



**Convention on the Elimination
of All Forms of Discrimination
against Women**

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against Women**

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**Consideration of reports submitted by States parties under
article 18 of the Convention on the Elimination of All Forms
of Discrimination against Women**

**Replies of Armenia to the list of issues and questions in
relation to its seventh periodic report*****

[Date received: 10 November 2021]

* The present document is being issued without formal editing.

** The annexes to the present document may be accessed from the web page of the Committee.



Definition of equality and non-discrimination

Reply to paragraph 1 of the list of issues and questions (CEDAW/C/ARM/Q/7)

1. The comprehensive and stand-alone law on “Ensuring Equality” has been developed by the Ministry of Justice, passed long standing and inclusive public consultations with all relevant stakeholders; journalists, activists and wide range of national human rights organizations, CSOs and submitted to the Government in December 2019. Afterwards the Law was returned to the Ministry of Justice for further amendments. The adoption of the Law was also enshrined in the National Human Rights Strategy and Deriving Action Plan for 2020–2022. The deadline for the implementation of this Action was set the first semester of 2020. Conditioned by the COVID-19 and situation of war in Artsakh, it is envisaged to extend the deadline of its implementation till the end of next year.

2. The HR Strategy and deriving AP for 2020–2020 envisages also trainings on equality and non-discrimination (Action 40) for prosecutors, judges, investigators, police officers, medical staff workers, education staff members and social workers. In accordance with the relevant Reports received from competent authorities these trainings were conducted. In particular:

<i>Professionals</i>	<i>Number of trainees</i>
Police officers	82
Investigators	23
Judges	42
Social workers	24
Education staff members	3 358

3. In this context, taking into consideration the issue of hate speech as well as its correlation with ensuring equality and fight against discrimination the National Human Rights Strategy and Deriving Action Plan for 2020–2022 adopted in December 2019 envisage elaborating liability for hate speech in accordance with the best international standards (Action N 42) and to raise public awareness on hate speech (Action N 44). It should be noted that in order to set liability for hate speech in accordance with the best international standards the MOJ had requested the CoE expert opinion on hate speech liability regulations (international experience) and on existing gaps in our legislation along with the recommendations on how to address them. The Ministry of Justice has received the relevant gap analysis which is available at the Council of Europe official webpage. The analysis also consists of suggestions on making relevant amendments within our legislation, including addressing hate speech within the Law “On Ensuring Equality”. Thus the MOJ provided the analysis to the Working group (adjunct to the National Assembly) on elaboration of legislation on hate speech which should address the issue within the Law and submit the relevant amendments. After summarizing the suggestions the Draft Law will be submitted to the Government.

4. It should also be mentioned that in accordance with the Draft Law “Discrimination is an action, inactivity or a regulation that has been manifested by differentiation, exclusion, limitation of or preference towards person’s rights and freedoms, without an objective basis and reasonable proportionality and necessity between the legitimate aim pursued and the means employed, based on one’s sex, race, colour of skin, ethnic and social origin, genetic features, language, religion,

worldview, political or other views, belonging to national minority, property status, birth, disability, age or other personal or social circumstances, actual or perceived”.

Reply to paragraph 2 of the list of issues and questions

5. There is no update concerning data collection on discrimination. In order to properly carry out the centralized registration of domestic violence cases, the «Electronic Information System for Centralized Registration of Domestic Violence Cases» is under construction. Through this system, all the data related to domestic violence will be collected and the statistics and its progress will be conducted electronically. Gender-disaggregated data is crucial to understand the context and to design gender sensitive policy.

Women’s rights and gender equality in relation to the pandemic and recovery efforts

Reply to paragraph 3 of the list of issues and questions

6. Protection of women’s rights and addressing the discrimination against women and girls is one of the fundamental priorities of the Republic of Armenia. In this context, a broad range of programs are carried out along with the legislative reforms. The Gender Policy Implementation Strategy of Armenia for 2019–2023 sets the government’s priorities for equal participation of women in decision-making processes achieving gender equality in science, education and socio-economic spheres.

7. The Government of Armenia has undertaken steps to mitigate the implications of the crisis and help to recover from post-war situation and COVID-19 pandemic on the most vulnerable groups with a particular focus on the needs of women and girls.

8. COVID-19 awareness and information posters were developed and distributed in different regions. During the pandemic, awareness campaigns deviated from the regular plan and were carried out only through online platforms. In addition, during the restrictions, services were provided mainly remotely.

9. As part of COVID-19 response, INGOs provided support to the MSLA in order to provide assistance to vulnerable groups of population amid the global outbreak and Government measures (e.g. assistance packages to women and girls survivors of Domestic Violence).

10. TIP identification sessions were deviated from the regular plan and were carried out through online platforms. In addition, during the restrictions, services were provided while maintaining sanitary and hygienic norms (e.g. “Hotline” services to provide legal and psychological information, in addition, the newly admitted beneficiaries have been isolated, maintaining all the conditions of isolation, only in the presence of a negative COVID test).

11. Starting 2020, The support centers services expanded to provide adequate services to beneficiaries. In addition, the Government announced several policy packages to mitigate the socio-economic shocks derived from the pandemic. As of September 2020, the Government had adopted 25 support packages. Most packages operate through lump-sum transfers to vulnerable households, including those facing unemployment due to COVID-19, families with children, pregnant women, women with disabilities.

12. The Government has taken measures to address the needs of persons displaced by the conflict (with a focus on vulnerable women and girls), Beneficiaries were provided with the needed psychological, social support services and financial assistance.

Measures undertaken to prevent the pandemic, such as restrictions to freedom of movement or maintaining physical distance

13. During the state of emergency declared in the Republic of Armenia due to the novel coronavirus disease (COVID-19) (Decision of the Government of the Republic of Armenia No 298-N of 16 March 2020), temporary restrictions were applied to the right of free movement of persons and to the types of economic activity throughout the territory of the Republic of Armenia, as well as basic rules were established to prevent the spread of the novel coronavirus disease (COVID-19) and to ensure safe and healthy conditions for workers by Instruction of the Commandant No Ts/17-2020 of 20 March 2020, as well as by Decisions of the Commandant No 27 of 31 March 2020 and No 63 of 3 June 2020.

14. In order to prevent the spread of Covid-19 in the Republic of Armenia, certain rules, restrictions and requirements were established by Order of the Minister of Healthcare of the Republic of Armenia N 17-N “On approving the sanitary rules N SK 3.1.2-001-20 applied to prevent the spread of Covid-19 in the Republic of Armenia” of 4 August 2020.

15. Afterwards, quarantine, as well as measures and restrictions applied during the quarantine were established in the entire territory of the Republic of Armenia from 11 September 2020 to 20 December 2021 (inclusive) by Decision of the Government of the Republic of Armenia No 1514-N of 11 September 2020 “On establishing quarantine due to Coronavirus disease (COVID-19)”. The above-mentioned legal acts also set a requirement to provide a distance of 1.5–2 meters between workplaces, payment terminals, service pavilions, and event participants.

