



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

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**Committee on the Elimination of Discrimination
against Women**

**Seventh periodic report submitted by Armenia under
article 18 of the Convention, due in 2020^{*,**}**

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* The present document is being issued without formal editing.

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



Introduction

1. The seventh report of Armenia (hereinafter referred to as “the Report”, “Armenia”), submitted in compliance with the UN Convention on the Elimination of All Forms of Discrimination against Women (hereinafter referred to as “the Convention”), was prepared in line with the guidelines on preparation of reports by the States Parties to the UN, particularly the Document No [HRI/GEN/2/Rev.6](#) adopted on 3 June 2009. The Report covers information on the implementation of the Committee’s General Recommendations on the Elimination of Discrimination against Women (hereinafter referred to as “the Committee”) addressed to Armenia. The General Recommendations were adopted by the Document of the Committee [CEDAW/C/ARM/CO/5-6](#) of 16 March 2016. Inter-agency Commission was established by Decision of the Prime Minister of Armenia No 991 of 24 July 2019 with a view to preparing this Report, the activities of which were coordinated by the Ministry of Foreign Affairs. It should be also noted that the preparation of the 7th periodic national report of Armenia has coincided with the pre-planned large scale military offensive unleashed by Azerbaijan on September 27 against Nagorno Karabakh (Artsakh). The brutal aggression of Azerbaijan with full and direct support of Turkey and the Turkish-backed foreign terrorist fighters and mercenaries carried out flagrant violation of the international human rights and international humanitarian law, using cluster bombs, explosive weapons and phosphorous munitions, targeting hospitals, including maternity hospital in Stepanakert, the capital of Artsakh, schools, communication systems and other essential facilities that has put the lives of civilian population, including many women and girls, under direct existential threat and has made the issue of protection of the affected population urgent. As a result of the Azerbaijani hostilities and indiscriminate, targeted and systematic strikes against civilian objects dozens of civilians including women have been killed and approximately 60% (over 90,000) of the entire population were forced to flee to Armenia or other parts of Artsakh. 170 peaceful settlements of the Artsakh Republic were severely damaged, in particular 13800 private immovable properties, 2100 private movable properties, 3100 infrastructures, public and industrial objects. Thousands of displaced families face shortage of food, water and access to medical care. Today there is a necessity to implement 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. Reports of Ombudsman of Artsakh reveal atrocities committed by Azerbaijan.¹ Armenia, as a strong supporter of the universality of human rights and their equal, non-discriminatory and non-selective application, 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. The authorities of Artsakh appealed to the Secretary General and the UN High Commissioner for Refugees for urgent humanitarian assistance to help dealing with the crises.

2. In recent years, Armenia has made important steps in the field of gender equality and women empowerment. In 2018, drastic changes were made in the political life of Armenia. After the mass protests and popular “Velvet Revolution” in 2018, a peaceful change of government took place. Being a purely internal process, the velvet revolution served as a new impetus for reforms in the country, including the promotion and protection of women’s rights.

3. Representatives of all layers of the society participated in the assemblies taken place in Armenia in spring 2018 and held demonstrations in different parts of the country raising various demands – starting from legislative and judicial reforms to

¹ https://artsakhombuds.am/en/ad_hoc_reports.

economic matters and issues of ensuring social justice. It is worth mentioning that young people and women were active participants of the demonstrations.

4. In 2018, Armenia became a member of the UN Commission on the Status of Women, reaffirming the commitment to support the international efforts aimed at enhancing the women equality, capacities and the role of women in different areas of life and to contribute to the annual activities of the Commission.

5. In March 2019, the Permanent Representative of Armenia to the UN was elected as the Chair of the 64th and the 65th sessions of the UN Commission on the Status of Women for the period of 2020–2021.

6. On 19 September 2019, the Government of Armenia approved the 2019–2023 Strategy for Gender Policy Implementation of Armenia and the Action Plan.

Fight of Armenia against COVID-19 epidemic

Taking into consideration that in 2019–2020 the world faced the risk of COVID-19 epidemic, we present below the steps of Armenia aimed at combating the epidemic, in particular its impact on women and girls

7. The Government of Armenia has initiated a number of social assistance programmes for different population groups. Non-governmental organisations also work to alleviate the impact of the epidemic on women and girls. Many of them have carried out wide range of activities to improve the financial, moral and social condition of women in need.

8. Emergency calls received by women support centres have increased in dozens, a part of which is emergency calls on domestic violence, fewer cases are requests for social assistance. Non-governmental organisations have conducted studies on the issues of victims of domestic violence resulting from the restrictions for the coronavirus pandemic. According to studies, deterioration in the social condition of women has been noticed. It has become obvious that during the epidemic women have suffered more, and being in charge of children, many have faced the risk of poverty.

9. It is noteworthy that many women are daily-paid and non-registered employees, who are unemployed today and are left with no income. Women surviving domestic violence have overcome many hardships, underwent psychological rehabilitation and often, possessing no work experience and skills, have tried to find their place in the labour market.

10. The other issue pointed out by the studies is the access to means of communication, as the phone numbers of women being subjected to domestic violence are mainly in the name of their husbands and are controlled. When isolated women cannot even make an emergency call from home. These days the lack of means of transport is also problematic: women cannot even get to the local police division or women support centres.

Services, legal information and psychological support provided

11. Taking into consideration the emergency declared in Armenia since 14 March 2020, organisations providing services to centres for victims of domestic violence have used alternative means for providing services, exchanging and providing information. These are social platforms, online discussions, financial assistance for food, medicine, apartment rental services.

12. In March 2020, the Government of Armenia has approved a number of instruments aimed at elimination of unfavourable economic consequences resulting from the coronavirus (Decisions No 358-L of 26 March, No 410-L, No 411-L,

No 412-L of 30 March, No 418-L of 31 March). According to these Decisions, it is envisaged to assist pregnant women who faced economic hardships due to the coronavirus, families with children under 14 years old, persons having lost their jobs, as well as to children under 18 of the families having social hardships.

13. Decision of the Government No 411-L of 30 March 2020 “On eliminating economic consequences of COVID-19” must be specifically noted. It covers single, pregnant women unemployed as of 30 March 2020, whose husbands were registered employees, yet during the period from 13 to 30 March 2020, they lost their jobs. It is envisaged that upon this Decision, those women will receive from the State Budget a lump-sum amount of AMD 100 000 (around 200 US\$).

14. The above-mentioned measures may make their indirect contribution to the prevention of domestic violence. The Ministry of Labour and Social Affairs is the body that, pursuant to Decision of the Government No 1381-N, carries out the centralised record-registration of cases of domestic violence. The website of the mentioned Ministry (www.mlsa.am) has a section “Council for Prevention of Domestic Violence”, where information on legal acts concerning the prevention of cases of domestic violence, organisations providing services to victims of domestic violence (including hot lines and contact persons), as well as on the functions being performed is posted.

Legislative framework

On implementation of the Committee’s General Recommendation No. 9

15. According to Article 29 of the Constitution of Armenia, “Discrimination based on sex, race, skin colour, ethnic or social origin, genetic features, language, religion, world view, political or other views, belonging to a national minority, property status, birth, disability, age, or other personal or social circumstances shall be prohibited”. The draft Law “On ensuring legal equality” was developed by the Ministry of Justice. The draft was put to public discussion on 15 July 2019. Based on the results of the discussions, the draft Law was modified and submitted to the Office of the Prime Minister.

16. The draft Law “On ensuring legal equality” defines:

Direct and indirect discrimination, incitement to discrimination, harassment, segregation, victimisation, associated discrimination and temporary special measures. In addition, the Law “On ensuring equal rights and equal opportunities for women and men” defines gender discrimination with its direct and indirect types, and sexual harassment. As entities ensuring legal equality, the draft Law “On ensuring legal equality” envisages both state and local self-government bodies, their officials, the Human Rights Defender, legal persons and individual entrepreneurs. The Draft requires supplements to the Civil Code to prescribe a new ground for a claim for compensation of intangible damage – “right to not be subjected to discrimination”, and to the Civil Procedure Code to prescribe the procedure for implementation of the relevant proceedings.

17. The draft on making amendments and supplements to the Law “On ensuring legal equality” and related laws prescribes a non-exhaustive list of features subject to protection against discrimination, including sex, by reproducing Article 29 of the Constitution on prohibition of discrimination. At the same time, the draft Law prescribes that the legislation on ensuring legal equality shall be also composed of the Law “On ensuring equal rights and equal opportunities for women and men”, which stipulates the terms “gender” (as socially constructed behaviour acquired by different sexes) and “gender discrimination” (as restriction of the legal equality based on sex, also of actual legal equality).

18. According to the Committee's General Recommendation No. 9 (1989), at the moment of submitting the Report it is impossible to introduce – within the framework of application of the Law “On ensuring legal equality” – statistical data on the results of the undertaken measures, as the Law is being drafted and is not applied. Due to COVID-19, the Statistical Service has also halted the collection of information on discrimination through the communication tool used in its research works and at this moment, it is in search for a new toolkit to conduct studies.

Access to justice and legal complaint mechanisms

On implementation of the Committee's General Recommendation No. 11

19. The Office of Public Defender provides free legal aid, inter alia, to the following persons:

- Family members record-registered in the family indigence assessment system and possessing points of family indigence higher than “0”;
- Insolvent natural persons submitting authentic data certifying the insolvency thereof. Within the meaning of this paragraph, a natural person shall be considered as insolvent, where he or she does not have sufficient income, a jointly residing and employed family member, as well as does not have under the ownership thereof an immovable property other than the personal apartment or vehicle the cost whereof exceeds one-thousand-fold of the minimum salary;
- Persons subjected to violence in the family, according to Article 11 of the Law of Armenia “On prevention of violence in the family, protection of persons having been subjected to violence in the family and restoration of solidarity in family”.

20. One of the strategic directions of the draft Decision of the Government “On approving the 2019–2023 Strategy for Judicial and Legal Reforms of Armenia and the Action Plan deriving therefrom” posted on e-draft.5am on 28 August 2019 is also the development of alternative mechanisms for provision of free legal aid with a view to ensuring access to justice, in particular through introduction of effective mechanisms for pro-bono legal services, which, in its turn, will contribute to the reduction of the workload of public defenders. In particular, it is necessary to create a new platform, which would involve advocates who are not public defenders, attendees of the School of Advocates, as well as lawyers of law firms, that will ensure the provision of free legal aid in various formats.

21. For the purpose of encouraging the submission of applications on cases of discrimination based on sex and gender, the Ministry of Justice has developed a package of the drafts Laws “On national minorities” and “On ensuring legal equality” and related laws, which has envisaged opportunities for applying to the Human Rights Defender through the newly-established Legal Equality Council within the composition of the latter with regard to the cases on manifestation of discrimination, as well as resorting to judicial protection for restoration of violated rights and freedoms through administrative and civil procedure.

22. For the purpose of ensuring referral mechanisms, point 73 of Decision of the Government No 483-N of 4 May 2017 “On approving the 2017–2019 Action Plan deriving from the National Strategy for Protection of Human Rights” provides for establishment of state-funded legal assistance centres in three marzes (regions) and in the capital of Armenia.

23. For the purpose of raising public awareness, various measures, trainings of representatives of responsible bodies have been carried out multiple times and they are ongoing. For example, for the purpose of raising awareness about the protection

of human rights of women and consistent improvement of professional knowledge and working skills of persons engaged in the administration of justice in the field of criminal law protection of those rights – judges, prosecutors and investigators, courses have been included in the 2016–2019 curricula of the Academy of Justice and have been taught.

24. For the purpose of raising awareness about the protection of human rights of women and consistent improvement of professional knowledge and working skills of persons engaged in the administration of justice in the field of criminal law protection of those rights – judges, prosecutors and investigators, the following events have been organised in collaboration with the Academy of Justice and foreign and international partners:

- On 15 and 16 June 2017, within the framework of the project “Improving women’s access to justice in six Eastern Partnership countries”, the Academy of Justice, jointly with the Council of Europe, organised a two-day seminar on “Ensuring equal access to justice for women through activities of judges and prosecutors”. The seminar was organised for attendees of the Academy – candidates for judges and prosecutors;
- On 17–18 June 2017, within the framework of the project “Improving women’s access to justice in six Eastern Partnership countries”, the Academy of Justice, jointly with the Council of Europe, organised a workshop on “Ensuring equal access to justice for women through activities of judges and prosecutors”;
- On 6 September 2017, an invited lecture on “First response, examination and prosecutorial oversight in cases of domestic violence” was organised for persons included in the list of candidates for investigators and for prosecutors, as well as for representatives of the Police of Armenia;
- On 14 December 2017, the Academy of Justice organised a workshop, where the Council of Europe HELP online course on “Violence against women and domestic violence” developed jointly with the Council of Europe was introduced;
- On 11 September 2018, in the Academy of Justice, the initial meeting for the second phase of the course of the Council of Europe (CoE) HELP programme (Human Rights Education for Legal Professionals) on violence against women and domestic violence was held jointly with the Council of Europe Office. During the meeting, the HELP programme, online registration procedure, peculiarities of interactive course, etc. were introduced to the participants of the course. Based on the results of two phases of HELP online course on “Violence against women and domestic violence”, judges, prosecutors and investigators participated in the courses;
- Within the framework of the project of the Council of Europe “Preventing and combating violence against women and domestic violence in Armenia”, the Academy of Justice, jointly with the Council of Europe, developed a new course on “Preventing and combating violence against women and domestic violence in Armenia” and the relevant manual for the provision of methodological support. The mentioned course is introduced in annual curricula of the Academy for 2019.

