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Replies of Azerbaijan to the list of issues in relation to its fourth periodic report*

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Replies to paragraph 1 of the list of issues (E/C.12/AZE/Q/4)

1. “International and national mechanisms for human rights protection” section was included in the program of various training courses at the Academy of Justice of the Ministry of Justice, thereby ensuring lectures on the themes of “Requirements and application issues of international conventions in the field of human rights”. In 2018 and 2019, overall 1,029 trainees attended such lectures.

2. At the same time, a lecture on the UN International Covenant on Economic, Social and Cultural Rights was included in the training course program for the nominees admitted to service in justice organs.

3. It shall be informed that in the rendering of decisions at the courts of the Republic of Azerbaijan reference is made to certain articles of the Covenant.

4. Thus, in 2018–2019 in the decisions of the Baku Court of Appeal regarding the following cases, reference was made to the provisions of Article 9 of the Covenant:

(a) 9 August 2018 Decision on the administrative case no. 2-1(103)-1809/2018 regarding the claim to be granted an age-related labor pension, between the claimant – Ms. U. Malikova and the respondent – Surakhani District Office of the State Social Protection Fund under the Ministry of Labor and Social Protection of the Population;

(b) 21 December 2018 Decision on the administrative case no. 2-1(103)-3011/2018 regarding the claim to recalculate the pension, between the claimant – Mr. Sh. Ahmadov and the respondent – Work with Military Servants and Special Ranked Persons Department of the State Social Protection Fund under the Ministry of Labor and Social Protection of the Population;

(c) 5 September 2019 Decision on the administrative case no. 2-1(103)-1408/2019 regarding allocation of a disability-related pension, between the claimant – Mr. V. Ismayilov and the respondent – Baku City Sabunchu District Office of the State Social Protection Fund under the Ministry of Labor and Social Protection of the Population.

5. In all three cases the decisions of the first instance courts were upheld without changes.

6. Also, in the resolutions on the following cases examined by the Gakh District Court, reference was made to the provisions of the Covenant’s Article 7 indentation 1 and paragraph 3:

(a) 20 October 2018 Resolution on the civil case no. 2(024)-724/2018 regarding the claim on cancellation of an order, job recovery, and payment of wages for mandatory work absence, between the claimant – Mr. R. Mammadov and the respondent – Gakh District State Puppet Theatre;

(b) 15 November 2018 Resolution on the civil case no. 2(024)-775/2018 regarding the claim on cancellation of an order, job recovery, and payment of wages for mandatory work absence, between the claimant – Mr. R. Mahsimov and the respondent – Gakh Water Channel Department of the “United Water Channel” LLC of the “Azersu” OJSC.

Replies to paragraph 2 of the list of issues

7. Aiming to raise the level of legal service provided to non-profit organizations, to ensure citizen satisfaction, and to form a favorable environment for the activity of non-profit organizations, by making relevant changes to the “Individual Electronic Window” electronic information system, created based on the Presidential Decree dated 20 November 2013, the software is being prepared to enable state registration, issuance of extracts and notifications from the state register via the “Individual Electronic Window” electronic information system, regarding the changes made to the non-governmental organization’s formation documents, as well as every subsequent change made to the recorded facts, and changes to the grants received and given by them and the registered grant agreements (decisions), based on an electronic request.

8. For the application of these e-services, draft laws amending the laws of the Republic of Azerbaijan “On State Registration and State Registry of Legal Entities”, “On non-governmental organizations (public unions and foundations)”, and “On Grants” were drafted and duly presented.
9. Moreover, the “List of organizations financed from the state budget of the Republic of Azerbaijan and enabled to give grants to legal and natural persons of the Republic of Azerbaijan, in accordance with their scope of activity”, approved by the Presidential Decree dated 21 October 2015, was amended on 10 December 2018 to include the Ministry of Labor and Social Protection of the Population and the State Committee for Work with Religious Organizations.
10. According to the changes made by the Decree dated 30 January 2020 to the “Rules on concluding and approving agreements on receiving technical assistance and grants”, approved by the Presidential Decree dated 17 April 2006, in order to support micro, small and middle entrepreneurial entities, agreements on receiving technical support or grants on behalf of the Government of the Republic of Azerbaijan shall be concluded in accordance with these Rules and with the Decree of the President of the Republic of Azerbaijan dated 2 July 2019 “On Coordinating the programs (projects) financed by foreign states and international organizations for the purpose of supporting entrepreneurship”.
11. Also, in this field the draft resolutions of the Cabinet of Ministers were drafted regarding the “Periodic reporting form on projects implemented through the technical support or grants of international donors” and “On approving the ‘Final reporting form on projects implemented through the technical support or grants of international donors’”.

Replies to paragraph 3 of the list of issues

12. According to the “Charter of the Center for Social Research”, approved by the Presidential Decree dated 12 April 2019, the Center is a public legal entity that shall systematically analyze the development dynamic of public relations, determine existing tendencies in this field and forecast changes, research the possible effects of such changes on the society, ensure the study of public opinion and conduct social researches by applying modern information technologies and scientific approaches, and shall present the results of its scientific and practical analyses to the state authorities.
13. According to the “Charter of the Center for International Relations Analysis”, approved by the Presidential Decree dated 19 April 2019, the Center is a public legal entity operating in the field of analyzing the processes that take place in the world and the region, various aspects of the Armenia-Azerbaijan Nagorno-Karabakh conflict, conducting fundamental researches related to international relations and security issues, conveying our country’s position on these issues to the international public, political and academic circles, providing the state bodies of the Republic of Azerbaijan with scientific and analytical materials.
14. Also, according to the “Charter of the Innovations Agency under the Ministry of Transport, Communications and High Technologies of the Republic of Azerbaijan”, approved by the Presidential Decree dated 22 February 2019, the Agency is a public legal entity that operates, and carries out control and regulation in the field of innovation activity, providing assistance to local entrepreneurial entities in obtaining modern technologies and technological solutions and organizing their transfer, supporting innovation-oriented scientific researches, promoting innovative projects (including startups), their financing through grants, soft loans, and investments into charter capital (including venture financing), and promotion of innovation initiatives.
15. According to second part of 26th article of Constitution of the Republic of Azerbaijan a state provides protection of rights and freedoms of everyone. According to 71st article of Constitution human rights and freedoms are valid in the territory of the Republic of Azerbaijan without intermediation. Disputes regarding violation of human and civil rights are considered by courts. According to the second part of 68th article of Constitution rights of a person who suffered as a result of a crime and misuse of powers are protected by law. A

sufferer has a right to participate in criminal justice and demand reparation of damages. According to 80th article of Constitution violation of Constitution and laws as well as abuse of authority or non-fulfillment of duties leads to criminal liability. According to fourth part of 29th article of Constitution acquisition of property for state needs may be implemented only by just payment of its value in advance.

16. According to article 1097.1 of the Civil Code of the Republic of Azerbaijan damage caused to individual or his property as well as to property and prestige of legal entity in the result of delict should be fully repaired by tortfeasor.

17. According to 239th article of Labor Code of the Republic of Azerbaijan, an employer who is guilty (fully or partially) of accident occurred in production field or occupational disease, should fully cover all expenses regarding the damage caused to the employee as a result of injury or other damage to his health, as well as, the costs incurred for his treatment and issuance of benefits and other additional expenses provided by the Civil Code of the Republic of Azerbaijan. Relevant compensation in accordance with legislation should be paid to employees whose health deteriorated as a result of accident or occupational disease caused by fault of the employer, as well as to the family members and other dependents of employees who have died as a result.

18. In accordance with article 4.1 of the Law of the Republic of Azerbaijan “On Acquisition of Lands for the State Needs”, the relevant share (stakes) in any land or jointly owned land required for state needs, on the basis of an agreement with the owner (s); on the basis of a court decision that has entered into force, may be obtained in accordance with this Law with the obligatory payment of compensation by the state. All persons affected by the acquisition shall be entitled to fair compensation in accordance with this Law in exchange for the acquisition of their land or in connection with their other land rights. Compensation is paid to those persons affected by the acquisition through a project that necessitates the acquisition of land.

19. In accordance with article 9 of the Law of the Republic of Azerbaijan “About Protection of Foreign Investment”, foreign investment is fully and unconditionally protected in the territory of the Republic of Azerbaijan. Such protection is ensured by this Law, other legislative acts and international agreements. According to article 10 of this Law, if the subsequent legislation of the Republic of Azerbaijan worsens the investment conditions, the legislation in force at the time of the investment in foreign investment for ten years shall be applied. According to article 11 of this Law, foreign investment in the Republic of Azerbaijan shall not be nationalized, except in exceptional cases that harm the people and state interests of the Republic of Azerbaijan. Foreign investment is not requisitioned, except in cases of natural disasters, accidents, epidemics, epizootics and other emergencies. When nationalization and requisition measures are taken, the foreign investor is compensated without delay and effectively. According to articles 13–15 of this Law, in case of termination of investment activity, the foreign investor has the right to receive the investment and income related to the investment in the form of money and commodities at real value at the termination of investment activity. After paying the relevant taxes and duties, foreign investors are guaranteed to transfer abroad the income and other amounts received in foreign currency on a legal basis in connection with the investment, including the amount of compensation and damages. Profits received by foreign investors in the territory of the Azerbaijan Republic may be re-invested in the form of that currency, kept in the banks of the Azerbaijan Republic, and used to purchase foreign currency in accordance with the procedure and conditions established by the National Bank of the Azerbaijan Republic.

Replies to paragraph 4 of the list of issues

20. The Republic of Azerbaijan has signed the Paris Agreement under the United Nations Framework Convention on Climate Change on April 22, 2016, has ratified on October 28, 2016, and thereby, as a contribution to global climate change initiatives, has undertaken the target reduction of 35 percent in greenhouse gas emissions by 2030 compared to 1990/base year. A number of measures are being taken by the Ministry of Energy of the Republic of Azerbaijan to achieve this goal.

21. Draft Law of the Republic of Azerbaijan “On the Efficient Use of Energy Resources and Energy Efficiency” was developed with the support of the Energy Charter within the framework of the EU4Energy Programme of the European Union initiated in 2016. Currently, as a continuation of the Programme, the National Action Plan on Energy Efficiency of Azerbaijan is underway.
22. It is envisaged to extend the share of renewable energy sources (RES) to 30% in the next 10 years when forecasting electricity demand and production capacity.
23. The cooperation with international companies has been enhanced in order to strengthen the collaboration and encourage future investment in the field of use of renewable energy sources. The number of companies with which MoUs and other such documents have been signed now stands at nine.
24. By the Decree of the President of the Republic of Azerbaijan No. 1673 dated December 5, 2019 “On Measures for Implementation of Pilot Projects in the Use of Renewable Energy Sources”, a Commission was established to implement the pilot projects regarding the construction of wind and solar power plants in the Republic of Azerbaijan and coordinate their execution. Taking into account the effectiveness of introduced offers and especially the price offers being within the existing wholesale prices for wind and solar power in our country, it was decided to continue negotiations with Masdar of the United Arab Emirates and ACKWA Power of Saudi Arabia.
25. Thus, on January 9 of 2020, Executive Agreements on the implementation of renewable energy pilot projects and the construction of 200 MW solar and 240 MW wind power plants were signed with ACWA Power and Masdar companies.
26. Furthermore, within the framework of the pilot project on “Exchange of knowledge and technical support for the development of floating solar panels”, it is planned to build business models for installing a photovoltaic system with a capacity of up to 100 kW on the Lake Boyukshor and encouraging the participation of private sector in the installation of solar devices, and to expand the national potential through trainings. The project is expected to be completed by March 2021.
27. The diversification of energy production by RES will not only ensure energy security, but will also have a positive impact on our country’s commitment to the Paris Agreement under the UN Framework Convention on Climate Change to reduce greenhouse gas emissions. At the same time, the commissioning of stations and the production of RES equipment in the country will result in the creation of new service and production areas, hence, the creation of multiple jobs.
28. Oil and gas operations carried out by Azerbaijan since independence meet the highest international environmental standards. The State Oil Company of Azerbaijan (SOCAR) has established and certified a management system for oil and gas operations that is in accordance with the requirements of the International Organization for Standardization (ISO). These projects have been awarded twice by the World Bank Expert Council. Since 2015, the Waste Management Centre, supplied with the most up-to-date equipment, has been operating in Azerbaijan for all oil and gas companies. Azerbaijan also ranks among the top 10 oil exporting countries of the European Union thanks to the lower associated gas emission rate during oil production.
29. In parallel, in 2021, the country plans to carry out certain small-scale reconstruction of these facilities in order to establish the production of motor fuels meeting the “Euro-5” standard, to ensure the reliable operation of existing facilities for the next 4–5 years before the commissioning of new facilities. The project is planned to be implemented in stages and completed by 2025.
30. It should be highlighted that the United Nations Development Programme (UNDP) and the State Oil Company of Azerbaijan (SOCAR) in their joint projects to combat climate change have accomplished an important milestone in terms of reducing methane emissions from onshore oil wells up to 20% thanks to the installation of new up-to-date technology for associated gas collection in Azerbaijan. New advanced compressors and separation facilities in the oil fields of Siyazan help to collect associated gas from crude oil and distribute it to end consumers in approximately 15 villages of Siyazan in the north of Azerbaijan. Thus, 7

million m3 gas, including 4.6 million m3 methane, will now be delivered to their homes. So far, the works have been financially supported by the Global Environment Facility (GEF), which have been realized within the framework of the National Action Plans (NAMA) implemented jointly by the United Nations Development Programme (UNDP) and SOCAR in Azerbaijan.

