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Committee on Economic, Social and Cultural Rights

Fourth periodic report submitted by Armenia under articles 16 and 17 of the Covenant, due in 2019^{*, **}

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* The present document is being issued without formal editing.

** The annex to the present report may be accessed from the web page of the Committee.



Methodology

1. The Fourth Periodic Report of the Republic of Armenia (hereinafter referred to as “the Report”) is submitted in accordance with Articles 16 and 17 of UN International Covenant on Economic, Social and Cultural Rights (hereinafter referred to as “the Covenant”). The Report contains information on the measures taken during the time period of 2014–2019 aimed at implementation of provisions of the Covenant.
2. The Report presents the course of implementation of recommendations given to the Republic of Armenia by the UN Committee on Economic, Social and Cultural Rights (See E/C.12/ARM/CO/2-3).
3. For the purpose of preparing the Report, an Inter-Agency Working Group was established with the co-ordination of the Ministry of Foreign Affairs, wherein representatives of all the interested ministries and agencies were involved.
4. In the course of developing the Report, the Working Group co-operated with non-governmental organisations. A round-table discussion on the Draft Report was held with the participation of representatives of the interested non-governmental organisations. The opinions and proposals submitted by the latter were involved in the Report.

Introduction

5. The Republic of Armenia consistently supports the universal realisation of the right of peoples to self-determination as a fundamental principle of international law, which is stipulated in the UN Charter, two main Covenants and other documents (for more details, see also 2-3rd periodic reports of the Republic of Armenia, E/C.12/ARM/2-3).
6. The Republic of Armenia, as the guarantor of the security of Nagorno-Karabakh, seeks the recognition of the right of the people of the Republic of Nagorno-Karabakh (hereinafter referred to as Artsakh) to self-determination and fully supports the realisation of inalienable political, civil, social, economic and cultural rights of its people.
7. In April 2016, Azerbaijan unleashed a large-scale military aggression against Artsakh and during the four days carried out the same barbarism that took place in the early 1990s, when Azerbaijan tried to suppress, by military force, the will of people of Artsakh to live peacefully in its historical homeland on the basis of the right to self-determination. Azerbaijani aggression was accompanied by gross violations of international humanitarian law, torture of civilians and atrocities (see the detailed information on the events in the report of the Ombudsman of Artsakh, which was released at the 70th session of the UN General Assembly (<http://undocs.org/A/70/863>)).
8. In its previous report (see E/C.12/ARM/2-3 art.1 para.18) Armenia drew the attention of the Committee to the policy of economic blockade against Armenia and Artsakh by Turkey and Azerbaijan since 1993, in particular, to the fact of the unilateral closure of the land border of the country, which is a violation of UN Charter, the international law, including the Convention on Transit Trade of Land-locked states. There have been no positive developments in the reporting period and today 82% of land border of Armenia remains closed, including all roads, railways and pipelines connecting Turkey and Azerbaijan with Armenia. The blockade affects the economy, in particular, the growth of export of goods, pricing policy of imported goods, and has negative impact on exercise of human rights and fundamental freedoms, including freedom of movement and the right to development, as well as the implementation of the Sustainable Development Goals.

Reference to paragraph 7

9. In 2018, drastic changes occurred in the political life of Armenia. In spring 2018, a popular Velvet revolution took place in Armenia. Being a purely internal process, the Velvet Revolution served as a new impetus for reforms in the country, including the promotion and protection of economic and social rights. Early parliamentary elections were held in December 2018. All observation missions underlined the presence of broad public trust towards the electoral process and its results.

10. Elections of local self-government bodies, including those of the Council of Elders of Yerevan, took place in 2018. In October 2018, Diana Gasparyan, who was nominated by the Civil Contract Party, was elected mayor of the city of Etchmiadzin and the country's first ever female mayor.

11. The economic agenda of the newly-formed government included the following key issues: the necessity of implementing economic reforms, promoting private investments, reducing poverty through providing opportunities for employment and through education, improving the efficiency of public spending. As a result of the implementation of the programme the following achievements were recorded during 2018–2019.

Enhancing employment opportunities

12. 51.000 jobs have been taken out of the shadows; some of them are newly created jobs.

Solution of housing problem

13. AMD 5.7 billion have been allocated from the reserve fund to meet the housing needs of military pensioners, moreover, the obligations of the state regarding housing issue over beneficiaries living in marzes (provinces), will be fully fulfilled. These obligations will also be partially fulfilled for the beneficiaries living in Yerevan. 410 apartments have been gratuitously provided to servicemen and the families of killed servicemen by the right of ownership. In case of not providing contract servicemen with a rent-free apartment at the place of service, the amount of compensation for renting other living space has been increased by an average of 24%. 107 servicemen have been provided with apartments with the right of free use in newly constructed buildings.

14. About AMD 2.38 billion has been allocated from the reserve fund for the implementation of the measure "Providing an apartment to the graduates of orphanages". Within the framework of this programme, the process of providing certificates of purchase of houses to about 300 graduates of orphanages is being carried out, to which the state has had such an obligation since 2003. Moreover, beneficiaries of the programme will be involved in programmes provided for by the state annual programme of employment regulation.

15. In the framework of improvement of the demographic situation, the state budget envisages – from 1 July 2020 – allocation of AMD 526 million to young families with children for implementation of three housing assistance programmes. In the framework of the first programme, lump-sum financial assistance will be provided to 245 beneficiaries purchasing apartments in regional settlements, in the framework of the second programme, 540 beneficiaries will be provided with insurance premiums of insured amount in the amount of unpaid prepayment, and in the framework of the third programme, 300 families, who pay mortgage loans, will be provided with assistance conditioned by the birth of a child.

Raise in salaries/pensions/benefits/introduction of new support programmes

16. The salaries of military servants have been raised since 1 July 2019, and the salaries of teachers – since 1 September.

17. On 19 November 2019, the National Assembly adopted the bill on making amendments to the Law "On minimum monthly salary", which envisages raising the minimum monthly salary from AMD 55000 to AMD 68000, and raising the minimum hourly tariff rate of employees paid at work-based and hourly rate in case of normal duration of working hours – from AMD 330 to AMD 406. It is expected that, as a result of the raise in the minimum salary, the salaries of about 187,000 employees – about 57000 of which are employees in public sector and 130000 are employees in private sector – will be raised since 1 January 2020. As a result of changes made in the accumulative pension system since 1 July 2018, salaries of 209 thousand people have been raised: salaries of 200,000 people more will be raised as a result of the amendments made to the Tax Code. Salaries of more than 10.000 primary health care workers have been raised by almost 30% since 1 July 2018, then since 1 January 2019. 15000 primary healthcare state workers from Yerevan and marzes have been involved in the social package in terms of healthcare element alone.

18. Salaries of employees in a number of state universities have been raised.
19. Raise in salaries of public administration bodies has been done through bonuses. For example, a new system of monthly bonuses in the field of remuneration for work of officers of the Police, as well as a new system for evaluating the effectiveness of the work have been introduced, according to which police officers having demonstrated effective activeness in the works of crime detection and prevention, can receive bonuses exceeding two or three times their monthly salary.
20. For the purpose of excluding extreme poverty among pensioners/beneficiaries, the minimum pension threshold and the amount of benefits related with old age, disability or in case of loss of breadwinner, has been set equal to the line of food (extreme) poverty, since 1 January 2019. As a result, the pension/benefit of about 85000 pensioners and beneficiaries related with old age, disability or in case of loss of a breadwinner, have increased. The amount of the lump-sum benefit related with childbirth has tripled in case of birth of the second child, becoming AMD 150.000 instead of AMD 50.000.
21. As a result of the decision adopted by the Government, since 2020, about 100 people who have been subjected to domestic violence, will receive support of up to AMD 150.000.
22. The law “On identification and support of victims of trafficking in human beings and exploitation” has defined the right to receive lump-sum monetary compensation for victims of trafficking and exploitation, including for minor victims, as a type of support (Decision of the Government No 492-N of 5 May 2016). The money is provided upon the decision of the commission for identification of victims, after the completion of reintegration process, and amounts to AMD 250.000. In the budget of 2020, a proposal was made to expand (double) the cost of the socio-psychological assistance programme for victims of trafficking. It is planned to implement the programme completely with state funding.

Credit policy

23. As a result of legislative changes, the commercial banks of Armenia have been given an opportunity to forgive the fines and penalties for overdue loans of natural persons, as a result whereof the fines and penalties for overdue loans of about 20.000 borrowers amounting AMD 11.5 billion, have been forgiven so far.
24. As a result of changes made in mortgage programmes of “National Mortgage Company” and “Housing for Youth”, the volume of mortgage loans provided in 2018 exceeded the index of previous year by 20%, while the weighted average interest rates decreased by 1.3%, fluctuating around 10.5%.
25. On the initiative of the Government, loans of about AMD 1 billion 300 million provided on preferential terms to 303 repressed people and their first priority heirs, have been forgiven.

Investment promotion and other programmes

26. The programme “Engineering City” received funding of USD 10.5 million and was launched in 2018. In 2018, the number of actively operating ICT companies reached about 800, providing a 23% increase compared to 2017. In 2018, the turnover of the programming and services sector of Armenia amounted to about USD 730 million, the combined annual growth was 28%, and the number of people employed in the ICT sector reached 19 552, as a result whereof an increase of about 27% was recorded compared to 2017.
27. From now on, programmers from Armenia can sell the applications created by them in one of the largest markets, in the platform “Google Play”, which was impossible in the past. The list of beneficiaries of tax benefits in the field of information technologies has expanded, and now the start-up companies engaged in the production of electronic systems and computer animation enjoy tax benefits. Under the Law No HO-63-N “On making a supplementer to the Tax Code of the Republic of Armenia” adopted by the National Assembly of Armenia on 7 June 2019, since 1 July 2019, the import and (or) the alienation of electric cars has already been exempt from VAT.

28. In October 2018, a loan agreement of 50 million Euros was concluded between the European Investment Bank and the Central Bank to give credit to small and medium-sized enterprises. It is not a Government debt and is not included in the calculation of debt restrictions. The loan will be spent to provide credit to small and medium-sized enterprises.

Healthcare sector

29. According to the results of the monitoring carried out by the Ministry of Health, compared to 2017, in 2018–2019, the paid prices for cardiac stenting decreased by AMD 250 thousand, and a change was made in the programme “Stent for life” (cardiac stenting for free of charge), as a result whereof, according to the order of the Minister of Health of 29 June 2018, since 1 July 2018, instead of a non-medicated stent, a medicated stent is placed. In accordance with the Government Decision of 31 January 2019 “On Making Amendments and Supplements to the Decision of the Government of 4 March 2004”, the free of charge treatment programme for acute ischemic stroke was launched in February 2019, as a result whereof, as of February–November, 322 citizens received medical care for free of charge within the framework of the state order. According to the same decision, about 230,000 citizens involved in socially vulnerable and special groups have started using the improved hospital care package, including 17 types of the latest expensive services. The obvious change here is that the scope of the state order has been formed in such a way that the citizen does not need to make additional payments.

30. According to amendment made to the Decision of the Government of 2004, medical care for children aged 0–18 has been implemented within the framework of the state order, since 4 July 2019.

31. The operation on malignant tumours is performed for free of charge out at the expense of the state budget resources. 15 types of anti-tumour drugs for children have been purchased, ensuring the entire demand of the Republic. For patients with confirmed malignant oncological and haematological diagnoses, radiotherapy with intrauterine devices, with TERAGAM radiation device and ELEKTA electronic accelerator is carried out entirely within the framework of the state order, regardless of the patient’s social status.

32. In Armenia has been introduced sanitary aviation service.

33. Some activities have also been carried out in the field of disease control and prevention, in particular, in 2014 (Joint Order of the Ministry of Health No 617-A of 28 March 2014 and of the Ministry of Defence No 5-A of 01 April 2014), vaccinations of persons of pre-conscription and conscription age are organised and carried out in organisations carrying out medical assistance and service instead of vaccinations previously carried out in the assembly point of the Ministry of Defence.

34. According decision of the Government “On approving the National Immunization Programme of 2016–2020, the list of priority measures for national immunization, the National Vaccinations Schedule, the expected results of the National Immunization Programme and the form of the international certificate of vaccination or prevention” of 17 March 2016, the vaccinations against viral hepatitis B, rabies and seasonal flu among real groups have been included in the National Vaccinations Schedule.

35. In July 2016, within the framework of radical elimination of poliomyelitis, the inactivated polio (IP) vaccine was included in the National Vaccinations Schedule, and the live trivalent oral polio vaccine (1st, 2nd and 3rd serotypes) was replaced by a two-valent vaccine (1st and 3rd serotypes). In February 2019, the phased transition from pentavalent vaccine against pertussis, diphtheria, tetanus, DtaP, hemophilus influenzae and viral hepatitis B to six-valent vaccine against DtaP, poliomyelitis, hemophilus influenzae and viral hepatitis B was included in the National Vaccinations Schedule.