25. Within the framework of the project “Supporting the criminal justice reforms and combating ill-treatment and impunity in Armenia” constituting a part of the 2015–2018 Programmatic Cooperation Framework of the COE/EU Eastern Partnership, distance learning courses of HELP programmes (Human Rights Education for Legal Professionals) of the Council of Europe (CoE) on “Preventing and combating violence against women and domestic violence in Armenia” and “Prohibition of ill-treatment” were adapted to the local legal system for legal professionals.

26. In 2016–2019, in collaboration with “Women’s Rights Center” NGO, awareness-raising about the rights to reproductive and sexual health of women, namely the rights to abortion, including to safer, medical abortion was carried out for 115 obstetrician-gynecologists working in maternity hospitals of Yerevan, Shirak and Vanadzor, who, in their turn, transferred that information to about 400 colleagues thereof.

27. Awareness-raising of 105 medical workers and 41 pedagogues of Tavush Marz about the rights to sexual and reproductive health of adolescents was carried out jointly with “For Family and Health” Pan-Armenian Association.

28. It should be mentioned that the specifics of enforcement of a number of acts subject to compulsory enforcement are not prescribed by law, the relations pertaining to the compulsory enforcement of each of them are not subjected to specific institutional regulation. Therefore, for the purpose of solving such issues, the decision of the Government “On approving the 2019–2023 Strategy for Judicial and Legal Reforms of Armenia and the Action Plan deriving therefrom” envisages various measures, the implementation of which is aimed at addressing the existing practical issues.

National machinery for the advancement of women

On implementation of the Committee’s General Recommendation No. 13

29. The 2019–2023 Strategy for Gender Policy Implementation and the Action Plan defines the primary directions of the gender policy and is aimed at creating favourable conditions for enjoyment of rights and opportunities of women and men in all areas of public life, taking also into consideration the international obligations assumed by Armenia.

30. The first priority of the 2019–2023 Strategy for Gender Policy Implementation refers to the improvement of the national machinery for the advancement of women, equal participation of women and men in governance and decision-making. The National machinery envisages establishing a council for ensuring equal rights and opportunities for women and men, develop and have operating rules of procedure of the council, regularly convene sittings and discussions regarding the performance of actions on the national agenda for gender equality and their monitoring.

31. Based on the priorities prescribed, The Council on Women’s Issues and the working group were established, their individual compositions were prescribed, and the rules of procedure of the Council on Women’s Issues was established by Decision of the Prime Minister No 1740-A of 21 November 2019. The composition of the Council underwent changes and involved not only state institutions, but also representatives of non-governmental organisations carrying out activities in the field of gender equality and having experience for a longer period of time,

32. The Council on Women’s Issues has been established and operates as a national machinery, which promotes the introduction of mechanisms for incorporating social and political resources of women in the processes of democratisation of the society, ensuring of equal rights and equal opportunities for women and men. The objective of the Council is to facilitate the processes of addressing the main issues related to enhancement of the role of women, gender equality, gender discrimination and violence in Armenia, developing policies aimed at their regulation, as well as implementing strategic and tactical programmes. The Council may also organise its works on-line.

33. The relevant materials concerning the issues falling within the competence of the Council on Women’s Issues are prepared and submitted for discussion by the working group, which has been established to organise current activities of the Council.

34. In the gender policy a measure is accentuated, within the framework of which it is envisaged to also intensify and promote the activities and works of gender commissions' adjunct to Marzpetarans (Regional Governor's Office). The introduction of the above-mentioned Strategy involves the following classification of responsibilities according to levels:

(1) National level – the Government of Armenia, “Council on Women’s Issues in Armenian executive bodies and other agencies, the Civil Service Office of the Office of the Prime Minister, the Employment State Agency, the “National Institute of Labour and Social Research” (State Non-Commercial Organization, hereinafter referred to as “SNCO”), the Science Committee of the ESCS Ministry, the Academy of Justice, “Rural Financing Structure” of “Rural Areas Economic Development” Programme Implementation Unit State Institution of the Ministry of Economy. This level ensures:

(a) development and approval of legislative and other legal acts relating to the ensuring of gender equality;

(b) coordination of actions carried out in compliance with strategic directions for introduction of this Strategy at the national level;

(c) organisation of development of guidelines and other educational materials and approval of materials;

(d) organisation of training courses for the specialists of different fields;

(e) development and publication of information materials;

(f) conducting research to study the main issues of the field;

(g) managing the process of introduction of programmes implemented within the framework of the Strategy and regular oversight/monitoring.

(2) Marz level – Marzpetarans of Armenia. This level ensures:

(a) participation in the implementation of measures for introduction of this Strategy at Marz level;

(b) coordination of implementation of programmes under the Strategy at Marz level;

(c) monitoring of implementation of programmes under the Strategy at Marz level.

(3) Community level – local self-government bodies. This level ensures:

(a) participation in the implementation of measures for introduction of this Strategy at community level;

(b) coordination of implementation of programmes under the Strategy at community level;

(c) monitoring of implementation of programmes under the Strategy at community level.

(4) Non-governmental organisations operating in the field – implementation of programmes under the Strategy, awareness-raising of the population, dissemination of information, monitoring, organisation of research, etc.

(5) International organisations – technical assistance to programme and legal documents under development, ensuring international expert examination, comprehensive assistance to the introduction of programmes implemented within the framework of this Strategy.

(6) Private sector – ensuring social partnership, support.

35. The reinforcement of the unified system incorporating national and institutional mechanisms for development and implementation of gender policies is based also on the sittings and discussions on the national agenda for gender equality, regularly organised by the Gender Thematic Group (representatives of international and non-governmental organisations, interested state institutions are included in the composition of the Group). The Gender Thematic Group has also been included in the 2019–2023 Strategy for Gender Policy Implementation as a body conducting additional supervision. The Gender Thematic Group works in three main sub-groups:

- (a) Women’s economic empowerment;
- (b) Issues of domestic violence;
- (c) Measures for public awareness-raising about gender issues.

The subgroups have selected coordinators working on rotation, and discussions are held in separate sittings.

36. The measure “Activating gender commissions’ adjunct to Marzpetarans and improving the quality of works” is stated under the first priority of the Gender Strategy.

Stereotypes

On implementation of the Committee’s General Recommendation No. 15

37. For the purpose of promoting in the Academy of Justice the perception by the judicial and law enforcement bodies of all forms of discrimination as unacceptable and illegal, the following courses have been included in the annual curricula of mandatory trainings for 2016–2019 and have been taught.

38. Non-governmental organisations also carried out awareness-raising activities. In 2017–2018, in collaboration with “Women’s Rights Center” NGO, a series of programmes on “Shant” TV channel was implemented, with repeated playbacks, which was aimed at rejecting tolerance for violence, stereotypes for justification.

39. In 2017, Armavir community staff, jointly with “Women’s Resource Center” NGO, conducted a three-day training of 85 medical workers of Armavir Marz, under the head “No to gender-based violence”. The participants improved their skills in identification of signs of violence, consultation, and prevention thereof. In addition, it was recommended that medical workers talked about rejection of all forms of violence when meeting members of families “at risk of violence” for the purpose of diagnostics, treatment and screening.

40. The standard and syllabus of the subject “Social studies” of 8th–12th grades of schools of general education cover topical units relating to fundamental human rights, legal equality of women and men, elimination of violence, tolerance and civil society. Topical gender materials are also included in elementary grades, in the syllabus of the subject “Me and the Surrounding World”. During the instruction of the mentioned subjects, learners are informed of topics on legal equality of women and men.

41. The course “Healthy Lifestyle” is taught in the 8th–11th grades of schools of general education, to which 14 class hours are allocated in each grade. The course includes teaching gender-based topics, promotes the awareness-raising of learners about healthy lifestyle and principles of preparation for family life.

42. Since 2008, the programme “Education of Tolerance” has been implemented at schools of general education and a manual for relevant teacher (class teacher) has been introduced in different grades. These manuals provide teachers with opportunity to touch upon the matters of building and showing tolerance towards all members of

the society when educating and raising awareness of pupils. The programme teaches the learners tolerance, cooperation, promotes conflict resolution, etc.

43. At schools of general education the syllabus “Social studies” includes topical units relating to fundamental human rights, gender equality, rights of national minorities, tolerance and civil society. The teaching of rights has also been integrated with the teaching of knowledge and skills for healthy lifestyle and fight against narcotic drugs and trafficking.

44. The manual on “Legal equality of women and men” for pedagogues, psychologists, social workers, administrative employees of educational institutions have been developed with the support of non-governmental organisations cooperating in the field.

45. A teaching manual on “Women and men – different yet equal” has been developed for teachers, school psychologists and class teachers to use in-group works among learners and parents. The mentioned manuals cover topics on gender-based and domestic violence.

46. The educational and methodical manual “How to prevent violence at school” for teachers has been developed, which the ESCS Ministry has guaranteed for use and provided to institutions of general education.

47. With respect to recording of cases of violence and responding thereto, in 2016 Joint Order of the Minister of Labour and Social Affairs No 120-N of 22 December 2016 and of the Minister of Education and Science of Armenia No 1349-N of 27 December 2016 “On approving the procedure for detecting suspicious cases of violence against children attended and/or studying at institutions in charge of care and protection of children or between them and the form of Register-book for registration of suspicious and established cases” was signed. The mentioned Order regulates the relations pertaining to detection of suspicious cases of violence against children attended and/or studying at institutions in charge of care and protection of children or between them. The objective of this procedure is to establish at institutions in charge of care and protection of children mechanisms for detecting suspicious cases of violence against children or between them, protecting the rights of children subjected to violence and providing relevant assistance thereto.

48. The course materials “Protection of children against violence” and the manual “Referral procedures” are introduced, which have been developed within the scope of the Programme “Unite for Children, Save Futures” implemented jointly with the Ministry of Labour and Social Affairs, the Ministry of Health and Armenian Country Office of “Save the Children” American Organisation. Within the scope of cooperation with “Women for Development” NGO, the teacher’s manual “Conflict management education at school” has been developed, which covers topics on prevention of violence at school.

49. Within the mentioned period a series of programmes were aired by the Public and Shoghakat TV Companies of Armenia (see Annex 1).

50. In 2015, upon the initiative of the World Bank, the textbooks of the upper cycle of the school of general education, i.e. high school, were analysed in order to study the issues of maintaining gender representation and gender balance therein. The results of the analysis were aggregated in the document, which was provided to the expert group reviewing the draft National Curriculum.

51. The ESCS Ministry conducts the review of state standard for general education within the scope of the Programme “EU4Innovation in Armenia: Enhanced Education focusing on science, technology, engineering and mathematics (STEM)” implemented jointly with the World Bank. Based on the review of the state standard

for general education, new subject-related standards and subject-related programmes for elementary, middle and high schools will be developed, the list of subjects taught will be reviewed, and new textbooks will be introduced. The mentioned processes will be carried out by ensuring gender balance and gender-sensitive perspectives.

52. As a result of these reforms, teaching and study materials for science, technology, mathematics and engineering, as well as modules related to the training of teachers will also be developed, and the evaluation system will be reviewed. Expert groups are formed, and the activities for development of state standards for general education are being carried out.

53. The National Strategy for Human Rights Protection and the Action Plan for 2020–2022 deriving therefrom has been approved by Decision of the Government No 1978-L of 26 December 2019.

54. In this context, the Ministry of Justice, which has carried out the coordination of works of strategy development, drafts such documents as inclusively as possible, namely in September 2019, three sectoral discussions were organised, within the scope of which, inter alia, the priorities for the protection of rights of women were discussed, which were later included in the documents. Many non-governmental organisations engaged in the protection of the rights of women, lawyers, representatives of the Supreme Judicial Council, deputies of the National Assembly and others participated in those discussions. As a result, many important points relating to the rights of women have been included in the National Strategy for Human Rights Protection:

- Criminalise domestic violence and violence against women in line with international standards;
- Provide in legislation procedural safeguards relating to effective remedy for persons having suffered from domestic violence and violence against women, in line with international standards;
- Conduct trainings on domestic violence and violence against women in line with international standards, including for police officers, investigators, prosecutors, judges and medical workers, representatives of educational institutions, employees of support centres for persons subjected to domestic violence;
- Adopt an action plan to combat domestic violence;
- Promote engagement of women in the armed forces.

Gender-based violence against women

On implementation of the Committee's General Recommendation No. 17

55. With regard to the mentioned in the communication by the Committee in December 2019 of the «lack of sufficient information to make an assessment» of the Law on Prevention of Violence within the family, protection of victims of violence within the family and restoration of peace in the family, Armenia would like to present the following web-link <https://www.refworld.org/pdfid/5a6b2e274.pdf>.