31. Measures are being taken for encouraging the use of environment-friendly automobiles and to some extent, limiting the import of old vehicles, especially of cars with diesel engines to reduce the negative impact on the environment and human health.

32. In this regard, one of the steps taken towards the systematic and consistent implementation of measures aimed at economic diversification has been the establishment of SOCAR-CNG LLC, which produces, sells and uses compressed natural gas (CNG). SOCAR-CNG LLC, established on October 21, 2013, by the decision of SOCAR and Domestic Liquid Gas CJSC, provided the transition to the next stage of development of the fuel market by introducing a new type of alternative engine fuel to the energy market of Azerbaijan.

33. Unlike traditional fuel oils, compressed natural gas (CNG) is produced from natural gas, not oil. Safe and environment-friendly CNG is more cost effective than traditional fuels. According to estimations of experts, fuel consumption of CNG cars can save up to 600 AZN for every 10,000 miles. Considering the costs of switching to CNG, this is especially relevant for companies that have a large fleet of vehicles. As a result, it is likely to reduce the share of domestic transportation costs in overall costs. At the same time, large volumes of natural gas resources in our country will allow wider utilization of CNG as an alternative type of engine fuel in the near future.

34. CNG differs from traditional fuels also by having less toxic emissions. Carbon monoxide is 90 percent less and carbon dioxide is about 24 percent less during the use of CNG. CNG does not have certain hazardous wastes as it does not contain nitrogen and sulfur.

35. In recent years, a number of measures have been taken to increase the use of CNG in our country. It should be especially emphasized that since the second quarter of 2018, SOCAR Petroleum CJSC, operating with SOCAR, has been regularly launching gas stations for sale of CNG to consumers.

36. Currently, this type of fuel is sold only in Baku in more than 10 stations. In the near future, this number is expected to increase by covering the regions as well. In 2018, the sale capacity of CNG across the country amounted to 16.1 million m3 and in 2019 to 21.5 million m3. By 2020, this figure is expected to reach 30 million m3. As it can be observed, the annual increase both in the number of gas stations and in the sale capacity of the fuel, and the development pace of the CNG market actualizes the price regulation of this product.

Replies to paragraph 5 of the list of issues

37. The Taxes Code of the Republic of Azerbaijan was amended by the 29 November 2019 Law. Thus, according to Article 2.1 of the Law, replacement of VAT for goods (works, services) obtained before 1 January 2020 shall be carried out in the manner prescribed before this Law's entry into force. Replacement of the VAT paid for goods (works, services) obtained with an electronic invoice shall be applied in respect of the operations taking place after 1 January 2020. While in accordance with Article 2.2 of the Law, a tax payer who, prior to the Law's entry into force, has started the construction and installation works of a construction site and who applies the simplified taxing method shall pay the taxes for the said construction and installation works in the manner prescribed before the Law's entry into force. No VAT and income (profit) taxes are calculated for the residential and non-residential areas presented by the said tax payers after 1 January 2020.

38. Moreover, according to Article 165.6 added to the Code by the said Law, the terms a procedure of returning VAT paid for residential and non-residential areas purchased cashless by consumers, being natural persons, from persons engaged in building construction activity in the territory of the Republic of Azerbaijan, shall be approved by the President of the Republic of Azerbaijan. In accordance with this Article the returned amount shall be 30% of the paid VAT.

39. Another amendment made to the Code by the Law is the addition of Article 218-1, which determines exemptions and concessions. According to the Article, the amount of tax to be paid to the budget by simplified tax payers engaged in the retail sale of goods within commerce and/or public catering activity, for the period of 3 years since 1 January 2019, shall be reduced by 25% of the tax amount based on the special weight in overall production of the cashless payments made via POS terminals, determined by the Law of the Republic of Azerbaijan “On Customer Rights Protection”.

40. The share of the population living below the poverty line is 5.1%.

41. The ratio of the total income of the richest ten to the total income of the poorest 40% of the population is 0.661.

Percentage of public spending in GDP and percentage of social spending in total public spending, 2019, thousand AZN

GDP	81 681 000
Total public spending	25 190 000
<i>The ratio of public spending to GDP</i>	<i>30.84%</i>
<i>Social protection costs</i>	<i>2 470 387</i>
<i>The ratio to total public spending</i>	<i>9.81%</i>
Education	2 285 884
<i>The ratio to total public spending</i>	<i>9.07%</i>
Health	1 042 488
<i>The ratio to total public spending</i>	<i>4.14%</i>
Culture & Art	359 076
<i>The ratio to total public spending</i>	<i>1.43%</i>
Housing and utilities	362 330
<i>The ratio of total public spending is 1.44%</i>	<i>1.44%</i>
Expenditures on socio-economic reforms and other measures	1 373 316
<i>The ratio to total public spending</i>	<i>5.45%</i>
Total social spending	7 893 482
<i>Ratio of total social spending to total public spending</i>	<i>31.34%</i>
Regulated by inflation	7 693 452

42. According to the State Statistical Committee, since inflation in 2019 was 2.6%, the amount of social spending is 7,693,452,000 AZN.

Replies to paragraph 6 of the list of issues

43. Article 154 of the Criminal Code of the Republic of Azerbaijan stipulates the right of a person to equality by infringing on the rights and legitimate interests of a person depending on race, nationality, religion, language, sex, origin, property status, position, beliefs, membership in political parties, trade unions and other public associations. criminal liability has been established for the violation.

44. According to available statistics, no person was convicted by the courts of first instance under Article 154 of the Criminal Code in 2018–2019.

45. According to the Resolution of the Cabinet of Ministers dated 27 November 2019 “Determining the allocation norm of the state housing fund’s residential area based on social renting agreement”, the state housing fund’s residential area allocation norm based on social renting agreement is set at 16m², depending on the level of provision with the state housing fund’s residential areas given based on social renting agreements concluded in respect of administrative territorial units of the Republic of Azerbaijan and on other factors.

46. The Draft Presidential Order “Approving the 2019–2025 Housing Strategy of the Republic of Azerbaijan” has been drafted.
47. According to Article 14.8-1 of the Law “On Education”, fee-based education of children, who have lost their parents and are deprived of parental care, as well as of those equated to them, at state, municipal and private higher, secondary and vocational education institutions shall be covered at the state budget’s expense.
48. Pursuant to the third indention of Article 15 of the Law “Protection of the population’s health”, persons under the age of 18 shall be hired only after being medically examined and must be medically examined annually at the employer’s expense until they reach the age of 18. According to Article 17 of the Law, every woman shall receive free specialized medical care at the state healthcare system establishments during pregnancy, in the course of and after the delivery.
49. In accordance with Article 16 part 2 of the Labor Code of the Republic of Azerbaijan, concessions, privileges and additional protection in labor relations for women, the handicapped, persons under 18 years of age, and others in need of social protection shall not be considered discrimination.
50. Based on Article 98 part 1 of the Code, pregnant women, women with children under the age of three, and individuals under the age of eighteen shall not be permitted to work at night.
51. According to the first sentence of Article 241 of the Code, the use of women workers in labor intensive jobs, in hazardous work places, and also in underground tunnels, mines, and other underground works is prohibited.
52. According to Article 250 of the Code, it is prohibited to employ persons younger than 18 years old in jobs with difficult and hazardous work conditions, also in underground tunnels, mines and other underground jobs, also in such places as night clubs, bars, and casinos which could be detrimental to development of his/her wisdom, and also in places where alcoholic beverages, narcotic components and toxic materials are carried, kept, or sold and also where circulation of narcotic drugs, psychotropic agents and their precursors is performed. It is prohibited to employ persons younger than 18 years old, covered by the Law on Compulsory General Education, for execution of jobs which may deprive them of the opportunity to receive this education in full.
53. Pursuant to Article 254 part 1 of the Code, no employee under the age of 18 shall be permitted to work at night or perform overtime work, to work on weekends, holidays, days considered as non-business days or other days off, or to be seconded.
54. According to Article 270 parts 8 and 9 of the Code, employees of legislative authorities, relevant executive authorities, courts, or law enforcement authorities may not go on strike. Sentenced persons at prisons are prohibited from terminating the labor activity and going on strike to settle labor disputes.
55. The Law of the Republic of Azerbaijan on Ensuring Gender Equality (Men and Women) guarantees the inclusion of the gender factor in all spheres of society and the prevention of inequality of rights between women and men. Article 3 of the same Law calls men for the active military (alternative) service, curtailing the right of husband to demand divorce pursuant to Article 15 of the Family Code of the Azerbaijan Republic, creating differing conditions for males and females in penitentiaries, implementing specific measures with the purpose of ensuring gender equality are not considering as gender discrimination.
56. The draft law on “Amendments to the guarantees of Gender (men and women) Equality” of the Republic of Azerbaijan has been drafted by the State Committee for Family, Women and Children Affairs. On the draft law described conceptions of “gender expertise”, “special measures”, “gender stereotypes”. Nevertheless, specific article named “gender statistic” has been included to the draft law, approving the new regulation controlling guarantees of gender equality, as well as included norms in connection with conducting gender expertise of mass media and advertising. The draft Law has been addressed to the Cabinet of Ministries according to law on normative legal acts.

Replies to paragraph 7 of the list of issues

57. During 2019, 1573 entrepreneurs were issued preferential credits at 175 million AZN (total value of projects is 638 million AZN), including preferential credits at 40.3 million AZN for small and medium sized projects, by Entrepreneurship Development Fund of the Ministry of Economy of the Republic of Azerbaijan. At the expense of these credits an opportunity to create 5363 new work places appeared. 74% of preferential credits were directed to agricultural sector, the rest 26% of them were used for development of production and processing of industrial products of various types. 65% of credits were directed to regions, 35% of credits – to Baku settlements. Entrepreneurship Development Fund held events regarding stimulation of entrepreneurship in regions and rapidly provided farmers with preferential credits, provided an extension of relations between entrepreneurs and credit entities, investigated an economic potential of each region and, taking into account potential and needs of region, defined priority fields. In this regard, constant meetings are held with those who are issued credits in the regions.

58. Since 2004, 4 State Programmes (2004–2008, 2009–2013, 2014–2018 and 2019–2023) were accepted by certain Decrees of the President of the Republic of Azerbaijan to develop non-oil sector, diversify economy, to provide continuous and balanced development of regions, including improvement of infrastructure and social services in the development of rural areas. Important works have been held in the sphere of development of industry and agriculture, improvement of supply with electric energy, gas, communication, water supply and sewage system, use of ecological and natural resources, construction and restoration of education, health, cultural, youth and sport facilities and all these served to continuous development of the country.

59. Thus, in regions new gas line of 58,1 thousand km was constructed and restored, level of gasification increased from 41% to 93,7 %, 12747 km of water pipeline and 7565 km of sewage system have been constructed, 248 water warehouses and 102 water pump stations have been constructed and restored, population receiving drinking water from centralised water procurement system increased from 9% (2004) to 44,1% (2019).

60. During the mentioned period, repair and construction works in regional roads of over 15000 km have been held, 467 bridges and tunnels have been constructed, over 3000 schools, approximately 400 kindergarten, over 530 health enterprises have been constructed and restored, 35 Olympic Sport buildings and 34 youth centers have been constructed.

61. At the same time, as a result of implemented works, approximately 2,4 million work places have been created and 70% or 1,7 million of them are situated in regions.

62. In order to improve public services and infrastructure provision a special attention is given to the usage of G2B partnership mechanisms. Generally, development of G2B partnership has been determined as one of the main strategic directions in “Strategic map of national economy and its main divisions”, at the same time use of G2B partnership mechanisms in energy, transport, education, healthcare, etc. has been foreseen. Currently, work is going on to implement pilot projects based on public-private partnership mechanisms with the involvement of technical support from the Asian Development Bank.

63. In order to implement a systematic approach in this area, the Decree of the President of the Republic of Azerbaijan dated June 26, 2018 approved the establishment of the State-Entrepreneurship Partnership Development Center in the structure of the Small and Medium Business Development Agency of the Republic of Azerbaijan.