36. According to the Order of the Minister of Health of 2017, the human papillomavirus vaccine (HPV) was included in the National Vaccinations Schedule.

37. At the same time, comprehensive measures are being taken regarding infections constituting an essential problem in the field of public health, as well as for the purpose of preventing the introduction and the spread thereof.

38. Amendments were made to the Decision of the Government No 568-N “On defining the procedure for medical care and service using assisted reproductive technologies for free of charge or on preferential terms and defining the requirements for the beneficiaries” of 27 May 2015, by the Decision of the Government N 1048-N of 8 August 2019, within the framework whereof the procedure for medical care and service using assisted reproductive technologies for free of charge or on preferential terms and the requirements for the beneficiaries were defined, as well as the procedure for registration and scheduling of beneficiaries for the purpose of medical care and service using assisted reproductive technologies. According to that decision, in 2019, about 300 infertile couples, couples not having children will be examined and will receive treatment against infertility, including treatment with assisted reproductive technologies.

Education and Culture

39. As a result of the implementation of publishing and related programmes, libraries throughout the territory of Armenia have unprecedentedly been replenished with more than 25,000 units of modern and valuable literature. In 2018, a record number of books were sold in the bookstores of Yerevan.

40. The demolition of historical and cultural monuments has been ruled out. In 2018, the number of museum visitors increased by more than 121 thousand, compared to 2017.

Implementation of the UN Sustainable Development Goals

41. The Government of Armenia considers the implementation of the UN Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs) as one of the most important tools for implementing comprehensive internal reforms launched in Armenia. Since 2015, the country has actively carried out measures aimed at the establishment of substructures necessary for the implementation of the SDGs, such as National Council for Sustainable Development under the Prime Minister of Armenia, inter-agency working group for the SDGs nationalisation, an innovative platform – the National SDG Innovation Lab of Armenia. The latter is the first such innovative model in the world, where the Government and the UN jointly created a platform for supporting the SDGs acceleration and implementation. In the course of the SDGs implementation in Armenia, the country actively and successfully co-operates with international partners, with the UN in the first place (MAPS mission, the National SDG Innovation Lab of Armenia, UN Global Pulse), as well as with international development organisations, the world’s leading technology and innovation centres (Stanford University Changes Lab, Columbia University SIPA, etc.) thereby creating a broad scope for engaging the best experience and methodologies, as well as new and innovative SDG financing tools.

42. Simultaneously, for more comprehensive SDG implementation, the SDG Secretariat and the Statistical Committee developed and introduced the SDG Reporting Portal in 2017.

43. At the UN High-level Political Forum on Sustainable Development held in New York on 17 July 2018, former First Deputy Prime Minister of Armenia Ararat Mirzoyan presented the first Voluntary National Review of Armenia summarising the progress of implementation of the Agenda for Sustainable Development and its goals and targets (VNR). The Review considered the concept of national strategy, including sectoral strategies and policies, as well as its connection with the SDGs, in particular, inclusion of the following four dimensions of sustainable development: (1) social, (2) economic, (3) ecological, (4) democracy and legal equality. Main conclusions of the VNR relating to the SDGs implementation have been analysed thoroughly, including the fields where there is a progress, concern, good practice, innovations and opportunities for solutions (see also the First Voluntary National Review of Armenia http://un.am/up/library/SDG_VNR_Armenia.pdf).

Reference to paragraph 8

44. The fight against corruption is one of the priorities of the Government of Armenia, in particular, extensive work has been done in this area in recent years, and a number of achievements have been made.

45. On 25 September 2015, as a result of discussions with all the interested bodies (state institutions, non-governmental organisations, international organisations), the Government

of Armenia approved the New Anti-Corruption Strategy and the Implementation Programme for 2015–2018 thereof. The goal of the strategy is to prevent corruption in the country and to increase public confidence in state bodies, as well as to create zero tolerance for corruption in the country in accordance with international standards. The strategy is mainly aimed at the implementation of anti-corruption measures in the public administration system, the provision of proportionate responsibility for corrupt behaviour and the effective investigation of corruption crimes. 4 target spheres have been determined by the Strategy. These are the spheres of healthcare, education, state revenue collection, services provided by the police to the citizens.

46. On 16 December 2016, the National Assembly of the Republic of Armenia adopted a draft law of the Republic of Armenia on making amendments to the Criminal Code of the Republic of Armenia and the Criminal Procedure Code of the Republic of Armenia, which criminalised illegal enrichment. As a result of the mentioned amendment, the increase in the property and (or) reduction of liabilities of the person responsible for submitting a declaration during the reporting period, which significantly exceeds his/her legal income, will henceforth be considered illegal enrichment and will be subject to criminal liability.

47. In 2017, the Draft Law “On making amendments” and supplements to the Law “On Public Service” was adopted, under which the Commission on Ethics of High-Ranking Officials will be authorized to bring to administrative liability those declarant officials, who fail to submit declarations to the Commission on Ethics of High-Ranking Officials in compliance with the Law and according to requirements, manner and time limits prescribed by the Commission on Ethics of High-Ranking Officials.

48. As a result of legislative amendments, the framework of officials obliged to submit a declaration was increased, including all the prosecutors, investigators, persons holding highest and chief positions in special services, persons holding chief positions in the Penitentiary Service and the Judicial Acts Compulsory Enforcement Service, members of the Procurement Appeals Board and other officials.

49. In 2018, measures were taken to ensure the effective implementation of anti-corruption legislation. In particular, on 1 January 2018, the Law “On the System of Whistle-Blowing” entered into force, the goal whereof is to reveal cases of corruption, violations in respect of conflict of interests, rules of ethics, incompatibility requirements and other restrictions, declaration, other harms to public interests, to reduce and prevent corruption, to contribute to the formation of intolerant attitude of the public towards corruption. For the purpose of ensuring the implementation of the Law, the Decision of the Government No 272-N was adopted on 15 March 2018, and on 12 April 2018, the Decision No 439-N was adopted. A large-scale public awareness campaign has been conducted to raise public confidence in the whistle-blowing system and to inform the public about new legislative regulations. Currently activities are being carried out to create and operate a unified electronic whistle-blowing platform.

50. On 23 March 2018, the Law “On Public Service” was adopted, under which significant changes were made in the system of public service, including in the relations related to the anti-corruption sphere. In particular, the systems of declaration of property, income, interests have been reformed by the Law, the concept of conflict of interests, the requirements of the ban on accepting gifts have been clarified, the list of declarants has been expanded, the integrity system of public servant and persons holding public positions has been introduced, a position of an integrity affairs organiser has been envisaged in the staff management subdivisions of state and local self-government bodies. On 23 March 2018, the Law “On Civil Service” was also adopted, under which the process of appointing a position based on merits has significantly been improved.

51. The government, formed as a result of the velvet non-violent revolution that took place in Armenia in 2018, reaffirmed its strong political will to an uncompromising fight against corruption within the framework of the opportunities provided by law. As a result, it can be stated that systemic corruption in the country has been overcome. The oligarchy lacks leverage over Government decisions.

52. As a result of the activities of the inter-agency working group set up for the purpose of implementing the necessary measures for identifying the real owners of the metal ore

mining companies of Armenia, the following Draft Laws were developed by the Ministry of Justice and adopted on 23 April 2019 “On making amendments” and supplements to the Law “On State Registration of Legal Persons, State Record-Registration of Separated Subdivisions, Institutions of Legal Persons and Individual Entrepreneurs”, “On making amendments” and supplements to the Law “On Subsoil”, as well as “On making amendments” to the Law “On Public Service”, under which the concepts related to real owners, the procedure, time limits for registration of real owners, the scope of information recorded in the unified register on the legal person responsible for identifying the real owner, has been determined.

53. According to the decision of the Prime Minister of the Republic of Armenia N 808-N of 24 June 2019, the Anti-Corruption Policy Council was established under the presidency of the Prime Minister, the main purpose whereof is to discuss the priorities and solutions proposed designated for the fight against corruption and overcoming corruption, as well as expressing a position on policies, programmes, and draft legal acts contributing the prevention of corruption.

54. During 2018–2019, hundreds of criminal cases of corruption nature were initiated and investigated by the competent authorities within the framework of the fight against corruption. During this period, former President of the country, Deputy Prime Minister, Minister of Defence, former Chief of General Staff, Minister of Nature Protection, Chief of the Compulsory Enforcement Service of the Judicial Acts and other high-ranking officials were involved as accused in the criminal cases.

Reference to paragraph 9

55. The Government of Armenia, within the framework of complete introduction of the programme budgeting system, carried out the following activities aimed at ensuring legal and methodological grounds – developing human resource capacity, regulating institutional issues of practical introduction of programme budgeting in state bodies, developing strategic planning system, introduction of evaluation function of the programmes, improving costing functions of the programmes, development of performance audit within the framework of external audit. As a result, the Law “On the State Budget of the Republic of Armenia for 2019” was approved by the National Assembly in programme budgeting format, in accordance with the requirements of the Law “On the Budget System of the Republic of Armenia”, ensuring complete implementation of programme budgeting principles.

Reference to paragraph 10

56. It was stipulated *by the provisions of Chapter 7 of the Constitution* that in the Republic of Armenia, justice shall be administered only by courts, through a three-tier judicial system, and *the Supreme Judicial Council* acts as a guarantor of unimpeded implementation of this function. With the aim to guarantee the independence of courts and judges, Article 173 of the Constitution of Armenia envisaged the establishment of the Supreme Judicial Council as an independent state body. The Supreme Judicial Council is composed of five members with high professional qualities elected by the National Assembly, the representative body of the nation, from among academic prominent lawyers, as well as of five members elected by the General Assembly of Judges, the representative body of judicial power, from among experienced judges, as a result of election whereof the representation of all judicial instances is ensured.

57. The Supreme Judicial Council was formed in March 2018 and assumed its powers on 9 April 2018. The Supreme Judicial Council compiles and approves the list of judge candidates, including the promotion list of judge candidates, proposes judge candidates, the chairpersons of courts subject to appointment, including those subject to appointment by way of promotion, decides on the issue of secondment of a judge to another court, decides on the issue of giving consent to initiating criminal prosecution against a judge or depriving him or her of liberty in connection with the exercise of his or her powers, decides on the issue of imposing disciplinary action against a judge, decide on the issue of imposed termination of the powers of judges.

58. On 7 February 2018, the new Judicial Code of the Republic of Armenia was adopted. The provisions stipulating the independence safeguards of the courts have clearly been stipulated by Article 7 of the Judicial Code. In particular, when administering justice and exercising other powers provided for by law when acting as a court, as well as exercising rights stemming from the status of a judge, a judge shall be independent from state and local self-government bodies, officials, natural and legal persons, and shall not be accountable to anyone and, inter alia, shall not be obliged to give any explanations.

59. The newly formed Government of Armenia is determined to carry out radical judicial reforms aimed at ensuring the principle of equality before the law, and will contribute to the establishment of a truly independent, efficient and accountable judicial system with the aim of restoring public confidence in the latter. In this context, the Government is trying to implement the relevant legislative mechanisms, to identify the existing gaps and to address them.

60. For the purpose of ensuring strategic planning of judicial reforms and continuance of reforms, “Strategy of Judicial Reforms for 2019–2024 and the short-term, medium-term, and long-term action plans thereof” are currently in the processing phase with the involvement of civil society representatives and all stakeholders, by means whereof it is expected to strengthen the legal certainty, predictability of the legal system and justice, access to justice and efficiency, independence of judicial power, impartiality, quality justice, public accountability and ensuring the transparency. During 2020, the implementation of measures stemming from the Draft strategy and its short-term Action Plan for 2019–2020 is envisaged, including, the implementation of measures aimed at elaboration of the law “On Composition Procedure and Activities of the Fact-Finding Committee”, formation of the Committee, discussion and adoption of the document defining the composition and operations procedure of the Constitutional Reform Committee, elaboration of amendments and supplements to the Electoral Code of Armenia, adoption of draft packages on making amendments and supplements to the Constitutional Law “Judicial Code of the Republic of Armenia” and related laws, adoption of the new Criminal Code and the Criminal Procedure Code, the improvement of legislation in the areas of civil and administrative trial, bankruptcy, commercial arbitration, conciliation, advocacy, reforming of the legislation of the areas of the Prosecutor’s Office, law enforcement bodies, development of e-justice system. Currently, the Draft has been put up for public discussion on e-draft.am. In parallel, working discussions are being held with the participation of all stakeholders. The development of the Strategy and relevant Action Plan is carried out by the working group established by the order of the Minister of Justice, which consists of an equal number of representatives from civil society and from the Ministry of Justice.

61. Within the framework of Judicial Reforms, the mechanisms for assessment of integrity of judges is also being developed; in the context of the mechanisms for assessment of integrity of judges, the powers of the Supreme Judicial Council as a body assessing the integrity of a Judge, are being clarified; the legislative grounds necessary for exercising the assessment of integrity of judges, the mechanisms aimed at the improvement of the institution of declaration of judge’s property, incomes, expenses, interests, the mechanisms aimed at the introduction of the institution of confiscation of criminal property are being elaborated, in accordance with international best practices and standards, including through active co-operation with international experts.