56. In January 2018, Armenia signed the Council of Europe Convention on Preventing and Combating Violence against Women and Domestic Violence. The Ministry of Justice initiated the ratification thereof in line with the provisions of the Law “On international Treaties”. On 26 July 2019, the Minister of Justice applied to the Venice Commission of the Council of Europe to receive the official opinion of the Commission on the constitutional implications of the ratification of the Convention. After receiving the opinion of the Venice Commission, the Government will, pursuant to part 3 of Article 169 of the Constitution, apply to the Constitutional Court to

determine the compliance of the obligations stipulated in the international agreement with the Constitution. Then, after ensuring the domestic processes, it will be submitted, in the manner prescribed, to the National Assembly for ratification.

57. As we have already mentioned, according to the 2020–2022 National Strategy for Human Rights Protection, the domestic violence and violence against women must be criminalised in line with international standards, which suggests relevant amendments and supplements to the Criminal Code.

58. On 7 June 2019, a Memorandum of Understanding was signed between the Ministry of Labour and Social Affairs, Hayastan All-Armenian Fund and Women's Support Center for prevention of the phenomenon of domestic violence and for methodical support, within the scope of which comprehensive cooperation in providing quality support to persons subjected to domestic violence was carried out in marzes. Under the Agreement, marz organisations were mapped by the Women's Support Center, underwent training and were provided with opportunity to participate in grants competitions for providing support services to persons subjected to domestic violence, co-financed by the State. Within the framework of the Programme "Services of support centres for persons subjected to domestic violence", support centres for persons subjected to domestic violence operate in all marzes since 2020, where about 1 800 persons subjected to domestic violence (per annum) will, in compliance with the requirements prescribed by law, be provided with necessary services. These services are provided by non-governmental organisations as services delegated by the State.

59. In 2019, the Programme "Shelter services for persons subjected to domestic violence" was also approved, under which two state-funded shelters operate since 2020, where about 60 persons subjected to domestic violence (per annum), also, where needed, the children under their care are provided with social services prescribed by law. This service is provided by the non-governmental organisation declared as winner on a competitive basis, as a service delegated by the State.

60. Under point 1 of Article 17 of the Law "On prevention of violence in the family, protection of persons having been subjected to violence in the family and restoration of solidarity in family", the Procedure "For organising free medical first aid for persons subjected to domestic violence, recording the information on persons having sought medical aid as a result of violence and reporting the cases of domestic violence to the Police, the Investigative Committee, and the Prosecutor's Office, as well as the Ministry of Health" was drafted and submitted for approval upon the order of the Minister of Health, and it is aimed at raising awareness of the representatives of the field of healthcare, promoting the change in the treatment of medical aid providers, supporting women subjected to domestic violence, ensuring the process of record-registration and reporting of all cases of violence referred to medical institutions, i.e. ensuring the record-registration of true information on the cases.

61. The Statistical Committee of Armenia last collected statistics within the framework of Armenia Demographic and Health Survey conducted in 2015–2016 (ADHS 2015–2016), which the Statistical Committee has been conducting since 2000, at five-year interval. Being a sample survey which has wider coverage in terms of topics, and more focused on the study of issues related to the health of the population mostly not covered in other statistical observations, the ADHS has provided information on domestic violence disaggregated by different socio-demographic characteristics.

62. The results of the 2015–2016 ADHS are available in the bilingual analytical report published on the official website of the Statistical Committee at: <https://www.armstat.am/file/article/adhs-2015-armenian.pdf>.

63. Within the scope of the international cooperation, single topical survey on the subject matter is envisaged to conduct in 2020–2021, guided by the methodology recommended by the World Health Organisation, which will be localised according to the national needs and peculiarities. The preparatory works of the programme launched in May 2020, whereas the timely and proper performance of further works is greatly conditioned by further developments of the novel COVID-19 pandemic.

64. For the purpose of preventing violence against women, preventing cases of femicide, raising awareness of pupils and eliminating gender-based stereotypes, discussions and meetings on different legal topics were organised and held at about 1 400 schools of general education and other educational institutions operating in the territory of Armenia, by the efforts of competent officers of the Department for Prevention of Juvenile Crime and Domestic Violence, as well as units for juvenile cases and domestic violence prevention of local subdivisions of the Police of Armenia.

65. For the purpose of raising awareness of the citizens, in 2019 visits of the expert group led by the head of the specialised department of the Police to Yerevan Municipality and all Marzpetarans were organised upon the initiative of the Police. During the mentioned meetings the inadmissibility of discriminatory treatment against women, necessity of legal equality between women and men, importance of cooperation with bodies and non-governmental organisations interested in combating violence in family were presented to the police officers and other participants. With a view to raising awareness on the phenomenon of violence against women, as well as domestic violence, the Department of Public Relations and Information (PRI) of the Police prepared and broadcast topical video materials.

66. For the purpose of strengthening the capacities of competent officers of the Police, raising their awareness on the protection of women's rights, in 2016–2020 training courses were regularly organised and conducted for police officers in the Educational Complex of the Police.

67. In each case of receiving information on crimes of violence against women, femicide, as well as crimes against sexual freedom and sexual integrity of the wife committed by the spouse, actions prescribed by law and legal acts are carried out, materials are prepared, a criminal case is instituted where grounds exist, inquest is conducted, then the criminal case is forwarded to preliminary investigation in the manner prescribed.

68. The competent police officers order measures of protection provided for by the Law “On prevention of violence in the family, protection of persons having been subjected to violence in the family and restoration of solidarity in family” and relevant supervision is exercised over the implementation thereof.

Trafficking and exploitation of prostitution

On implementation of the Committee's General Recommendation No. 19

69. Combating trafficking in and exploitation of human beings has always been in the focus of the Government and ongoing activities are carried out in that direction. The vivid evidence of it is that for years systemic mechanisms for combating trafficking have been established, and Armenia undertakes coordinated steps in different fields.

70. Decision of the Prime Minister No 760-A of 18 August 2015 “On approving the individual composition of the Council for Combating Trafficking in and Exploitation of Human Beings in Armenia and the rules of procedure thereof, establishing the working group, and repealing Decisions of the Prime Minister No 861-A of 6 December 2007 and No 312-A of 5 June 2008” entered into force on 19 August 2015.

71. Since 2002, the Government has approved six triennial national action plans. The recent one covers the period from 2020 to 2022. Moreover, it has been approved during COVID-19 pandemic, which serves as another evidence that the Government does its best even in emergency situations to ensure the continuation of works aimed at combating trafficking. The actions provided for by the Plan must make the fight against trafficking in and exploitation of human beings more expanded and comprehensive, unite the efforts of the parties involved, contribute to strengthening capacities and improving qualifications of specialists, preventing the phenomenon more effectively, identifying victims, improve support and specify protection mechanisms, taking also into consideration the best interests of the child.

72. In 2019, amendments and supplements to the Law “On identification of and assistance to persons subjected to trafficking in and exploitation of human beings” were made, as a result of which minor, i.e. special category victims were provided with opportunity to enjoy the right to monetary assistance until attaining the age of maturity (previously, the minor acquired that right after attaining the age of 18).

73. The measure “Protection of persons subjected to trafficking and exploitation, sexual abuse and organisation of accessible, comprehensive and operational assistance thereto” is also implemented as part of provision of social and psychological rehabilitation services to persons subjected to trafficking and exploitation, sexual abuse provided by the Ministry of Labour and Social Affairs.

74. Increase in the funding for the provision of the above-mentioned service has already been envisaged in the 2020–2022 Mid-Term Expenditure Framework and 2020 budget request, i.e. in 2020 AMD 38, 120.0 thousand will be provided from the State Budget for the implementation of the measure. The service is provided by “Hope and Help” NGO, the Organisation receives a subsidy to partially compensate for the lease of shelters and salary of 14 employees.

75. The State provides monetary assistance to persons subjected to trafficking in and exploitation of human beings as a partial compensation for the damage caused. The amount is available to anyone who has been recognised by the Commission for Identification as a victim and has not refused assistance (the monetary compensation is a type of assistance).

76. Liability for trafficking in and exploitation of human beings is provided for by Article 132 “Trafficking in or exploitation of human beings” and Article 1322 “Trafficking in or exploitation of a child or a person deprived of the opportunity to realise the nature and significance of his or her action or to control it as a result of mental disorder” of the Criminal Code. Liability in the form of imprisonment for a term of 5 to 15 years is provided for the mentioned crimes.

77. According to part 3 of Article 4 of the Law “On identification of and assistance to persons subjected to trafficking in and exploitation of human beings”, recognising a person as a victim or a special category victim and recognising him or her as a victim in accordance with criminal procedure norms are processes pursuing different objectives and may not in any way derive from each other. All provisions of the Law, including the provision on monetary compensation, apply equally to both the citizens and persons subjected to trafficking in Armenia and recognised as victims by the Commission for Identification, however they can receive the amount while they are in Armenia and receive assistance. For example, in 2019, two citizens of India, who were identified in 2018, received monetary assistance after which, with the support of UN, they left for their homeland. The amount is not subject to taxation; it is only intended for meeting the initial social needs of the given person.

78. For the purpose of improving the professional knowledge and practical skills of the persons engaged in the administration of justice (judges, prosecutors,

investigators) in establishing the criminal and legal characteristics of the crimes under the cases on trafficking, the course “Current issues of the criminal law” was included in the annual curricula for mandatory training of the Academy of Justice and was taught, and a separate topic “Main issues of qualification of trafficking in or exploitation of human beings” constituted a part of the course thereof.

79. Persons engaged in the administration of justice (judges, prosecutors, investigators) have acquired professional knowledge and practical skills in displaying gender-sensitive approach to victims of trafficking within the scope of the course “Specifics of proceedings with the participation of vulnerable persons”.

80. The Statistical Committee semi-annually and annually collects and publishes information presented by the inquest and preliminary investigation bodies under the type of crime “Trade in human beings, trafficking in human beings” on applications and reports on crimes, as well as on completed cases, based on the data of administrative statistical reports provided by the Police and the Prosecutor’s Office.

81. The information is annually published in Armenian in the statistical compendium “Social condition of Armenia”, which is available at the website of the Statistical Committee at https://www.armstat.am/file/article/soc_vich_2018_31.pdf (pages 644, 646).

82. The State Programme “Social and psychological rehabilitation of victims of trafficking in and exploitation of human beings” is in place since 2010. Services have been implemented by non-governmental organisations. Starting from 2020, the Programme is fully funded from the State Budget. The amount has been doubled and constitutes AMD 40.210.100.0 (forty million two hundred and ten thousand one hundred). The Programme is implemented by “Democracy Today” NGO.

83. The Programme “Lump-sum monetary assistance to persons subjected to trafficking and exploitation” is implemented under the state funding, within the scope of which a lump-sum assistance is provided to persons subjected to trafficking and exploitation. As a result of changes made in 2019, minors were also provided with opportunity to receive – until attaining the age of maturity – the financial assistance prescribed by law. Thus, the scope of beneficiaries receiving relevant financial assistance has expanded.

Participation in political and public life

On implementation of the Committee’s General Recommendation No. 21

84. Article 83 of the Electoral Code adopted on 25 May 2016 enshrined that in the first part of the national electoral list of a political party, alliance of political parties and each of the political parties included in the alliance, the number of representatives of each sex, starting from the 1st place on the list, must not exceed 70% in each integer group of 3 (1-3, 1-6, 1-9 and subsequently up to the end of the list).

85. The Electoral Code has prescribed gender-sensitive quotas (the quota has increased by 10%, as compared to the previous number), which are aimed at enhancing the representation of women in the legislative power. It has prescribed a requirement for the women representation in the list of political parties, alliances of political parties running in the parliamentary elections to be 25%, which is envisaged to increase to 30% starting from 2021.

86. Of the total number of 1 444 candidates running in the elections of the National Assembly of 9 December 2018, 464 or 32% were women, and, as a result, of 132 Deputies of the National Assembly, 32 or 24% are women. In the composition of the National Assembly of previous convocation women deputies constituted 18%.

87. Of 18,000 national observers accredited by the Central Electoral Commission for the parliamentary elections, 10,951 or 62% were women, and of 1,163 journalists, 696 or 60% were women.

88. Of the total number of 948 candidates running in the elections of the Council of Elders of Yerevan in 2018, 344 or 36% were women and, as a result, of 65 members of the Council of Elders, 19 or 29% are women. During the elections of local self-government bodies held in October 2018, the first woman mayor in the history of the third Republic of Armenia was elected as Mayor of Etchmiadzin. Of 688 national observers accredited by the Central Electoral Commission for the elections of local self-government bodies, 346 or 50% were women, and of 516 journalists, 296 or 57% were women.

89. In 2019, the working group on making the improving amendments to the Law “On political parties” was launched in the National Assembly. The provisions of the Draft include a requirement for at least 40% representation of each sex in the executive bodies of political parties. In case of failure to fulfil this requirement, the political parties that, because of elections, may have received financing from public funds, will be deprived of that opportunity. Mandatory provisions on promoting the political participation of women and young people are also considered to be included in the programme documents of political parties. It is also considered to require the political parties receiving financing from public funds to spend a certain percentage of those funds on promoting the political participation of women.