64. Another important measure is the Self-Employment Program, which was launched in 2016.

65. The scope of the program, which is dominated by people with special needs for social protection and those who have difficulty finding employment, expanded 6.5 times in 2018 and covered about 7,300 people. In 2019, 10,716 people were involved in the program, of which 7,808 were in rural areas (including 1,649 women, 964 young people).

66. Through the program, the Heydar Aliyev Foundation actively supports the development of gardening, an important area of agriculture. Due to this support, the Ministry

of Labour and Social Protection of Population and the Heydar Aliyev Foundation's Regional Development Public Union signed a memorandum in 2018 on the Social Gardens project. Melon farms have been established and the second phase of the project, implemented jointly with the Regional Development Public Union in 2019, has ensured self-employment of 250 low-income families, eliminated their dependence on targeted state social assistance programs and opened access to small businesses.

67. Over the past period, the State Employment Service has organized labour fairs in 57 cities and regions.

Replies to paragraph 8 and 9 of the list of issues

68. In 2017, a Working Group comprising representatives of relevant state bodies was established on the issues of integration and social protection of the foreigners who are granted refugee status in Azerbaijan in accordance with the relevant instruction of the Cabinet of Ministers of the Republic of Azerbaijan. Authorized representatives of State Migration Service, Ministry of Foreign Affairs, Ministry of Internal Affairs, Ministry of Justice, Ministry of Taxes, Ministry of Economy, Ministry of Labor and Social Protection of the Population, Ministry of Education, and Ministry of Health are the members of the Working Group under the leadership of the Cabinet of Ministers.

69. On June 28, 2018, the Chief of the State Migration Service approved the "Action Plan of the State Migration Service of the Republic of Azerbaijan in addressing socio-economic problems of refugees".

70. With the amendments made to the Decree of the Cabinet of Ministers of the Republic of Azerbaijan dated May 19, 2005 on the approval of the "Rules for Issuance of Personal Identification Number" a seven-character code, same as in the identification card of the citizens of the Republic of Azerbaijan was determined on the refugee IDPs of persons granted refugee status in the country. Refugees (including persons under UNHCR) are included in the category of persons who have been involved in the compulsory health insurance in accordance with amendments to the Law of the Republic of Azerbaijan "On Medical Insurance". In accordance with the Law of the Republic of Azerbaijan "On State Register of Population of the Republic of Azerbaijan", information on foreigners and stateless persons who were granted refugee status in the Republic of Azerbaijan was included to the State Register of Population.

71. A "Travel document" giving the right to travel outside the territory of the Republic of Azerbaijan has been developed and presented to the persons, who obtained refugee status, as well as their family members since January, 2020.

72. According to the amendments made to the Law of the Republic of Azerbaijan "On the Status of Refugees and Internally Displaced Persons" and "On the Rights of the Child" dated December 7, 2018, foreigners and stateless persons who were granted refugee status in the territory of the country, have the opportunity to study at all stages of education in the Republic of Azerbaijan in accordance with the legislation.

73. By the Decree dated February 23, 2017, amendments and additions have been made to the "Rules of Consideration on Applications for Refugee Status" in connection with unaccompanied children. Thus, when a person under 18 arrives unaccompanied or stays unaccompanied after arrival, is identified, information about that person is referred to the Guardianship and Trusteeship Authority. The Guardianship and Trusteeship Authority shall determine whether an unaccompanied child enters the territory of the country or remains unaccompanied after arrival and in case of his/her intention to obtain refugee status, application is filled to the SMS in accordance with the Rules. Until the issue of granting refugee status to an unaccompanied child is resolved, the guardianship and custody authorities place him/her in a social service facility. Unaccompanied children in the country is treated equally as children who have lost their parents and are deprived of parental care, and their social protection is ensured by the state, and their rights and benefits are protected in accordance with the law. According to the instruction of the Cabinet of Ministers a Working Group was established to ensure the effective national referral mechanism in the

area of child care for improving the care for unaccompanied and separated children. The Working Group is headed by the State Committee for Family, Women and Children Affairs. The working group includes representatives of the State Migration Service, Ministry of Labour and Social Protection of the Population, Ministry of Education, Ministry of Health and the Baku City Executive Power.

74. The “Individual Integration Plan” for refugees is regularly updated by the State Migration Service. According to the “Individual Integration Plan” integration needs of refugees have been identified, refugees and their families were provided with assistance (food, clothing, legal, etc.) and are involved in Azerbaijani language courses.

75. 20 refugees and asylum seekers in the Republic of Azerbaijan participated in various vocational trainings organized within the project “Social and cultural integration of foreigners and refugees in the Republic of Azerbaijan” implemented by the “Caring for the Future” Public Union for Support of Social and Economic Development of Regions with the support of the State Migration Service. The participants were provided with relevant certificates upon completion.

76. The State Migration Service takes necessary measures to protect the health of refugees and solving their medical problems, and these issues are in the focus of attention of the Ministry of Health. As a result of joint efforts, the issue of registration of refugees, persons applying for refugee status and their family members at local polyclinics of the Ministry of Health at their place of residence, their medical examination, placement in the maternity ward, medical examination, as well as in-patient treatment in case of need have been solved based on submissions by the State Migration Service.

77. During 2019, the State Migration Service provided appropriate assistance in the area of sexual and reproductive health in accordance with the needs of refugees and asylum seekers. Thus, over the past year, 12 asylum seekers received free medical care (birth) in this area. Additionally, the UNHCR Office in Azerbaijan provides assistance to refugees and asylum seekers in delivering free medical care related to reproductive health (in partnership with the clinic on a contractual basis).

78. In 2019, 1 refugee obtained the citizenship of the Republic of Azerbaijan in accordance with the Law of the Republic of Azerbaijan “On Citizenship of the Republic of Azerbaijan”.

79. Activities on establishment of the “Refugee Integration Center” and the “Asylum seeker’s Reception Center”, as well as improving mechanism of integration into the society by the foreigners and stateless persons who have been granted asylum, refugee status or under the protection have been included in the project of “National Strategy on Migration of the Republic of Azerbaijan for 2020–2025”.

80. In connection with the solution of social problems our compatriots who have been displaced from their homeland as a result of the Armenian-Azerbaijani conflict over Nagorno-Karabakh, 75 decrees and orders were signed by the President of the Republic of Azerbaijan, 224 decrees and order were made by the Cabinet of Ministers of the Republic of Azerbaijan and 11 laws were adopted by Milli Majlis of the Republic of Azerbaijan in total of 2004–2019.

81. Removal of 12 tent camps and 3 settlements consisting of rail cars on the railway was completed in 2007, and the last of 16 Finnish-type settlements in 2016.

82. In April 2016 the village Jojug Marjanli of Jabrayil, where was constantly fired by the enemy as well as Shikharkh settlement of Tartar, were saved from danger by surrounding heights being passed to the control of the Azerbaijani army, thus foundation of great return of our compatriots to their original lands was laid. In a short period of time, settlements were built in Jojug Marjanli and Shikharkh respectively containing 150 private houses and 34 four-storey buildings for more than a thousand families. All infrastructures necessary for convenience of people and meeting modern requirements was created in the reconstructed settlements.

83. In total, 110 settlements and residential complexes, as well as 27 residential areas were built in 2003–2019.

84. By the end of 2020, a total of 14 settlements and 3 residential areas are expected to be commissioned in the Absheron peninsula, as well as in the regions. So in addition, more than 10.000 families, approximately 33–40 thousand IDPs who have lived in temporary shelters for many years will be provided with large and bright apartments meeting modern requirements.

85. Over the past years, more than 16.000 internally displaced families have been provided with private real estate in many regions along with Baku.

86. In total, 110 modern settlements and residential complexes, as well as 27 residential areas containing private houses, multi-apartment buildings with a total area of 3,9 million square meters, having all the socio-technical infrastructure, yard were built in more than 30 cities and regions of the country at the expense funds allocated from the State Oil Fund and other sources for refugees and IDPs in 2001–2019, and 8 residential complexes with a total area of 311,2 thousand square meters and a residential area containing 1 building were commissioned in 2019.

87. The housing and living problems of 315.000 refugees and mainly IDPs containing 62.500 families were solved with the settlements built in 2003–2019.

88. In total 791 km of asphalt road, 1.001,5 km of water, 700,5 km of gas, 93,5 km of communication, 69 km of heat, 112,8 km of sewage and 1.818.9 km of power supply lines were laid, and 202,8 km of drainage network was built to ensure the road economy and technical communication network of settlements and residential areas built in 2001–2019. 243 water reservoirs and 93 pumping stations were built, 227 artesian wells were drilled and put into use and 878 power transformers with different capacity were installed. Thousands of trees and decorative shrubs were planted, renovation work was performed and recreation areas were created in all settlements.

89. In total, 162 secondary schools, 71 kindergartens, 66 club-community and cultural centers, 7 administrative buildings, 65 medical centers, 3 communication stations, and 2 Olympic complexes and 1 police station and ceremony house were commissioned by the end of 2019 to provide infrastructure in settlements and residential areas built for IDPs.

The work done to address the housing problems of IDPs

90. At the end of 2018, construction works were completed and put into operation 300-apartment, “Umid-2” settlement built in Garadagh district of Baku; 1,001 apartment, residential complex built in the territory of Absheron district (near Sumgayit railway station); The resettlement of IDPs to the 1,005-apartment residential complex built in the 12th micro-district of Sumgayit city began in early 2019 and was completed in the first quarter of the reporting year.

91. Commissioned since April 2019, 810-apartment residential complex built in Kurdakhani settlement, Sabunchu district of Baku; 306-apartment residential complex built in Pirallahi settlement, Pirallahi district of Baku city; To a settlement consisting of 146 individual houses built in the territory of Beylagan district; The resettlement of IDPs to the 1,300-apartment, Gobu Park-2 residential complex built in Lokbatan settlement, Garadagh district of Baku was completed in November 2019.

92. 685-apartment residential complex built in the territory of Shirvan city, put into operation upon completion of construction works at the end of 2019; To an 80-apartment residential building built in the territory of Goychay region; 564-apartment residential complex built in the territory of Kurdamir region; 250-apartment residential complex built in the territory of Ujar district; To a settlement consisting of 130 apartment buildings built in the territory of Goygol region; The resettlement of IDPs began in the last days of 2019 and is expected to be completed in the first months of 2020.

93. 3 IDP settlements consisting of 645 individual houses built in the territory of Takhta Korpu settlement, Agjabedi district, the construction of which was completed in the first months of 2020; The resettlement of IDPs will begin in the first quarter of 2020 in a new settlement consisting of 95 individual houses under construction in the Fizuli region.

94. Modern infrastructure meeting modern requirements was created, secondary schools, kindergartens, medical and communication stations were built in all IDP settlements.

95. In 2019, repair work was performed at 106 facilities, in which IDPs were densely settled. As a result of taken measures, 52.673 m² of metal and soft roofing materials were renovated at 89 repaired facilities, 36 apartment damaged by fire were restored and 10 apartments were internally repaired. Electrical equipment and lines were renewed in 3 dormitories, which are compact accommodation facilities. Corroded pipes were replaced with 1.138 km of external sewage and 1.836 km of water lines. Electrical equipment was bought and installed to avoid problems with electricity and water supply in compact accommodation facilities.

96. Electrical cables and wires were bought and used in temporary settlements of IDPs to keep the power lines in a good condition.

97. In the settlements accepted to the balance of the State Committee for Refugees and Internally Displaced Persons, the Committee's Housing and Utilities Department will overhaul 75 private houses in emergency condition in 2019, illuminate inner streets, elevators, stairwells and boiler-pumping stations, repair destroyed roads and landscaping works, as well as reconstruction of irrigation junction in Hajigabul region, repair of auxiliary buildings and roads, etc. work has been done.

Regarding utility costs and social allowances of IDPS

98. Decree dated on January 23, 2017 on "Determining single monthly allowance for IDPs and persons equated to them" was signed by the President of the Republic of Azerbaijan Mr. Ilham Aliyev to simplify the mechanism for accurate addressing and provision of funds allocated from the state budget for social protection of IDPs and persons equated to them, "Regulations for payment of single monthly allowance provided in lieu of allowance for food costs, as well as payment from the state budget for utilities and other services for IDPs and persons equated to them" was approved by the decision No.11, dated on January 24, 2017 of the Cabinet of Ministers of the Republic of Azerbaijan to ensure the execution of that Decree. Relevant commission and a working group under the commission was established and started to work within the Committee by the order No. 8s, dated on July 19, 2019 of the State Committee for Refugees and IDPs to avoid any faults in execution of the assigned tasks and strengthen the control over the proper compilation of lists of IDPs, whom single monthly allowance applies to.

