbaijani Government, I would like to reiterate that the Republic of Azerbaijan is ready for fruitful cooperation and constructive dialogue with the CEDAW Committee.

**Thank you for your attention!**