Access to justice and legal complaint mechanisms

Reply to paragraph 4 of the list of issues and questions

16. The Draft Law «On ensuring equality» envisages the establishment of the Legal Equality Council. The Chapter 3 of the Draft Law enshrines regulations on the status of the Equality Council and its members, the selection of the members, the termination of their jurisdiction/authority, objectives and functions of the Equality Council (The Draft Law is attached, please see Annex 1).

National human rights institution

Reply to paragraph 5 of the list of issues and questions

17. The activities of the Human Rights Defender had been periodically reviewed in terms of its compliance with the Paris Principles, which define standards for national human rights institutions.

18. The Armenian Human Rights Defender has been granted an “A” status since 2006, which is reviewed on a periodic basis and confirmed for the year 2021.

19. This high status recommended by the Sub-Committee on Accreditation of the Global Alliance of National Human Rights Institutions, which operates with the

assistance of the Office of the United Nations High Commissioner for Human Rights as its Secretariat, confirms the full independence, credibility and effective operation of the Armenian Human Rights Defender.

20. The A-status grants the NHRI the right to participate in the work and decision making of international institutions, including the UN Human Rights Council, to take the floor under any agenda item during the sessions, etc.

National machinery for the advancement of women

Reply to paragraph 6 of the list of issues and questions

21. The Council for Women's Affairs is established as a national mechanism that supports the introduction of mechanisms for the inclusion of women's social and political resources in the democratization process of society, ensuring equal rights and equal opportunities for women and men.

22. The Council is headed by the Deputy Prime Minister and its objectives include: Fighting against violence, combating discrimination in all sectors of public life, promoting women's economic empowerment. The Council monitors the impact of state policies on gender equality, women's empowerment in various spheres of public life, opportunities for expansion, reduction of discrimination, and prevention of gender-based violence.

23. The Council may establish temporary thematic groups to address individual issues or pressing issues in the area of equal rights and opportunities for women and men, Representatives from stakeholder state bodies, non-governmental and international organizations can participate in the activities of the Council. The Interagency Working Group comprises of representatives from different sectors and Non-governmental organizations operates with the purpose of organizing the ongoing activities of the Council.

Women human rights defenders and civil society organizations

Reply to paragraph 7 of the list of issues and questions

24. Point 33 of NHRAP envisages developing legislation to enhance criminal and legal coverage for persons engaging in human rights protection activities. To this aim, a relevant study elaborated by the MOJ provides for international standards and practices regarding legal and policy coverage of persons engaging in human rights protection activities, to facilitate consideration of amendments to be submitted to the National Assembly to effect legislative amendments and/or policy and practice guidelines. This study was discussed with relevant CSO's working in the human rights protection field, including women's rights activists. Based on this study, the MOJ planned to carry out necessary amendments in close cooperation with relevant stakeholders, including CSO representatives.

Temporary special measures

Reply to paragraph 8 of the list of issues and questions

25. Please see answer to question 1.

Stereotypes

Reply to paragraph 9 of the list of issues and questions

26. On 5 May 2021 the New Criminal Code was adopted and will enter into force on July 2022. In addition to the information provided within the answers to the List of Issues, based on the recommendations enshrined in the “Gap analysis of Armenian criminal law in light of the standards established by the Council of Europe Convention on Preventing and Combating Violence against Women and Domestic Violence”¹ relevant provisions to prevent and combat violence against women and domestic violence are included in the New Criminal Code.

27. In particular the New CC envisages committing of a criminal offense by a close relative as an aggravating circumstance. Within the New Code the close relative include, regardless of the circumstances of cohabitation, spouse (including a person who is in an actual marital relationship), parent, including foster parent, adoptive parent, foster parent, child (also adopted, stepfather, foster child), spouse of the adoptive parent, parents, brothers, sisters (also stepmother), grandfather, grandmother, grandchildren, as well as for parents, sister and brother of the husband-the bride or groom, sister of the spouse, brother of the spouse. The New Criminal Code also introduces criminal liability in line with the Istanbul Convention for the following offences: Abortion or Artificial Termination of Pregnancy and Sterilization and Forced Abortion or Artificial Termination of Pregnancy and Sterilization (Articles 175–176), Mental Influence (Article 194), Physical Influence (Article 195) and Forced Marriage, Divorce or Pregnancy (Article 197).

Fight against hate speech

28. Taking into consideration the issue of hate speech as well as its correlation with ensuring equality and fight against discrimination the NHRAP envisages elaborating liability for hate speech in accordance with the best international standards (Action N 42) and to raise public awareness on hate speech (Action N 44).² It should be noted that in order to set liability for hate speech in accordance with the best international standards, the MOJ had requested the CoE expert opinion on hate speech liability regulations (international experience) and on existing gaps in our legislation along with the recommendations on how to address them. The Ministry of Justice has received the relevant gap analysis which is available at the Council of Europe official webpage. The analysis also consists of suggestions on making relevant amendments within our legislation, including addressing hate speech within the Law “On Ensuring Equality”. Thus the MOJ provided the analysis to the Working group (adjunct to the National Assembly) on elaboration of legislation on hate speech which should address the issue within the Law and submit the relevant amendments. After summarizing the suggestions the Draft Law will be submitted to the Government.

29. With regard to the awareness-raising component of NHRAP it should be emphasized that the Council of Europe, in cooperation with the MoJ, organized an online training courses on Council of Europe standards to combat hate speech in April 2020 with the engagement of over 40 participants from public institutions, civil society organizations, media organizations and religious organizations.³ Training was organized by the MOJ in cooperation with the CoE on May 26–27 2021 for 30 representatives of state authorities. The two sessions included activities on

¹ <https://rm.coe.int/gap-analysis-armenian-law-eng/168075bac2>.

² http://www.e-rights.am/?app=AppEvent&page=default&event_id=157.

³ <https://www.coe.int/en/web/inclusion-and-antidiscrimination/-/actions-to-combat-hate-speech-in-armenia-with-an-inclusive-and-participatory-approach>.

international standards and definitions of hate speech, analysis of constituent elements of hate speech and clarification of how to assess a case, the obligations of public officials in relation to not spreading hate speech, and the national legislation and practice of combating hate speech.⁴

30. Relevant trainings are also being organized by the Academy of Justice on a regular basis for judges, prosecutors and investigators.

31. The Ministry of Justice in cooperation with the Human Rights Defender office and with the support of the Council of Europe has initiated the process of elaboration of awareness raising campaign. The aim of the campaign is to increase awareness among target groups about hate speech and counter-hate narratives, promoting diversity and human rights. The process has already launched and we are now elaborating the concept in order to start to disseminate the products of the campaign as soon as possible.