99. The amount of single monthly allowance paid to one IDP at the beginning of 2019 was 40 AZN per month for IDPs temporarily settled in private houses, provided that all utility service costs shall be paid by them, and for IDPs residing in compact accommodation facilities without natural gas supply and no meters. The monthly allowance from the state budget to service organizations was 22 AZN. However, as a result of the President's care for IDPs, the state's financial opportunities were reviewed amid the ongoing economic development in the country, and the amount of single monthly allowance was increased by 50% and determined 60 and 33 AZN respectively since April 1, 2019 under the Order "Increasing the amount of single monthly allowance for IDPs and persons equated to them" dated on February 26, 2019 signed by the head of state.

100. By execution of this Order, the total amount of monthly allowances paid to averagely 495.306 IDPs was 304.908.244 AZN in 2019.

101. The amount of funds spent for one IDP was averagely 956 AZN in 2019, which is of the highest rates among the world countries for the amount of funds allocated to people from similar categories.

Regarding education and employment of IDPs

102. IDPs studying in paid departments at higher and secondary education institutions were exempted from tuition fees and 18,3 million AZN was allocated from the budget for tuition fees of 12.426 students in 2019 according to relevant decrees of the President of the Republic of Azerbaijan.

103. In February 2019, a young IDP was sent to South Korea for undergraduate education with support of the Embassy of the Republic of Korea.

104. According to the Law of the Republic of Azerbaijan “On Employment”, IDPs belong to the category of persons with special need for social protection and those having difficulties in finding employment. Ensuring the employment for this category of persons is carried out within the quota established by specified law for employers. In order to ensure the employment and integration of IDPs into society, measures are regularly taken to hold job fairs in their regions, to involve them in vocational training courses and self-employment programs.

105. From 2003 to the end of 2019, 451 non-residential areas in 106 settlements were put into use for residents taking into account the appeal of those intending to engage in entrepreneurial activities.

106. According to the rates for early 2019, the number of IDPs with working capacity was 366,9 thousand, of which 200 thousand were provided with permanent jobs in budget organizations and other sectors, and 134 thousand with seasonal jobs.

107. According to the program “Support for Internally Displaced Youth” co-funded by the Government of Azerbaijan and the World Bank, 4.664.108 AZN was allocated in 2019 to support young people engaged in private business activities, of which 2.128.024 AZN was spent on the purchase of work tools and equipment for those who have completed the training course.

108. 2.090,0 thousand AZN was allocated from the share of the Government of Azerbaijan and 12.761,500 AZN from the World Bank under the loan agreement made between the Government of Azerbaijan and the World Bank, and they were used to address the employment and social problems of IDPs in 2019.

109. In 2019, 3618 IDPs were provided with jobs, 233 people were involved in vocational courses, and 1,860 people in self-employment programs.

110. In 2019, documents of young IDPs were collected and submitted to the Ministry of Emergency Situations for employment purposes, and as a result 52 young IDPs, who successfully passed the training and internship, were provided with permanent jobs in firefighting brigades.

111. 161 people were employed in the regional power supply networks of “Azerishig” OJSC as a result of negotiations with “Azerishig” Open Joint Stock Company for employment of internally displaced youth in the electric power industry.

112. On May 7, September 18, November 19 and December 24 of 2019, career expo was organized for residents of new residential complexes at the initiative of the State Committee for Refugees and IDPs with support of the Ministry of Labor and Social Protection of the Population, total of 1778 vacancies from 166 companies and organizations were presented at the expo, 112 people were employed, 12 were involved in vocational training courses and 7 in self-employment programs.

113. Our compatriots – 29 IDPs and 5 Armenian refugees have been provided with permanent jobs at the Committee’s Base-Industrial Combine since the beginning of 2019. Considering the appeals of 104 IDPs living in the new settlements, appropriate places were allocated to them for activities such as retail and repair of household appliances.

114. In the reporting period, a total of 37.213 IDP appeals were received by the relevant sector of the Committee regarding documents submitted to obtain IDP status, and in 2019, new or renewed IDs (cards) were provided to 22.586 IDPs.

Regarding addressing the physical health problems of IDPs

115. In 2019, a total of 10 medical examination actions were held in settlements overcrowded by IDPs in various dates, and more than 3.500 people were examined.

116. Relevant number of IDPs with health problems used 600 medical examination cards received from the Medical Clinic of the Red Crescent Society of the Islamic Republic of Iran operating in our country. The Japanese “Fuji Optical Co.Ltd”, which has been carrying out

humanitarian actions in our country since 2005, presented 59 thousand high-quality eyeglasses to our IDPs, and over 31 thousand people's eyes were examined for free. In addition, 2,400 IDPs benefited from the services of "Fuji" humanitarian mission in 2019.

Regarding consideration of appeals of IDPs

117. In January-December 2019, the Committee received 48.391 written appeals regarding IDPs. Execution of 45.452 (93.9%) were ensured.

118. In total, 7.525 citizens were received by Chairman of the Committee at 86 held meetings.

119. 604 judicial proceedings were held to protect the rights of IDPs and the Committee's interests. 196 of the claims initiated were against the Committee, 255 proceedings were regarding expelling the IDPs living in apartments owned by others, and 153 court cases were on different issues. The majority of legal proceedings ended in favor of interests of the Committee.

120. As a result of the work done, integration of our IDPs into the society was ensured, and their trust in the Azerbaijan and the Government strengthened. However, all the work done is temporary, because the only solution of the problems of IDPs is realization of their right to return as provided for in the UN resolutions.

Replies to paragraph 10 of the list of issues

121. In this regard it shall be noted that pursuant to the country's legislation, administration of justice in the Republic of Azerbaijan is carried out by observing the equality of rights and freedoms of everyone before the law and court, irrespective of race, ethnicity, religion, language, sex, origin, property status, occupation, beliefs, affiliation with political parties, trade union organizations and other public associations.

122. It should also be noted that the situation with regard to sexual minorities in Azerbaijan doesn't differ from the situation in Europe. However, in recent years, there have been cases in our country where members of sexual minorities who have committed offenses try to get rid of responsibility by promoting or emphasizing their sexual orientation. Meanwhile, these issues are solved only within legislative acts passed legal examination by the relevant international organizations.

Replies to paragraph 11 of the list of issues

123. The "Action Plan for Prevention of Sexual Choice of Children before Birth for 2020–2025" approved by the Order of the Cabinet of Ministers of the Republic of Azerbaijan dated February 24, 2020 defines the measures to be taken by relevant agencies to prevent child sex before birth has been.

124. The State Committee for Family, Women and Children Affairs, the Council on State Support to Non-Governmental Organizations under the Auspices of the President of the Republic of Azerbaijan and Public Union Zafar: Support for Martyrs' Families implemented the project called "The support for removal negative consequences of domestic violence" for IDPs.

125. In frame of the project, in September–October, 2019, an educational meeting was held at schools for refugees for teachers, students and parents. At the educational meetings, participants were informed about the negative legal, medical and social consequences of domestic violence and their protection mechanisms.

126. The draft National Action Plan on Gender Equality in the Republic of Azerbaijan 2020–2024 has been developed by the State Committee for Family, Women and Children Affairs. It was drafted according to implementation of Clause 7.4 of the Development Concept "Azerbaijan – 2020: Outlook for the Future", United Nations Convention on the Elimination of All Forms of Discrimination Against Women (CEDAW), Beijing Declaration and Platform, Sustainable Development Goals and other international documents.

127. In 2019, trainings on “Gender and Leadership” were conducted by the State Committee for Family, Women and Children Affairs together with the German Society for International Cooperation(GIZ). The purpose of training was to build leadership capacity, as well as knowledge and skills on public policy in the area of protecting the rights and freedoms of citizens and gender equality in the relevant area. The trainings were organized for deputies and employees of local executive powers in the regions.

128. Since 2016 the Government has been launching the project within the financial support of the United Nations Population Fund, the Kingdom of the Netherlands and the European Union to prevent child sex-selective abortions in our country, and combat gender based violence. The main government partners of the above mentioned project are the State Committee for Family, Women and Children Affairs, the Ministry of Labor and Social Protection and the Ministry of Youth and Sports. So far, the project has conducted a series of trainings for media representatives, young generations on perception the values of girls in the families and community, and within this project several social initiatives have been drafted.

129. During the current year “The Global Programme to Prevent Son Preference and the Undervaluing of Girls” has been implemented by the United Nations Population Fund, the European Union, the State Committee on Family, Women and Children Affairs and the Ministry of Youth and Sports. As part of the project, a Practical Workshop was held on May 20–22, 2019 for media representatives in order to “Increase the sensitivity of the media and enhance the capacity of media representatives to cover gender-based gender selection”.

130. At the same time, on July 29-August 3, 2019, the Summer School “Equal Opportunities for a Better Future” opened in Shamakhi under “the Global Programme to Prevent Son Preference and the Undervaluing of Girls”.

131. In 2019, in cooperation with the Government of Azerbaijan and the United Nations Population Fund, a National Action Plan to eliminate gender inequality among newborns was drafted, and the document was improved on the basis of opinions and suggestions from relevant government agencies. The financial volume of the document is currently being calculated.

Replies to paragraph 12 of the list of issues

132. The “2020–2025 Actions Plan for the implementation of the Employment Strategy”, approved by the Presidential Order dated 13 February 2020, includes instructions to draft proposals on the establishment of career centers in higher, secondary and vocational education institutions for the youth’s profession-oriented organization and supporting the provision of career counseling services; increasing the efficiency of vocational training courses in order to engage in the labor market the persons in special need of social protection and having difficulties being hired, in particular the young people; by utilizing progressive education methods in this field, enhancing application of competence-oriented module training and tasks on other issues.

133. At the same time, according to Article 28.13 of the Law “On State Service”, the persons who have studied abroad in the framework of the state program approved by the President of the Republic of Azerbaijan on education of the Azerbaijani youth in foreign countries shall be admitted to state service outside of competition.

134. Furthermore, brochures, booklets are printed and distributed at various events (exhibitions, seminars, infotainments, career days, etc.) as part of career guidance and outreach activities, and information on vocational education opportunities is provided. On October 10–12, 2019 “13th Azerbaijan International Education Exhibition” was organized where 9 vocational education providers joined with 15 occupations and master classes, branded products were exhibited to the visitors.

135. 12,678 students from vocational education providers were involved in work based learning (industry internships) to provide practical skills matching to the needs of the labor market and to support their employment.

136. In 2019, in order to provide graduates with vocational skills 13 competency-based education programs (curricula) and 55 modules / textbooks have been drafted to meet the needs of the labor market within the framework of various projects.

137. The State Employment Service under the Ministry of Labour and Social Protection of Population together with the Youth Fund of the Republic of Azerbaijan has implemented the “Youth Employment Program” in May–June 2019. The program envisages the employment of graduates of higher and secondary vocational education institutions under the age of 29, and the Fund will sponsor part of their salaries for a certain time frame. With the support of the service, 20 companies from 13 cities and regions joined the program and 82 vacancies were submitted. Applications and registration for the program were conducted by the Youth Foundation in a fully transparent electronic form, in total 614 young individuals participated in the program.

138. The “Build a Career with Us” program was launched jointly with the State Employment Service under the Ministry of Labour and Social Protection of Population and the Youth Foundation of the Republic of Azerbaijan. Within the framework of the project, training courses for youth are conducted by trainers of the State Employment Service. At the initial stage, these courses were organized in Baku (Youth Career and Development Center and Sabunchu Youth Center), as well as in Gazakh and Shamkir districts. The aim of the project is to ensure integration of the unemployed and job-seeking youth into the labour market using innovative methods.

Replies to paragraph 13 of the list of issues

139. The “2020–2025 Actions Plan for the implementation of the Employment Strategy”, approved by the Executive Order of the Head of State prescribes execution of measures to draft proposals on upgrading the list of jobs prohibiting employment of women in accordance with international labor standards, strengthening the work of engaging women, who are in special need of social protection and are having difficulties being hired, in active employment measures, as well as engaging a part of this contingent in the labor market based on statistical data on the quantity of non-active employable population.

140. More than 70 percent of women in the country are involved in education, health, culture, arts, social and other areas financed from the state budget, and here the Unified Rates Handbook is implemented as a remuneration system. Taking into account, that under the Unified Rates Handbook, salaries depend on the minimum wage, and as the minimum wage amount is low, the average women’s salary is about 2 times lower than that of men. This payment gap will decrease due to the increased minimum wage in 2019 (92,3% increase in total).