90. In 2019, the working group on making the improving amendments to the Law “On local self-governance” was also launched in the National Assembly. Here it is planned to switch over to the proportional electoral system in the communities having 4,000 and more electors, which will allow to prescribe at least 30% representation for each sex. The National Assembly is ready to also consider the issue of establishing a quota (in case of lists) or incentive measures (in case of maintaining the majoritarian electoral system in small communities) in the elections of local self-government bodies.

91. While the quotas in elected positions are needed to gradually overcome the dominant political culture in the public by temporary special measures, the National Assembly sees need for more discussions on quotas in appointed positions. One of the arguments is that the promotion of women in appointed positions may be regulated more effectively through politics, by means of debates between and criticism of the ruling power, opposition parties and the civil society.

92. As of 2019, one is a woman (8,3%) of 12 Ministers of the Government. One was a woman (5,6%) of 18 Ministers of the previous Government. Three were women (16,7%) of 18 Ministers of the Government preceding it. On the other hand, as of January 2020, 8 are women of 24 Deputy Ministers in the Government, and 12 are women of women deputies of the bodies subordinated to the Government (nearly 36%). Three were women (5,3%) of 57 Deputy Ministers of the previous Government. And five were women (7,7%) of 65 Deputy Ministers of the Government preceding it.

93. A quota for judge members of the Supreme Judicial Council is established: the number of representatives of judge members of the same sex must be restricted “to the extent possible” to up to three members. If this fails, the election process is repeated, by restricting the number of representatives of the same sex to up to four members. If this also fails, the obligatory quota is removed. Where the number of judges of either sex is less than 25% of the total number of judges, spots of up to 50% for representatives of the same sex having received the maximum number, but not less than at least more than half of “for” votes of the total number of the members of the Supreme Judicial Council shall be guaranteed in the list of contenders for judge candidates.

94. The National Assembly is ready also to discuss the issues of specifying for the Central Electoral Commission an obligation prescribed by law for collecting and publishing the statistics for participation of women in the elections of all levels, imposing quotas in the judicial system, including in leading positions, and raising the existing quotas, stipulating quotas for the Constitutional Court. Vahe Grigoryan, Judge of the Constitutional Court elected by the National Assembly on 18 June 2019, also talked about this, proposing that the number of judges of the sex less represented be not less than one third either by virtue of the constitutional tradition or by virtue of law, i.e. in quotas.

95. Survey has been conducted in the public, jointly with the United Nations Development Programme Office, to find out public perceptions of the role of women and men in the field of public service, the obstacles to and impetus for engaging in the public service.

96. Training on Methodology of Gender Equality Seal has been organised to test it in the Civil Service Office of the Office of the Prime Minister.

97. In June 2019, the seminar-discussion “Informed mass media, informed citizen” was held upon the initiative of the Civil Service Office [CSO] and with the support of the United Nations Development Programme Office, during which the CSO introduced the mass media representatives the solutions of the new system of the civil service.

98. In April 2020, the National Assembly adopted amendments to the Criminal Code, which criminalised calls for public violence on the ground of the Article of the Constitution on prohibition of discrimination. This, in fact, criminalised the extreme manifestations of hate speech, i.e. hate speech containing calls for violence. As the Article of the Constitution on prohibition of discrimination protects also the sex and political views, this amendment protects all the citizens against the calls for violence on the ground of sex and political views, including women holding public positions and engaged in politics.

99. In December 2019, the working group on issues of amendments to the legislation for combating hate speech was established in the National Assembly. The group considers the issue of imposing sanctions under the Criminal Code, Civil Code or Administrative Code for hate speech on the ground of the Article of the Constitution on prohibition of discrimination. This will allow for more effective protection of all the citizens against manifestations of hate speech, including women holding public positions and engaged in politics, regardless of the fact whether that speech contains calls for violence or not.

Education

On implementation of the Committee’s General Recommendation No. 23

100. The third priority of the 2019–2023 Gender Strategy prescribes the priority “Enhancing full-fledged and effective participation of and equal opportunities for women and men in the field of science and education”.

101. The support manual “Educational work at school: Issues of professional orientation” has been applied in basic school. Learners are informed about issues of professional orientation, which is aimed at overcoming gender-based stereotypes, creating motivation among girls and boys for professions non-traditional for their sex.

102. Events were held in career centres operating in 12 regional colleges with a view to introducing the issues related to professional orientation among the learners, the professions valid in the field of professional education, the existing demand for

professions in the labour market, as well as to overcome gender-based stereotypes that exist among girls and boys in choosing a profession.

103. In addition, activities aimed at introduction and development of career subdivisions were carried out in 95 primary (handicraft) and secondary vocational education institutions in total. Persons in charge of career centres of these educational institutions were appointed.

104. It has already been a few years that three-day exhibition “Education and Career” is organised in Yerevan. The exhibition has aroused interest particularly in young people who try to get informed, find their relevant profession.

105. The ESCS Ministry implements, jointly with the Union of Advanced Technology Enterprises, a programme for establishment of “Armath” engineering laboratories at schools of general education. About 5000 pupils get involved in 225 clubs in total created within the scope of the programme, get free of charge engineering education. In “Armath” engineering laboratories children aged 10–18 are introduced to science, technology, engineering and mathematics through interactive after-school classes, exciting competitions, innovative camps. Both boys and girls are involved in those clubs.

106. For the purpose of promoting the participation of girls in the field of information and telecommunications, the National Institute of Education of the ESCS Ministry and “Women and Information Society” NGO implemented “Technovation”, the largest global technology entrepreneurship programme, for three consecutive years. “Technovation” is the programme of “Iridescent” Organisation, the aim of which is to inspire and empower girls to become innovators and leaders. During the programme, girls identify any social problem in their community and create a mobile application to solve that problem. They use the knowledge and skills in technology entrepreneurship acquired as a result of the programme.

107. Also, trainings for teachers of schools of general education of marzes are conducted to apply in teaching information and telecommunications (more than 80% of teachers participating in the training are women).

Cases of dropping out of school and efforts aimed at continuing education at secondary school

108. The ESCS Ministry has developed the draft of the “Procedure for identification, record-registration and referral of children dropped out of compulsory education”. The adoption of the draft shall bring to the exercise of every child’s right to education, regulation of the record-registration process of school-age children, ensuring of implementation of the obligations of territorial administration and local self-government bodies, all responsible agencies, interested bodies in the process of enrolling children in general education.

109. As of 2019, the draft of the “Procedure for identification, record-registration and referral of children dropped out of compulsory education” was being amended. The implementation of the Procedure will further enable the identification of children who have dropped out of education in any level of general education, according to the reasons for their dropout and return them to the education system as a result of cross-sectoral cooperation.

110. It should be added that the school admission system is flexible, it enables the learner having interrupted education at any level to return to the education system and continue his/her education. In particular, in accordance with the procedure for “Enrolment of a learner in an educational institution implementing basic general education programmes of Armenia, transfer and release of a learner from an institution, as well as organisation of education of children being enrolled in general

education after the established term” approved by Order of the Minister of Education and Science No 1640-N of 24 November 2010, a learner – after the term defined by the Law “On general education” – shall be enrolled in general education:

- (a) Under the age of 8 – first grade on a general basis;
- (b) From 9 to 13 years old – one grade below his/her age group.

And a learner over the age of 17, who has not attended school or has interrupted education at any level, can master the basic general education programmes through self-education and externally (extern), receive a basic education certificate and/or a secondary education certificate in accordance with the procedure established by the ESCS Ministry.

The right to education of representatives of national minorities

111. Every year, on the basis of the written motion of the Head of Community of the national minority, the issue of being admitted to a higher education institution of applicants being representatives of national minorities having received positive grades in competitive exams of relevant professions, is discussed at the session of the Republican Admission Commission for admission to higher education institutions of Armenia. Tuition-free seats out of the reserve ones are allocated to the applicants being representatives of national minorities having received positive grades. During 2014–2019, six tuition-free seats out of the reserve ones have been allocated to the representatives of national minorities, including four seats for the Yezidi community and two seats for the Assyrian community.

Employment and economic empowerment

On implementation of the Committee’s General Recommendation No. 25

112. According to part 2 of Article 178 of the Labour Code, men and women shall receive an equal pay for the same or equivalent work. Regular pay surveys are conducted by the National Institute of Labour and Social Research SNCO. The analysis shows that there is a significant disproportion in the remuneration of men and women in the Armenian labour market. The existing deviations indicate significantly lower salaries of women compared to men. It turns out that women received an average of only about 65% of the average salary of men in 2017.

113. For the fulfilment of the assumed international obligations the list of works deemed heavy and harmful was approved by Decision of the No 2308-N of 29 December 2005 “On approving the list of works deemed heavy and harmful for persons under the age of 18, pregnant women and women taking care of a child under the age of one”.

114. Based on the obligations assumed within the framework of the Revised European Social Charter, Articles 257 and 258 of the Labour Code define the following provisions:

- Article 257 – engaging persons under the age of 18 in heavy, harmful, especially heavy, especially harmful works established by the national legislation, as well as in other cases established by law, shall be prohibited;
- Part 1 of Article 258 – engaging pregnant women or women taking care of a child under the age of one in heavy, harmful, especially heavy and especially harmful works established by the legislation, shall be prohibited.

115. According to Article 257 of the Labour Code engaging persons under the age of 18 in heavy, harmful, especially heavy, especially harmful works established by the legislation, as well as in other cases established by law, shall be prohibited, and

according to part 1 of Article 258 engaging pregnant women or women taking care of a child under the age of one in heavy, harmful, especially heavy and especially harmful works established by the legislation, shall be prohibited.

116. Thus, the availability of a list of works deemed heavy and harmful for persons under the age of 18, pregnant women and women taking care of a child under the age of one approved by Decision of the Government No 2308-N of 29 December 2005 “On approving the list of works deemed heavy and harmful for persons under the age of 18, pregnant women and women taking care of a child under the age of one” shall not be considered discrimination and shall pursue an aim of ensuring health and safety of those in need of special protection, that is to say children and young people, pregnant women and women taking care of a child under the age of one, i.e. protecting them from dangers directly or indirectly deriving from their work.

117. Within the framework of the 2019–2023 Strategy for Gender Policy Implementation, a number of employment programmes aimed at equal distribution of equal family responsibilities between women and men, providing sufficient conditions for child care are implemented, in particular:

- The Programme “Organising vocational training at employer’s office for young mothers who are uncompetitive in the labour market and have no profession”;
- Amendments in and supplements to Decision of the Government No 534-N of 17 April 2014 on approving a number of legal acts ensuring the implementation of the Law “On employment” have been made within the framework of the Programme “Implementation of state policy analysis aimed at expanding opportunities for women to combine family and work”. Within the framework of these changes, the scope of beneficiaries of the Programme “Organising vocational training at employer’s office for young mothers who are uncompetitive in the labour market and have no profession” has been expanded; it has been planned to consider – from now on – also mothers who are uncompetitive in the labour market as beneficiaries of the Programme, regardless of age (previously the age limit was set up to 30 years old), and to remove the fact of entering the labour market for the first time.

118. Cooperation with international partner organisations continued under the Programme “Carrying out campaigns aimed at transformation of the model of one major earner in the family”, within the framework of which measures are implemented to enhance the economic empowerment of women.

119. Point 2 of part 1 of Article 3 of the Labour of 9 November 2004 defines that prohibition of forced labour of any form (nature) and of violence against employees is one of the main principles of the labour legislation.

120. Part 1 of Article 140 of the Criminal Code prescribes that forcing a person to sexual intercourse, homosexuality, lesbianism or other sexual actions, by means of blackmail, threats to destroy, damage or seize property, or using the financial or other dependence of the aggrieved, shall be punished (...) by imprisonment for a term of one to three years. In other words, the Labour and Criminal Codes already enshrine regulations that prohibit all forms of violence, including forcing a person to sexual intercourse, homosexuality, lesbianism or other sexual actions, by means of blackmail, threats to destroy, damage or seize property, or using the financial or other dependence of the aggrieved, that is considered a criminally punishable act.

121. There is a summary of statistical information, the source of which is the Police of Armenia. It is available at the following link: https://www.armstat.am/file/article/sv_01_20a_550.pdf, pages 146–149. The information is regularly published in the publications of the “Social and Economic Situation of Armenia” monthly information report, as well as in the “Social Situation of Armenia” annual statistical collection.

122. The second priority of the 2019–2023 Gender Strategy envisages overcoming gender discrimination in the social and economic sphere, expanding women’s economic opportunities. In particular, the objectives are the following:

- (1) Reducing social and economic inequality between women and men, including:
 - (a) Reducing the level of gender discrimination in the field of professional work;
 - (b) Creating favourable conditions for combining work and family responsibilities;
 - (c) Protecting labour rights of women of vulnerable groups and using the potential.
- (2) Increasing women’s competitiveness in the labour market, expanding economic opportunities, including:
 - (a) Promoting women’s entrepreneurship, improving business knowledge of women entrepreneurs, access to and availability of business information and consulting for start-up and operating SMEs;
 - (b) Expanding women’s economic opportunities in the field of agriculture;
 - (c) Increasing the level of employment among women and reducing the ratio of women in the poor population of Armenia.