32. The New Criminal Code also envisages relevant provisions. In particular: Public speech aimed at inciting or propagandizing hatred, discrimination, intolerance or enmity, as well as the dissemination of materials or objects for this purpose (Article 329), Public calls for the use of violence, public justification or propaganda of violence, as well as the distribution of materials or objects for this purpose (Article 330) are criminalized. In accordance with Article 71 of the CC Commission of a crime motivated by hatred, intolerance or enmity due to racial, national, ethnic or social origin, religion, political or other views or other circumstances of a personal or social nature is considered as a circumstance aggravating criminal liability or punishment.

33. It should be noted that within the Project “Strengthening the access to justice through non-judicial redress mechanisms for victims of discrimination, hate crime and hate speech in Eastern Partnership countries” of the Council of Europe, the Ministry of Justice works on relevant hate crime related reforms. The objective of the project is, among others, to assist national partners to further develop their procedures and tools on collecting disaggregated data collection on discrimination, hate crime and hate speech, in order to better prevent these phenomena and improve recording and reporting.

34. In this context, 2 meetings with the participation of all stakeholders, including civil society organizations were conducted in 2020 and 1 meeting in June 2021.⁵

35. As a result of effective cooperation between international partners and stakeholder agencies, a package of recommendations on improving and adopting joint approach for Armenia’s hate crime and discrimination data collection system developed by an international expert is currently on the table, which addresses the main gaps in our country in this area and offers mechanisms to tackle them. The extensive package of reporting forms has been elaborated as well. These documents were translated into Armenian and relevant stakeholders are now working on adjusting them into our national legislation.

36. The priorities of the gender policy are defined in the 2019–2023 Gender strategy. The strategy is aimed at creating favourable conditions for the realization of

⁴ <https://www.euneighbours.eu/en/east/stay-informed/news/training-public-officials-combating-hate-speech-armenia>.

⁵ https://www.coe.int/en/web/yerevan/news/-/asset_publisher/UATN4W18F3Wu/content/assisting-national-beneficiaries-in-armenia-to-improve-their-disaggregated-data-collection-on-hate-crimes-discrimination-and-hate-speech?inheritRedirect=false&redirect=https%3A%2F%2Fwww.coe.int%2Fen%2Fweb%2Fyerevan%2Fnews%3Fp_p_id%3D101_INSTANCE_UATN4W18F3Wu%26p_p_lifecycle%3D0%26p_p_state%3Dnormal%26p_p_mode%3Dview%26p_p_col_id%3Dcolumn-4%26p_p_col_count%3D1.

opportunities for women and men in all spheres of public life, the development of the strategy was carried out on a participatory basis, involving various stakeholders in the field. The strategy defines 5 priorities: (1) Improving the National Mechanism for the Advancement of Women, Ensuring Equal Participation of Women and Men in Governance, at the Decision-Making Level, (2) Overcoming gender discrimination in the socio-economic sphere, expanding women's economic opportunities, (3) Enhancing full and effective participation of women and men in education and science, (4) Enhancing equal opportunities for women and men in the field of healthcare, (5) Prevention of Gender Discrimination.

37. The Government continues to take measures aimed at integrating the gender component in the legislations and policies, improving the national mechanism for the advancement of women, conducting awareness raising activities to overcome existing stereotypes in society, preventing domestic violence, combatting gender based discriminating (e.g. measures to fight Gender-biased Sex Selection) ensuring women's participation in politics and public life. In this regard, the gender-sensitive component was ensured for all programs included in the state budget from 2020, As a result, the content of the state budget reflected the goals of gender equality and social justice, distributing resources, directing revenues in a way that is socially and gender-balanced, and taking into account the interests of all groups of the population when planning budget expenditures.

Gender-based violence against women

Reply to paragraph 10 of the list of issues and questions

38. Since 2020, domestic violence centers were launched in all regions of the country which are co-funded by the state budget of the Republic of Armenia. The support centers provide services to beneficiaries, such as social-psychological and legal support. With the co-funds provided by the state budget, there have been 2 shelters for victims of domestic violence and support centers have been established in all regions of Armenia and Yerevan. All the centers were provided with "Hotline" numbers.

39. In order to provide adequate support for the prevention of domestic violence, comprehensive cooperation is provided in the provision of quality assistance to victims of domestic violence in the regions. Within the framework, in September-October 2020, training was provided to support center and shelter staff and was organized in cooperation with international organizations, NGOs in the field. Trainings are ongoing and new round of trainings will be provided in 2021 in order to give quality care for victims.

40. In cooperation with international non-governmental organizations, awareness campaigns aimed at combatting domestic violence were carried out: Social advertisements were filmed, posters were printed and posted in public places.

41. The Ministry of Labor and Social Affairs, with the support of the Council of Europe jointly with the Ministry of Justice, launched a public awareness campaign "Silence in violence" aimed at combating domestic violence.

42. In 2020, about 1068 people received assistance from the support centers, and 135 people benefited from the shelter service (53 women, and 82 children) In 2021 (First semester) about 689 people received assistance from the support centers, and 66 people benefited from the shelter service (42 children, and 24 women).

43. In order to provide adequate support for the prevention of domestic violence and quality assistance to victims of domestic violence in the regions, in September-

October 2020 training was provided to support center and shelter staff and was organized in cooperation with partner international organizations, NGOs in the field. In 2021 in order to provide quality care for DV victims, refresher trainings were organized for DV support center staff, hotline workers, service providers (e.g. child care, elderly care, people with disabilities). A training was also organized on Equality and GBV for Armenian journalist and media workers, the training was carried out jointly with the Council of Europe and MSLA.

44. In order to support the victims of domestic violence, a lump-sum financial assistance programme is being implemented to the victims of domestic violence from 2020, within the framework of which it is envisaged to provide up to 150 thousand AMD annually from the state budget (a lump-sum financial support). To this date, a lump-sum support is provided to 65 individuals.

45. With regards to the ratification of the Istanbul Convention, MoJ can provide the needed update. In addition, 3 micro projects are being implemented in 3 Marzes (provinces) to prevent domestic violence and violence against women as well as to promote gender equality and women's empowerment at a grassroots level.

46. On 5 May 2021 the New Criminal Code was adopted and will enter into force on July 2022. In addition to the information provided within the answers to the List of Issues, based on the recommendations enshrined in the "Gap analysis of Armenian criminal law in light of the standards established by the Council of Europe Convention on Preventing and Combating Violence against Women and Domestic Violence" relevant provisions to prevent and combat violence against women and domestic violence are included in the New Criminal Code. In particular the New CC envisages committing of a criminal offense by a close relative as an aggravating circumstance. Within the New Code the close relative include, regardless of the circumstances of cohabitation, spouse (including a person who is in an actual marital relationship), parent, including foster parent, adoptive parent, foster parent, child (also adopted, stepfather, foster child), spouse of the adoptive parent, parents, brothers, sisters (also stepmother), grandfather, grandmother, grandchildren, as well as for parents, sister and brother of the husband-the bride or groom, sister of the spouse, brother of the spouse. The New Criminal Code also introduces criminal liability in line with the Istanbul Convention for the following offences: Abortion or Artificial Termination of Pregnancy and Sterilization and Forced Abortion or Artificial Termination of Pregnancy and Sterilization (Articles 175–176), Mental Influence (Article 194), Physical Influence (Article 195) and Forced Marriage, Divorce or Pregnancy (Article 197). Please see Annex II with detailed information on training provided to the judiciary and prosecutors.