141. The definition of the minimum wage was revised in the draft of the Law of the Republic of Azerbaijan “On amendments to the Labor Code of the Republic of Azerbaijan” in order to eliminate discrimination and ensure compliance with the basic principles and provisions of “The Revised European Social Charter as well as the ILO “Minimum Wage Fixing Convention 1970 (No 131)”. The revised draft defines minimum wage as a social requirement, that determines the minimum amount of monthly wage for unskilled labor and services in accordance with the needs of employees and their families, taking into account decent working conditions that promote employment and based on the demands of economic development, productivity, average monthly wage, purchasing power of currency, social benefits as well as minimum living standard for social demographic groups. The implementation of this definition will play a crucial role in reducing gender payment gap.

142. At the same time, a legal draft will be drafted by the Ministry of Labour and Social Protection of Population and submitted to the Cabinet of Ministers of the Republic of Azerbaijan in order to bring Article 241 “The occupations and positions in which female labor is prohibited” of the Labor Code of the Republic of Azerbaijan in line with Articles 8 and 20 of the Revised European Social Charter.

Replies to paragraph 14 and 16 of the list of issues

143. Effective measures are implemented to combat informal employment in the country. With this aim the “Action plan on prevention of informal employment in the Republic of Azerbaijan” was approved by the Order of the President of the Republic of Azerbaijan dated

October 9, 2017. The Action Plan will provide the policy approaches in the improvement of normative legal acts and administration, strengthening of control measures in the prevention of informal employment, establishing a monitoring and evaluation system, as well as raising awareness.

144. Tax penalties (in the amount of 2–6 thousand AZN), administrative fines (in the amount of 1–25 thousand AZN) and criminal liability (criminal case for 10 illegal employees) are established to combat informal employment.

145. It should be noted that alongside the measures of responsibility taken to combat informal employment, crucial mechanisms were established to stimulate the transition from informal to formal employment.

146. So, tax incentives in the non-state and non-oil and gas sectors, monitoring and strengthening of administration in the fight against informal employment, implemented in the country from January 1, 2019, as well as a significant increase (92.3%) in the minimum wage in the country. The number of employees in the country increased by 10.9% (153,000 people) in 2019 as a result of raising the level of decency of jobs by bringing it to the subsistence level and setting a higher amount.

147. A draft of the Decree of the President of the Republic of Azerbaijan on approval of “The list of information systems and resources required for creation of unified system for monitoring informal employment” and “Provisions on conducting and coordinating control measures in the field of legalization of informal employment” was drafted in order to ensure the joint activities and coordination of the bodies with control functions in connection with the legalization of informal labor relations, to improve the forms of inspections and increase the effectiveness of inspections in order to detect informal employment.

148. Additionally, in order to coordinate the implementation of employment measures in the field, local coordinating committees on employment assistance were established and approved by the Resolution of the Cabinet of Ministers of the Republic of Azerbaijan dated July 9, 2019.

149. Measures were taken to establish and develop state electronic information system aimed to combat informal employment.

150. The “Labor contract notification subsystem” and the newly established “Employment subsystem” of the Centralized Electronic Information System of the MLSPP register the data on labor contracts, new workplaces, and vacancies in the county. These subsystems allow to access data about employees and workplaces in real-time, thus creating a wide range of opportunities for monitoring and analysis.

151. The creation of the “Employment subsystem” eliminated the need for entrepreneurs to submit periodic reports to the State Employment Service.

152. Measures have been taken to integrate the systems of migration, taxes, statistics, and internal affairs authorities into the “Labor contract notification subsystem” and “Employment subsystem”.

153. The “2020–2025 Actions Plan for implementation of the Employment Strategy”, approved the Presidential Order, envisages preparation of proposals on increasing minimum wage in stages for the purpose of ensuring decent labor and preventing informal employment.

Replies to paragraph 15 of the list of issues

154. The State Labour Inspectorate Service under the Ministry of Labour and Social Protection of Population of the Republic of Azerbaijan (hereinafter, SLIS) executes state control over the compliance with the requirements of the Labor Code of the Republic of Azerbaijan and other normative legal acts on labor legislation.

155. However, according to the Law of the Republic of Azerbaijan dated October 20, 2015 “On suspension of inspections in the field of entrepreneurship”, inspections of business entities in the territory of the Republic of Azerbaijan were suspended until January 1, 2021.

156. In accordance with the requirements of the above-mentioned Law, the SLIS has not conducted inspections of business entities since November 1, 2015. Nevertheless, during 2019, 8512 complaints filed with the SLIS were investigated and responded in accordance with the requirements of the Law of the Republic of Azerbaijan “On citizens’ appeals”. In the course of investigation, 625 cases of violations of labor legislation by employers were identified and administrative fines were imposed with respect to officials and legal persons. During this period, 247 work-related accidents were investigated. As a result of these accidents, 63 persons died and 239 were injured. The 302 injured detected during the investigation were provided with work injury act.

157. In 2019, during the investigation of citizen appeals and review of information send to the SLIS by the Labor Relations Monitoring Center under the ASAN Service (Azerbaijan Service and Assessment Network), 196 cases of labor legislation violations were encountered. The violations were mainly found in relation to involvement of individuals in work or service delivery without the entry into force of labor contracts. Administrative fines were imposed with respect to officials and legal persons by the senior management of SLIS and the judicial authorities.

158. Regarding the bias of judges towards employers and the limited understanding of labor rights, and in this regard, the inability of courts to take effective protection measures against labor rights violations, we note that these claims are baseless and do not reflect the reality. Judges review cases impartially and fairly, based on equality of the parties and on facts, and in accordance with the law.

159. The Courts of the Republic of Azerbaijan carry out administration of justice in conditions complying with the high status of the judiciary, which enable the fulfillment of all procedural requirements and exclude any influence to the judges’ freedom to express their will.

160. The rights and freedoms of citizens of the Republic of Azerbaijan, foreign citizens residing in its territory, as well as stateless persons provided for in the Constitution and other laws of the Republic of Azerbaijan, and the legitimate interests of legal entities shall be guaranteed at any stage of court proceedings.

161. It shall be informed that successive measures are being taken to raise the quality and efficiency of justice, based on the program-type Presidential Decree of 3 April 2019 “On Deepening Reforms in the Judicial and Legal System”.

162. At the same time, it shall be noted that relevant works are being conducted to form the institute of mediation, which plays a vital role in alternative out-of-court resolution of disputes. The purpose of mediation is to resolve based on mutual agreement of the parties the disputes arising from civil and economic, family, labor and administrative legal relations without going to court.

163. The special Law “On Mediation” was adopted on 29 March 2019; this Law regulates public relations in the field of mediation, being one of alternative dispute resolution methods, and determines its purposes, principles, implementation rules and the status of mediators.

Replies to paragraph 17 of the list of issues

164. Since 1996, lands used for agricultural crops in Azerbaijan have been privatized and transferred to private ownership. In 2018, cotton was planted on 132.6 thousand hectares in 22 regions of the country. In general, about 93% of the country’s cotton fields are harvested by machine, and only 7% by hand. Manual collection is completely voluntary and is carried out on a paid basis with high current tariffs (20–25 AZN per day) for rural areas. In order to increase the level of mechanization of the agricultural sector, the supply of machinery and equipment has increased several times in recent years.

165. So, during 2005–2018, 33,622 units of agricultural machinery, as well as, 880 grain harvesters, 222 cotton harvesters, 10,094 tractors and 22,426 other agricultural machinery leased or sold to producers in the country at prices subsidized by the state only through “Agroleasing” OJSC.

166. This work is still ongoing, as in 2019, a total of 3,480 units of various agricultural machinery were contracted for use in the cultivation and harvesting of cotton, of which 2,939 units (84%), including 50 cotton harvesters, 570 tractors, 360 cotton cutters, 420 straw cultivators, 350 cotton cultivators, 330 tractor trailers, 150 mowers and other agricultural machinery were purchased and brought to the country.

167. In the presence of large labor resources in rural areas, as well as in the context of increasing the supply of machinery and equipment in recent years to increase the level of mechanization of agriculture, the lack of economically viable options for the use of child labor in agriculture excludes.

168. During 2019, the SLIS has not received any complaints about child labor in agriculture or cotton harvesting, or violation of the rights of migrant workers in connection with the issuance or revocation of work permits.

169. In accordance with the “State Program on the development of official statistics in the Republic of Azerbaijan in 2018–2025 years”, the State Committee for Family, Women and Children Affairs has developed a methodology for the statistical survey of child labor exploitation in 2018 and a national survey in 2019. As a result, the analysis of the employment of children by sex and age groups in different areas was conducted.

Replies to paragraph 18 of the list of issues

170. In accordance with the Migration Code of the Republic of Azerbaijan a temporary residence permit is issued to foreigners and stateless persons who have been granted a work permit. In case of early termination of the employment contract the State Migration Service investigates the other grounds for the migrant’s stay in the Republic of Azerbaijan. At the same time, an opportunity is given for employment of a migrant worker by another employer. Otherwise, the migrant worker should leave the territory of the Republic of Azerbaijan within 10 working days.

171. The State Migration Service exercises control over the validity of work permit. The Service inspects compliance with requirements of the Migration Code and the legal and regulatory acts governing use of foreigners and stateless persons as a labor force. At the same time, the Service receives information or a reference paper from the employer as well as form the foreigner or stateless person in case of issues that arise during inspection. According to Article 67.13 of the Migration Code the State Migration Service cancels a work permit if the state fee to obtain the permit was not paid within 30 days or if foreigner or stateless person was refused to obtain a permit for temporary residence in the territory of the Republic of Azerbaijan.

172. According to the Migration Code, employers are prohibited to seize passports or other identity documents of foreigners and stateless persons recruited and according to the Code of Administrative Offenses of the Republic of Azerbaijan, an employer is fined in the amount of 500 AZN in such cases (this penalty is imposed if the offense does not result in criminal liability under the relevant article of the Criminal Code of the Republic of Azerbaijan).

173. According to the Code of Administrative Offenses, the employer is brought to administrative liability for recruiting a foreigner or stateless person without a work permit by violating the requirements of the Migration Code, employing a foreigner or stateless person outside his or her place of employment.

174. In order to prevent the cases of abuse and exploitation the Service reviews issuance of work permits after checking employer’s activities who applies to get work permit for foreigners and stateless persons invited to carry out paid labour activity in the territory of the Republic of Azerbaijan.

175. During 2018, a citizen of the Republic of Turkey brought 9 citizens of Turkey to the Republic of Azerbaijan in exchange for huge amount of money in order to send them to Europe and organized obtaining permits for residence and work for carrying out paid labour activity. During the investigations conducted by the State Migration Service it was revealed

that these foreigners were not actually engaged in labor activity in a company that received a work permit and their permits were terminated.

176. In 2019, there were no reports on abuse and exploitation cases of the system of issuance and termination of work permits.

177. To prevent such cases, the State Migration Service carries out awareness raising campaigns with legal entities, natural persons dealing with entrepreneurial activity without establishing a legal entity and branches and representations of foreign legal entities heads of various departments, organizations and enterprises. During the events, the participants are informed about the requirements of migration legislation, responsibility for violating the requirements of legislation, rights and responsibilities of foreigners and stateless persons. In addition, a hotline has been set up to contact directly with the chief of the State Migration Service in order to improve the process of issuance of work permits, increase transparency and ensure prompt consideration of applications of entrepreneurs.

178. Currently, relevant works are underway in the direction of improving the system of issuance of work permits.

179. In order to prevent legislation violations in the field of migration, all appeals, including appeals for work permits are filed electronically. The appeals can be submitted through ASAN Service (Azerbaijan Service and Assessment Network) as well.

180. In addition, since 2016 the work permits are issued electronically based on assessments of the State Migration Service and the Ministry of Labour and Social Protection of Population.

Replies to paragraph 19 of the list of issues

181. According to Article 281 of the Labor Code of the Republic of Azerbaijan, strikes are prohibited in certain service sectors (the hospital sector, power generation, water supply services, telephone communications, air traffic control and firefighting services) which are vital to human health and safety. Arbitration shall be mandatory in these sectors if the parties are unable to resolve an organizational labor dispute by reconciliation. The restriction of the right to strike in certain service sectors vital to human health is in line with international standards. The International Labour Organization made no comments on this issue.

182. According to Article 281 of the Labor Code of the Republic of Azerbaijan, the right to strike is restricted only for management personnel of air and rail transport service. Other employees working in the same service sector have the right to strike.

183. According to Article 3 of the Law of the Republic of Azerbaijan “On Trade Unions” employees, pensioners, studying individuals have all uniform right to voluntary set up trade unions at their choice without getting prior permission, as well as join trade unions for the protection of their legal interests, labor, social and economic rights, and engage in trade union activity. In order to achieve these goals, at least seven persons have the right to form a trade union and, at their own discretion, unite in the relevant trade union organization and adopt its charter. In accordance with Article 7 of the Law of the Republic of Azerbaijan “On Trade Unions”, men and women should enjoy the right to join trade unions on an equal footing.