62. The subject courses on economic, social and cultural rights have been included in the Curriculum of 2014–2019 of the Academy of Justice, which are aimed at the purposes of professional training of persons included in the list of contenders for judge candidates, annual training of judges, professional training of persons included in the list of candidates for prosecutors and annual training of prosecutors.

Reference to paragraph 11

63. Under the Law No HO-173-N adopted by the National Assembly on 10 September 2019 (entered into force on 19 October 2019), a supplement was made to the Labour Code of Armenia (Article 3.1), pursuant to which discrimination is prohibited by the labour legislation.

64. Every person has the right to free choice of employment. Every employee has the right to protection in case of dismissal from work without any justified reason (the grounds for dismissal from work are prescribed by law). It is prohibited to dismiss from work due to maternity reasons. Every employed woman has the right to paid leave in case of pregnancy and maternity. Every employed parent has the right to parental leave in case of birth or adoption of a child. The details are defined by the Law (points 1–3 of Article 57).

65. It is also defined that forced or compulsory work is prohibited. Forced or compulsory work is not the work performed by a convicted person, military or alternative service, any work required in case of emergency threatening the life or well-being of the population (point 5 of Article 57).

66. Among the objectives of the labour legislation, the definition of the state guarantees for employment rights and freedoms of natural persons, i.e. citizens of Armenia, foreign nationals and stateless persons, is stipulated by the Labour Code of Armenia, (point 1 of Article 2). Among the main principles of the labour legislation, legal equality of parties to employment relations irrespective of their race, national origin, origin, nationality or other circumstances, is prescribed.

67. The new Law “On Social Assistance” (HO-231-N) was adopted on 17 December 2014 and entered into force on 1 January 2015, pursuant to Article 18 whereof every person residing in Armenia – citizens of the Republic of Armenia, foreign nationals and stateless persons having the right to reside (a residence permit) in the Republic of Armenia, as well as persons with a status of refugee – has the right to social assistance in case the grounds prescribed by law pertain. For exercising the right to social assistance in accordance with the procedure established by this Law, no discrimination is established depending on the person’s gender, race, religion, geopolitical views, etc.

68. The Draft Law “On Ensuring Equality before the Law” was developed by the Ministry of Justice. The Draft was submitted to the expert opinion of OSCE/ODIHR and on 15 July 2019, was put up on the site e-draft.am for the second time for public discussion, addressing the proposals presented by the international expert results.¹ The purpose of the Draft is to ensure equal opportunities for implementation of the rights and freedoms of every individual and citizen irrespective of sex, race, colour of skin, ethnic or social origin, genetic features, language, religion, worldview, political or other views, belonging to national minority, property status, birth, disability, age or other personal or social circumstances. It is envisaged to guarantee the equal opportunities for implementation of the rights and freedoms of every individual in the Republic of Armenia, improve the legislation in the field of combating discrimination, ensure the legal grounds for prevention of discrimination, those of legal and judicial protection of them by this Draft. The definition of discrimination is provided in the Draft, according to which, discrimination is an action, inactivity or regulation that has been manifested by differentiation, exclusion, limitation of or preference towards person’s rights and freedoms, without objective grounds and a reasonable proportionality between the legitimate aim pursued and means selected, based on one’s sex, race, colour of skin, ethnic or social origin, genetic features, language, religion, worldview, political or other views, belonging to national minority, property status, birth, disability, age or other personal or social circumstances, actual or perceived.

69. Prohibition of discrimination in economic activities is defined by Article 13 of the Draft, pursuant to which:

70. Discrimination is prohibited in economic activities, including in the following cases:

- (i) Registration of a legal person or individual entrepreneur;
- (ii) Tax and credit policy;
- (iii) Inspections and supervision;
- (iv) Suspension, termination and liquidation of a business.

¹ <https://www.e-draft.am/projects/1801/about>.

71. The Draft Law of the Republic of Armenia “On Ensuring Equality before the Law” is currently in the phase of public discussion and after summing up the opinions, it will be submitted to the Government.

72. Pursuant to Part 1 of Article 5 of the Law “On Foreigners”, in the Republic of Armenia, foreigners (pursuant to Article 2 of the same Law, also the persons who are not citizens of Armenia and hold the citizenship of another State (foreign citizens) or do not hold the citizenship of any State (stateless persons)) shall have the rights, freedoms and obligations equal to those of the citizens of Armenia, unless otherwise provided for by the Constitution, laws, and the international treaties of Armenia.

73. Under the Law of the Republic of Armenia “On Employment”, citizens of Armenia, foreign nationals and stateless persons residing in Armenia have the right to choose between being employed or being unemployed, except for the cases defined by laws of the Republic of Armenia (Part 1 of Article 3).

74. Employment of foreign nationals and stateless persons having the right to reside (a residence permit) within the Republic of Armenia is regulated by the Law “On Employment”, by other laws of Armenia and by international agreements. State employment regulation of citizens of Armenia, foreign nationals and stateless persons residing in the Republic of Armenia is carried out through social security (Parts 2 and 3 of Article 3).

Reference to paragraph 12

75. The draft laws regulating the field of disability are currently being reviewed and amended by the Ministry of Labour and Social Affairs, with an aim to bring them in line with the provisions of the Convention “On the Rights of Persons with Disabilities”, taking into account also the final observations of the Committee on the Rights of Persons with Disabilities No CRPD/C/ARM/CO/1 of 8 May 2017. The draft laws should stipulate principally new and equitable approaches to ensuring the rights of persons with disabilities and promoting their inclusion in various areas of life.

76. The Draft law “On Rights of Persons with Disabilities” is being elaborated. Under the Draft, discrimination based on disability is prohibited. “Discrimination based on disability” means any differentiation, exclusion or limitation because of a disability, the goal or result whereof is manifestation of a less favourable attitude in political, economic, cultural and/or any other field, and/or prohibition or refusal of the recognition and (or) the exercise of any right defined by the legislation on equal grounds with others. “Discrimination based on disability” includes also refusal of provision of reasonable adjustments.

77. “Complex programme of Social Inclusion of Persons with Disabilities for 2017–2021” was approved by the Government on January 12, 2017. Clear measures have been stipulated by the complex programme aimed at ensuring equal conditions for persons with disabilities and their social inclusion.

78. The measures include all spheres of public life and are aimed at providing access to vehicles, educational institutions, and buildings of social importance, the realisation of educational, employment rights and the right of persons with disabilities to information, as well as the promotion of employment.

79. According to the regulations of Article 20 of the Law “On Employment” (adopted on 11 December 2013 and entered into force on 1 January 2014), the requirement for normative standard (hereinafter referred to as “a quota”) of compulsory provision of positions for employing persons with disabilities and persons not having reached the age entitling the receiving of an old-age pension by state administrative institutions and community administrative institutions, the Central Bank of Armenia, state non-commercial and community non-commercial organisations, occurs at an average annual rate of 3% of the organisation’s employees, and the quota requirement for non-governmental organisations, except for community administrative institutions and community non-commercial organisations, occurs at an average annual rate of 1% of the organisation’s employees.

80. The above-mentioned regulation has been in force since 2015, but due to problems arisen in law-enforcement practice, it is not in force now. Further work in this direction is under discussion.

81. Rights of persons with disabilities are ensured by the Law “On Social Protection of Persons with Disabilities in the Republic of Armenia”, it is particularly prescribed by Article 17 that for the purpose of exercising creative and productive capacities of persons with disabilities and in accordance with individual rehabilitation programmes they shall be provided with the right to work in enterprises, institutions and organisations with common working conditions, specialised enterprises (including those of educational and practical internship), production sites and local areas which use the work of persons with disabilities, as well as with the right to engage in entrepreneurial and other activities not prohibited by law. The refusal to conclude a contract with a person with disability or grant a promotion thereto, the dismissal thereof from office and transfer to another work, on the ground of the disability and at the initiative of the administration, shall not be permitted, except for the cases where in accordance with the opinion issued by medical and employment expert examination bodies his or her health condition hinders the performance of professional duties or threatens the health and employment safety of other persons. Administration shall not be permitted to dismiss from office persons undergoing medical, professional and social rehabilitation at relevant institutions.

82. Pursuant to Article 259 of the Labour Code, the safety and healthcare of disabled employees is guaranteed by laws.

83. Guarantees for defining incomplete working time (based on medical conclusion), upon the request of a person with disabilities, those for engaging in overtime work only on their consent, provision of unpaid leave and other guarantees are prescribed by the Labour Code. It is prescribed that the employees taking care of an ill or disabled person at home, as well as the employee with chronic diseases the exacerbation of which depends on the conditions of the atmosphere shall be granted annual leave at the time of their choice, on the basis of the medical conclusion.

Reference to paragraph 13

84. In recent years, major steps have been taken towards achieving gender equality and empowerment of women. Women have been at the forefront of revolutionary transformations in 2018, acting as guarantors of peaceful and lasting change.

85. Enhancement of the role of women in the legislative body is obvious: gender-sensitive quota was set in the Electoral Code of the Republic of Armenia (the quota was increased for 10 percent as compared to the previous one) adopted on 25 May 2016 (entered into force on 1 June 2016), which are aimed at increasing the representation of the women in legislative power. A requirement of including 25 per cent women in the electoral lists of political parties, alliances participating in parliamentary elections has been set, which is envisaged to reach 30 per cent by 2021. As a result of elections of the National Assembly on 9 December 2018, 32 of 132 deputies or 24 per cent of the deputies of the National Assembly are women. Women in the composition of the National Assembly of Armenia of the previous convocation made up 18 per cent.

86. By Decision of the National Assembly of Armenia of 14 February 2019, the programme of the Government of Armenia was approved, according to which “Diversification of economic opportunities of women, as well as creating favourable conditions for enjoyment of equal rights and equal opportunities for women and men will be the focus of the Government.” Currently, the draft Action Plan deriving from the above-mentioned Programme is in the stage of development.

Legislation

87. The principle of equality between women and men is widely reflected in the legislation of Armenia. Armenia has ratified almost all gender-related international legal acts, and as a party to these treaties has undertaken certain obligations to ensure that its own domestic law and practice are consistent with international human rights documents.

88. The main law of the country providing the guarantee of the legal equality of women and men, the Constitution of Armenia (entered into force on 22 December 2015), sets out new provisions, in particular, according to Article 29: “Discrimination based on sex or social circumstances shall be prohibited.”, according to Article 30: “Women and men shall enjoy

legal equality”, according to sub-point 4 of Article 86, one of the main objectives of state policy is “promoting actual equality between women and men”, which provides the opportunity for introducing more viable mechanisms and developing policies and programmes.

Policy

89. Currently, with the purpose of ensuring the sustainability of gender policy in the country, a draft decision of the Government “On approving 2019–2023 Gender Policy Strategy of the Republic of Armenia and the Action Plan” was developed and circulated. It was also submitted for public discussions, as a result of which the elaborated version was submitted to the Office of the Prime Minister. The Decision of the Government of the Republic of Armenia “On approving 2019–2023 Gender Policy Strategy of the Republic of Armenia and the Action Plan” (hereinafter referred to as “the Strategy”) was approved at the session of 19 September 2019. The Strategy establishes the priority areas of the state policy for ensuring equal rights and opportunities for women and men, including fighting stereotypes, and is aimed at creating favourable conditions for realising the rights and opportunities of women and men in all the fields of social life, taking into consideration international obligations undertaken by Armenia. Within the scope of the Strategy, the goals aimed at resolving sectoral problems and the expected outcomes were identified respectively.

90. To guarantee women’s political participation, the UNDP jointly with the Ministry of Territorial Administration and Infrastructure, has implemented “Women and local democracy” project in 2015–2019. The goal of the project was to promote women’s leadership and gender equality in Lori, Tavush, Syunik and Vayots Dzor marzes of Armenia, providing wide knowledge and mechanisms necessary for gradual enjoyment of women’s rights at the local level. Within the framework of the project:

- 1400 women and 197 men were trained on the topics of leadership, local self-governance, gender equality, participative democracy and co-operation;
- 1009 women received pre-election assistance and 95 women received post-election assistance. 24 women members of the Council of Elders participated in the Leadership School, after which they implemented 4 small grant programmes aimed at enhancing the direct democracy and increasing participation of women;
- 121 women beneficiaries were nominated for the elections of the local self-government bodies, of which 89 were elected;
- As a result of “I am the community” camp, a network of 132 young people was created, who carried out 53 small-scale initiatives aimed at the issues of enhancing direct democracy and increasing participation of women in 32 communities;
- 122 representatives of the local self-government bodies received training on gender equality topic within the context of regional development;
- Thematic materials and researches on gender equality and participation of inhabitants were prepared, which were submitted to the counterparts implementing administrative and territorial reforms;
- Five new instruments for involving the population and evaluating community services were developed and piloted in Vanadzor, Vayk, Goris, Yeghegnador, Zarithap and Sisian communities, of which four were led by women;
- SMS-survey tool has been introduced, which helps the multi-settlement community administrations of Goris, Areni, Jermuk and Tatev to ensure involvement of the population in setting priorities for the community issues.