47. For the purpose of improving the work carried out in the field of prevention of domestic violence, as well as raising public awareness, a number of measures have been taken and implemented by the Department for Juvenile Delinquency and Domestic Violence Prevention (JD and DVP) within the General Department of Public Safety Protection (GDSP) of the Police of the Republic of Armenia. In particular, upon the initiative of the Department for Juvenile Delinquency and Domestic Violence Prevention within the General Department of Public Safety Protection of the Police of the Republic of Armenia and with the support of the UN Population Fund, expert group visits were organised and conducted to the Yerevan city and regional departments of the Police of the Republic of Armenia. At the same time, for the purpose of raising public awareness, legal acts regulating the functions of officers of the competent police subdivision in the field of prevention of domestic violence have been posted on the official website of the Police.

48. In the context of the Law of the Republic of Armenia "On prevention of domestic violence, protection of persons subjected to domestic violence and

restoration of solidarity in family”, the Department for Information and Public Relations of the Police of the Republic of Armenia broadcast thematic programmes and organised press conferences to prevent domestic violence and cover violence against women.

49. For the purpose of fight against and prevention of domestic violence, protection of victims of violence, as well as strengthening the capacity to promote gender equality, the staff of the Department for Juvenile Delinquency and Domestic Violence Prevention participated in a number of meetings, on-line discussions, as well as programmes organised by the media aimed at preventing cases of violence against women and domestic violence (H1, Medialab, etc.).

50. Within the framework of ongoing awareness-raising activities, the competent officers of the specialised subdivision of the Police held meetings in general education schools, during which they presented the topics “Violence”, “Domestic Violence and Prevention”. Moreover, the Police have launched a Skype programme with an on-line address “Armenian police”, as well as a hotline, which enable provision of the necessary advice and legal assistance to citizens on cases of domestic violence.

51. Within the framework of measures aimed at developing and strengthening the professional skills of officers of the specialised subdivision of the Police in the field of prevention of domestic violence, upon the initiation of the Department for Juvenile Delinquency and Domestic Violence Prevention within the General Department of Public Safety Protection of the Police of the Republic of Armenia, as a result of co-operation with international and local NGOs, both local and international experts and psychologists have organised and conducted training courses for officers of the Department for Juvenile Delinquency and Domestic Violence Prevention, during which the following topics were studied: “Gender as a Socio-Cultural Paradigm”, “The Phenomenon of Violence in the Family”, “Domestic Violence, Its Legal Regulations”, “Existing Problems of Domestic Violence”, “Study of Local and International Documents Related to the Field of Domestic Violence”, “Duluth Model; Models and Methods of Working with Juvenile Offenders”.

52. During 2017–2020, classes on the topics “Gender and Social Stereotypes”, “Gender as a Social-Cultural Paradigm”, “Gender Violence”, “Domestic Violence” and “Sexual Violence” were held at the Training Centre of the Educational Complex of the Police of the Republic of Armenia for police officers. Conducting the training courses is continuous.

Trafficking and exploitation of prostitution

Reply to paragraph 11 of the list of issues and questions

53. In the framework of the fight against trafficking, the implementation of protection and social assistance programs for the victim of trafficking is implemented, in particular, the state provides a comprehensive package of assistance services to victims of trafficking and potential victims in accordance with the law. Support includes the following: “Social-psychological rehabilitation of people trafficked, exploited, sexually abused”. The program, for which the amount envisaged has doubled compared to 2019 (which was 19 million AMD, becoming 40 million AMD). Support services include:(1) provision of domicile; (2) in-kind aid; (3) provision or restoration of necessary documents; (4) medical aid and service; (5) psychological aid; (6) consultative aid; (7) legal aid; (8) provision of care, including in a relevant institution; (9) provision of translation services; (10) provision of general education; (11) ensuring the accessibility of secondary education and primary special

(vocational) education; (12) provision of employment; (13) arrangement for a safe return; (14) lump sum monetary compensation.

54. A number of legislative reforms have been implemented within the framework of the National Program to regulate the legal field, as a result of which the legal acts related to child trafficking have been improved. In particular, amendments were made to the Law on Identification and Assistance to Victims of Trafficking in Human Beings, as a result of which the process of providing financial assistance was improved (previously the child could receive financial compensation only after reaching the age of 18, with the new regulation this restriction was removed).

55. In 2020 the Ministry of Justice of Armenia has worked to identify the main challenges, and research and assessment was conducted. Based on the findings of the researches and assessments the Deputy Minister of Justice led series of consultations/discussions with high-ranking officials from stakeholder agencies. A draft interim action plan was developed to address the issues identified by the Department of State TIP report. The AP identified some activities aimed at providing adequate government funding for combating TIP, ensuring effective investigation and prosecution of TIP cases, employing victim-cantered procedures by law enforcement, assisting Armenian migrants working abroad, inclusion of a definition of forced labour in the labour code, as well as improving education and awareness on these issues. The schedule of implementation was discussed with the representatives of stakeholder agencies, including: Ministry of Labour and Social Affairs, Ministry of Education, Science, Culture and Sports, Investigative Committee, Police, Office of Prosecutor General, National Security Service, Office of Human Rights Defender, Office for Coordination of Inspection Bodies in the Office of Prime Minister, Health and Labour Inspection Body. Based on the results of the meeting the Prime Minister assigned to complete those interim activities by the end of December 2020 and a status report was due in November.

56. The interim action plan was developed and implemented in close and effective partnership with U.S. Embassy Yerevan, including with the INL office and USAID Armenia. A handbook for law enforcement officers entitled: “Indicators of Trafficking in Persons for Law Enforcement Officers”. The handbook starts with the definition and description of human trafficking and exploitation and continues into collection of TIP-related data, issues of identifying and uncovering cases of human trafficking and exploitation and offers some indicators to differentiate the cases. The handbook in its appendices presents indicators of potential cases of human trafficking and exploitation for law enforcement officers, a checklist for assessing the risk criteria of human trafficking and exploitation, list of TIP-related crimes, as well as the principles of working with potential victims of TIP. The Ministry of Justice discussed the draft handbook with the representatives of the Police. By February 25, 2021, instruction of the Police chief the handbook was also circulated within relevant sections of the Police. Also, the Ministry of Justice presented this handbook to the Office of the Prime Minister recommending its use by other law enforcement agencies.