184. As the Law stipulates, trade unions may have local, territorial, and republican status. In the Republic of Azerbaijan, trade unions are created at all levels, including agencies, organizations, and enterprises. More than 95 percent of the hired workers in the Republic of Azerbaijan are members of trade union organizations which demonstrate the broad coverage of the trade unions in the country.

185. Over 25 sectoral trade unions are active in Azerbaijan. The trade unions continuously undertake initiatives to expand and increase number of their members, which is fully supported by the state in line with the principles of social partnership.

186. According to the information provided by Azerbaijan Trade Unions Confederation, the Trade Union Republican Committee of Oil and Gas Industry Workers was based on the

Charter of the Ministry of Justice and as of January 2020, is the first trade union to combine 119 unions and reach 68619 members.

187. There have been no cases of pressure from the employer to establish a trade union in the oil and gas departments and enterprises and to become a member of the organization.

188. Collective agreements were signed with employers in 119 primary organizations under the structural service of the Republican Committee of the Trade Union of Oil and Gas Industry Workers of Azerbaijan. Also, the General Committee (Tariff) Collective Agreement is signed between the Republican Committee of the Trade Union of Oil and Gas Industry Workers of Azerbaijan and SOCAR every two years.

189. In the last five years, the proportion of trade union workers by industry by sex is as follows. According to the State Statistics Committee, the average annual number of employees in the industry in 2019 by type of economic activity and property was 220.3 thousand people. At the same time, in 2019, the number of women working in such areas as “mining, processing, electricity, gas and steam production, distribution and supply, water supply, waste treatment and processing” was 30.5%, and the number of men was 69.5% organized.

190. According to the Azerbaijan Trade Unions Confederation, in 2015–2019, the trade unions in the statistical reports received from the republican authorities “mining, processing, electricity, gas and steam production, distribution and supply, water supply, waste treatment and disposal” The number of trade union members in industries such as 529,161. 147876 of them (27.9%) are women and 481285 (72.1%) are men.

Replies to paragraph 20 of the list of issues

191. According to Article 8 of the Law of the Republic of Azerbaijan “On Social Benefits”, the amount of benefits is determined by the relevant executive authority and is indexed at least once a year. The amount of social benefits is constantly increasing.

192. Throughout the 2019, monthly and lump-sum social benefits were assigned and paid to 4.9% of country’s population covering 488,822 people. 400,304 people in the country receive monthly and 88,518 people receive one-time social benefits. Of these, 180,521 people receive disability benefits, and 62,951 people receive benefits for children with disabilities under the age of 18.

193. During the first half of 2019, the Government of Azerbaijan adopted the first reform package aimed to improve the social situation of 3 million people. According to the reform package, the amount of social benefits and presidential pensions paid to 570,000 people increased by an average of 50–100 percent, as well as two new types of presidential pensions were introduced and additional 400 million AZN was spent from the state budget.

194. It was instructed to double on average the amount of social benefits by the Decree of the President of the Republic of Azerbaijan dated February 25, 2019, “On additional measures aimed to strengthen the social protection of the population”. In order to carry out the directive, legislation drafts were drafted and adopted on April 15, 2019 and the amount of social benefits was increased from April 2019.

195. War veterans used to receive a supplement to their labour pensions in the amount of 11 AZN while the non-retired war veterans received a social benefit in the amount of 55 AZN. This led to two different approaches to the same category of people. Taking into account the above-mentioned, under the Decree of the President of the Republic of Azerbaijan dated April 15, 2019 No.641, as of April 1, 2019 a presidential pension was established in the amount of 80 AZN for all the war veterans.

196. According to the Decree of the President of the Republic of Azerbaijan No.643 dated April 15, 2019, “The presidential pension for persons looking after people with first degree disabilities or children with limited health capabilities under the age of 18” was established in the amount of 50 AZN.

197. According to the amendments made to the Law “On Labor Pensions” on November 29, 2019, if the amount of the insurance part of the labor pension calculated for the loss of the head of the family of each incapable family member is less than the amount of the social benefit for the loss of the head of the family established by the Law of the Azerbaijan Republic “On Social Benefits” is entitled to social benefits for loss.

198. In order to improve the social welfare of the population in the coming years, the amount of social benefits will be substantially increased.

Replies to paragraph 21 of the list of issues

199. According to the “Rules on provision of social services at home (mobile services)”, approved by the Resolution of the Cabinet of Ministers of the Republic of Azerbaijan on April 22, 2014, the regional (district) departments of the State Social Protection Fund under the Ministry of Labor and Social Protection of Population will provide social services at home (mobile services) to elderly couples, persons and children with limited health capabilities, persons suffering terminal stages of disease who don’t reside in the same settlement with able-bodied relatives or legal representatives and are in need of social services. During 2019, 1160 social workers provided mobile social services to 9225 persons.

200. In 2019 to order of the Ministry, 224 social service projects were implemented by 73 different non-governmental organizations and more than 9000 persons with special needs have benefited from these projects. Within the framework of the mentioned projects, day-care centers were established in 70 districts with the aim of providing access to social services for children and families living in difficult living conditions. In accordance with the mentioned social projects various centers and services such as: community-based social rehabilitation services in 54 districts, 2 rehabilitation and audiological service centers for children with hearing and speech impairments, 3 social rehabilitation centers for visually impaired children, 9 parent support centers, 10 day-care centers for elderly persons, 11 vocational rehabilitation centers for persons with disabilities and 3 rehabilitation centers for victims of human trafficking were established. Alongside these services, 3 publications were drafted in a format accessible for visually impaired persons, educational services were provided through mass media for 4 children with hearing and speech impairment, leisure activities were organized for 8 children with limited health capabilities and other people, various awareness raising activities were implemented in order to help to understand disability, 4 children with limited health capabilities participated in special programs to learn new sports and arts, as well as 3 support centers for victims of domestic violence, 1 treatment center for children affected by domestic violence and 16 defectological and psychological support centers were established for children with autism and down syndrome. Within the framework of the relevant projects, a lot of measures were taken to render social and psychological assistance to children living in socially dangerous situation, provide social rehabilitation, organize sport events for children with limited health capabilities and persons with disabilities and create conditions for their participation in international competitions.

Replies to paragraph 22 of the list of issues

201. In order to satisfy housing needs of population and to eliminate deficiencies in continuous development of housing sector in regions, reconstruct cities, houses and social infrastructure objects on the planned base “Strategic road map on development of housing on proper prices in the Republic of Azerbaijan” has been confirmed by Decree of the President of the Republic of Azerbaijan dated December 6, 2016 No 1138. In order to satisfy housing needs of citizens, to provide them with opportunity to acquire flats by preferential condition, State Housing Development Agency (SHDA) of the Republic of Azerbaijan that was established by the Decree of the President of the Republic of Azerbaijan dated April 11, 2016, No 858, and other entities have been given relevant assignments.

202. In order to provide equal opportunities for people who wish to acquire flats by using preferential conditions, to simplify procedure of acquiring flats, which are in balance of SHDA, by using preferential conditions, to maintain transparency and operability during

consideration of applications, to benefit from information and communication technologies and to receive necessary documents in real time mode, to save a time and expenditures and to increase a quality and reasonability of services “A preferential flat” system has been established. Implementation of 5 projects (Yeni Yasamal I, Yeni Yasamal II, Hovsan housing estate, construction of apartment buildings in Ganja and Sumgait) started in order to provide citizens with flats on proper prices from 2016 to 2019 by SHDA. According to information for the beginning of 2020, 1499 families acquired flats in preferential conditions, 122 families of them are internally displaced persons and people like this, 19 families are family members (husband, wife, children) of martyrs.

203. According to Strategic Road Map, taking into account annual development of flat market, needs to acquire flats on proper prices, urbanization level and amount of population in every city, it is planned to construct by SHDA and operate new flats and to provide approximately 7000 families with flats in preferential conditions until 2022.

204. Provision of family members of people who were killed and injured for independence, territorial integrity, with flats is successfully going on. 934 flats and private houses were given to this category of population in 2019. Totally, over 7500 flats and houses have been given to mentioned category of population since 2014 up to now.

205. In order to provide worthy level of live to population and to increase its social welfare, to reach balanced and continuous development of Economy, Mortgage and Credit Guarantee Fund of the Republic of Azerbaijan has been successfully implementing its activity. Thus, at the expence of the Fund total amount of mortgage credits reached 1,3 billion AZN, approximately 28000 families improved their living conditions at the expence of mortgage credits. Over 412 million AZN of these credits (8400) are mortgage credits that have been issued to preferential category of population. Near 70% of those, who received mortgage credits at the expence of the Fund, are youth and young families, mortgage credits have been issued in 50 regions. Besides, in order to improve social protection of population and to satisfy needs of low-income families in housing, one of the main duties put before Mortgage and Credit Guarantee Fund, according to the Decree of the President of the Republic of Azerbaijan dated January 25, 2019, No 488, is to create rent mechanism with obligation to sell.

206. The State Committee on Urban Planning and Architecture of the Republic of Azerbaijan has started preparing a new master plan for Baku, which will be valid for 20 years from 2020, and has developed the city’s Development Concept as the first stage of the process. According to the concept, 4 priorities for the future development of the city have been identified: the sustainable development of the city, the regeneration of the environment, the preservation of historical and cultural heritage and the transition to a post-industrial era with the formation of a new urban economy.

207. It should be noted that the creation of equal opportunities and inclusion for different groups of the population has been identified as one of the main principles in urban planning for the capital Baku.

208. During 2019, it was possible to approve property rights on a total of 74,046 apartments on the basis of commissioning permits issued by the Committee in Baku and in other cities of the country by the relevant local executive authorities.

209. According to Article 31 of the Law “On the Rights of Persons with Disabilities”, the grounds for considering a person with a disability in need of housing and the rules for registering them as in need of housing are determined by the Housing Code of the Republic of Azerbaijan. In case of death of a person with a disability registered as a person in need of living space, such registration shall be maintained for his/her family members in accordance with the procedure established by the Cabinet of Ministers of the Republic of Azerbaijan.

210. The Ministry of Labour and Social Protection of Population carries out the strategy for improvement of housing conditions of privileged persons based on the Decree of the President of the Republic of Azerbaijan dated June 20, 2014 “On additional measures to improve the social and living conditions of persons who have become disabled in connection with the protection of the territorial integrity, independence & constitutional order of the Republic of Azerbaijan, and families of martyrs”. The Decree envisages the provision in

order of priority of housing or individual homes during 2014–2028 for persons registered in local executive authorities until January 1, 2014 as in need of living space.

211. According to the Decree, during the implementation period of the Decree, a total of 5731 persons will be provided with housing and individual homes. During 2014–2019, 2618 houses and apartments were provided to the persons of this category. The number of apartments and individual houses built and provided to privileged persons has been growing over the years. During 2018, 626 apartments were built and provided to the privileged persons, by 2019, this number increased to 934, and this year the Ministry plans to commission another 1500 apartments and individual houses.

Replies to paragraph 23 of the list of issues

212. Resolution of the Cabinet of Ministers of the Republic of Azerbaijan dated January 16, 2019 “On additional measures to accelerate the socio-economic development of Sabunchu district of Baku” dated October 8, 2015, “On additional measures to accelerate the socio-economic development of Binagadi and Garadagh districts of Baku” Resolutions dated January 22, 2016 and “On additional measures to accelerate the socio-economic development of Surakhani, Nasimi, Khatai, Narimanov, Nizami, Yasamal, Sabail, Pirallahi, Khazar districts of Baku” dated February 25, 2016 has been canceled.

213. Also, in this field, the Presidential Decree No. 868 dated 29 November 2019 “On some issues related to state urban planning activities in Baku City” includes issued related to reconstruction of residential buildings which prejudice the overall view of the city, are in emergency condition and do not comply with the existing urban planning norms (including their demolition and construction of a new building).

Replies to paragraph 24 of the list of issues

214. Since 2011, together with the United Nations Development Programme has implementing the technical assistance project “Encouraging women’s participation in economical and social life in rural and regional areas” in Azerbaijan. The goal of the project is to increase economic opportunities and skills for active participation of women and young people in rural and urban areas, economic activity and entrepreneurship. The project is implemented in the regions. Totally, 9 Women’s Resource Centers were opened in 2011–2019. In 2011–2019, the number of women and young participants in trainings and events in general is 6000 people. Within the project, a total of 192 entrepreneurship facilities were opened for women in 2011–2019 and 50 additional jobs were provided.

215. Targeted State social assistance is provided to low-income families since 2006. This social project is of great importance in improving the welfare of this category of families as well as solving their financial and social problems. The main objective of targeted State social assistance is providing financial assistance to low-income families based on their income and improving their social welfare. The amount of social assistance is calculated as the difference between the average monthly income of the family and the assessed needs criterion for each family member. The threshold of the need criterion and the subsistence minimum in the country are regularly increased every year. In 2019, the needs criterion was set at 143 AZN and the minimum wage was 180 AZN. In 2020, these indicators were set at 160 AZN and 190 AZN.