123. During 2016–2019, Small and Medium-sized Enterprises provided a lot of assistance to women entrepreneurs in supporting the entrepreneurship, providing business information and consultation, credit guarantees, business internationalisation of start-up entrepreneurs.

124. Within the framework of financial assistance programmes, Small and Medium-sized Enterprises have provided credit guarantees of AMD 937.4 million to 64 start-up entrepreneurs and entities of Small and Medium-sized Enterprises; financing of 25 more start-up entrepreneurs was in the current phase in 2019.

125. Women entrepreneurs were provided with 271 instances of assistance in business internationalisation within the framework of activities of Enterprise Europe Network Armenia.

126. The Law “On ensuring equal rights and equal opportunities for women and men” defines “sexual harassment” as a form of gender-based discrimination, including acts of sexual nature having verbal or physical manifestation, or any situation aimed at humiliating dignity, intimidation, hostility, degrading or similar situations. The draft amendments to the Labour Code being developed by the Ministry of Labour and Social Affairs, already provides for supplements to ensure labour relations free from sexual abuse. The National Assembly is ready to include such a definition in the Labour Code and to envisage a criminal or other sanction for sexual persecution/harassment in workplace. It should be noted that in the draft Law “On ensuring legal equality” there is a chapter entitled “Ensuring legal equality in separate spheres”, where a separate extensive article refers to the prohibition of discrimination in labour relations.

127. No drafts have been developed with respect to confidential and secure system for submitting applications on sexual harassment in workplace. At the same time, we would like to inform that the package of draft Laws “On national minorities” and “On ensuring legal equality” and related laws, which are being amended, envisages ensuring legal equality in a number of spheres, including prohibition of discrimination in labour relations.

128. As for the “effective access of victims to the means of compensation”, under the above-mentioned drafts both through administrative proceedings (restoration of rights or compensation of pecuniary and non-pecuniary damage for the plaintiff/person subjected to discrimination) or through civil proceedings (recognition of the fact of manifestation of discrimination, as well as obligation for the respondent to eliminate the consequences of discrimination upon relevant claim), the possibility of compensation for the person subjected to discrimination is provided for.

Healthcare

On implementation of the Committee’s General Recommendation No. 27

129. Until 2015 contraceptives were received within the framework of international cooperation. Starting from 2015, modern contraceptives are purchased at the expense of the State Budget and are provided free of charge to a wide range of persons included in socially disadvantaged and separate (special) groups defined by Decision of the Government No 318-N of 3 March 2004, without any discrimination or differentiation. During 2016–2018, the average annual consumption of contraceptives in 93 medical institutions of Armenia was 200.000 condoms, 2500 intrauterine devices [IUDs], 2 000 packs (3 blisters in each) of tablets.

130. In the recent years, during 2016–2019, an enormous amount of work has been done within the framework of the strategy for proportional development of marzes for the purpose of reconstruction, furnishing of medical institutions, ensuring the accessibility and availability of high-quality medical care for the population of rural areas, health of women, notably for the protection of maternal health.

131. In all regions 18 multi-profile medical centres were built and furnished with modern equipment.

132. Buildings of around 190 rural primary health maintenance medical institutions were also basically repaired or built.

133. Development and introduction of common criteria for medical care quality and services, improvement of referral system, organisation of medical care according to the nature of pathology and degree of severity has continuously been made in the healthcare system, which has allowed to standardise the system and, regardless of the area, provide adequate medical care and service to women, as well as to the population. Aside from this, certain work has been done in training of the specialists of marzes and developing their professional skills. In the last five years, around 200 specialist have participated in studies conducted at the simulation centres of leading medical institutions of Moscow and Saint Petersburg.

134. Within the framework of the strategy for improving reproductive health “Maternity and Child State Certificate Programmes” still continued to be implemented during 2016–2019, thanks to which prenatal care and obstetric care of pregnant women were made available free of charge and it was possible to ensure the widespread – around 100% – inclusion of women in prenatal care and inpatient delivery [childbirth], regardless of the place of residence or social status, etc.

135. It was mentioned in “The State of World Population 2017” regular annual report of the UN Population Fund that “Since 2008, Armenia has almost doubled its maternity care allocations and introduced the Maternity State Certificates by providing free services to pregnant women. As a result, inequality for all income groups of pregnant women was greatly eliminated. In this respect, Armenia appeared in the leading positions in the world” (see at: http://www.unfpa.org/sites/default/files/pubpdf/UNFPA_PUB_2017_EN_SWOP.pdf).

136. The Ministry of Health, in cooperation with non-governmental organisations, has done some targeted work to raise the awareness of rural women and girls.

137. During 2016–2019, “UMCOR Armenia” Charitable Foundation implemented – within the framework of the Programme “Improving community health through awareness raising and medical care” – courses on reproductive health issues in 40 communities of marzes, particularly in villages of Armavir (18), Ararat (10), Aragatsotn (8), Kotayk (4), with participation of 834 healthcare and community volunteers. They transferred the received materials and knowledge to about 9500 women and girls. 2847 women from the above-mentioned marzes underwent a comprehensive professional clinical-laboratory and instrumental examination, in 70–80% of cases pathologies were detected, which underwent free further examination and treatment.

138. With regard to the organisation of medical care and health maintenance for women with disabilities, persons with disabilities are included in the list of socially disadvantaged and separate (special) groups of the population approved by Decision of the Government of Armenia No 318-N of 4 March 2004 “On medical care and services free of charge and on preferential terms guaranteed by the State” and enjoy the established privileges, including where in case of availability of relevant medical instructions, they are provided with free hospital care and services guaranteed by the State, special and unaffordable diagnostic examinations, dental care and services in accordance with the criteria for free medical care and services guaranteed by the State.

139. According to Decision of the Government N 1717-N of 23 November 2006 “On approving the lists of social groups of the population entitled to purchase medicines free of charge or on preferential terms and the lists of diseases”, persons with disabilities of I and II groups enjoy the privilege of obtaining medicines free of charge and persons with disabilities of III group enjoy the privilege of purchasing medicines at a 50% discount.

140. Upon Decision of the Government N 1048-N of 8 August 2019 the disability of one of the couples was included in the list of beneficiaries receiving assisted reproductive technologies for infertile couples.

141. According to the procedure in place, all types of outpatient polyclinic and inpatient care related to pregnancy and childbirth are guaranteed for all citizens, including people with disabilities. As regards inpatient examination and treatment of gynaecological diseases, women with disabilities enjoy the benefits provided by the Decision.

142. Depending on the nature of disability (deafness, muteness, blindness, movement restrictions, mental disorders), while providing medical care and services medical organisations implement individualized measures according to the needs of the disabled, involving relatives, guardians, accompanying persons or other specialists.

143. For the purpose of reducing abortions, improving reproductive health, ensuring the availability and accessibility of contraceptive methods a three-year Programme “Providing access to modern contraceptives for the prevention of unwanted pregnancies” was implemented during 2016–2018, within the framework of cooperation between the Ministry of Health and the UN Population Fund, which provided an opportunity of getting comprehensive information on the personnel potential, needs in the field of family planning in Armenia, as well as on the demand for modern contraceptives.

144. Courses were organised for 503 obstetrician-gynaecologists and family therapists. In parallel, large-scale activities have been carried out aimed at raising awareness about issues of reproductive health and family planning, encouraging the

use of modern contraceptive methods to prevent abortions among the population through organising community meetings with the population.

145. During 2015–2018, about 3500 women and men of reproductive age participated in community meetings/courses, and 2350 young women and men participated in interactive theatrical performances dedicated to reproductive health.

146. In order to increase the safety of abortion, medical abortion was introduced in all inpatient medical organisations of Armenia, as well as the curettage was replaced by vacuum-aspiration, due to which no case of maternal death, serious complications have been recorded as a result of abortions in recent years.

147. In accordance with Article 1 of the Law HO-134-N of 29 June 2016 “On making amendments to the Law “On human reproductive health and reproductive rights”, Article 10 of the Law HO-474-N of 11 December 2002 “On human reproductive health and reproductive rights” shall be amended with new edition, according to which: “1. Every woman has a right to termination of pregnancy (abortion). Termination of pregnancy (abortion) shall be done:

- Up to 12 weeks of gestation – upon the written application of the woman. In case of medical instructions, termination of pregnancy up to 12 weeks of gestation shall be done upon the written consent of the woman;
- From 12 to 22 weeks of gestation – exclusively in case of availability of medical (including in case of possibility of inheriting a disease based on sex) or social indications.

In any other case of medical or social indications by the doctor not provided for by the list adopted in a manner prescribed by part 8 of this Article, including sex-selective termination of 12 to 22-week pregnancy shall be prohibited”.

148. According to the Charter of the Healthcare and Labour Inspection Body approved by the Annex to Decision of the Prime Minister No 755-L of 11 July 2018, some of the tasks of the Healthcare and Labour Inspection Body are the risk management in the field of medical care and supervision over the compliance with the requirements of the laws and other regulatory legal acts of Armenia, as well as the execution of preventive measures in the field of medical care, and the objective is to ensure safety and compliance with the requirements of the national legislation in the field of healthcare, in cases and in a manner prescribed by law.

149. In order to eliminate the practice of sex-selective terminations of pregnancy and to ensure the compliance with the requirement for a prohibition on sex-selective terminations of pregnancy provided for by the Law “On reproductive health and reproductive rights”, the Inspection Body regularly carries out preventive activities, such as:

- Organising and conducting courses, seminars, discussions in order to raise awareness among economic entities and citizens;
- Carry out explanatory work with and provide consultation to economic entities.

150. There are no specific surveys conducted in Armenia that can prove the existing discrimination in the provision of healthcare services to women, especially those living with HIV. One of the reasons for the discriminatory treatment against people living with HIV in general is the insufficient level of awareness of people about the ways of HIV transmission and misconceptions yet circulating in the society about HIV/AIDS.

151. According to Order of the Minister of Health No 65-N of 18 October 2013, Human Immunodeficiency Virus/Acquired Immune Deficiency Syndrome (HIV/AIDS) is included in the list of diseases requiring free urgent medical care guaranteed by the

State for the population (for persons up to 18 and over 18 years old) and is provided free of charge for the entire population, including people with disabilities.

152. There is a significant progress in prevention of mother-to-child transmission of HIV. The mother-to-child transmission of HIV has been eliminated, as approved by the Global Validation Advisory Committee of the WHO in 2016 and Armenia was recognised as the 4th country in the world having eliminated mother-to-child transmission of HIV. During the UN General Assembly High-level Meeting on HIV/AIDS in 2016 Armenia has been awarded with a certificate by the Director General of the World Health Organisation.

153. Measures have been implemented aimed at raising the level of awareness of broad sections of the society on the issues of HIV infection.

154. Materials related to the issue are regularly posted on various electronic news sites and social networks, and TV programmes have been organised. Social advertisements dedicated to the propaganda of non-discriminatory treatment against people living with HIV have also been prepared and broadcast with participation of representatives of church, intellectuals, art and culture.

155. Believing it important to provide people with relevant information from school age, to develop an attitude in line with universal values of humanity and compassion, upon the relevant Decision of the Government, the course “Healthy lifestyle” has been introduced in the curricula of the upper grades of schools of general education, several sections whereof are devoted to sexual and reproductive health, sexually transmitted infections, and the consequences of abortions. One of the lectures is entirely devoted to HIV/AIDS and human rights, which covers prevention of sexually transmitted infections/HIV, safe sexual behaviour, the rights of people living with HIV under the national legislation, the importance of prohibition of stigma and discrimination against them in the effective response to the epidemic.

Sex-selective abortions

On implementation of the Committee's General Recommendation No. 29

156. With regard to the communication raised by the Committee in December 2019 following further actions taken regarding the implementation of the Law on Human Reproductive Health and Reproductive Rights on women's access to safe abortion and improving of the situation of the mandatory waiting period and counselling prescribed in the Law, Armenian Ministry of Health stand ready to inform the following: in 2020 activities were undertaken to make changes in the Law. It is planning to provide women who is going to apply for abortion with the possibility of selection of medical institution, where the abortion should be done, as well as to provide online registering possibility that was followed by 3-days waiting period before applying for abortion. With regard to the concern expressed by the Committee on results of implementation of the Law in 2016–2020, Armenian Ministry of Health informs that thanks to the sanctions implemented by the Law on Human Reproductive Health and Reproductive Rights and Code of Administrative Offences, as well as thanks to the large-scale propaganda, 100-120 abortion rate in 2016 has been reduced to 100-110 ratio. Statistical data, tendencies to regulate the boy/girl ratio of newborns tells about successful implementation of the Law. Implementation of the Law has been monitored and evaluated by the Health and Labor Inspectorate of Armenia. According to the information by the Ministry of Health there is no violations found by them.