91. Apart from that, within the framework of a state programme, women politicians had the opportunity to carry out small grant programmes aimed at raising public awareness, capacity building and increasing participation of population in the communities. Information on the number of grant programmes implemented by women politicians starting from 2015 and on the general population having participated in those programmes is given below.

<i>Number of workshop participants</i>	<i>Number of small grant programmes</i>		<i>Number of participants of small grant programmes</i>
25	2015	7	1 082
27	2016	7	832
25	2017	10	1 220
25	2018	7	1 000
102	Total	31	4 134

92. Participation of women in decision-making in press, including information and communication technologies, is rather high, which is due to the fact that the editors of journals and newspapers are women, with high level of involvement of women among journalists, as well as the fact that the press secretaries of the state bodies and the heads of the newsrooms are women as well.

93. One of the peculiarities of the field of information and communication technologies of Armenia is the involvement of women in the professional field. According to the survey and the data collected by Enterprise Incubator Foundation, involvement of women and girls in the field in 2018–2019 made up 37 per cent. With this indicator, Armenia holds the fourth place. The indicator is gradually increasing due to encouragement of the organisations and because of the created conditions in the field, in particular combining the work and the family, paid maternity leave, creating mother and childcare corners in the companies. High professional capacities and skills are of first priority in the field of information and communication technologies. A circumstance and a factor contributing to the development of professional, entrepreneurial and leadership skills of women in the field is also the number of women and girls studying and teaching in the higher educational institutions of natural sciences, technical higher educational institutions and scientific and research centres.

94. Wide public awareness campaigns and actions aimed at appreciation of a female child, public awareness on the issues of violence against women have been also held in social networks. Among such public awareness campaigns can be mentioned the annual composition contests for men on the topic of “My daughter and my wife is my friend” being organised by the United Nations Population Fund in Armenia and Mediamax media-company starting from 2015.² A number of events aimed at increasing gender sensitivity among mass media are included in the Gender Strategy, as it is known that the mass media are the most important institutions reproducing and reinforcing stereotypes and they contribute to formation of discriminated perceptions of social roles of women and men, rules of conduct, subsequently a systemised work with a developed specific policy must be carried out.

95. Trainings on human rights, women’s rights, combating domestic violence and other issues were conducted for the representatives of mass media mainly by the NGOs or with funding of international organisations.

96. Starting from 2016, wide media coverage process is conducted within the framework of 16 Days of Activism against Gender Based Violence Campaign every year in the period of 25 November–10 December. For example, in autumn 2017 a series of programmes were broadcast via “Yerkir Media” TV channel within the framework of 16 Days of Activism against Gender Based Violence Campaign, in the course of which key issues regarding gender equality were discussed. On 25 November 2019, within the framework of 16 days, Minister of Labour and Social Affairs Zaruhi Batoyan had a press conference.

97. Starting from 2014, a co-operation between the Ministry of Defence and the UNFPA³ started, within the framework of which initiatives of involving women in different units of the Armed Forces (including units participating in peace-keeping missions), a number of events and programmes aimed at formation of the culture of protecting women’s rights and ensuring equal opportunities in the defence system, as well as those promoting women’s participation in policy-making and decision-making in the defence system were undertaken.

² https://www.mediamax.am/am/news/husbands_wives/20707.

³ <http://mil.am/hy/news/6261>.

98. Legal obstacles preventing involvement of women in the system of defence of Armenia and promoting them, in particular in military service were studied and eliminated. Currently, legal guarantees are stipulated and ensured by the legislation for women and men with regard to having equal rights and obligations with regard to receiving military professional education, joining public service in the system of defence, joining the service in the military forces, appointing to a position, re-qualification, promotion, payment, health, rest and other actions related to the service.

99. 2019–2021 National Action Plan on implementation of the UNSC Resolution 1325 on Women, Peace and Security and Timetable for its implementation was approved by the Government of 28 February 2019.

Institutional mechanisms

100. Guarantees for ensuring political, civil, social, economic, cultural rights, equal opportunities for women and men and regulations for relations arising with regard thereto are established by the Law “On equal rights and equal opportunities of women and men”. Exclusion of discrimination is defined as a principle of gender equality policy (point 3 of part 1 of Article 4 of the Law).

Reference to paragraph 14

101. The Programme of the Government formulated as a result of Velvet revolution taken place in April–May 2018, attaches special importance to ensuring inclusive economic growth, job creation and poverty eradication.

102. Attaching importance to the social implication of the economic development, the Government took consistent steps aimed at introduction of inclusive economic model, encouraging business initiatives and labour, as well as improving social conditions of certain groups of the society. In 2018 – 40.8 per cent growth in processing industry, in particular in the volume of production of clothing and 77,0 per cent growth in production of textile articles was recorded. In 2018 – 65.4 per cent growth in the import of textile production was recorded. In the same period of time, 9.8 per cent growth in added value of, as well as 4.5 per cent growth in construction volume was recorded. The mentioned indicators contributed also to the employment growth.

103. 16 projects regarding VAT deferral and 34 projects regarding the customs duty relieve were approved in the post-revolution period. Within the framework of the approved projects, it is envisaged to create 2763 job places, of which 1604 are already created.

104. By the Decision of the Government No 442-N of 27 March 2014, 2014–2025 Prospective Development Strategy of Armenia aimed at ensuring economic growth, creating quality job places was approved. Apart from the toolkit, the economic policy stipulated by the Strategy includes a number of framework policies, such as improving the quality of business and investment environment, promoting investments, promoting competition and preventing the abuse of monopoly and dominant position of economic entities and effective control, enhancing financial mediation, reducing shadow economy. Consequently, it is expected to reduce shadow economy, strengthen the culture of self-calculation and payment of taxes by the taxpayers, ensure fair and competitive economy.

105. At the same time, of four priorities set by the Strategy, the first one is the expansion of employment, moreover, expansion of formality degree of non-agriculture employment is envisaged, reaching 80 per cent in 2021, 83 per cent in 2025 instead of 73 per cent in 2011. Increase in the level of employment formality will be conditioned both by improvement of tax administration and reformation of the norms regulating the relationship between the employees and employers in the Labour Code of Armenia.

106. Point 5.2 (Poverty reduction, social assistance) of Section 5 (Free, decent and happy citizen) of the Government Programme of Armenia approved by the Decision of the Government No 581-A of 1 June 2018 stipulates that the social security shall be of primary significance in terms of the feeling of dignity and happiness and among other priorities, the significant improvement of the living standards of the population, continuous employment growth, real salary raise, preventive measures against the risks causing poverty will be among

highest priorities for the Government. And in point 6.2 (Fighting the shadow, increasing state revenues) of Section 6 (Continuous development of economy) of the same programme it is mentioned that the shadow economy is another factor hampering the economic development. It is also mentioned that with the purpose of ensuring competitive conditions in the business environment, the Government has set an objective to reduce shadow economy.

107. Accepting the importance of decent work, on 14 May 2019, ILO and tripartite partners in Armenia jointly developed and signed 2019–2023 “Decent Work” Country Programme (DWP), which defines the priorities for co-operation between the ILO and the Republic of Armenia, the main outcomes and implementation strategies for a 5-year perspective. ILO promotes decent work as the main component of development policy and at the same time as the goal of the national policy of the Government and social partners.

108. Both national sectorial strategic programmes and priorities, as well as 17 goals of Sustainable Development included in “Transforming our world: the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development” approved by the Heads of States of the world at the UN International Conference on Sustainable Development in September 2015 in New York (which also includes “gender equality: achieve gender equality and empower all women and girls”, “decent work and economic growth: promote sustained, inclusive and sustainable economic growth, full and productive employment and decent work for all”) and UN development assistance framework served as a basis for developing the “Decent Work” Country Programme.

109. Improving the mechanisms regulating legal aspects of labour relations are envisaged as a priority by the “Decent Work” Country Programme and it is expected to develop the capacities of the Government and social partners in respect with facilitating the transition to formalisation, for the fulfilment of which it is envisaged that the Government will continue taking steps to reduce informal economy, to develop a policy which would facilitate the transition to formal employment through structural changes, improvement of educational knowledge, identification and registration of non-registered employees and making it compliant with international norms.

110. The following key direct outputs are expected:

111. Raising public awareness and exchange of knowledge regarding informal economy, application of international best practice contributing to transition to formal economy and taking actions:

- With the assistance of the ILO, diagnosing the informal economy in the country by partners;
- With the assistance of the ILO, regulating the problems of entrepreneurial activities in the country by partners;
- Based on the diagnosis carried out in the country, developing tripartite proposal-recommendations with regard to the policy contributing to the transition of formal economy;
- Training tripartite partners dedicated to making the transition to formal employment easy (pursuant to ILO recommendation No 204);
- Technical assistance to tripartite partners: developing and implementing services facilitating the transition to formal economy, stipulating the principle of equality for women and men.

112. Within the scope investment programmes submitted by organisations and individual entrepreneurs, the advantage of postponing the time limit for payment of value added tax amounts calculated by customs and tax authorities in case of importing goods, where the investment programmes submitted by the economic entities also include information on the planned number of the employees (the process has been later regulated in accordance with part 1 of Article 79 of the Tax Code of the Republic of Armenia and the procedure approved by point 1 of the Decision of the Government of the Republic of Armenia N 1225-N of 5 October 2017). In particular, in 2014–2018, within the scope of 77 investment programmes, as a result of postponing for three years the time limit for payment of value added tax amounts

calculated by customs and tax authorities in case of importing goods 3348 job places were created.

(For the statistical data in the employment sector and the statistics regarding the employed in the informal sector, see Annex 1)

Reference to paragraph 15

(See statistics on distribution of salaries in Annex 2)

113. The Labour Code of Armenia also stipulates that men and women receive equal remuneration for the same or equivalent work (part 2 of Article 178). Concerning the observations on horizontal and vertical gender segregation, as well as on the gender pay gap, we hereby note that:

- The gender gap (horizontal (choice of profession, segregation based on professions and fields of employment) and vertical (less access of women to economic resources and to decision-making process, unequal access of career growth)) is a serious problem and exists both throughout the world and in Armenia: for the purpose of resolving the existing problem the priority steps recommended by the EU aimed at reducing the gender gap were studied. According to the surveys, upon implementation of measures comprising 7 groups the gender pay gap may be reduced. Those measures are as follows:
 - Intervention by the Government: even though the Equal Pay Act has been in force since 1963 there are still problems with regard to the implementation of that document. Female employees have to invoke the legal acts as to being discriminated against. To this regard, the Government is an institution that may assist to resolve the problem and to eliminate the gender pay gap. One of the recommended steps is the provision (publication) of information on the amount of salaries paid for men and women. That will compel the organisations to ensure fairer conditions for the remuneration;
 - Providing paternity leave: to enable fathers to take paternity leave (childcare leave). It makes the workplace more flexible and enables women to return to work;
 - Providing subsidies for childcare: it is a major problem for families with low income to hire a childminder for childcare, therefore the services providing childcare at state institutions must ensure childcare after the end of paid leave;
 - Organising education (mentoring) programmes: organising education programmes for women in order to develop negotiation skills on working conditions;
 - Ensuring transparency of salaries: the possession of data on the amount of salaries for different jobs enables not only women but also all employees to receive equal and fair remuneration and to ensure conditions therefore;
 - Enhance women's negotiation skills to promote pay equity;
 - Promoting female entrepreneurship: this measure will also enable to reduce the gender pay gap.

114. Each year the statistical booklet entitled as "Women and Men of Armenia" is published by the Statistical Committee, in a separate section whereof the data on salaries of women and men are published as of the types of economic activities, the institutional sectors of the economy, etc.

115. According to Article 173 of the Labour Code of Armenia, leave for taking care of a child under the age of three is granted both to the mother (step-mother) and to the father (step-father) of the family, who are actually taking care of a child. The State pays benefit to the guardian of a child under the age of two during that period of leave.

116. As a rule, the children are admitted to the pre-school education institution from the age of 2 or 3. The number of such services will sharply increase from 2020, since the measure

entitled as “Providing daily care services to children, including those with disabilities” is included in the 2020–2022 Medium-Term Public Expenditure Framework approved upon the Decision of the Government N 900-N of 10 July 2019, within the scope whereof services will be provided to the children aged 2 to 18.

117. As a new state programme for regulation of employment, the Programme For Organising Vocational Education With the Employer for Young Mothers, who are non-competitive in the labour market or lack any profession has been introduced since 2018: upon the Decision of the Government N 1616-N of 4 November 2019 amendments were made thereto, as a result of which the beneficiaries of the programme will be considered to be mothers who are non-competitive in the labour market, irrespective of their age and the fact of access to labour market for the first time.