57. In addition, a handbook for detecting and identifying TIP was developed for front-line officers: migration service, health-workers, and consular offices. This handbook provides for the indicators which should be considered for identifying and detecting TIP issues. Another guideline was developed for the inspectors of Labour and Health Inspection, the indicators provided for in this guideline will lead the identification process of forced labour cases. These guidelines are in the finalization process. The relevant trainings are regularly being held by the Academy of Justice. The details are provided in the Annex 3.

58. During 2019, 11 criminal cases were initiated in the Republic of Armenia under the elements of human trafficking or exploitation, the proceedings of 5 of which were

dismissed due to lack of *corpus delicti*. In the remaining 6 cases, 7 incidents of crime were detected, of which 4 were cases of labour exploitation and the other three were cases of sexual exploitation.

59. Two out of the cases of labour exploitation were domestic and two - external (Russian Federation) exploitation cases.

60. The 3 incidents of sexual exploitation were those of internal exploitation. 8 persons were declared as victims in the mentioned cases, 3 out of which were female, 5 – male (1 – juvenile).

61. During 2020, the Police of the Republic of Armenia prepared 15 materials under the elements of human trafficking or exploitation, in 3 out of which a decision on rejecting the initiation of a criminal case was rendered on the grounds of lack of *corpus delicti*, in 1 – a criminal case was initiated under Article 178 of the Criminal Code of the Republic of Armenia (“Fraud”); in regard to the remaining 10 materials criminal cases were initiated under Articles 132 and 132.2 of the Criminal Code of the Republic of Armenia; another criminal case was initiated at the Investigative Committee of the Republic of Armenia. 5 of 11 criminal cases initiated in 2020 were terminated. The remaining 6 cases were cases of internal labour exploitation. 9 persons were declared as victims, of which 5 were female (1 juvenile), 4 were male (3 juveniles).

62. In the 1st semester of 2021, 7 criminal cases were initiated under the elements of human trafficking or exploitation, 3 of which were initiated in regard to labour and 4 – in regard to sexual exploitation. In the criminal cases initiated in regard to labour exploitation, 3 persons were declared as victims (3 of them were male), 2 out of which were minors. 16 females, one out of which was a minor, were declared as victims in criminal cases initiated in regard to sexual exploitation.

63. All cases of labour exploitation were cases of internal exploitation, and 3 out of the cases of sexual exploitation were cases of internal exploitation, and 1 out of them was a case of external exploitation. During 2017–2020, classes on the topics “Criminal and legal characteristics of trafficking in human beings”, “Peculiarities of combating human exploitation/trafficking” and “Ways of organizing the fight against human exploitation/trafficking” were held for police officers at the Training Centre of the Educational Complex of the Police of the Republic of Armenia. 427 police officers, of which 4 were female, took part in the mentioned training courses.

Participation in political and public life

Reply to paragraph 12 of the list of issues and questions

64. Armenia has repeatedly declared its commitment to advance women’s rights, to effectively promote their participation in country’s public life, particularly, at the decision-making and local levels. In 2021 the quota for women’s representation in elective bodies was increased to 30%. At present, Armenia has the first woman elected mayor and one member of the current cabinet is a woman (Ministry of Health). Armenia is very much committed to support the global efforts for gender equality, enhancement of opportunities and empowerment of women in all spheres of public life and to contribute, both globally and on national level, to the achievement of these goals. The main guarantor of gender equality in Armenia is the country’s Constitution, which states that “Discrimination based on sex or other social circumstances shall be prohibited.”(Article 86) and “Women and men shall enjoy legal equality.”. One of the main objectives of state policy is “promoting actual equality between women and men” (Article 30), which allows for the development and introduction of more

effective mechanisms, policies and programs. National legislation, including the Law “On Ensuring Equal Rights and Equal Opportunities for Women and Men” adopted in 2013, endorses the idea of “equality” of rights for all in all spheres of public life and legal protection of all from gender discrimination, and the Government’s ongoing policy and reforms are consistent with the UN 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs) particularly against the gender-related indicators of the SDGs.

65. The national legislation affirms the idea of “equality” of rights for everyone in all spheres of vital activity, which includes equal entitlements for men and women to health care, education, economic opportunities, administration of justice, employment. On the latter, much importance is attached to increasing the opportunities of accessing the labour market by uncompetitive young mothers by way of professional training and mentoring programmes of employers. Along with the legislative reforms, programmes aimed at strengthening the gender policy were carried out. Every year, annual action plans on gender policy and fighting against gender-based violence were approved by the Government.

66. The Government has commenced a reinforcement and/or establishment of a series of effective mechanisms aimed at ensuring gender equality, such as reorganization of the Council on Equal Rights and Opportunities for Women and Men with the purpose of coordination of activities related to the issues of equality of women and men and the development of a national mechanism for equal rights and opportunities for women and men, reestablishment of the Gender Thematic Group, development and enforcement of gender-sensitive budgeting tools and instruments with the support of the European Union.

67. The Ministry of Justice in cooperation with UNDP carries out a Gender quality in Public Administration of Armenia (GEPAA) Project. The expected outcome of the project is that gender equality prism will be ensured throughout implementation of the public administration reform in Armenia. It will also lay a solid basis for further continued work and replication of successes and results for stronger gender equality dimension in the public administration system, including policy and legal framework, organizational structure, incentive and enabling measures for better women engagement in public administration. In addition, findings from the survey among students on their aspirations and needs in their potential joining the public office will inform the overall reforming process from human resource management perspective and make it more conducive for women and men, potential leaders of next generation. It should be mentioned that an internal review of the legal and policy frameworks with an assessment methodology in the Ministry of Justice is in the process of implementation and the results will be ready soon which will serve as a basis for future gender equality strengthening policies within the MOJ.

68. Amendments were made to the “Electoral Code” Constitutional Law, as a result of which elections of the Councils of Elders of communities with more than 4,000 electors shall be held under the proportional electoral system, and the electoral lists shall be formed by quotas. It has been envisaged that, “Within the electoral list of a political party (an alliance of political parties) and each of the political parties included in the alliance the number of representatives of each gender, starting with the first place on the list, must not exceed 70 per cent of each integer group of three candidates (1–3, 1–6, 1–9 and subsequently till the end of the list)”.

Education

Reply to paragraph 13 of the list of issues and questions

69. In total, 2.12% of students enrolled in general education have special educational needs (including disability), 1/3 of which are girls. 93.10% of girls with special educational needs (including disability) enrolled in general education attend general education schools and 6.90% attend special schools (source: Information System for Management of Education, 2020–2021 academic year).