157. Implementation of activities of the 2015–2017 Programme, as well as the 2020–2023 Programme on Preventing Sex-Selective Abortions, developed with the support of the UN Population Fund and approved by the Joint Order of the Minister of Health

and the Minister of Labour and Social Affairs continued, within the framework whereof large-scale public awareness campaigns were held in collaboration with state institutions, international organisations (UNFPA, “Save the Children”, “World Vision”, etc.), local non-governmental and community organisations.

158. Within the framework of public awareness raising events, a puppet show “NE’s travel” was organised in Gegharkunik, Armavir and Shirak marzes with high disproportion of gender among new-borns.

159. In 2018, a short video film on the causes and consequences of discriminative gender-based selection has been developed and posted on the websites of the Population Fund and the International Center for Human Development (hereinafter referred to as “ICHD”), as well as on the Facebook group named “Combating Gender-Biased Sex Selection in Armenia” moderated by the ICHD.

160. The Ministry of Health will continue to implement a comprehensive policy aimed at reducing disproportion of gender among new-borns.

161. More significant measures implemented with the UN Population Fund and International Center for Human Development in recent years, during 2016–2019, are:

(1) Establishment of Community of Practice (network for exchanging experience and knowledge) of “Local Participation and Non-Discrimination”:

In order to implement awareness-raising and campaign activities on preventing sex-selective abortions in marzes, working and initial meetings were held in all marzes of Armenia and in the city of Yerevan with the involvement of the representatives of territorial bodies of state administration, local self-government bodies, civil society institutions, community organisations, higher education institutions, media, religious organisations, police, as well as healthcare professionals, social workers, development specialists and community figures.

(2) Activities carried out through mass media:

(a) 2 public service announcements were developed and published on the following websites:

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

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

The broadcasting is carried out via the Internet, in cooperation with marz and central TV and radio companies of Armenia.

(b) 33 thematic programmes and talk shows were broadcast. According to the data of monitoring of TV programmes conducted by specialized organisations, the programmes were watched by about 333 000 people, within the interval of May 2015 and April 2016, 70% of which are women.

(3) Information, educational and communication materials were developed. 200 000 bookmarks and 250 posters were printed. The posters were posted in crowded places, in medical institutions. Bookmarks were distributed to citizens during the measures implemented within the framework of the programme.

(4) Discussions were organised on social networks on the prevention of gender-biased sex selection and sex-selective abortions.

162. As a result of complex measures implemented some positive trends have been recorded in the process of overcoming the issue of selective abortions. For example: prior to measures aimed at combating selective abortions the average indicator of

girl-boy ratio among those born during the period 2008–2012 was 100/115; in 2016 – 100/111.9; in 2017 – 100/109.8, while in 2018 it was 100/110.9; in 2019 it was 109.8.

Rural women

On implementation of the Committee's General Recommendation No. 31

163. A number of measures aimed at expanding the economic opportunities of women in the field of agriculture are envisaged in the 2019–2023 Strategy for Gender Policy Implementation and the Action Plan, in particular the measure of “expanding the proportion of women members of agricultural cooperatives and improving working conditions (maximal mechanisation of manual work)” is being implemented which is aimed at increasing the efficiency of the activities of women farmers engaged in animal husbandry, the introduction of new technologies in branches of agriculture with the involvement of women, and the dissemination of experience.

164. The Programme “Subsidising the interest rate of loans provided to the agricultural sector” is being implemented, as a result of which increase in the level of women’s employment in rural areas, targeted use of women’s opportunities, expansion of production capacities, increase of incomes are recorded.

165. In the process of activating gender commissions’ adjunct to Marzpetarans and improving the quality of works, the implementation of works aimed at the active involvement of rural women is emphasised, especially in the decision-making process at the local level.

166. In order to encourage women’s entrepreneurial initiative in the field of economic development of Armenia, to appreciate, popularise and support the achievements of women entrepreneurs in different branches of the economy, the “Best Female Entrepreneur” awards of the Prime Minister were held in 2016 and 2017 within the framework of the event “Support to Female Entrepreneurship”. The “Best Female Entrepreneur” award of the Prime Minister was presented in the following six nominations: “Best Female Employer”, “Best Female Innovator”, “Best Female Entrepreneur Brand”, “Best Young Female Entrepreneur”, “Best Start-up Female Entrepreneur” and “Best Exporting Female Entrepreneur”. As a result, about 24 female entrepreneurs operating in marzes and in the city of Yerevan received awards in the above-mentioned nominations.

167. Within the framework of support to entrepreneurship of start-up entrepreneurs implemented by Small and Medium-sized Enterprises, 531 start-up female entrepreneurs participated in courses conducted in all marzes of Armenia during 2016–2019.

168. To appreciate and encourage the work of successful women carrying out activities in the agro-food sector, to once again value the role of the Armenian woman in the economy, the Oxfam office in Armenia and Agricultural Alliance of Armenia have jointly organised the “Female Food Heroes” competition since 2011, which has been organised during 2017–2019 respectively under the following heads: “New approaches, new solutions in the field of food production”, “The role of women in agri-business is crucial” and “Successful cooperative – developing agriculture”, within the framework of which many women carrying out activities in the agro-food sector were awarded.

169. During 2016–2019, 286 female entrepreneurs participated in courses on the following topics: “Sales and Marketing”, “Hospitality Management”, “Digital Marketing”, “Food Safety and HACCP Principles”, “Hazard Analysis and Critical Control Points”, “Procurement, sorting, drying and packaging of vegetable raw materials”.

170. Within the framework of the Programme “Erasmus for Young Entrepreneurs”, 20 female entrepreneurs engaged in marketing, design, winemaking, IT and other fields participated in the exchange of entrepreneurial experience abroad.

171. Despite the abovementioned, taking into account the relatively lower level of female representation among start-up entrepreneurs, the Government is currently taking steps to promote female entrepreneurship, creating a basis for further increase of the level of female representation. In particular, a wide range of specific measures to promote female entrepreneurship, including measures for considering entrepreneurship as a core competency, training, mentor involving, capacity building and technical support to the formation of knowledge-based business ideas and more are envisaged within the framework of the 2020–2023 Strategy for Small and Medium-sized Enterprises Development.

Women, peace and security

On implementation of the Committee’s General Recommendation No. 33

172. The Armenian Government continues to focus on the issues of female refugees and displaced people. In the last years of the Soviet Union, from February 1988 more than half a million Armenians, about 400 000 of which emigrated to Armenia, fled their permanent settlements as a result of the violence against and massacres of the Armenian population of Azerbaijan. Later, as a result of the bombardment of border regions of Armenia by Azerbaijan and the occupation of Artsvashen settlement 72 thousand more internally displaced persons [IDPs] became homeless. The responsibility for addressing the urgent needs of more than half a million displaced people, as well as more than half a million people left homeless as a result of the earthquake in 1988 lied upon the newly independent Armenia. Naturally, women, children and the elderly needed more attention.

173. In the mid-1990s, it became clear that the voluntary repatriation of refugees to a country with a state policy of hatred and enmity towards Armenians was unrealistic. Under these conditions, the Government adopted the path of naturalisation. UNHCR considered the attempt to integrate refugees and grant them citizenship in Armenia as one of the best attempts for naturalisation of refugees in the world.

174. In April 2016 Azerbaijan provoked a new military aggression against Artsakh and in the late September 2020 launched a pre-planned offensive along the entire Line of Contact with Artsakh, using UAVs, cluster and phosphorous munitions prohibited by International Humanitarian Law. The displaced residents of Artsakh took refuge in Armenia, most of them were women and children.

175. The Government has repeatedly brought the attention of the international community to the vulnerability of the population living in conflict zones, calling for their protection under the principles of international law, first and foremost taking into account the principle of universal human rights. The implementation of humanitarian programmes, the provision of urgent humanitarian assistance to the population in crisis situations must be implemented regardless of any circumstance, including the status of the territory. This is even more relevant in today’s context of humanity uniting in the fight against COVID-19 pandemic.

176. Despite its limited financial capacity, Armenia continues to be a refugee accepting country, providing asylum to people affected by war and internal unrest at various times. Armenia has accepted refugees from Iraq and Syria in different years.

177. Armenia is ready to continue works aimed at creating and improving a system that will enable to fully ensure women’s rights and equal opportunities for women and men, based on the Constitution, international treaties, the Law “On ensuring equal rights and equal opportunities for women and men” and other legal acts taking into

account the requirements of UN Security Council Resolutions 1325, 1820, 1888, 1889, 1960, 2106, 2122 and the international best practice.

178. On 28 February 2019, Armenia adopted the first National Plan on the implementation of the provisions of UN Security Council Resolution No. 1325, developed by an inter-agency commission. Works on the implementation of the provisions of the Plan are ongoing in close cooperation with NGOs and international organisations. Due to the localisation of the provisions of the UN Security Council Resolution, the National Plan of Armenia in this field focuses, among other issues, on the issues of economic and social development of women in the border communities of Armenia, the issues of ensuring special protection for displaced women and girls.

179. On 23 April 2020, a commission for implementation and monitoring of the National Action Plan on Resolution No. 1325 on women, peace and security was established by the decision of the Prime Minister, the activities whereof are managed by the Head of the Human Rights and Humanitarian Issues Department of the Ministry of Foreign Affairs. Taking into account the need to clarify the provisions of Resolution No. 1325 and to present the priorities of the National Plan of Armenia thereon, on the initiative of the Ministry of Foreign Affairs, an information booklet clarifying the provisions of the National Plan and presenting steps implemented by Armenia in this field was developed in Armenian and English (https://www.mfa.am/filemanager/un_brochure/brochure_eng_WEB.pdf).

180. Since 2014, the Ministry of Defence and the United Nations Population Fund (UNFPA) in Armenia have been signing an annual cooperation programme, which focuses on promoting inclusion of women in the armed forces, encouraging exercise of their rights through awareness raising and education, ensuring equal opportunities.

181. The measures implemented within the framework of the Cooperation Programme of the Ministry of Defence and the UN Population Fund in 2016–2019 can be divided into several directions:

- Awareness raising events

182. During the mentioned period, awareness raising events, discussions and meetings were regularly held on the importance of women's involvement in the armed forces, women's rights, increasing the role of female military servicemen, on the resolutions of the agenda "Women, Peace and Safety" of the UN Security Council both among military servicemen of various subdivisions of armed forces, including subdivisions carrying out peacekeeping missions, the employees of the Military Police of the Ministry of Defence, and the youth through involving representatives of non-governmental organisations dealing with women's rights issues, independent experts.

- Educational programmes, training courses

183. Within the framework of the annual programmes of cooperation with the UN Population Fund in Armenia, training courses are regularly conducted for the cadets of higher military educational institutions and the military servicemen of the peacekeeping brigade of the Ministry of Defence. The main objective of courses is to provide the participants with knowledge and skills both on the rights of female military servicemen and the mechanisms for their protection, and the impact of armed conflicts against women, prevention of gender-based violence against women, prevention and resolution of armed conflicts, as well as involvement of women in peace building process.

184. For the fulfilment of the requirement of paragraph 30 of the "Action Plan for 2017–2019 deriving from the National Strategy for Human Rights" approved by Decision of the Government No 483-N of 4 May 2018, the Ministry of Defence has

develop the subject “Human Rights in the Armed Forces” and introduced it in the educational programmes of military educational institutions. The curricula of this subject includes also modules related to women’s right and the ensuring of equal opportunities. The mentioned modules are also included in the “Human Rights in the Armed Forces” distance learning course, the materials of which have been posted on the official website of the Ministry of Defence, and currently works are being done for improving them and presenting them in a more effective format on the relevant website of distance learning.

- Research, studies, publications

185. A number of studies have been conducted on the perceptions of military service by women, as well as the character and role of female military servicemen among military servicemen, as well as different layers of society, the results of which were summarised in the publication of “The perspective for expanding opportunities for women’s involvement and participation in the defence sector.” Within the framework of the programme, the book “The Woman and the Army” has also been published, which presents the current issues related to the involvement of women in the armed forces and women’s participation in the defence of the state, from military-civil, sociological, social-cultural points of view. Based on the summary of results of the research conducted on the mentioned issue, suggestions are regularly submitted to the Minister of Defence.

- Assessing the needs of female military servicemen and wives of military servicemen

186. Within the framework of the cooperation programme, an assessment of the needs of female military servicemen and wives of military servicemen was carried out in several stages. The main purpose of the needs assessment was to identify the objective and subjective obstacles that women face during their professional military education, joining military service, and career advancement.

187. In order to study the problems of the wives of military servicemen and the reasons hindering their rapid integration into the military environment, studies were conducted in the families of military servicemen and in military settlements (especially located in the marzes) and recommendations were submitted based on them.

188. A needs assessment was conducted among female military servicemen with children of tender years to establish agency centres for child care as part of the commitment to eliminate circumstances hindering the service and advancement of female military servicemen.