216. In 2019, 72000 families or 296000 family members received targeted state social assistance. The average monthly amount of targeted state social assistance per family- 209 AZN, the average monthly amount per person was 51 AZN. As of March 2019, the population reached 10 million. The ratio of family members that received social assistance to the population is 2,96 percent.

217. 55,53 percent or 158451 of the persons that received targeted state social assistance were women, 46,46 percent or 137,549 persons were men and 161,549 persons or 54,58 percent were children under 18.

218. In 2019 with the aim of increasing women's employment as well as supporting development of small business among them, 2631 women were involved in self-employment program and 1977 women were enrolled in vocational training courses.

219. On December 19, 2018 the Ministry of Labour and Social Protection of Population of the Republic of Azerbaijan and the United Nations Development Program signed a technical assistance project entitled "Creating Inclusive and Decent Jobs for Socially Vulnerable Groups".

220. At the same time, within the framework of "Social and Economic Development Activity" (SEDA) Project implemented as partnership between United States Agency for International Development (USAID) and Ministry of Economy 163 community projects have been implemented since 2011, 43 projects of them are profitable projects. Thus, within the framework of the Project, 1 carpet workshop and sale market of 31 feed processing enterprises, 6 incubator points, 1 milk processing enterprise, 2 milk collecting points, 1 packing point were constructed and all these positively affected to family economy and increase of incomes.

221. On September 26, 2019, an exhibition and sale fair of products and services of micro, small and medium entrepreneurs operating in Ganja-Gazakh economic region was organized by the Agency and the German Society for International Cooperation (GIZ) in Naftalan. In order to present the products and services of micro, small and medium entrepreneurs and expand sales opportunities, the exhibition-sale fair mainly featured products and handicrafts of women entrepreneurs, in general, more than 50 products of about 30 SMBs were exhibited at the fair. At the same time, in order to provide occupation of young people and women in rural areas and in accordance with Work Plan of the Agency events with participation of representatives of local executive authorities, relevant public entities, international organizations and entrepreneurs have been held.

222. For this purpose, continuing awareness-raising activities among women entrepreneurs living in the regions on the normative-legal base regulating entrepreneurial activity, creating conditions for establishing contacts in the regions to further improve the financial security of women entrepreneurs, improving the production, market and social infrastructure of women's entrepreneurship, including support for initiatives, raising the level of knowledge and training of women entrepreneurs in the field of ICT in the regions, women entrepreneurs, especially supporting new business initiatives covering the production and service sectors of young people who want to start a business or implement new ideas and a joint program has been implemented to increase employment and continue to stimulate women producers of agricultural products by the Small and Medium Business Development Agency of the Republic of Azerbaijan and German Society for International Cooperation.

223. Within the framework of the Program support events (trainings, visits to production enterprises, exhibitions) for young women were held on 15–16 August 2019 in Qazakh, on 27–28 August 2019 in Aghstafa, on 3–4 September 2019 in Samukh, on 10–11 September 2019 in Naftalan. In mentioned regions, training courses on themes "Start your business", "Creation of business plan", "ICT skills of potential business women" have been organised and completed. Totally, 100 persons (25 persons from each region) participated in training courses. Participants received information on how to write a business plan at the level required for the development and operation of "potential women entrepreneurs", increase their knowledge and skills in ICT, electronic financial reporting (preparation of tax returns, easy signature, registration). The trainings were informative.

Replies to paragraph 25 of the list of issues

224. Amendments to the Law on Medical Insurance on December 28, 2018 and December 3, 2019 played an important role in ensuring the access of the population to medical services. Thus, in 2020 it is planned to gradually implement the opportunity for the population of the Republic of Azerbaijan to benefit from the medical services included in the package of services at the expense of compulsory health insurance.

225. The Government of Azerbaijan has taken significant steps to eradicate the informal payments within the public health facilities, which included the implementation of pilot project on mandatory health insurance during 2016–2019 in 3 pilot regions of country and phased introduction of health insurance system in whole country during 2020. The mandatory health insurance system national roll out in 2020 was made possible as a result of almost two times increase in state budget allocations to health that reached 1.5 bln AZN in 2020, successful reforms conducted in medical education and training, development and implementation of standardized care pathways and clinical guidelines for physicians. This has already allowed eradication of informal (out of pocket) payments in 3 pilot regions and this positive trend is continued in other regions of the country in 2020.

226. To ensure the access to quality health care in rural and remote areas, government initially had to refurbish or build healthcare facilities in many rural regions of country. During last 10 years, the government refurbished and builds over 600 clinics and hospitals with 70% of them in rural and remote areas outside of major cities and capital of country.

227. The introduction of clinical guidelines obtained from Finland's Duodecim as well as through partnership with British Medical Journal, the healthcare providers in whole country including mainly primary healthcare providers were provided with access to information/clinical protocols for diagnosis and treatment of various medical conditions.

228. Given the importance of non-communicable diseases (NCDs) with regards to morbidity and mortality in the world and Azerbaijan, the government adopted the National Strategy on Prevention of NCDs in Azerbaijan for period of 2015–2020. As part of this strategy, the survey on prevalence of non-communicable diseases (NCDs) in Azerbaijan was conducted in Azerbaijan in 2017 based on WHO STEPS methodology and enabled to collect data on major health risk factors and prevalence of NCDs like diabetes, cardiovascular and cerebrovascular diseases, chronic lung diseases and cancer. Based on the results of the Survey, Ministry of health developed targeted interventions including specialized public awareness and health promoting activities in rural regions. As part of preventive work and health promoting activities, the government invested resources that many parks enabling physical activity and many so-called Olympic Sport Centers are established in many rural regions to ensure enabling environment for children, young people and adults to physical activity.

229. The establishment of cancer registry in the National Oncology Center of Ministry of health enabled to collect and analyze data on cancer prevalence and incidence in Azerbaijan. Based on data NOC developed the specialized mobile medical teams to visit regions for education/training purposes as well as to provide rural population with quality care and referrals to specialized oncology clinics whenever needed. The Oncology Center also continues its support to capacity building of regional cancer clinics in 8 regions of the country including Nakhichevan AR, which enables rural population to get access to quality cancer care.

230. Given the prevalence of eye diseases in Azerbaijan, National Ophthalmology Center of Ministry of Health established three regional ophthalmology clinics in regions of country to ensure the quality eye care to the population in the regions.

231. To ensure the access to emergency medical care in rural and remote areas the technical capacity and training of Ambulance/Emergency medical aid services have been improved, the special telemedicine unit was established to ensure the access of medical facilities in rural and remote areas to the most qualified specialists located in Baku and major hospitals and clinics of the country.

Replies to paragraph 26 of the list of issues

232. The reproductive health strategy will ensure that relevant government agencies, including Ministry of Health and the State Committee for Family, Women and Children Affairs provide public awareness activities related to child marriages, negative health effects of early pregnancies and expand the availability of barrier contraceptives (condoms) in all regions of country.

233. PHRC of Ministry of Health and AIDS Center of Ministry of Health have got a developed plan of activities on public awareness on STDs and HIV for population and also for healthcare providers. During 2020–2025 the Ministry of Health will continue to develop and disseminate information materials (booklets, leaflets, etc.) as well as TV talk shows to increase awareness on these issues among population on HIV, STDs, early pregnancies and child marriages. The special web portal on Reproductive health was established by PHRC of Ministry of Health on wide range of reproductive health issues and available for public at www.saglamliq.isim.az.

234. The special “Individual Reproductive health assessment module” on PHRC’s web site to enable women of reproductive health and currently pregnant women to evaluate their health, assess the risks and get informed on actions they need to take to ensure their health during pregnancy and after delivery. The PHRC and other health agencies will continue to train midwives, obstetricians and nurses in the country to assume wider role of health promoter in their communities and advance the knowledge of their population in the field of early pregnancies, HIV and STDs.

235. The State Committee for Family, Women and Children Affairs permanently holds awareness raising events among the population, especially young people and adolescents in the cities and regions of our republic focused on promoting healthy lifestyle, enhancing knowledge about negative consequences of harmful habits (drug addiction, alcoholism, smoking), strengthening efforts to combat AIDS, raising awareness about reproductive health and family planning, negative consequences of early marriages.

236. The continuation of awareness-raising activities in this direction in 2019 jointly with the Ministry of Health and with the support of the Ministry of Education is envisaged in educational institutions (secondary and primary vocational education institutions, secondary schools) located in Baku and the regions.

Replies to paragraph 27 of the list of issues

237. Articles 139.1 and 140.1 of the Criminal Code of the Republic of Azerbaijan provide for criminal liability for infecting another person with the knowledge of having a venereal disease and knowingly endangering another person with the human immunodeficiency virus.

238. Legislation and regulations of the Republic of Azerbaijan, sexual relations between adults and cases of unintentional HIV infection are not followed. Nevertheless, sexual relationships with a number of unknown and unknown partners, and sexual contacts with persons at risk of HIV infection are publicly reprimanded. This approach focuses on the creation and protection of the family, not on the criminalization of young marriages.

239. For the purpose of establishing a healthy family and protecting young people from unintentional sexually transmitted infections, individuals wishing to enter into the Family Code as of 01.06.2015 are subjected to sexually transmitted infections and HIV as part of their medical examination. Given the confidentiality of the results of the examinations, couples are required to inform each other. We believe that the work being done in this area should be expanded and should be actively involved in educating all sections of the society, especially the intelligent groups, along with the medical staff.

Replies to paragraph 28 of the list of issues

240. In 2011, the Ministry of Health adopted the National Strategy on Mental Health, including children and adolescents and adults. As part of this strategy, the Ministry of Health reformed the mental health services in Azerbaijan, which included establishment of National Mental Health Center based in Baku with consolidated mental health services and staffed with experienced specialists as well as helpline. In addition, psychiatrists who were part of only psychiatric clinics and hospitals were introduced into primary health care policlinics throughout the Baku and regions which enabled the population to get access to quality psychiatric/mental health services close to their communities.

241. The Ministry of Education, the Ministry of Health and the Center for Public Health and Reforms of the Ministry of Health and the State Committee for Family, Women and Children Affairs continued their support with expanding capacity and outreach of Azerbaijan national child helpline service, which was established in 2010 and established a branch in the Goy-Gol region in 2017.

242. The Parliament of Azerbaijan adopted the new law on psychological assistance, established jointly with relevant government agencies, including the Ministry of Health. The law, signed by the President of Azerbaijan and entered into force in December 2018, will allow for better organization of psychological assistance and the provision of quality psychological assistance.

243. Given the fact that HIV is infected with parenteral way more often, it is an effective way to combat HIV by injecting drug users with opioid replacement therapy in an effort to discourage this habit. However, efforts to expand the network of opioid substituents alone have yielded some positive results in the recruitment of injecting drug users, but experience has shown that drug addicts use opioid substitution therapy in addition to injection. Serious screening and serious medical observation should be the key to indications for opioid replacement therapy. On the other hand, the drug-addict should be prepared for opioid replacement therapy by a narcologist and should consciously understand the patient's condition and willingly join the therapy.

244. The staff of the Republican AIDS Center is the main focus of the opioid substitution therapy strategy and promotes it. The harm reduction programs, such as the distribution of syringes in the fight against parenteral infection of HIV, and the promotion of educational materials, are giving their positive results.

245. Of course, since this issue is in the area of drug dependency provision, the network of the next country should be included in the Strategic Plan, with responsibility for the related services.

246. Reports of recent years show that parenteral infections have fallen from 80–75% in the total index over the past 10–12 years to 13.6% by the end of 2019, and the trend is still ongoing.

Replies to paragraph 29 of the list of issues

247. In order to regulate public relations in this area, the Law of the Republic of Azerbaijan “On Environmental Impact Assessment” No. 1175-VQD, adopted on June 12, 2018 determines legal, economic and organizational bases of the evaluation process of the effects toward the environment and the human health of realization of economic activity and other activity types, as well as of strategic documents and territorial planning documents and regulates the relations in this field. Relying on this Law, a number of laws were amended, and based on the instruction to bring the regulatory legal acts in compliance with the said laws, the Ministry of Justice has drafted 10 draft laws, 32 draft decrees and 13 draft resolutions and presented them to the Cabinet of Ministers.

248. Protecting the environment, living in a healthy environment and using natural resources for the benefit of citizens are an integral part of the country's socio-economic reforms.

249. The use of progressive methods in solid waste management including polyethylene and plastic packaging waste, restoration of contaminated sites, mitigation of greenhouse gas emissions, enhancing usage of environmentally friendly transports, management of wastewater, prevention of pollution of Caspian Sea, reduction of environmental impacts in the process of prospecting, exploration and extraction of natural resources, integrated management of water resources, including transboundary waters, and the usage of advanced environmentally friendly technologies in production facilities are the main priorities.