118. The Law “On Employment” prescribes the right of assistance of persons, being on leave for taking care of a child under the age of three and seeking employment, to organise the care of a child in parallel to work in case they return to work before two years elapse. After 1 July 2020, it is envisaged to provide for a lump-sum childbirth benefit in the amount of AMD 300 000 instead of the amount of AMD 50 000 and AMD 150 000, if the child is the first or the second child born. From 1 July 2020, an amount of AMD 25 500 is provided for as a childcare benefit for children under the age of 2 instead of the amount of AMD 18 000, for employed parents. On 1 July 2020 and thereafter in rural areas irrespective of whether or not the parent is employed, in case of birth of a child the childcare benefit in the amount AMD 25500 will be granted and paid before two years elapse.

119. Each month the Statistical Committee publishes data on the average salaries in the economy of Armenia (as of institutional sectors of the economy, types of economic activities, types of organisations, etc.).

120. It should be also noted that according to the data having been published in the statistical booklet entitled as “Women and Men of Armenia – 2017, 2018” of the Statistical Committee, the difference of nominal average monthly salaries (earnings) have been decreased by 8.3 percentage points over the past ten years within the period of 2007–2017 (by 7.2 percentage points – within the period of 2006–2016).

121. In 2017 the average earnings of women in Armenia constituted 67.5 per cent (in 2016 – 66.4 per cent) or the gender pay gap (the difference of nominal average monthly salaries of men and women as compared to nominal average monthly salaries of men) constituted 32.5 per cent (in 2016 – 33.6 per cent).

122. One of the main principles of labour legislation is the legal equality of parties to employment relations irrespective of their gender. Another main principle of labour legislation is: ensuring the right of every employee to fair remuneration in timely manner and in full which is not less than the amount of minimum salary prescribed by law (according to points 3 and 6 of part 1 of Article 3 of the Labour Code).

123. According to the Labour Code, the minimum conditions and amount of remuneration to work, occupational and official, as well as tariff and qualification requirements, labour standards, as well as tariffication of jobs and employees are defined by the legislation or by collective agreement. Moreover, in case of applying a job qualification system, the same criteria must apply both to men and women, and this system must be developed so as to exclude any discrimination based on gender (parts 1 and 3 of Article 180 of the Labour Code of Armenia).

124. Moreover, collective agreements and employment contracts may not contain conditions that deteriorate the state of employees as compared to the conditions prescribed by labour legislation, other regulatory legal acts containing norms of labour law. Where the conditions prescribed by collective agreements or employment contracts contradict the Labour Code, laws, other regulatory legal of Armenia, these conditions shall have no legal force (first paragraph of part 1 of Article 6 of the Labour Code of Armenia).

125. The Labour Code also stipulates that men and women receive equal remuneration for the same or equivalent work (part 2 of Article 178).

126. Since 1 July 2014, an amount of AMD 50 000 has been established as minimum monthly salary in Armenia (increased by 11.1 per cent as compared to the previous one), whereas since 1 July 2014 – an amount of AMD 55 000 (increased by 10 per cent as compared to the previous one).

127. It should be also mentioned that the Law “On remuneration for work” HO-226 of 18 October 2001 has been repealed since 7 August 2010. Currently, the legal relations prescribed by the given Law, in particular, the relations pertaining to the remuneration for work between employers and employees and the procedure for remuneration are prescribed by the Labour Code of Armenia, whereas the procedure for and conditions of remuneration of persons holding political, discretionary or civil positions, as well as of civil servants, officers of other state (special) services and local self-government bodies prescribed by law, other state officials as well as those of the employees of the Central Bank are prescribed by laws of Armenia regulating relevant legal relations.

Reference to paragraphs 16 and 17

(See additional information on benefits in Annex 3 and 4)

128. Since 1 January 2014, the Law “On employment” has entered into force, according which the programme for payment of unemployment benefit was terminated. In accordance with abovementioned Law the new model of employment policy having been introduced and is implemented within the programmes aimed at ensuring stable employment for unemployed persons, including those who are non-competitive in the labour market. In particular, within the scope of recent reforms in the employment policy, all state programmes, including unemployment benefit has been redefined and also new active programmes for state regulation have been introduced.

129. Since 1 January 2019, upon the Decision of the Government the amount of benefits in case of old-age, disability, loss of bread-winner has been increased, being established in the amount of AMD 25 500 which is equal to the extreme (food) poverty line.

130. On 28 of March 2019, the National Assembly adopted the Law “On making supplements and amendments to the Law “On State Pensions”, which introduced a new term – “minimum pension”, according which certain amount was stipulated by legislation, below which the amounts of pensions may not be paid to. Upon the Decision of the Government N472- N of 25 April 2019 the minimum pension was also established in the amount of AMD 25.500.

131. According to the Decision of the Government N 65-A of 8 February 2019, the amounts of state pensions will be regularly increased by ensuring progressive growth in the amount of the average pension against the inflation.

132. As to 1 January of 2019, the amounts of state benefits are as follows:

- (i) In case of old-age, disability, loss of bread-winner the amount of benefits constitutes AMD 25 500;
- (i) The amount of child care benefit for a child under the age of 2 is AMD 18 000;
- (iii) The amount of lump sum childbirth benefit based on the sequential number of the new-born child:
 - (a) In case of birth of the first child – AMD 50 000;
 - (b) In case of birth of the second child – AMD 150 000;
 - (c) In case of birth of the third child – AMD 1 million;

(d) In case of birth of the fourth child – AMD 1 million, AMD 500 000 out of which is paid by transferring this amount to the state aid account opened in the name of the new-born child (as a family capital⁴);

(e) In case of birth of the fifth and each subsequent child – AMD 1 million five hundred thousand, AMD 500 000 out of which as a family capital;

(iv) Maternity benefit for unemployed mothers⁵ is calculated similar to maternity benefit for working persons – from 50 per cent of the minimum monthly salary;

(v) The amount of funeral expenses payment – AMD 200 000.

133. The reforms in the system of family benefit were implemented in accordance with the strategy directions established by the Poverty Reduction Strategy Programme (PRSP) and the Sustainable Development Programme (SDP), as well as in accordance with the 2014–2025 Strategy Programme for Prospective Development of Armenia, the data of summarised annual research of living standards of households of the Statistical Committee, by changing the procedure for assessment of the level of indigence of families, as well as by providing the possibility of making adjustments to data existing in the system of assessment of the level of indigence of families related to the information being received online from other state bodies.

134. Taking account the envisaged gradual transition to more active forms of social assistance of poor and vulnerable social groups and to the provision of complex packages of social assistance (based on the assessed social needs), the benefits programme for raising living standards of the family (RLSF) in long-term prospective has its aim of gradually reducing the number of potential beneficiaries of the benefits programme for raising living standards of the family and bringing them in compliance with the number of families which are below lower rather than the upper threshold of poverty.

135. According to the programme of the Government of Armenia, the amounts of state pensions will be regularly increased by ensuring progressive growth in the amount of average pension against the inflation. Accordingly, the increase in pensions and benefits will have continuous nature. The issue of disproportionate pensions has been regularly raised by different non-governmental organizations operating in Armenia. Large-scale reforms in the field of labour and social protection are being currently implemented. Within the scope of reforms, the discussion of ratification of the ILO Convention No. 117 is envisaged.

Reference to paragraph 18

136. On 13 December 2017, the National Assembly adopted the draft Law “On prevention of domestic violence, protection of victims of domestic violence and restoration of solidarity in the family” (hereinafter referred to as “the Law”). The Law provides for effective preventive and protective mechanisms for the victims of domestic violence, as well as guarantees of state support to the victims of domestic violence. According to transitional provisions of the Law, the latter entirely entered into force on 1 January, 2019.⁶

137. Following the adoption of the Law, a number of secondary regulatory acts ensuring the implementation thereof have been developed and approved. According to these documents, the new mechanisms are being introduced for supporting persons having faced domestic violence, for record-registration of cases of domestic violence, for exchanging information and maintaining statistics. In addition, the Council for Prevention Domestic Violence in the Family was established as prescribed by law, which is actually considered as a body coordinating policies aimed at preventing domestic violence in the family.

138. 6 state centres for support are already operating in Yerevan and three marzes of the Republic, where persons having faced domestic violence receive assistance.

⁴ The legal representative (parent, guardian, adopter) residing in the same place of residence with a child disposes the family capital until the child attains the age of 18 in order to make exclusively non-cash payments under the conditions and procedure established by the Government.

⁵ It has been established by the amendments to the Law “On state benefits” since 1 January 2016.

⁶ <https://www.arlis.am/documentview.aspx?docID=118672>.

- In January 2018, Armenia signed the Convention of the Council of Europe “On Preventing and Combating Violence against Women and Domestic Violence”. The ratification of the Convention is mainly driven by effective, comprehensive and full application of the law in practice.
- In 2020, it is planned to increase the number of shelters, to establish shelters maintained by the State, to conduct campaigns for informing the public of a new law, submission of complaints and access to services.
- For 2020–2022 in order to implement the above-mentioned programmes the State Budget of Armenia will annually allocate AMD 10 824.2 thousand aimed at providing services, in two shelters, to around 60 persons having faced domestic violence, AMD 54.121.0 thousand aimed at providing services, in 11 support centres, to around 1800 persons having faced domestic violence, and AMD 10.000.0 thousand aimed at providing monetary assistance to around 100 persons having faced domestic violence, respectively.

139. On 26 July 2019, during public discussion of the fourth draft report of Armenia on the enforcement of provisions of ICESCR, held at the MFA, the representative of the NGO “Armenian Constitutional Right-Protective Centre” noted in respect of prevention of domestic violence and as a measure – increase in the number of shelters, that no survey has been published on the effectiveness of shelters operating in Armenia for many years. The number of persons “accommodated” in these shelters, whose families have been restored, as well as the number of families having faced breakdown is not known. It is unreasonable and unwise to raise the issue of establishing new shelters without finding out the benefits or harms thereof. The representative also informed that their organisation receives reports to the effect that parallel to prosperous, soft living conditions in existing shelters, the accommodated persons, including children, are induced hatred and animosity towards the other member (members) of the family. The rules applied therein resemble the regime applied at penitentiary institutions, when visits between parents and minors are prohibited, by deepening the problems in the family and ultimately leading to the breakdown of the family.

140. On 7 June 2019, a Memorandum of Understanding was signed between the Ministry of Labour and Social Affairs, the “Hayastan All-Armenian Fund” and the “Women’s support centre” public organisation, within the scope whereof a complex cooperation is envisaged in provinces aimed at providing high quality support to those having faced domestic violence, preventing domestic violence and providing methodological support. Since the first stages of the process of drafting the Law of the Republic of Armenia, relevant activities being carried out aimed at raising the awareness of general public and responsible persons on the importance of legal grounds targeted at preventing domestic violence and protecting the citizens of Armenia from the harm caused by the cases of domestic violence.

141. The Ministry of Justice has developed the programmes on “Communication Strategy for Prevention of Domestic Violence and Protection Victims of Violence within the Family” and on “Training Programme for Public Officials Addressing Issues on Domestic Violence”.⁷

142. On 11 September 2018, the launch meeting of the course on the topic entitled as “Combating Violence against Women and Domestic Violence” of the Council of Europe (CoE) HELP programme (for Human Rights Education for Legal Professionals) was held at the Academy of Justice jointly with the Council of Europe Office. During the meeting the participants of the course were introduced the HELP programme, the procedure for registering on the online platform, the peculiarities of interactive course, etc.

143. Within the scope of the project entitled as “Supporting the reforms of the system of criminal justice and combating ill-treatment and impunity in Armenia” constituting an integral part of the 2015–2018 CoE/EU Eastern Partnership Partnership Programming Co-operation Framework, the online courses for legal professionals on the topics entitled as “Preventing and Combating Violence against Women and Domestic Violence in Armenia” and “Prohibition of Ill-treatment” of the Council of Europe (CoE) HELP programme (for Human Rights Education for Legal Professionals) have been adapted to the local legal system.

⁷ <http://www.moj.am/legal/view/article/1214>.

Reference to paragraph 19

144. The main directions of reforms being implemented in the sector of protection of children's rights are:

- Reorganisation of all-day children's institutions (Establishment of Child and Family Support Centres);
- Creation and expansion of alternative services (promotion of the process of adoption and guardianship, expansion of services aimed at foster families, children and families (day and rehabilitation centres));
- Support to families of the child having returned to the family (provision of housing, in-kind, social and psychological support, improvement of living conditions, and ensuring the employment of adult members of the family).