189. For the fulfilment of the requirements of the Law of 20 May 2013 “On ensuring equal rights and equal opportunities for women and men”, UN Security Council Resolution No. 1325, as well as paragraph 1.4.1 of the Armenia-NATO Individual Partnership Action Plan (IPAP), in order to guarantee the protection of human rights, the ensuring of equal opportunities, the exclusion of cases of discrimination and professional advancement in the system of the Ministry of Defence, the “Guideline and the action plan to protect women’s rights and to ensure equal opportunities in the defence system of Armenia” has been approved upon the Order of the Minister of Defence No 128 of 16 February 2016. The mentioned Guideline was developed jointly with the UN Population Fund in Armenia and aims to create effective conditions for more effective involvement of women in the defence system of Armenia and for the protection of their rights, by promoting the implementation of state policy for ensuring equal rights and equal opportunities for women and men in the defence system and other related institutes. The Guideline sets out the conditions necessary for the exercise of equal rights, freedoms and opportunities for women and

men and to prevent all forms of discrimination and any type of gender-based violence. In 2017, within the framework of measures aimed at promoting the involvement of women in different subdivisions of the armed forces, a concept paper has been developed, which includes also the baseline demographic data on the number of women involved in the armed forces, according to distribution of military bases, and other information.

190. Based on this study, in the same year, the Pilot Programme and the Action Schedule for the Formation of Female Platoon in three military units of the Armed Forces was launched. Within the framework of the mentioned programme, in 2017, a female peacekeeping platoon has been formed in the Peacekeeping Forces of the Ministry of Defence.

191. Currently, the military servicemen of the Female peacekeeping platoon, within the composition of Armenian peacekeeping contingent, are involved in the peacekeeping missions of NATO's Kosovo Force (Kosovo, KFOR) and "Resolute Support" (Islamic Republic of Afghanistan, "Resolute Support"), as well as in the UNIFIL peacekeeping mission ("United Nations Interim Force in Lebanon") carried out under the auspices of the UN in Lebanon. Armenia shares the United Nations vision to enhance the participation of women in uniform in peacekeeping missions and is ready to increase the number of women in Armenian contingents involved in peacekeeping missions carried out under the auspices of the UN.

Disadvantaged groups of women (Women in disaster affected areas)

On implementation of the Committee's General Recommendation No. 35

192. In November 2019, the Government approved the programme of providing housing to homeless families deported from Azerbaijan, thus solving the three-decade-long housing problems of refugees. The programme envisages:

- To establish the conditions for issuing housing purchase certificates;
- To carry out issuance of certificates by concluding contracts with families deported from Azerbaijan;
- To set the term of obtaining an apartment (dwelling house) through a certificate for 1 year, without the possibility of extension.

193. At the same time, considering the importance to solve the housing problem of families forcibly displaced from Azerbaijan in 1988–1992, given the large amount of funds required, it was considered expedient to solve the housing problem of families deported from Azerbaijan not within the framework of a common programme, but to separate it according to priority and stages, developing relevant separate sub-programmes, the solution of which is more realistic.

194. The problems of the settlements affected by the earthquake continue to remain in the centre of attention of the Government, in particular, in the field of urban development in Shirak marz, in 2019, over AMD 26,745 billion of capital investments (20.18 billion in 2018) were made from the State Budget and other financing sources, including in housing, water supply, road construction and other fields. (See Annex 2.)

195. In May–June 2019, the Ministry of Labour and Social Affairs carried out 10 marz visits, which included also border and disaster zone communities. Within the framework of marz visits, the main problems of women, including women with disabilities, were mapped, the framework areas of concern of women living in marzes and especially those living in border and disaster zone communities, belonging to different vulnerable groups, were separated, the programmes and measures being implemented by the Ministry were presented.

196. It has been planned to conduct an appropriate needs assessment to have social-economic situation characteristics – conditioned by conflicts or other circumstances – of women living in border and disaster zone communities.

197. The Action Plan envisaged by Annex 1 approved by Decision of the Government N 650-L of 16 May 2019 envisages (paragraph 16.4) the action of “Introduction of social protection system: emergency, disaster and concussions response, resistance mechanisms”, within the framework whereof a number of works related to the issue are also being carried out.

198. In 2019, the Ministry of Emergency Situations developed the draft Law “On disaster risk management and protection of population”, which provides an opportunity to address social protection issues in disaster conditions, paying special attention to the most vulnerable group of the population (pregnant women, breastfeeding mothers, children, the elderly, persons with disabilities). According to Article 14 of the Law “On medical care and services of the population”, people affected by emergencies are provided with medical care and services free of charge in a manner guaranteed by the State.

199. In cooperation with the National Platform for Disaster Risk Reduction Fund (ARNAP) and the UN Population Fund in Armenia courses on “The minimum initial service package for reproductive health in emergency situations” were conducted during 2016–2019 in four marzes of Armenia: Syunik, Tavush, Armavir, Shirak and were attended by 508 fire-rescuers and 520 medical workers, as a result of which the participants acquired relevant knowledge and skills about the effective use of the minimum initial service package aimed at preservation of reproductive health, in particular in emergency situations, the provision of assistance to women giving birth during disaster, the prevention of sexually transmitted infections/HIV, sexual violence, as well as on the organisation and provision of medical care in these cases.

Persons with disabilities

On implementation of the Committee’s General Recommendation No. 37

200. After the Velvet Revolution taken place in Armenia in 2018, the draft laws regulating the field of disability are being revised and amended, stipulating principles based on human rights. For the purpose of ensuring favourable conditions for the exercise of rights and freedoms of persons with disabilities, ensuring their equal participation in public life and effective social inclusion, the draft Law “On the rights of persons with disabilities” has been developed with a new edition and is currently in circulation.

201. The adoption of the Law will create the necessary legal grounds for the protection of the rights of persons with disabilities, for ensuring equal opportunities and affordable conditions for them, for ensuring the exercise of their rights in all spheres of public life, excluding discrimination on the ground of disability.

202. Based on fundamental human rights, the Law aims to introduce a system for assessing the functionality of persons with disabilities and to establish legal grounds for the provision of services based on the assessment of the functionality of persons with disabilities.

203. Every year, within the framework of the State Budget, the annual programme for social inclusion of persons with disabilities, as well as the measures ensuring its implementation are developed. The annual programme includes the annual events, programmes and actions implemented in the field of protection of the rights of persons with disabilities during the given budget year.

204. As of 31 December 2019, the number of persons with disabilities record-registered in the Republican Database of Persons with Disabilities is 192 013, of which 92 076 are women.

205. State support is provided to NGOs to provide social-rehabilitation services to persons with disabilities in day care centres. In 2019, the organisations providing social-rehabilitation services in day care centres were selected on a competitive basis through a grant agreement. In 2019, about 600 children with disabilities and with difficult living conditions in day care centres were provided with social-psychological services according to their assessed needs. Day care and social-rehabilitation services are also provided yearly to about 190 adolescents and young people with disabilities (including those with mental health problems and autism). The above-mentioned services help children and people with disabilities to develop and realise their abilities, skills and opportunities, promote their full participation in community life, living in family, as well as prevent them from entering round-the-clock care facilities.

206. State support provided to day care services has been expanded since 2020, which is a significant step towards promoting a policy of transformation (deinstitutionalisation) of services and promotes the independent life of persons with disabilities, the exercise of the right to live in family and in community. In 2020, a grant agreement was concluded with 12 non-governmental organisations (instead of 3 of the previous year) to provide care and social-rehabilitation services. The geography of service delivery has also expanded.

207. As of 1 April 2020, 2463 unemployed persons with disabilities are record-registered in the territorial centres of the State Employment Agency, of which 1 032 are women. In 2018, 234 persons with disabilities were employed, 38 of which as a result of state employment regulation programmes. 126 persons with disabilities are included in state employment regulation programmes. In the fields of healthcare, employment, education and in social spheres, targeted medical, vocational and social rehabilitation programmes are implemented to ensure the independent living conditions for persons with disabilities, the development of physical, mental, social and professional skills and their inclusion and participation in all spheres of life.

208. Within the framework of measures envisaged by the Gender Strategy, training programmes aimed at protection of sexual and reproductive rights of women with disabilities are conducted for professionals of organisations providing healthcare services to women, also awareness-raising activities are carried out among employers on the main problems of women with disabilities; these activities are aimed at the protection of labour rights of women with disabilities and the elimination of stereotypes about them among the employers.

209. The Ministry of Labour and Social Affairs, as an authorised body, carries out centralised record-registration of cases of domestic violence in accordance with the procedure established by Decision of the Government N 1381-N of 10 October 2019 “On establishing the procedure for centralised record-registration of cases of domestic violence”. According to that Decision, the first comprehensive record-registration data will be summarised starting from 2020. The Decision also envisages collecting statistical data on persons with disabilities.

Women asylum-seekers and returnee Armenian migrant women

On implementation of the Committee’s General Recommendation No. 39

210. The Government approved the “State programme on primary assistance for reintegration of citizens returning to Armenia (including forced returns)” by Decision N 336-L of 19 March 2020. The programme envisages provision of primary assistance

to RA citizens returning to Armenia (including women) to ensure their full and sustainable reintegration in the future. The programme consists of two components:

(a) Provision of information support and referral of relevant needs (including in relation with ensuring income generating opportunities) for all returnees;

(b) Provision of temporary accommodation only to forced returnees. The second component of the programme envisages short-term compensation for renting an apartment for forced returnees to Armenia, which will be provided for six months in the amount of AMD 60,000. In the selection of beneficiaries, priority shall be given to the following vulnerable groups:

- Large families (with more than four children);
- The elderly (65 and more years old);
- Persons with disabilities;
- Persons in need of urgent medical care;
- Children having returned without being accompanied and left without parental care in Armenia.

211. According to Annex N14 to Decision of the Government N 534-N of 17 April 2014 ensuring the implementation of the Law “On employment”, refugees and returned migrants are recognised as uncompetitive in the labour market and are included in the annual state employment assistance programmes in the order of priority; with regard to it relatively positive results have been recorded in recent years.

212. In the territorial employment centres of the State Employment Agency (SEA) of the Ministry of Labour and Social Affairs, migrants, including returned female migrants, are provided with consultation on the procedure for record-registration in employment centres, on vacancies, the annual state employment programme, which contributes to the increase of the opportunities of ensuring income for them.

213. According to data of the first four months of 2020 of migration resource centres operating within the composition of the SEA, migrant resource centres provided appropriate consulting assistance to 38 returned migrant women during the mentioned period.

214. In 2020, the European Union, in cooperation with the Government, will launch a new Programme “Local Empowerment of Actors for Development (LEAD)”, in the development process of which the Migration Service of the Ministry of Territorial Administration and Infrastructures has also participated. The programme provides an opportunity for migrants, including returnees, as well as migrant workers and their family members to start small or medium-sized business in their communities.

215. The objective of the programme is to direct the economic and human potential of migrants to the social-economic development of the country, to create a favourable environment for investing in Armenia the financial resources accumulated in the migrant host country, to support migrant workers and returnees to realise their entrepreneurial/business ideas, thus ensuring the effective and successful return of Armenian migrants to their homeland.

216. The format of the programme is as follows: the migrants and their family members, with their financial resources accumulated in the host country and the equitable funding received from the donor organisation make an investment in Armenia to implement their own entrepreneurial and business plans.

217. The Migration Service fully implements the procedures defined by Decision of the Government N 1440-N of 19 November 2009 “On approving the procedure for

placing asylum seekers in temporary reception centres and providing them with subsistence means”, in particular:

- Asylum seekers who state in their asylum application (or separate application) that they need accommodation, are placed in the temporary reception centre (“The Center”) operating under the Migration Service of the Ministry of Territorial Administration and Infrastructures based on vouchers granted by the Migration Service. In the Center they are provided with necessary subsistence means: food (three times a day), linen, personal hygiene items, where necessary, clothes and shoes at the expense of the State Budget.
- When allocating a room in the Center for asylum seekers in Armenia, preference is given to women asylum seekers and their children. In case there is a free room, they are accommodated in the Center in the order of priority.
- When placing asylum seekers in the Center, their gender is also taken into account along with a number of other factors (for example, number of family members, age). Persons of different gender who do not belong to the same family cannot be accommodated in the same room.
- Asylum seekers reside in the Center until a final decision is made on their asylum request (including the conclusion of the process of appealing the decision on refusal). Asylum seekers placed in the Center are exempted from utility bills.

Women from ethnic minorities

On implementation of the Committee’s General Recommendation No. 41

218. The package of draft Laws “On national minorities” and “On ensuring equality” and related laws, which is undergoing internal procedures, is aimed at regulating the relations pertaining to the exercise of rights of persons belonging to national minorities, including women. The package of drafts enshrines rights, such as the right to education, freedom of thought, conscience and religion, celebration of national and religious holidays, access to mass media, naming of settlements, streets, public facilities in the language of the national minority, establishment of organisations, representation in the National Assembly, etc. Mechanisms for exercising these rights are envisaged.

219. The Women’s Fund Armenia implements programmes for the empowerment of women belonging to ethnic minorities. Noticeable are works aimed at solving the problems of women living in remote and rural areas (see in details at: <http://www.fao.org/3/a-i6737o.pdf>).