250. During the period, measures have been taken to improve the environmental condition of the contaminated soils and to restore the landscape, including neutralization of oil sludge and restoration of oil-contaminated soils and lakes. To this end, inventory has been

undertaken to assess the contaminated areas, methods for cleaning up and determining of future use.

251. Within the framework of the “Improvement of the environmental condition and restoration of landscapes of the former iodine-bromine plant contaminated area” project, the 66 hectares’ area has been completely restored. In 35 hectares of the area oil and oil products, ground water, mixed sludge etc. have been removed from the field. Additionally, 31 hectares of contaminated areas with various wastes has been cleaned up, trees were planted with applying drip irrigation system and landscape has been restored.

252. Restoration works have been carried out within the framework of the “Improving the ecological condition of Chukhurdara lakes and landscape restoration” project in the territory of Heydar Aliyev International Airport with a total area of 272 hectares. These areas have been completely cleaned up from oil and oil-sludge, trees have been planted.

253. A large-scale publicity campaign was held on reducing the negative impact of plastic and polyethylene packaging waste on the environment and the importance of using of alternative packaging materials, public awareness had been increased on these issues. To increase public activity on this issue, educational campaigns were organized with the participation of embassies, government agencies; civil society institutions of the country, the coastal areas were cleaned up from plastic wastes.

254. For separate collection of plastic waste and recycling special containers were placed in 37 cities and regions across the country.

255. The draft Law on banning of lightweight (up to 15 microns) polyethylene bags, as well as the Draft Decree on the provision of polyethylene bags with a thickness of 15–50 microns as a separate product (paid) to the customers has been developed.

256. Projects are under implementation with the use of environmentally friendly technologies, renewable energy sources, energy efficiency and other measures to reduce greenhouse gas emissions to mitigate the effects of climate change.

257. Despite the ambitious target of the Republic of Azerbaijan to reduce its greenhouse gas emissions by 35% by 2030 compared to the baseline year 1990 as a National Determined Contribution to the Paris Agreement, opportunities for reviewing this target are currently under consideration.

258. In order to protect the atmospheric air, awareness, propaganda and administrative measures are being taken to prevent the emissions from the restaurants. Instructions for the installation of appropriate equipment at these facilities for the prevention of harmful emissions have been issued and taken under strict control. As a result of these activities, gas-cleaning filters were installed at facilities.

259. Taking into account significant emissions from vehicles, work has been carried out to establish an appropriate regulatory framework for development of utilization program of old vehicles and to use environmentally friendly means of transport to reduce pollutants emitted from cars. International experience on limiting the import of old vehicles, expanding the use of environmentally friendly cars and fuel (compressed natural gas) has been investigated and appropriate proposals have been made.

260. In addition to forest planting activities, the protection of forests has been strengthened. Illegal cutting of trees has been reduced due to gasification of the regions and public awareness.

261. The “National Forest Program for the Protection and Sustainable Development of Forests in the Republic of Azerbaijan” and Action Plan for implementing of first stage of the program has been developed in collaboration with the Food and Agriculture Organization of the United Nations (FAO).

262. 650,000 trees have been planted only in one day on the occasion of the 650th anniversary of the great poet Imadaddin Nasimi. More than 200 different agencies and private organizations have attended a tree-planting campaign.

263. The National Water Strategy of the Republic of Azerbaijan has been developed. Based on the principles of integrated water resources management the strategy encompasses issues

related to the improvement of legislation, institutional structures and capacity building and the development of cooperation on transboundary waters. The aim of the strategy is to develop a system of water resources management, water supply and waste water treatment in the country in accordance with international standards.

264. The National Water Strategy is a strategic document for the implementation of the Convention on the Protection and Use of Transboundary Watercourses and International Lakes and its “Water and Health “Protocol.

Replies to paragraph 30 of the list of issues

265. The Law of the Republic of Azerbaijan No. 1071-VQ dated April 24, 2018 “On Vocational Education” envisages the principles of state policy in the field of vocational education for the purpose of increasing vocational training in the country and preparing competitive qualified personnel, determines the organizational, legal and economic bases of the vocational education and training system.

266. In addition, according to Article 5.3 of the Law No. 1532-VQ dated 29 March 2019 “On General Education” (hereinafter throughout this paragraph - the Law), irrespective of its state ownership form, in the admission to all general education establishments, in the evaluation of knowledge, in the continuation of education at the next grade and in other issues, all citizens shall be ensured with equal opportunities irrespective of their sex.

267. According to Article 13.23 of the Law, the full secondary education at state educational institutions covering state standards of general education grade shall be free of charge. According to Article 13.27 of the Law, winners of international subject Olympiads in any specialties, winners of republican subject Olympiads, high-level international competitions and contests are admitted to higher education institutions in relevant specialties out of competition. In accordance with Article 13.28 of the Law, applicants who have received general education on education programs accredited at the international level, shall be admitted upon compliance with the conditions determined by the authority (Cabinet of Ministers of the Republic of Azerbaijan) determined by the relevant executive power authority (President of the Republic of Azerbaijan), into higher education institutions outside competition, in the language and specialties for which they received education.

268. The law provides for the creation of special conditions for children with disabilities in general education institutions and their involvement in education in the same class as healthy students through special training.

269. To increase access to vocational education, to maintain full transparency and to ensure equal education rights for all without discrimination admission process to vocational education funded by government is career out at “ASAN Service” centers of State Agency for Public Service and Social Innovations under the President of the Republic of Azerbaijan. “The ASAN Profession” project was developed as a result of cooperation between the Ministry of Education and “ASAN Service” has being implemented since 2016.

270. For the 2019–2020 academic year curricula for 145 specialties that were included in the admission plan have been developed and approved by the Ministry of Education’s Order F-560 dated 18.09.2019.

271. At present, 21,946 students are enrolled in vocational education provider and 16,662 of them are male and 5284 are female students. In 2019–2020 academic year, the number of applicants for vocational education increased 10% compared to the last year.

272. Equal access to vocational education and provision of equal opportunities for all is stated in The Law of the Republic of Azerbaijan “On Vocational Education” approved on April 24, 2018.

273. There are no restrictions on the selection of qualifications, equal opportunities are provided in the admission process to vocational education institutions and admission criteria are the same for both genders. Within career guidance measures awareness-raising activities are being conducted among parents, teachers and decision makers to involve women to vocational education.

274. Vocational education is mainly funded from the state budget and during admission process; preference is given to the people with low social status, refugees and IDPs. Also, during the admission, 2 places are for foreseen for the students from boarding schools (10% of the group).

275. The following activities have been implemented to establish vocational educational institutions equipped with modern facilities and infrastructure:

276. Supported the Korea Economic Development and Cooperation Fund, The Baku State Vocational Education Center for Industry and Innovations was established as a vocational education provider with a modern infrastructure, trainings were held for its engineering-pedagogical staff in South Korea and an official opening ceremony was held on 13 September 2019. Having the status of “Public Legal Entity”, The Baku State Vocational Education Center for Industry and Innovations developing professional workforce in accordance with international standards in 8 specialties (mechanics, electronics, electrical engineering, industrial installation, construction, IT, automotive, automation).

277. Based on “Strategic Roadmap for Vocational Education and Training in the Republic of Azerbaijan” the construction of two pilot vocational education centers (located in Barda and Jalilabad) was launched in 2019.

278. Training workshop at the Ganja State Vocational Education Centre for Industry and Technology was reconstructed and equipped within the framework of the EU-funded project “Support to the Establishment of Regional Industrial Vocational Education and Training Competence Centre in Ganja” with the support of the United Nations Development Program and was launched on July 10, 2019.

279. Training workshop at Jalilabad State Vocational Education Centre was reconstructed within the framework of the “Modernization of Vocational Education and Training Centers in Azerbaijan” project funded by the EU and supported by the United Nations Development Program (UNDP) and was launched on November 5, 2019.

280. “Construction of Locksmiths Workshop” at Gakh Vocational Lyceum and “Construction of Carpenter Workshop” at Guba Vocational Lyceum projects are being implemented by the support of the German International Cooperation Organization (GIZ).

281. Currently, majority of college students are female and in 2018–2019 academic year 51819 students were enrolled in colleges and 34505 out of them are female students (66.8%). In 2019–2020 academic years, the numbers were 55922 and 35952 (64.23%), respectively.

282. In 2019–2020 academic year tuition fees of 12974 students from the internally displaced families, 1263 students whose parents has fallen, 2144 students whose parents became physically disabled, died or have been given up for lost by the court during the fights for the independence, sovereignty, territorial integrity and Constitution of the Republic of Azerbaijan, 587 students with disabilities of I degree and II degree, as well as persons with disabilities up to the age 18 were paid by the Ministry of Education of the Republic of Azerbaijan.

283. “Maarifchi” Student Loan Fund was established by the higher education institutions with the initiative of the Ministry of Education. Currently, 14 higher education institutions signed agreement on cooperation and within the framework of this cooperation in 2018, 48 student loan credit contract with the total amount of 764,30 AZN and in 2019, 50 student loan credit contract with the total amount of 804,20 AZN were signed with the students.

Replies to paragraph 31 of the list of issues

284. As part of activities related to the restoration and preservation of immovable historical and cultural monuments, the Decree of the President of the Republic of Azerbaijan No. 195 dated 27 December 2013 “On the Approval of the State Programme on Restoration and Preservation of Immovable Historical and Cultural Monuments, and Improvement and Development of Functionality of Historical and Cultural Reserves for 2014–2020” is worth mentioning.

285. The Government has carried out conservation and restoration works on the historical and cultural monuments, which have survived for centuries, although damaged as a result of natural disasters (inundations, river floods, earthquakes and other natural disasters).

286. Reconstruction, conservation and restoration works were carried out at 42 immovable historical and cultural monuments, including extensive renovations around these cultural monuments at the expense of capital expenditure provided in the State Budget for 2007–2019.

287. A number of monuments, including the Azerbaijan State Academic National Drama Theatre, Nizami Cinema Centre, Azerbaijan State Musical Theatre, Azerbaijan National Museum of Art, Heydar Aliyev Palace, Bibiheybat Mosque, Friday Mosque in Shamakhy, Imamzade and Nizami Ganjavi Mausoleums in Ganja have been restored and renovated to the modern requirements and are currently being used as intended.

288. Sheikh Junaid Tomb in Gusar, Kurmuk Temple and Sumuggala Monument in Gakh, Pir Huseyn Temple in Hajygabul and other important historical and architectural monuments, where restoration and conservation work are already completed, have had a complete drainage system installed.

289. Restoration work was carried out at the Shah Abbas Caravanserai in Ganja and at the Allah-Allah Tomb, located in the territory of Nushaba Fortress in Barda. The mosque in the village of Demirchi (Shamakhy) and Hajy Shahla Mosque in Balakhany settlement (Baku) have been restored.

290. In order to address critical emergency at the minaret of the Gileyli Mosque in Sheki (18th century), the necessary restoration and reinforcement work was carried out and the river bed at the site of the minaret was reinforced. Restoration and conservation work was also carried out at the monument Synyg Korpu in Gazakh, which was affected by flooding of the river Khram.

291. At present, according to the Decree of the President of the Republic of Azerbaijan, reinforcement and restoration work has been started at the monument Chyraggala (5th–6th centuries), located in the territory of Shabran.

292. The State Service for Protection, Development and Restoration of Cultural Heritage under the Ministry of Culture of the Republic of Azerbaijan and the Turkish Cooperation and Coordination Agency (TICA) signed a Letter of Intent (LoI) on the restoration of the Greater Mardakan Castle and the Tuba Shah Mosque, and design work is currently underway.

293. Along with the architectural heritage, the work on the preservation and study of archaeological heritage continues. Thus, the protection and study of archaeological monuments and other tangible cultural artefacts, found as a result of natural causes (rain, floods, etc.) and human activities, as well as the prevention work at other archaeological sites in Azerbaijan was carried out in cooperation with the National Academy of Sciences of Azerbaijan (ANAS).

294. Only in the last 4 years, the Institute of Archaeology and Ethnography (IAE) of the National Academy of Sciences of Azerbaijan (ANAS) has carried out archaeological excavations at 154 historic sites and monuments under the control of the Ministry of Culture of the Republic of Azerbaijan, and published dozens of books and articles on the results of the scientific research.

295. In accordance with the Memorandum of Understanding and Agreement signed by and between the countries, joint projects in the field of archaeological research and conservation with the participation of foreign scientists and archaeologists were carried out in the country along with local archaeological expeditions.

296. The certification of 258 immovable monuments, including GPS coordinates, historical data, descriptions and other information about these monuments, have already been completed.