145. The process for reorganisation and liquidation of institutions for social protection of the population (orphanage, childcare boarding institution) continues. For that purpose, upon Decision of the Government of Armenia No 831-N of 11 August 2016, "Yerevan Boarding Institution for Child Care and Protection No 2" SNCO and, upon Decision of the Government No 762-N of 4 July 2018, "Vanadzor Boarding Institution for Child Care and Protection No 1", respectively, were reorganised pursuant to Decision of the Government of the Republic of Armenia No 762-N of 4 July 2018 into Child and Family Support Centres, and, upon Decision of the Government of the Republic of Armenia No N1398 of 22 September 2017, "Kapan Boarding Institution for Child Care and Protection" SNCO was reorganised into "Syunik Marz Child and Family Support Centre" Foundation, as a result whereof, the main objective and the object of activities of those organisations and the foundation have changed.

146. As a result of the process of reorganisation:

- All children receiving twenty-four-hour care in the institutions have returned to biological families;
- More diverse and quality, as well as decentralised services are being provided with less resources;
- After reorganisation, services are being provided to the family of the child as well. Support is being provided to the family of the child having returned to the family (provision of housing, in-kind, social and psychological support, improvement of living conditions, and ensuring the employment of adult members of the family);
- More than 50 per cent of children of the childcare boarding institution and their families receive diverse services from the reorganised centre;
- Activities have been carried out through the deep and comprehensive assessment of the child and his or her family within the scope of case management, elaboration and implementation of individual programmes, in close co-operation with international and non-governmental organisations.

147. For the purpose of preventing the emergence of a child into a difficult life situation and/or getting him or her out of a difficult life situation, Child and Family Support Centres provide, as alternative services, the following:

- Social and psychological, social and pedagogical and social and legal services;
- Once-a-day provision of food, provision of social and psychological assistance, legal consultation, education and upbringing services, professional orientation, art therapy, occupational therapy (therapy through corrective exercises) to persons receiving care in the organisation, provision of primary medical assistance and service, organisation of leisure, cultural, as well as other events aimed at social inclusion, including through decentralised services;
- Support provided – within the service territory of the organisation – to children with disabilities and their families as well as persons subjected to domestic violence and their family members, including through decentralised services.

148. The following measures aimed at creation and expansion of alternative services have been implemented:

- A number of legislative drafts have been elaborated. In particular, on 13 July 2017, upon Protocol Decision No 30, the Government approved the “2017–2021 Strategic Programme for Protection of the Rights of the Child in the Republic of Armenia”, whereby the goals, priorities, fundamental issues of protection of the rights of the child and relevant measures for their solution in the upcoming years were prescribed. In 2017, the Law “On making amendments and supplements to the Family Code of Armenia” and the Law “On prevention of violence within family, protection of persons subjected to violence within the family and restoration of solidarity in the family” were adopted. Draft Laws of Armenia “On the rights of the child” and “On the social protection of children left without parental care” were submitted to the Government;
- Around 300 children of school age from socially disadvantaged families registered in the family indigence assessment system received care in 4 childcare boarding institutions;
- Day care services are provided to 150 children in difficult life situation and their families in “Child and Family Support Centres” SNCO;
- 3 day centres for children’s social care provide services to around 300 children in difficult life situation aged 6–18 and their families. Services were provided to at least 250 children in difficult life situation in 4 children’s day centres of “Bridge of Hope” NGO (Dilijan, Ijevan, Noyemberyan, Berd);
- “‘Zatik’ Yerevan Child Assistance Centre” SNCO provided twenty-four-hour care for a period of up to 6 months to around 17 children in difficult life situation aged 3–18;
- Around 25 children left without parental care received care in 21 foster families;
- Within the scope of the measure for returning children to biological families from institutions (deinstitutionalisation and prevention), 40 children were returned to the biological family, and entry of 60 children into institutions was prevented in Lori Marz, and also in Shirak Marz since 2014. Within the scope of the measure, a package of in-kind support – a food basket, clothes and shoes, stationeries and textbooks, compensation for energy services are provided to families;
- In 2016 and 2017 six (6) state and two (2) charity orphanages, including two specialised – for children with physical and mental impairment, having disabilities were established and operate in the Republic for children aged 0–18 left without parental care (https://www.armstat.am/file/article/soc_vich_2017_15.pdf).

149. The mentioned programmes of the State Budget for providing services to children in difficult life situation, including to those with disabilities – implemented each year as prescribed by law – are aimed at the development of alternative care in the country.

150. Below are stated the allocations from the State Budget of Armenia having been provided since 2013 up till now for programmes related to children, except for 5 highlighted programmes, which were added in 2019. As the table shows, for the purpose of implementing those new programmes, the budget allocations were increased by AMD 62.375.3 thousand in 2019.

	3 464 699.3 (thousand drams)
<i>Support to Families, Women and Children</i>	
Twenty-four-hour Child Care Services	2 017 270.6
Services related to the Return of Children under the Care of Institutions Providing Twenty-four-hour Child Care and Protection in the Republic of Armenia to Their Families (deinstitutionalisation)	23 118.6
Support and counselling to graduates of institutions for social protection of the population, implementing children’s twenty-four-hour care	1 440.0
Provision of social services to children of day centres of social care	237 995.7

<i>Support to Families, Women and Children</i>	<i>3 464 699.3</i> <i>(thousand drams)</i>
Boarding childcare services	505 105.6
Social care services for children in difficult life situation by children's day centres of social care	74 667.3
Services for provision of temporary care to children in difficult life situation	34 585.2
Day care services for children with disabilities in inclusive kindergartens	38 111.9
Services for provision of support to children and families	303 590.2
Social and psychological rehabilitation services for persons subjected to trafficking and exploitation, as well as violence	19 068.6
Services for provision of care to children left without parental care in small family houses	7 818.8
Social care services provided to children in difficult life situation and with disabilities	4 444.5
Community services for children in difficult life situation and with disabilities	4 888.9
Community services for children with disabilities	7 111.2
Provision of monetary support to children studying at schools, cared for in institutions for social protection of the population, that implement children's twenty-four-hour care	5 820.0
Provision of in-kind assistance package to the families of children moved to their biological families	24 483.8
Provision of a lump-sum monetary assistance to graduates of institutions for social protection of the population, that implement children's twenty-four-hour care	600.0
Provision of support for child care and upbringing in the foster family	152 828.4
Provision of a lump-sum monetary compensation to victims of human trafficking (and/or) exploitation	1 750.0

151. The measures “Provision of day care services to children, including with disabilities” (by providing for AMD 236,428.8 thousand for 3277 children) and “Services for the Return of Children under the Care of Institutions Providing Twenty-four-hour Child Care and Protection to Their Families, and Prevention of Their Entry into Institutions and Provision of Support Thereto” (AMD 98,968.7 thousand for providing support to 389 children and their families) (hereinafter referred to as “measure”) were included in the 2020–2022 State Medium-Term Expenditure Programme, approved by Decision of the Government No 900-N of 10 July 2019. The goal of the measure is to ensure the care and upbringing of a child in difficult life situation in a family. The above-mentioned measure will be implemented in Yerevan and 10 Marzes, through delegating to non-governmental organisations. Preparation works are being carried out for the purpose of implementing the measure – development of a package for announcing a tender (the terms of reference and texts of the announcement).

152. Pursuant to Decision No 751-N of 13 June 2019, the draft Order of the Minister of Labour and Social Affairs “On approving the curriculum and schedule of the course envisaged for persons who wish to become a foster parent” has been elaborated by the Government. Trainings of persons who wish to become a foster parent will be implemented as soon as it is approved.

153. Pursuant to Decision No 630-N “On approving the content of the curriculum of preparation courses for persons who wish to adopt, the requirements therefor, the competent body prescribing the content of the curriculum, and the procedure for organising and conducting the curriculum” approved by the Government of the Republic of Armenia on 23 May 2019, for the purpose of organising courses for persons who wish to adopt, a tender was announced by the Ministry on the website azdarar.am for delegating the course to a non-governmental organisation.

154. On 31 October 2019, Decision of the Government No 1507-N “On liquidating “Dilijan Boarding Institution for Child Care and Protection”, “Byureghavan Boarding Institution for Child Care and Protection”, “Gyumri Children's Care and Protection Boarding

School No 1”, “Gyumri Children’s Care and Protection Boarding School No 2 Named after Fridtjof Nansen”, and “Vanadzor Children’s Home” SNCOs, and repealing Decision No 1738-N of 17 October 2002, Decision No 1906-N of 28 November 2002 and Decision No 890-N of 26 July 2007 was approved. This Decision provides for liquidation of the institutions of Dilijan, Byureghavan, and Gyumri No 1 on 1 December of this year, “Vanadzor Orphanage” on 1 January 2020, and “Gyumri Children’s Care and Protection Boarding School No 2 Named after Fridtjof Nansen” in June.

155. The needs of all children under care in the above-mentioned institutions were assessed, individual development programmes for children and families were elaborated. The overwhelming part of the children have returned to biological families.

156. Activities aimed at protection of children’s rights, in particular, improvement of the quality of life and ensuring social protection guarantees for children in difficult life situation, development of the network of alternative services provided thereto, improvement of services provided in children’s care and protection institutions continued to be carried out during 2019.

157. For that purpose, a number of legislative drafts have been elaborated. In particular, the Decision “On approving the procedures for selection, record-registration of persons who wish to become a foster parent, organisation of the care and upbringing of the child in the foster family, teaching, qualification and training of persons who wish to become a foster parent, and supervision over the care of the adoptive child in the foster family, the procedure for and amount of payment of financial means to the foster family for a monthly period, sample forms of contracts on guardianship, and repealing Decision of the Government No 459-N of 8 May 2008” was approved on 13 June 2019 upon Decision No 751-N.

158. For the purpose of provision of state support, the measures “Services for provision of care to children left without parental care in small family houses”, “Social care services provided to children in difficult life situation and with disabilities” “Community services for children with disabilities”, and “Community services for children in difficult life situation and with disabilities” were implemented by non-governmental organisations declared as winners as a result of the tender held for the selection of legal persons or persons having the status of a legal person, providing services in the sector of social protection. Within the scope of the measure, day care services are provided to around 400 children.

- The care of around 500 children aged 0–18, left without parental care, was implemented in general institutions and special (specialised) institutions (orphanages) for social protection of the population, which implement children’s twenty-four-hour care and operate within the system of the Ministry of Labour and Social Affairs. Around 200 children aged 6–18 from socially disadvantaged families, registered in the family indigence assessment system, received care in child care boarding institutions.
- Day care services were provided to around 300 children in difficult life situation, aged 3–18, and support services – to their families in three child and family support centres.
- Services were provided to around 280 children in difficult life situation and their families in 3 day centres for children’s social care.
- Within the scope of the programme “Foster Family”, 48 children are cared for in foster families.
- During the 1st semester of 2019, around 50 children returned to families from all-day institutions, the care for 12 children was organised in foster families, and 48 children were adopted.

159. The draft Decision of the Government “On approving the procedure for record-registration of persons who wish to adopt – citizens of Armenia permanently residing in Armenia, foreign citizens, stateless persons, citizens of Armenia residing outside the Republic, and of children subject to adoption, provision of information about children subject to adoption to persons who wish to adopt, comparison of persons who wish to adopt and children subject to adoption, adoption of a child by persons who wish to adopt, record-registration of persons, wishing to adopt, for adopting a child from a foreign state, the protocol on examination of their living conditions, issuing a permit to a child adopted by

foreigner to enter Armenia and repealing Decision of the Government No 269-N of 18 March 2010” was elaborated and put into circulation.

160. The legislation of Armenia, including the Constitution (Article 26), the Criminal Code (Article 11), the Law “On the rights of the child” (Article 9), the Law “On keeping arrested and detained persons” (Article 2) clearly prohibit physical abuse. It should be noted that, pursuant to the legislation, corporal punishment shall be deemed to be or is considered to be a type of physical abuse (which is a wider concept), thus it is not prescribed or separated and is prohibited by law, according to elements of physical abuse. It should also be added that the new draft Criminal Code prescribes “physical abuse” as a separate crime which includes, *inter alia*, beating, corporal punishment and carrying out other violent actions. Pursuant to Article 9 of the Law “On the rights of the child”, adopted on 26 May 1996, “Each child shall have the right to protection from every type (physical, mental, etc.) of violence. Every person, including parents or other legal representatives, shall be prohibited from subjecting a child to violence or a degrading punishment or another similar treatment. In case of violation of the rights and lawful interests of the child, the violator shall bear liability as prescribed by the legislation. The State and relevant bodies thereof carry out the protection of the child from any violence, exploitation, engagement in criminal activity, including the use of narcotic drugs, engagement in production or trade thereof, beggary, lechery, gambling, and other violations of his or her rights and lawful interests”.

161. Decision of the Government of 4 December 2014 “On approving the Concept Paper for the fight against the phenomenon of violation against a child, and the list of measures deriving therefrom” was adopted. The objective of the Concept Paper is to develop the main directions of state activities in the field of legal, educational, healthcare and social protection of children subjected to violence, elaborate procedures for referral in cases of violation against the child, ensure actions aimed at increasing the public awareness of the measures for the fight against violence against the child.