Employment

Reply to paragraph 14 of the list of issues and questions

70. In accordance with the RA draft Law “On Ensuring Equality” a regulation is envisaged in relation to the discrimination in the workplace. In particular Article 9 (Prohibition of discrimination in working relations) prescribes the following:

A. In working relations it is prohibited to demonstrate any distinction, exclusion, restriction or preference against a person without objective reason, as a result of which the equality before the law in working relationship is violated and the person is deprived of equal rights and opportunities compared to others;

B. National and local self-governing bodies and legal entities should exclude discrimination in working relations, amongst which are the following sectors:

- Job announcement and competition;
- Accepting employment, transfer to another job and promotion;
- Probation and training;
- Working conditions of the employee;
- Salary, additional remuneration, guarantees and rewards;
- Disciplinary liability;
- Termination of employment relations;
- Providing information on working relations;
- Membership in trade unions;

C. The actions mentioned in the first part of this article are not discrimination, as long as they stem from inherent occupational requirements. Inherent occupational requirements shall mean distinction, exclusion, restriction or privilege deriving from the nature and peculiarities of a particular occupation, constitutes substantial and determining occupational requirement, if such a requirement pursues a legitimate aim and is proportionate;

D. In the field of ensuring equality before the law the employer must:

- In working relationships apply, protect and promote equality before the law, ensure equal opportunities and prohibit any type of discrimination;
- Take actions aimed at preventing discrimination in work relationships and imposing liability against people who have manifested discrimination.

71. The implementation of the gender-sensitive budgeting is aimed at ensuring a balanced distribution of resources and opportunities. In this regard, in the framework

of public budget management policy reforms in Armenia, elements of gender-sensitive budgeting have already been fully introduced in the process of elaborating the state budget, making the state budget gender-sensitive, which will help to reduce gender gaps in all spheres of public life.

72. The health and labor inspection body (HLIB) is the entity mandated with monitoring and conducting labor violation inspection of workplaces, included visits to all sectors of economy.

73. The Health and Labour Inspection Body (HLIB) is an institution mandated with monitoring and conducting labour violation inspection of workplaces, included visits to all sectors of economy.

74. According to Law HO-265-N of 4 December 2019 “On making amendments to the Labour Code of the Republic of Armenia”, the wording of Article 33 of the Labour Code of the Republic of Armenia of 9 November 2004 (hereinafter referred to as “the Code”) has been amended which reads as follows: “The authorised inspection body of the sphere shall carry out state control over the fulfilment of the labour legislation, other normative legal acts containing labour law norms, the requirements of the collective and employment contracts by the employers, by applying sanctions in cases provided by law. Article 33 of the Code entered into force with a new edition on 1 July 2021.

75. By Decision of the Government of the Republic of Armenia No 1006-A of 18 June 2020 “On making amendment to Decision of the Government of the Republic of Armenia No 1071-A of 22 August 2019”, the Health and Labour Inspectorate of the Republic of Armenia (hereinafter also referred to as “the Inspectorate”) was recognized as the authorised body conducting supervision over the field of labour law, including the safety assurance and protection of health of the employees.

76. According to point 9 of the Charter of the Health and Labour Inspectorate of the Republic of Armenia, as approved by Decision of the Prime Minister of the Republic of Armenia No 755-L of 11 June 2018, the aim of the Inspectorate is to ensure compliance with the requirements of labour legislation of the Republic of Armenia and other normative legal acts containing norms of labour law, collective and employment contracts in the cases and in the manner prescribed by law.

77. Starting from 1 July 2021, the supervision exercised by the Inspectorate is aimed also at ensuring that men and women are paid the same amount of salary for the same or equivalent work, according to Part 2 of Article 178 of the Code.

78. In accordance with the Draft Law of the Republic of Armenia “On ensuring equality”, a regulation is foreseen in relation to the discrimination at the workplace. In particular, Article 9 (Prohibition of discrimination in working relations) prescribes the following:

A. In working relations it is prohibited to demonstrate any distinction, exclusion, restriction or preference against a person without objective reason, as a result of which the equality before the law in working relationship is violated and the person is deprived of equal rights and opportunities compared to others;

B. National and local self-governing bodies and legal entities should exclude discrimination in working relations, amongst which are the following sectors:

- Job announcement and competition;
- Accepting employment, transfer to another job and promotion;
- Probation and training;
- Working conditions of the employee;

- Salary, additional remuneration, guarantees and rewards;
- Disciplinary liability;
- Termination of employment relations;
- Providing information on working relations;
- Membership in trade unions;

C. The actions mentioned in the first part of this article are not considered as discrimination, as long as they stem from inherent occupational requirements. Inherent occupational requirements shall mean distinction, exclusion, restriction or privilege deriving from the nature and peculiarities of a particular occupation, constitutes substantial and determining occupational requirement, if such a requirement pursues a legitimate aim and is proportionate;

D. In the field of ensuring equality before the law the employer must:

- Apply, protect and promote equality before the law in working relationships, ensure equal opportunities and prohibit any type of discrimination;
- Take actions aimed at preventing discrimination in work relationships and imposing liability against people who have manifested discrimination.

Health

Reply to paragraph 15 of the list of issues and questions

79. The lack of a separate line in the state budget for the purchase of contraceptives is due to the scarcity of a budget allocated to the health sector. The issue of purchasing contraceptives at the expense of the budget funds will be reconsidered in parallel with the increase of the budget funds allocated to the health sector.

80. Trainings of employees of healthcare sector on sexual and reproductive health and rights of women and girls are carried out regularly, with the involvement of various partner organisations. Currently a seminar entitled “Principles of non-discriminatory approach of medical workers to reproductive health and rights of different groups of women” is being held for family doctors and obstetrician-gynaecologists.

81. Pursuant to Article 16 of the Law of the Republic of Armenia “On medical aid and service to the population”, a person’s written consent for medical intervention shall be a necessary condition, except for the cases envisaged by Article 24 of the same Law.

82. Performance of sterilization and the need for informed consent (written application) in regard to it is fixed in the Law of the Republic of Armenia “On human reproductive health and reproductive rights” and by Decision of the Government No 425 of 6 July 1998 “On approving the procedure for medical sterilization”. Article 4 of this Law, which regulates human rights related to reproduction, stipulates that “... everyone has the following vital sexual and reproductive rights:

- To manage his/her own sexual and reproductive life independently, if it does not endanger the health of others;
- To be protected from all forms of oppression, including sexual exploitation and violence, forced pregnancy, artificial termination of pregnancy (abortion), sterilization, and other violations of reproductive rights;

- To get reliable and complete information on sexual and reproductive health issues, including the benefits, effectiveness, and potential risks of existing means and methods of fertility control;
 - To receive medical advice and services on sexual and reproductive health issues in isolated and secret conditions;
 - To use high-quality preventive medical services and to be protected from the use of methods that pose a risk to health, including scientific experiments;
 - To make independent decisions when receiving medical interventions related to sexual and reproductive health, except in life-threatening situations requiring urgent intervention and other cases provided by law”.
83. Article 9 of the same Law, which deals with voluntary medical sterilization, without any distinction, stipulates the following for everyone:
- Adult women and men shall have the right to apply for voluntary medical sterilization to protect themselves from unwanted pregnancy;
 - Voluntary medical sterilization shall be performed in medical institutions only for adults, with their informed consent.”