220. According to Article 4 of the Law “On medical care and services of the population”, everyone, regardless of nationality, race, sex, language, religion, age, health status, political or other views, social origin, property or other status, has the right to receive medical care and services in Armenia. Consequently, regardless of nationality and ethnicity, as citizens, women belonging to national minorities enjoy the same rights and privileges as the Armenian population.

221. Targeted examinations and treatment are organised for women belonging to national and ethnic minorities, in cooperation with non-governmental organisations.

222. In 2017–2018, the “Hippocrates” Greek Charitable Foundation carried out a professional clinical-laboratory and instrumental complex examination of 1613 Greek women belonging to other ethnic minorities in 9 rural communities of Lori marz having Greek population. It should be noted that in 50–60% of cases pathologies were detected, which underwent free further examination and treatment.

223. In cooperation with “UMCOR Armenia” NGO, in 2017–2019, professional clinical-laboratory and instrumental complex examination of 520 Yezidi and 157 Assyrian women has been carried out in rural Yezidi communities (Baghramyan, Frik, Nor Artages, Shamiram) of Armavir marz, as well as rural Assyrian communities (Veri Dvin, Dmitrov) of Ararat marz. Treatment of detected pathologies was carried out free of charge by those organisations.

Older women

On implementation of the Committee’s General Recommendation No. 43

224. The legal acts in force regulating the process of providing care services for the elderly do not provide for separate provisions on equality of women and men, prevention of violence and prohibition of discrimination against women. However, these issues are enshrined both in the Constitution, and in other legal acts of general nature (Legal equality of women and men, domestic violence, etc.). It should be noted that in practice in all organisations (state or non-state) delivering care services all services are provided to the beneficiaries equally, regardless of sex, nationality, disability, etc., and no gender-based discrimination has been reported in these organisations up to nowadays.

225. According to the preliminary data of the State Statistical Committee, as of 1 January 2020, the de jure population of Armenia was 2 959 694, of which 52.8% were women (Annex 3 provides information on people receiving care services in institutions of social protection of the population; the information is presented in accordance with the types of services and the sex of beneficiaries).

226. During 2016–2017 the dental care of retired women was provided free of charge by the State.

227. Upon Decision of the Government No 36 of 24 August 2017 “On approving the 2018–2018 programme of measures for carrying out cataract surgeries for people involved in separate groups of the population in order to prevent blindness” surgical treatment of cataracts among the older women was carried out in 2017–2018. The charity programme “Bringing Sight to Armenian Eyes” is currently underway, which provides surgical ophthalmic care to women with cataracts living in rural communities via “mobile clinic”.

LBTI women

On implementation of the Committee’s General Recommendation No. 45

228. The Ministry of Justice has developed and submitted for public discussion on 14 August 2019 the draft Law “On making amendments to the Criminal Code of Armenia” (“the Draft”), which prescribes criminal liability for public calls to use violence dangerous to the life or health of a person, for publicly justifying violence dangerous to the life or health of a person or for propaganda of such violence. According to the substantiations of the Draft, criminal measures combating “hate speech” should be primarily aimed at protecting the life and health of persons, as public calls for violence dangerous to the life or health of a person, for publicly justifying violence dangerous to the life or health of a person or for propaganda of such violence are extreme manifestations of “hate speech”.

229. The Draft has passed to the stage of public discussion on the “e-draft.am” unified website for publication of draft legal acts. The draft of the new Criminal Code is at the stage of finalisation by the Ministry of Justice.

230. The first step in this direction can be considered the definition of “incitement to discrimination” in the Law “On ensuring legal equality”.

231. The National Assembly plans to discuss the draft legal act aimed at criminalising calls for violence being developed by the Ministry of Justice. It is important to also emphasise that the “My Step” Alliance, which is currently in power, referred in detail – in its election programme – to the conceptual provisions on human rights, including legal equality between women and men, noting in particular the following:

- “My Step” Alliance will continue to make serious efforts to achieve the establishment of new social, political, legal, domestic relations of the citizens of Armenia based on the imperative of equality of all people before the law, full protection and applicability of human rights, legal equality of women and men”;
- “Laws will become the core for the formation of new traditions of regulating personal, group and public relations”;
- “We reject violence as a way of resolving internal, personal issues”.

232. The policy of Armenia towards LGBTI women is also implemented on the basis of the principles of respect for, equality of human rights and prohibition of discrimination.

Marriage and family relations

On implementation of the Committee’s General Recommendation No. 47

233. The Statistical Committee publishes statistical information on the marriage of 16–19 year olds according to different characteristics, based on the database of administrative statistical data of the online register of civil status acts of the Ministry of Justice. The data source allows calculating on demand also the indicators of marriage of 16–18 year olds by nationality. The information in question is published annually in the Demographic Handbook in Armenian and English, which is available on the website of the Statistical Committee: https://www.armstat.am/file/article/_2018_6.pdf (pages 117–118).

234. According to the amendments made to the Family Code in 2013, “Voluntary mutual consent of the man and the woman getting married, as well as their attainment of the age of 18 are required for concluding a marriage, except for cases prescribed by law. A person may also get married at the age of 17, where there exists the consent of his or her parents, adopters or curator. A person may also get married at the age of 16, where there exists the consent of his or her parents, adopters or curator, and the other person getting married is at least 18 years of age.”

235. Legal regulations aimed at equality between women and men are defined by the Constitution, the Family Code and other legal acts. In particular:

236. According to Article 30 of the Constitution women and men shall enjoy legal equality.

237. Article 35 of the Constitution guarantees that a woman and a man are entitled to equal rights as to marriage, during marriage and at its dissolution.

- In accordance with Article 1 of the Family Code women and men enjoy equal rights as to marriage, during marriage and at its dissolution. Legal regulation of the family relations is carried out according to the principles of voluntariness of the marriage union of a man and a woman, equality of rights of spouses in family, resolution of family matters by mutual consent, care of their well-being, ensuring primary protection of the rights and interests of minor family members and those without capacity to work.
- Article 24 of the Code defines the legal equality of spouses in the family, according to which:

- Each of the spouses shall be free to choose employment, occupation, profession, place of residence.
- Spouses shall jointly resolve matters related to maternity, paternity, upbringing and education of children, as well as other issues of family life, based on the principle of legal equality of spouses.
- In the family spouses shall be obliged to build their relations based on mutual help and respect, contribute to the strengthening of the family, take care of the well-being and development of their children.

238. According to Article 49 of the Code parents shall have equal rights and bear equal responsibilities towards their children (parental rights).

239. According to the Law “On prevention of violence in the family, protection of persons having been subjected to violence in the family and restoration of solidarity in family”, the violent act of physical, sexual, physiological or economic nature, as well as ignorance between the members of the family as prescribed by the same Law, shall be considered as violence in the family.

240. Economic violence envisaged by the Law shall be depriving the person of necessary means of subsistence (food, clothing, accommodation, medicine), unlawfully restricting the rights of the person to dispose of, possess and use the property belonging thereto under the right of ownership or the right of common ownership, restricting the rights of the person to freedom to receive education or to choose employment with a view to forcing the person into material dependence or dominating over the person.

Beijing Declaration and Platform for Action

On implementation of the Committee’s General Recommendation No. 49

241. As a Co-Chair of the Commission on the Status of Women for 64th and 65th sessions of the UN and as a newly elected member of the UN Human Rights Council, Armenia has reaffirmed its commitment to strengthening the agenda for gender equality at the national and international levels. In line with its international obligations, Armenia has taken steps to promote gender equality and prevent violence against women through legislative and political reforms.

242. Armenia has prepared National Review dedicated to the 25th anniversary of the Beijing Declaration and Platform for Action, detailing the implementation of the provisions of this important document. The report is available at the following website: https://www.unece.org/fileadmin/DAM/Gender/Beijing_20/Armenia.pdf.

243. Based on the provisions of the Beijing Declaration and Platform for Action, in 2019, the Government has adopted a comprehensive Action Plan and Gender Strategy for the next five years. These documents are intended to encourage the representation of women at all levels of power in decision-making process. The Government is currently working on the introduction of national mechanisms ensuring gender equality and the development of existing mechanisms, one of which was the reorganisation of the Council on Women’s Issues, which will operate with greater involvement of the civil society. Recently, Armenia has also made progress in the national index of Gender Gap Index, which is reflected in four main areas: economy, politics, education and healthcare.

244. As of 2019–2020, the Government is focusing on the establishment of support centres in all marzes of Armenia, the activities whereof will be aimed at supporting victims of domestic violence. The Government has adopted a Procedure for providing financial assistance to victims of domestic violence. Two shelters have received financial assistance from the State Budget.

245. In October 2019, the Government established a centralised information register of victims of domestic violence, which allows to have centralised, comprehensive and complete information on cases of domestic violence across the country.

246. As we have mentioned, in January 2018, Armenia signed the Council of Europe Convention on Preventing and Combating Violence against Women and Domestic Violence. The Ministry of Justice initiated the ratification thereof in line with the provisions of the Law “On international Treaties”.

247. Currently activities are implemented to raise public awareness of the provisions of the Convention.

248. Professional involvement of women is one of the components of IT sector of Armenia. According to a survey conducted by the Enterprise Incubator Foundation, a leading organisation in this field in Armenia and the collected information, in 2018–2019, the involvement of women and girls in IT sector of Armenia was 37%. With this indicator, Armenia ranks fourth in the world.

249. During the last four years (2016–2019), the number of women and girls who teach and train in higher education institutions of the fields of science, technologies and scientific research has increased fivefold.

250. At the same time, in parallel with all the work being done, there are still a number of restrictions on women’s empowerment and gender equality, such as the prevailing negative gender stereotypes and the traditional practice that harm women and that are still present in the society. *De jure* equality does not yet lead to *de facto* equality and in key areas of life women are still in unfavourable conditions compared to men. This fact makes us to take further steps in this direction. Cooperation with the UN, and in particular the CEDAW Committee, is and will be an important factor for Armenia to advance, through joint efforts, the national, regional and global agendas for gender equality.

2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development

On implementation of the Committee’s General Recommendation No. 50

251. The Government considers the implementation of the UN Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs) as one of the most important tools for implementing comprehensive internal reforms launched in Armenia. Since 2015, the country has actively carried out works aimed at the establishment of infrastructures necessary for the implementation of the SDGs within the institutional and systematic approach towards the implementation of the SDGs: National Council of Sustainable Development under the Prime Minister, SDG Nationalisation Inter-agency task force, Armenia National SDG Innovation Lab – an innovative platform which will support the implementation of the UN SDGs in the country. This is the first in a kind innovative model in the world where the State and the UN are joining their efforts to establish a joint platform for supporting the acceleration and implementation of the SDGs in the country. In the process of implementing the SDGs in Armenia, the country actively and successfully cooperates with our international partners, the United Nations, first and foremost (MAPS Mission, Armenia National SDG Innovation Lab, UN Global Pulse), as well as with a wide scope of international development organisations, leading technology and innovation centres across the world (Stanford University Changes Lab, Columbia University SIPA, etc.) in order to attract the best practice and methodologies, as well as new and innovative tools of financing the implementation of the SDGs.

252. At the UN High-level Political Forum on Sustainable Development held in New York on 17 July 2018, First Deputy Prime Minister Ararat Mirzoyan submitted the first Voluntary National Review (VNR) summarising the progress of implementation

of the Agenda for Sustainable Development and the goals and targets deriving therefrom. The Review considered the concept of national strategy, including sectoral strategies and policies, as well as its connection with the SDGs, in particular the involvement of three pillars of sustainable development – economic, social, and environmental. Main conclusions of the Voluntary National Review with regard to the realisation of the SDGs in Armenia are analysed in detail, including the sectors where there is a progress, sectors of concern, examples of successful practice, innovations and solution opportunities.

253. The process of nationalisation of the UN Sustainable Development Goals has launched during which active involvement and continuous work of both the UNDP and relevant state bodies of Armenia, in particular, the Ministry of Justice, Staff to the Human Rights Defender and the National Statistical Service are envisaged. SDG 16 has been elected as an initial target within the framework of the programme implemented for the purpose of ensuring the process of nationalisation of the UN Sustainable Development Goals.

254. On 10 July 2020, during the High-level Political Forum conducted in online format under the auspices of the UN Economic and Social Council, Armenia presented the second Voluntary National Report on implementation of the UN Sustainable Development Goals. This year the Forum was held under the head “Accelerated action and transformative pathways: realising the decade of action and delivery for sustainable development”.

Dissemination

On implementation of the Committee’s General Recommendation No. 51

255. Following the approval of the General Recommendations issued in the Document of the Committee No [CEDAW/C/ARM/CO/5-6](#) of 16 March 2016, the General Recommendations issued to Armenia have been translated and provided to all interested institutions in accordance with the established practice.

Technical assistance

On implementation of the Committee’s General Recommendation No. 52

256. For years, Armenia has adopted a policy of directing the implementation of international obligations to address development issues, including the implementation of the provisions of the Convention on the Elimination of All Forms of Discrimination against Women.

Ratification of other treaties

On implementation of the Committee’s General Recommendation No. 53

257. On 23 September 2013, Armenia signed the Convention on the Protection of the Rights of All Migrant Workers and Members of Their Families. It is currently undergoing a domestic ratification process.