162. The Law “On prevention of violence within family, protection of persons subjected to violence within the family and restoration of solidarity in the family” adopted on 13 December 2017, which provides for legal and organisational grounds for the prevention of violence within the family and protection of victims thereof, gives a definition for domestic violence, prescribes the competences of bodies assigned for the prevention of violence within the family and protection of victims thereof, points out the types of protective measures, grounds for their use, specifics of reconciliation of persons subjected to violence within the family and those guilty, and the legal protection of information on persons subjected to violence within the family. Pursuant to part 2 of Article 3 of the Law, the types of violence within the family include physical abuse – beating and other violent actions provided for by the Criminal Code, intentionally causing grave harm to the health, unlawfully depriving of liberty, and intentionally causing strong physical pain. Within the scope of the Law, the principles of prevention of violence within the family and protection of persons subjected to violence in the family include, *inter alia*, the prevalence of the best interests of the child.

163. In 2017, Armenia joined two important international initiatives – WE PROTECT global alliance network which is aimed at eliminating on-line sexual exploitation of children, and the global partnership End Violence Against Children, undertaking the obligation to enhance state efforts and implement reforms, which will solve – from different perspectives – the issues of violence against children in Armenia. There is clear evidence that the fight against violence may have significant results when it is carried out with the inter-agency and various efforts and joint activities of all relevant parties – social officers, specialist of the sectors of healthcare and education, police, justice, with the strong support of the civil society.

164. The Council for Juvenile Justice, co-ordinated by the Ministry of Justice, was formed, which is a strong national platform aimed at the co-ordination of and supervision over programmes for the solution of issues of violence against children and protection of children’s rights and interests in the sector of justice.

165. Different points for the Fight against Violence against Children will be addressed in the National Strategy for Human Rights Protection and the 2020–2022. In this context, clear mechanisms for collection of relevant administrative data will be developed as well.

166. Expert analysis of the legislative framework with respect to foreign adoption and international cases of kidnapping, and works for elaboration of the concept paper for introduction of the institute of public psychologists with respect to cases of minors are being conducted.

167. New provisions are being provided for within the scope of new draft criminal legislation (criminal code, penitentiary code, criminal procedure code) based on the international practice in prevention of violence against children, as well as protection measures in cases of violence. Such provisions include new services for children having become a victim of crimes.

168. For the purpose of protecting children from violence, Action 27 of the 2017–2019 Action Plan Deriving from the National Strategy for Human Rights Protection provides for revision of criteria for assessment of the content of erotic television and radio programmes, horror films and those containing explicit violence, as well as programmes having a potential negative impact on the health, mental, physical development, and upbringing of minors.

169. The issues existing in the sector of ensuring the rights of women and minors deprived of liberty require consistent work. The Extraordinary Public Report of the Human Rights Defender “On ensuring the rights of women and juveniles deprived of liberty in the penitentiary system” was published in 2018. The Report is based on the results of discussion of the unannounced monitoring visit made to “Abovyan” Penitentiary Institution on 14 May 2018 by employees of the Sub-Division for Prevention of Torture and Ill-Treatment of the Staff of the Human Rights Defender, as well as doctor, psychiatrist and sociologist independent experts of the national mechanism for prevention, other visits having preceded it, and complaints addressed to the Human Rights Defender from the penitentiary institution.

<http://www.ombuds.am/resources/ombudsman/uploads/files/publications/b1290ae68d58b1d1d0c065ac84c7827b.pdf>

Reference to paragraph 20

170. In 2018, 14.2 thousand or 12.3% of around 115.6 thousand families, registered in the family indigence system, constituted families in need of housing.

171. According to the data of the 2011 Census (4 and more persons in one room), there is a need to improve the housing conditions of around 22,5 thousand families residing in over occupied apartments and of around 2 thousand families residing in dormitories. Thus, the number of families in need of improvement of housing conditions in the Republic comprises around 60 thousand, of which 22,5 thousand families (or around 7.8% and 2.9% of the permanent population of the Republic, respectively) have no shelter and reside in cottages, public facilities, etc.

172. The programme for providing with housing implemented with state support for solving the housing issues of families left without shelter as a result of the 1988 earthquake (hereinafter referred to as “the Programme”) has been implemented by the Urban Development Committee since 2008, within the scope whereof, during 2008–2018, the housing issue of 4883 families was solved through allocation of an apartment or provision of financial support at the expense of around AMD 65.6 billion, of which:

- in 2018, at the expense of AMD 460.0 million allocated from the State Budget of the Republic of Armenia, for the purpose of solving the housing issues of 44 families, construction works of their semi-constructed residential houses started, which will be completed by 1 December 2019.

173. During 2015 and 2017, at the expense of AMD 126.5 million allocated to Shirak Marzpetaran (regional administration) from the State Budget, the housing issue of 27 more families was solved.

174. In total, within the scope of the Programme the housing issue of 679 families was solved at the expense of AMD 4.5 billion allocated from the 2014-2018 State Budgets.

175. Upon Decision of the Prime Minister of 20 December 2018, a working group headed by the Chairperson of the Urban Development Committee of Armenia was established (hereinafter referred to as “Working Group”), and the following questions were posed to it:

- Collection and summing-up of information (including studies and researches of local self-government bodies and public groups) on the distribution, belonging, condition of temporary shelters installed or built in the disaster zone after the earthquake, the number of families residing therein, as per marzes and communities, and the reasons for having gotten into such conditions;
- Elaboration of recommendations on the process for resettlement – improvement of housing conditions – of families residing in non-primary constructions based on the information collected, and assessment of the volume of state obligation in that process;
- Elaboration of recommendations on freeing the territories from non-primary constructions and legalising constructions complying with the requirements of urban development documents;
- Calculation of the amount of financial means needed for solving the issue.

176. The final results of the works performed were submitted to the Office of the Prime Minister on 30 June 2019. The indicated works will give an opportunity to create pre-conditions for freeing the territories of settlements of the disaster zone after the earthquake from non-primary constructions and elaborating public-private partnership programmes aimed at the improvement of housing conditions of families residing in those constructions.

177. AMD 560 million is envisaged from the 2019 budget for 60 families of villages of Shirak, Lori and Aragatsotn Marzes. Upon the assignment of the Prime Minister of Armenia, AMD 3 billion will be allocated in 2020 for providing the remaining 457 families with apartment, and this matter will be solved once and for all.

(See the relevant tables in Annex 5)

Reference to paragraph 21

178. The State Childbirth Assistance Certificate Programme introduced in 2008 continued to function during 2014–2018, which rightfully made childbirth assistance free of charge. From 1 January 2011, the Child Health State Certificate Program was introduced in Armenia, which guarantees the right to free of charge medical assistance of children under the age of 7, irrespective of their social status. The double increase of budget funds directed at the funding of programmes for in-patient medical assistance to the child and pregnant women served as a guarantee for the introduction of the system of certificates. As a result, an opportunity was created – through the compensation for the price close to the real price of in-patient services and increasing for around twice the salary of practitioners – to improve the accessibility and quality of in-patient assistance to pregnant women and children, decrease the practice of non-formal payment existing in the system, and expect, in the final result, improvement of maternal health and reduction of infant mortality in hospitals.

179. The course of introduction of the Programme was being permanently monitored through regular visits of employees of the Department of Maternal and Child Health Protection of the Ministry of Health and telephone calls made to discharged patients, as well as it was assessed through the study of complaints and information questions addressed to the hotline. Parallel to the introduction of the Programmes, an awareness raising campaign for the population was carried out.

180. The results of the preliminary and current (6 months later) assessment of the Programme attested to the reduction of non-official payments for more than 4–5 times. 79% of mothers from Yerevan having participated in the survey and having used the certificates and 91% of mothers from marzes indicated that they were satisfied with the services provided, as they had received free of charge medical assistance.

181. The increase of the rate of applying to hospitals for around 20 per cent also attests to the effectiveness of the introduction of the Programme and increase of accessibility to in-patient services rendered to children, which, indeed, may be explained by the increase of confidence of the population.

182. As a result of the assessment of introduction of the Health State Certificate for Children aged 0–7, introduced in 2011, a number of positive developments were recorded in

relation both with the access to medical assistance and increase in the level of satisfaction of the population and improvement of the key health indicators. In particular, a sharp decrease in the cases of death in hospitals, including mortality during the 24 hours of life, as well as cases of death at home was recorded.

183. As for child (aged 0–5) and infant (aged 0–1) mortality, if in 2010 it constituted 13.4% and 11.4%, respectively, they reduced in 2018, comprising 8.7% and 7.1%, respectively.

184. Since 2011 up till now the funding under the Programme of In-patient Medical assistance to Children continued to increase, even though with slower paces, thereby ensuring the right of children under 7 to receive free of charge medical assistance.

185. Upon the initiative of the Ministry of Health, a permanent monitoring tool for patient satisfaction – interactive terminals were installed in three medical institutions of Yerevan that have higher flow and are multi-profile (“Izmirlyan”, “Erebuni”, “Saint Gregory the Illuminator”). The permanent monitoring tool for patient satisfaction is simple-to-use from the practical point of view and gives an opportunity to collect data with any periodicity.

186. Summing up the two-months’ results of the pilot programme, it was recorded that 63% of patients is satisfied with the conditions of in-patient treatment, according to which they are more satisfied with the doctors’ attitude than that of nurses and nursing aids. Exactly half mentioned that they had got into red tapes and queues. Each forth informed that he or she had paid a non-official amount. The majority of the patients is not aware upon what basis he or she received treatment – state funded or paid.

187. On 27 June 2019, the Government of Armenia approved the project for allocating around AMD 12 billion to the Ministry of Health. With the amount allocated, medical services for citizens under 18 will also be rendered within the scope of state funding.

188. On 30 March 2019, deputy Minister of Health Arsen Davtyan was arrested, and a criminal case was instituted against him at the Investigation Department of the National Security Service under point 2 of part 4 of Article 311 and point 1 of part 3 of Article 312 of the Criminal Code, on suspicion of having taken a bribe on a particularly large-scale. The preliminary investigation into the criminal case is pending.

Reference to paragraph 22

189. For the purpose of preventing induced terminations of pregnancy conditioned by the sex of the foetus, legislative amendments have been made:

- Article 10 of the Law “On human reproductive health and reproductive rights” was adopted by the National Assembly in 2016: Induced terminations of pregnancy (abortion) in new edition (Article 10 amended by HO-24-N of 30 April 2015, edited by HO-134-N of 29 June 2016), whereby the prohibition on induced terminations of pregnancy conditioned by the sex was enshrined, as well as, through other supplementary legislative regulations and mechanisms, a goal is pursued to prevent and essentially reduce induced terminations of pregnancy conditioned by the sex in particular and induced terminations of pregnancy in general.

190. Decision of the Government of 23 February 2017 “On approving the procedure and conditions for induced termination of pregnancy and repealing Decision of the Government of 5 August 2004” was elaborated and approved.

191. The above-indicated Law and Decision were forwarded by the Ministry of Health to all medical institutions providing childbirth assistance and their founders. The provisions of the above-indicated legal acts were presented to specialists within the scope of various training programmes.

192. Taking as a basis the above-indicated Decision of the Government, Order of the Minister of Health “On approving the procedure for induced terminations of pregnancy, the form of the medical card for induced termination of pregnancy, the procedure for filling in the medical card for induced termination of pregnancy and the consultation sheet for prevention of abortion conditioned by the sex of the foetus” was approved on 27 December 2018.

193. Joint Order of the Minister of Health of 8 May 2015 and the Minister of Labour and Social Affairs of 13 May 2015 “On approving the measures for implementation of the 2015–2017 Programme for Prevention of Induced Terminations of Pregnancy Conditioned by the Sex of the Foetus and establishing a working group for that purpose” was approved. Representatives of state institutions, international (International Center for Human Development, Save the Children, World Vision) and local non-governmental and community organisations were included in the composition of the working group established upon the Order.

194. Significant measures have been implemented in recent years within the scope of the programme; Community of Practice of Local Participation and Non-Discrimination has been established, works have been carried out through the mass media, in particular:

- 2 public service announcements were developed and published on the following websites:

https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=_eSSJkVxKmk.

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=T2jyPjldyOY&feature=youtu.be>.

- 33 thematic programmes and talk shows have been broadcast. According to the data of the monitoring of television programmes, conducted by specialised organisations, around 333,000 people watched the programmes within the period between May 2015–April 2016, 70% whereof are women;
- Information, educational and communication materials have been elaborated, discussions on the prevention of biased selection of the sex of the child and induced terminations of pregnancy conditioned by the sex of the foetus have been organised on the social networks. Active groups have been created in communities and training has been conducted, 25 active civil groups (ACG) have been formed, and measures aimed at the change of professional practice have been implemented. Works have been carried out in co-operation with the United Nations Population Fund, within the scope of the Global Programme to Prevent Son Preference and the Undervaluing of Girls, for the purpose of reducing the disproportion of sexes of newborns, aimed at the enhancement of the knowledge and consultative skills of medical workers.