Reply to paragraph 16 of the list of issues and questions

84. In accordance with current Criminal Code the illegal induced abortion is criminalised (Article 122) which envisages 2 different types: 1. Illegal abortion by a person with a relevant higher medical education and 2. by a person without a relevant higher medical education. In all other cases the abortion is legal and decriminalized. The New Criminal Code envisages the following regulations (will enter into force on July 2022): the illegal induced abortion (Article 174), induced abortion or sterilization (Article 175), enforced induced abortion or sterilization (Article 176) are criminalized.

85. Pursuant to the Law of the Republic of Armenia “On human reproductive health and reproductive rights”, “1. Every woman shall have the right to an artificial termination of pregnancy (abortion). Artificial termination of pregnancy (abortion) (hereinafter referred to as “abortion”):

- Prior to the period of up to 12 weeks of pregnancy, shall be made according to the written application of the woman. Provided medical instructions, abortion prior to the period of up to 12 weeks of pregnancy shall be made with the written consent of the woman;
- In the period from 12 to 22 weeks of pregnancy, it shall be made exclusively in the presence of medical (including in case of probability of inheriting a sex-based disease) or social indications, with the written consent of the woman”.

86. The list of medical and social indications for abortion in the period of 12–22 weeks (including pregnancy as a result of rape) is approved by Decision of the Government of the Republic of Armenia N 180-N of 23 February 2017.

87. Abortions according to medical and social indications shall be made free of charge, within the framework of state financing; abortion made at the wish of a woman shall be made within the framework of a state financing for women included in socially vulnerable and special groups. In the “Strategy for maternal and reproductive health”, which is currently in the development process, will be envisage activities aimed at providing access to information on basic knowledge related to the reproductive health of women and girls with disabilities.

88. We would also like to inform you that the information database on the demand for medical staff with higher and secondary professional education is posted on the register “Vacancies” of “Provision of Staff” of the official website www.moh.am of the Ministry of Health, the data is regularly updated (at least twice a year). The information on the personnel potential of medical institutions of the Republic of Armenia for 2020 is presented as per marzes in the statistical year-book “Health and Healthcare”: <http://nih.am/assets/pdf/atvk/0b0e76b39832ae2244f1522a8581d87c.pdf> (tables – 6.10.1 – 6.20.2, pages – 207–302).

Reply to paragraph 17 of the list of issues and questions

89. No updated information to present.

Reply to paragraph 18 of the list of issues and questions

90. Within the framework of the grant programme of the Global Fund, HIV prevention activities, including awareness-raising, legal aid provision and such measures aimed at reducing stigma and discrimination, are performed among women providing commercial sexual services. In 2020, services were provided to 3,156 beneficiaries. A similar programme is implemented also for people using drugs intravenously, including women. In particular, in 2020, services were provided to 4,996 beneficiaries, 240 of which were women. HIV-positive people, including women, are also provided with a variety of care and support services – in 2020, 1,816 people in total, 713 out of which were women. 918 out of 2,550 HIV-positive people, i.e. about 36%, receiving free medical services at the National Center for Infectious Diseases of the Ministry of Healthcare of the Republic of Armenia, are women.

91. We would also like to mention that in 2022–2024, it is planned to carry out activities for revision of the legislative framework related to HIV/AIDS (including the Law “On prevention of disease caused by human immunodeficiency virus”) aimed at HIV-positive people, as well as increase of access to health services for vulnerable groups to the disease, including women, and reduction of stigma and discrimination.

Women with disabilities

Reply to paragraph 19 of the list of issues and questions

92. On March 16, the Standing Committee on Protection of Human Rights and Public Affairs of the National Assembly of Armenia, in the first reading, debated the package of the draft law on Rights of Persons with Disabilities. The draft laws will create necessary legal bases for the protection of the rights of the persons with disabilities, equal opportunities and provision of accessible conditions, exercising their rights in all spheres of the public life, ruling out the discrimination on the basis of disability. The disability assessment will be carried out, being based on the international classification ideology and approaches of the functions of the World Health Organization (WHO). The Ministries of Labor and Social Affairs, of Health and of Education, Science, Culture and Sport, the NGOs with the support of the UN and the EU worked out the assessment tools, the methodological guidebooks, the business processes on the person’s functionality assessment. The investment program of the disability assessment system reforms and the person’s functionality assessment system was worked out and presented to the Government. Part of the existing buildings will be adjusted to the needs of the persons with disabilities, the designing and the construction of the settlements, the buildings of residential, public and

production importance, the designing of the transport system, the construction and the restorations will not be allowed, if they are not accessible for the persons with disabilities.

Rural women

Reply to paragraph 20 of the list of issues and questions

93. The government has taken measures to promote equal economic independence for women and men and to remove barriers to women's labour market participation; various state programs have been developed in all spheres of public and political life, to ensure the involvement of women in the decision-making process. In particular, vocational training programs are being implemented. At the regional level, Women's Resource Centres are being established aiming at strengthening the capacities of rural women.

Refugee and asylum-seeking women

Reply to paragraph 21 of the list of issues and questions

94. The Law of the Republic of Armenia "On refugees and asylum" regulates the relations pertaining to grant of asylum and recognizing as refugees in the Republic of Armenia, as well as ensures application of the 1951 Convention relating to the Status of Refugees, its 1967 Protocol and recognizes the right of all foreigners and stateless persons to seek asylum in the territory of the Republic of Armenia and at crossing points of the state border of the Republic of Armenia, as well as to receive asylum.

95. Application for receiving asylum in the Republic of Armenia [is submitted to] the authorized body – the Migration Service. Upon a substantiated decision of the Migration Service, the time limit for consideration of the application may be extended for up to three months. Persons having submitted an application for asylum shall receive a certificate of asylum-seeker in the Republic of Armenia.

96. As a result of consideration of the application, the Migration Service adopts a decision on rejecting or granting the application for asylum, whereon it shall inform the applicant within a three-day period. The Migration Service shall take the decision based on the information available in the individual file of the applicant and provided thereby during the interview, as well as on the information obtained with regard to the country of origin of the applicant. The Migration Service may apply the grounds for excluding the refugee status and rejecting the grant of asylum, in particular not recognize the person as a refugee, where there are reasonable doubts that he or she has committed a crime against peace or humanity, war or other grave crime, has committed a grave non-political crime before entering the territory of the Republic of Armenia, or has been found guilty of acts contradicting the objectives or principles of the United Nations, and reject the grant of an asylum, where the applicant has arrived from a third safe country where he or she has no fear of prosecution.

97. Where the applicant has already been recognized as a refugee by a state having signed the 1951 Convention relating to the Status of Refugees, he or she shall automatically be considered a refugee in Armenia, and the Migration Service shall only consider the issue of granting him or her an asylum in Armenia. Application for grant of asylum (claim for asylum) may be considered under accelerated Procedure.

98. Accelerated procedure for provision of asylum shall not be applied where the applicant is an asylum-seeker with special needs:

- Children with no accompanying person or separated from the family;
- Persons with disabilities;
- Pregnant women;
- Single parents having minor children;
- Persons suffering from some serious disease;
- Persons with mental health problems;
- Victims of trafficking, torture, rape or other forms of violence.

99. Foreigners, including stateless persons, who entered the country illegally were not held criminally liable provided that they applied for asylum immediately on arrival, in accordance with article 329 (3) of the Armenian Criminal Code, which was in line with the Convention relating to the Status of Refugees. Since 2018, 10 asylum applications had been received from persons who had entered the country illegally and applied for asylum.

100. In November 2019, the Government had approved a programme to provide refugees from Azerbaijan who had entered Armenia between 1988 and 1992 with certificates enabling them to purchase apartments. The Migration Service had received 300 applications and had granted 240 certificates. Once the programme had been completed in the capital, it would be implemented throughout the country. Funding of 1.4 billion drams for the programme for 2020–2024 had been approved. Increasing numbers of Azerbaijani refugees were being granted Armenian nationality, affording them greater protection. A budget of 13 million drams had been allocated to assist those refugees with their applications for Armenian nationality.

101. As a result of the military aggression unleashed by Azerbaijan against Artsakh/Nagorno Karabakh in 2020, more than 91,000 people were forced to flee their homes and find refuge in Armenia, 88 percent of whom were women and children.

102. A significant number of the arrivals from Nagorno Karabakh may not be able to return safely even now with the ceasefire in place, particularly residents of territories currently under control of Azerbaijan. Most of the displaced persons, particularly from Shushi and Hadrut region, became refugees twice, as in the 1990s they were displaced from different cities of Azerbaijan, as well as the settlements of Artsakh under the control of Azerbaijani forces and subjected to ethnic cleansing.

103. The priorities of the Government have expanded to include the creation of economic, social and psychosocial support mechanisms to provide for the mental and physical wellbeing of the affected population, particularly vulnerable groups such as children, women, elderly, and people with disabilities.

Women and peace and security

Reply to paragraph 22 of the list of issues and questions

104. The war unleashed by Azerbaijan against Nagorno Karabakh/Artsakh on September 27, 2020, posed an existential threat to the lives of thousand people of Artsakh, including women and girls, and has made the issue of security and protection of the affected population a pressing priority. The priorities of the Government have been expanded to include the creation of psychosocial support mechanisms to provide for the mental and physical wellbeing of the affected population, particularly

vulnerable groups, such as children, women, veterans of war and people with disabilities, as well as the implementation of comprehensive programs aimed at meeting the needs of war veterans, including medical care, procurement of prostheses, and psychological support. Accordingly, the beneficiaries were provided with psychological, social support services and financial assistance (based on the specific needs). A Centre was established to provide housing and other essential services, to identify the needs of the displaced persons, to assess and to address those needs. Furthermore, a Hotline Centre was established in order to receive urgent calls and help the beneficiaries accordingly. In addition, dignity kits containing essential hygiene items for women and newborns were distributed to displaced women and girls. It's important to note that a particular support was provided to pregnant women by ensuring the provision of safe access to healthcare services for mothers and newborns.

105. In 2020, we marked the 20th anniversary of the landmark UN Security Council Resolution 1325, which accelerated political participation and economic empowerment of women in the context of peacebuilding, conflict-prevention and conflict resolution. Armenia, as a member of the Human Rights Council, has highlighted among its commitments the implementation of the National Action Plan under the UN Security Council Resolution 1325 Women, Peace and Security agenda, considering it instrumental in terms of protecting women living in conflict zones and ensuring their active contribution to peacebuilding and post-conflict reconstruction and rehabilitation. It is our deepest conviction that women do have a powerful role in terms of driving change towards peace, and that efforts related to security can be much more sustainable with women as equal partners in conflict prevention, settlement and rehabilitation efforts, as well as in upholding sustainable peace.

106. Taking into account that the protection and promotion of human rights and fundamental freedoms, gender equality, as well as ensuring the active role of women in peace and security issues, the Government of Armenia approved the first National Action Plan for 2019–2021 (further mentioned as NAP) and implementation timetable for fulfilment of provisions of the UNSCR Women, Peace and Security in February 2019. Thus, Armenia became the 80th UN member state to have adopted a 1325 NAP.

107. The recent aggression against the people of Nagorno Karabakh perpetrated by Azerbaijan with the full political and military support of Turkey and involvement of Turkish-sponsored foreign terrorist fighters has put the lives of 150 thousand people of Artsakh, including many women and girls, under existential threat and has made the issue of protection of the affected population urgent. Perpetrated amidst the COVID-19 pandemic, Azerbaijan's unlawful, indiscriminate and disproportionate military attacks, shelling and bombardment have heavily affected the region's critical civilian infrastructure, including the healthcare and maternity capacities. Thousands of displaced families face shortage of food, water and access to medical care. Today there is a necessity to implement individual socio-economic and rehabilitation programs, including socio-psychological rehabilitation for women and girls residing in the conflict affected settlements, as well as women that have been forced to move to Armenia.

108. Armenia, as a strong supporter of the universality of human rights and their equal, non-discriminatory and non-selective approach, as it is emphasized in the Universal Declaration of Human Rights, underlines, that adherence to this principle is key in the context of the humanitarian response, when assistance should be provided to civilians affected by hostilities on the ground.

109. Currently, the Second NAP of the Republic of Armenia on WPS for 2022–2024 is being prepared. The second NAP represents the evolutionary process and is based on analysis of the implementation and results achieved in the process of operation of

the first NAP. This NAP addresses the challenges faced by women of Armenia and Nagorno Karabakh related to 44-day war of aggression and COVID-19 and also presents emerging trends and strategic and security needs of Armenian women. Being three years' strategy the NAP comes up as «living document» which will allow adjusting the programs in it to address the emerging realities.

110. The second NAP engages into an important process of ensuring harmonization between WPS NAPs and other gender equality-related strategies, which is an important basis for success, resource management, and effectiveness Armenian efforts to implement the pillars of UNSCR1325 (2000) and all the other Resolutions on WPS, as well as recommendations from the Reports on WPS of UN Secretary General linked to the general promotion and protection of equality and human rights of women and girls, within the framework of important international documents protecting the rights of women adopted by Armenia: the Beijing Declaration and Programme of Action-1995, relevant international and regional documents, including Convention on the Elimination of all forms of discrimination against women, Convention on the Rights of the Child, the Council of Europe Convention on Action against Trafficking in Human Beings, etc.

111. The NAP sees as important strategy strengthened cooperation between foreign and domestic government agencies and funds through organization of joint activities and expertise sharing. The NAP aims to ensure cooperation with other interagency platforms working in the areas of gender equality, children's rights and women's rights such as Interagency commission on fight against trafficking, Commission on the rights of the child, Gender equality commission and others. The NAP encompasses strong effective monitoring and evaluation strategy and mechanism to evaluate the efficiency of implementation and the capacity to learn from optimal outcomes, which is a critical factor for the success of the NAP.