195. In 2018, for the purpose of ensuring the continuity of the Programme for Prevention of Induced Terminations of Pregnancy Conditioned by the Sex of the Foetus, a trilateral memorandum between the Ministry of Health, Ministry of Labour and Social Affairs and the International Center for Human Development was elaborated.

196. Within the scope of the Global Programme, the “Analysis of costs and feasibility of reforms of state policy for expanding the services for the child’s care and development in the early childhood” has been implemented by the International Center for Human Development for the purpose of prevention of discriminatory selection of the child upon the feature of the sex.

197. Within the scope of the measures aimed at public awareness raising, the puppet show “NE’s journey” was organised in Gegharkunik, Armavir and Shirak marzes.

198. An event devoted to the International Day of the Girl Child (trivia game) was organised within the scope of the Francophonie Summit taken place in Yerevan on 11 October 2018.

199. In 2018, a short video film on the causes and consequences of discriminatory selection conditioned by the sex was developed, which was posted on the websites of the UNFPA and of the International Center for Human Development, as well as on the relevant Facebook groups – “Fight Against Discriminatory Selection of the Sex of the Foetus, the moderator whereof is the International Center for Human Development” (ICHHD).

200. As a result of the complex measures implemented, certain positive trends in the process of overcoming the fundamental issue of selective abortions were recorded. Thus: if in the period 2008–2012, preceding the measures against selective abortions, the average rate of girl-boy proportion constituted 100:115, in 2014 – 100:113,4, in 2015 – 100:112,7, in 2016 – 100:111,9, in 2017 – 100/109,8, according to the 2018 data it was 100/111.1.

201. The Programme for Ensuring Affordability of Modern Contraceptives for Preventing Unintended Pregnancies, implemented by the UNFPA, has started since 14 May 2014.

202. A Committee on Implementation of and Supervision over the National Program for Reproductive Health Protection was established upon Decision of the Minister of Healthcare of the Republic of Armenia No 874-N of 23 April 2014, which has carried out works aimed at co-ordination of measures implemented and to be implemented in the sector of reproductive health, including family planning, and provision of professional assistance at all stages of implementation of the programme.

203. The process of assessment of 75 family planning services established by the UNFPA was conducted through local consultants in 2014, which provided an opportunity to obtain comprehensive information on the personnel potential, service needs, as well as ensuring with modern contraceptives in the sector of family planning in Armenia.

204. Medical operating procedures, guidelines have been introduced in the activities of primary healthcare institutions, based on which training courses for the medical personnel providing consultation and medical assistance in the sector of family planning, including obstetrician-gynaecologists and family doctors, have been organised as well.

205. An increase in the visit rate of visitors in the primary unit to obtain contraceptives is observed over 2016–2018. In 2015–2018, 15729 visitors were registered in the Logistic Management Information System.

(See the relevant tables in Annex 6)

Reference to paragraph 23

206. From 2017, 12-year education is compulsory in Armenia, as a result of which learners will continue education either in senior classes or in primary vocational (handicraft) and secondary vocational education institutions. Consistent works for bringing the materials included in admission examination tests (“Shtemarans”) of state higher education institutions in full compliance with general education subject curricula have been performed by the Ministry of Education and Science.

207. Concurrently, with the support of international institutions, general education subject curricula and education criteria are reviewed, bringing them in compliance with the modern requirements. Publicity and availability of education curricula and study materials for large groups of beneficiaries are ensured; the number of education materials published on the official websites of institutions of the system of the Ministry of Education and Science increase year by year, they are regularly updated and are available both for learners and the public. We can particularly mention the website www.armedu.am, where the sections Education Forum, Resource Database, Distant Learning, and Education Management Information Section are available. Electronic educational materials, distant courses on various topics, electronic textbooks are available and a link to the Unified Education Management Information System with sections on educational institutions from preschool to vocational education is active in this website. The website “Vocational Education and Training” functions as well. This platform provides summary information on primary vocational (handicraft) and secondary vocational education, news, announcements, legislation and normative documents relating to the sector, state criteria and modular projects, educational-methodical documents and useful literature are posted here. The vocational education and teaching institutions are presented here, there is a discussion platform (forum) which gives an opportunity to jointly discuss any matter on the sector, and exchange information.

208. In 2014, amendments were made to the Law “On higher and post-graduate professional education”, and, in 2018, to Decision of the Government No 1183-N of 27 July 2006, as a result whereof 10–100% of discounts with respect to higher education tuition fee are provided to a wide range of students from socially vulnerable groups and border communities.

209. 2015–2030 Programme for the Improvement of Seismic Safety of Public General Education Schools was approved upon Decision of the Government of the Republic of

Armenia No 797-N of 23 July 2015, whereby the number of most dangerous schools in the Republic from the point of view of seismic resistance – 435, and the number of schools subject to reinforcement or construction – 46, were specified. 26 schools will be newly built or reinforced with the support of the Asian Development Bank as early as this year. Schools subject to repair are being designed having regard to the changes necessary for persons with disabilities.

210. The Law “On making supplements and amendments to the Law ‘On general education’” (HO-200-N) was adopted by the National Assembly in 2014, whereby a transition to the universal inclusive education is made in the system of general education, by applying a three-tier system for responding to the educational needs of the child. The newly-formed system will provide an opportunity to organise the education and upbringing of children in need of special conditions for education (hereinafter referred to as “ChNSCE”) without separating the child from the family, ensuring his or her comprehensive social development and integrating him or her into the general education institution.

211. As a result of application of the Law, ChNSCE will receive pedagogical and psychological assistance at 3 levels – at general education school, as well as from territorial and republican pedagogical and psychological assistance centres.

212. The transition to the universal inclusive education system will be implemented through re-organisation of a number of special general education institutions of the Republic into pedagogical and psychological assistance centres.

213. Making a transition to the idea of universal inclusiveness means to waive the idea of making specific schools inclusive and prepare the whole system for inclusiveness, *i.e.* to recognise all schools of the Republic as conducting inclusive education.

214. The system is in the transitional phase now, and both specific inclusive schools and the system of special schools will still operate in parallel in this time period.

215. Thus, the policy of transition to universal inclusiveness according to marzes has been adopted in Armenia. Pedagogical and psychological assistance services are being created marz by marz, which must support the schools in providing educational services complying with the needs of the child.

216. According to the approved schedule, the process of re-organisation of special schools started in 2016 and will end in 2021, by including all the marzes. In 2016, the system was introduced in Syunik Marz, in 2017 – in Lori and Tavush Marzes, in 2018 – in Armavir Marz. From September 2019, the system will be introduced in the city of Yerevan, Shirak and Aragatsotn Marzes, in 2020 – in Gegharkunik and Kotayk Marzes, in 2021 – in Ararat and Vayots Dzor Marzes. The universal inclusive education system will be fully introduced in Armenia by 1 August 2025.

217. Parallel to the universal inclusiveness, some special schools will continue operating, to ensure education of children with certain needs. It is envisaged to leave at least 6 institutions with the status of special general education institutions (instead of former 23 special schools in total) at the end of the process of transition to universal inclusive education. Upon transition to the universal inclusive education system, the number of separate general education schools conducting inclusive education and the number of ChNSCE studying there decrease year by year. In particular, in the 2017–2018 academic year, inclusive education was conducted in 201 general education schools of the Republic, where around 6225 children in need of special conditions for education (ChNSCE) studied. Whereas in the 2018–2019 academic year, inclusive education was conducted in 136 general education schools of the Republic, where around 3330 children in need of special conditions for education (ChNSCE) studied. Thus, as a result of the introduction of the universal inclusive education system:

- Territorial pedagogical and psychological centres were formed;
- The staff position of teacher’s aide was introduced in general education schools;
- As a result of re-organisation, learners of former special general education schools were transferred to general education schools;

- The increased scale of the amount for funding prescribed for children in need of special conditions for education according to the degree of gravity of the child’s need was introduced in 4 marzes having transitioned to the universal inclusive education system;
- The new criteria for assessment of the needs of the child for special conditions for education have been introduced.

218. Extensive works were carried out for enhancing the learning process with ICT as well. The number of learners per computer decreases year by year, by gradually approximating that indicator to the international indicators. The applicability of ICT in the learning process, and the volume of electronic materials being processed are expanding as well.

<i>Year</i>	<i>2013</i>	<i>2014</i>	<i>2015</i>	<i>2016</i>	<i>2017</i>
Number of pupils per computer	19.4	17.5	17.2	16.5	16.2

Preschool education sector

219. For the purpose of ensuring the affordability and accessibility of preschool education services in various territories of Armenia, alternative and cost-efficient models of organising preschool education have been introduced. The process started within the scope of the loan project implemented with the support of the World Bank. For the purpose of ensuring the continuity of the indicated programmes, funds for organising one-year education for children of preschool age are being envisaged in the State Budget from 2011. The priority in the project is given to poor families and the communities where no PSIs operate. In this context, within the scope of the second loan project “Education Improvement” implemented with the funding of the World Bank, grants will be allocated – in 2019 – to 17 institutions conducting a preschool programme, as a result whereof around 425 children will be additionally included in preschool education. Within the scope of this loan project, 97 preschools in total were opened in Yerevan and the marzes of Armenia during 2015–2018, which were provided with property, and trainings for the pedagogical staff were conducted.

220. For ensuring the continuity of preschool programmes (except for programmes to be implemented in Yerevan), current costs will be made at the expense of the State Budget in the further years as well. The funds envisaged by the 2019 State Budget for the indicated purpose will be directed at organising the preschool education of around 7 thousand children.

221. Also, an agreement was concluded with the European Union in 2018, pursuant to which 40 alternative preschool institutions/services will be established in the marzes, which will be adapted for children with disability.

222. A pilot distant learning programme was implemented in 5 schools with respect to Physics and Informatics in 2018, but legislative amendments are needed for the full introduction of the latter, for which works are underway. As a result, the courses with respect to the subjects for which specialists teaching the subject are missing will be available to marz schools. Young participants of the programme “Teach for Armenia”, who are distributed in the general education schools of various marzes of Armenia, where there is a lack of subject teachers, provide support for the solution of this issue.

223. Funds are being allocated from the State Budget to high schools and Marzpetarans for compensating for the transport costs of the learners in whose place of residence there is no general education institution implementing an education programme relevant to the learner, and the learner does not have an opportunity to carry out the sequence and continuity of his or her 12-year secondary education or, that is the same, the three main tiers of general education. In such cases, the learner studies the next tier of general education in another school adjacent to his or her settlement.

224. Steps are also being taken for replenishing the vacant positions of teachers existing in the marzes of Armenia. For that purpose, the “Procedure for seconding pedagogical personnel to state general education institutions of remote, border, mountainous and high mountainous settlements” was approved upon Decision of the Government of 25 September 2003.

Concurrently, students admitted to state higher education institutions for goal-oriented studies are seconded to the marzes.

(See the relevant tables in Annex 6)

Reference to paragraph 24

225. Clear measures were elaborated under the 2017–2021 Complex Programme for Social Inclusion of Persons with Disabilities, approved by Decision of the Government of 12 January 2017, aimed at ensuring equal conditions for and social inclusion of persons with disabilities in all main areas of public life (urban development, education, transport, information, culture, and sport). For the purpose of bringing to life the target areas provided for by the complex programme, each year the “Annual programme for social inclusion of persons with disabilities and the list of measures ensuring the implementation of the programme” is elaborated and submitted to the Government for approval and, according to the measures prescribed, they are implemented by state agencies.

Reference to paragraph 25

226. Continuing to improve the works for programme budgeting, aimed at the effective distribution and use of existing public resources, a dynamic increase was recorded in 2014–2018 with respect to allocations made from the State Budget of Armenia and community (local) budgets to the sectors of healthcare, education and science. Except for with respect to education in 2018, and healthcare and science in 2017–2018:

(billion AMD)

Sectors		2014, actual	2015, actual	2016, actual	2017, actual	2018, actual	2019, approved budget
Education	s/b	115.8	122.3	122.4	124.4	121.6	141.8
Healthcare	s/b	76.6	86.1	88.6	83.2	79.6	91.7
Science	s/b	12.7	13.9	14.2	14.1	13.9	16.8
Education	l/b	34.6	39.0	40.6	42.5	43.6	46.1
Healthcare	l/b	0.2	0.3	0.4	0.3	0.2	0.2
Science	l/b	0.0	0.0	0.0	0.0	0.0	0.0
Education	total	150.4	161.3	163.0	166.9	165.2	187.9
Healthcare	total	76.8	86.4	89.0	83.5	79.8	91.9
Science	total	12.7	13.9	14.2	14.1	13.9	16.8

Other recommendations

Reference to paragraph 26

227. The Optional Protocol to the UN International Covenant on Economic, Social and Cultural Rights is currently undergoing domestic procedures for ratification.

Reference to paragraph 27

228. The Government of Armenia envisages to establish a national mechanism for reporting and follow up. The introduction of the Mechanism will provide an opportunity to make the co-ordination of works for implementation, translation and dissemination of the recommendations issued to the Republic of Armenia more effective.