



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

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

**Consideration of reports submitted by States parties under
article 18 of the Convention**

Fifth periodic report of States parties due in 2016

Turkmenistan*


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1. Turkmenistan confirmed its strong commitment to gender equality and the advancement of women by acceding to the United Nations Convention on the Elimination of All Forms of Discrimination against Women in 1996 and to the Optional Protocol thereto in 2009.
2. In 2006, Turkmenistan submitted its combined initial and second periodic reports, and in 2012, its combined third and fourth periodic reports on implementation of the provisions of the Convention.
3. The present report is the fifth periodic report of Turkmenistan on the implementation of the Convention on the Elimination of All Forms of Discrimination against Women. The report was prepared in accordance with the compilation of guidelines on the form and content of reports submitted by States parties to the international human rights treaties ([HRI/GEN/2/Rev.1/Add.2](#)), which were drawn up by the Committee on the Elimination of Discrimination against Women, and it covers the period from 2012 to 2016.
4. The report contains information on key legislative, judicial, administrative and other measures taken during the reporting period that are of direct relevance to the provisions of the Convention. The report focuses on the Committee's comments and recommendations in the context of the latest concluding comments of 2012 and provides information on measures taken to implement them. In the preparation of the present report, due consideration was also given to the general recommendations of the Committee on the Elimination of Discrimination against Women.

I. Introduction

5. Turkmenistan has maintained, since the early years of its independence, an active gender policy aimed at strengthening the principles of the equal participation of women in all spheres of social and political life. The status of women in Turkmenistan is governed by the priority guidelines for the State's policy in that regard, the purpose of which is to implement the principle of equal rights and freedoms and equal opportunities for men and women in accordance with the Constitution of Turkmenistan and the norms of international law.
6. As an active member of the world community, Turkmenistan has acceded to the main international conventions in the field of human rights and to the treaties, agreements and instruments approved by the Beijing Platform for Action and the United Nations Millennium Declaration of 2000, and is committed to the goals and objectives known as the Millennium Development Goals (MDGs). It should be noted that Turkmenistan has achieved great progress in almost all of the Goals and targets of the MDGs.
7. Turkmenistan cooperates fully with the United Nations and is taking concrete steps to implement the key objectives of the global agenda. The Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs) were adopted at the United Nations Summit on Sustainable Development in September 2015. In his speech at that high-level meeting, the President of Turkmenistan, Gurbanguly Berdimuhamedov, emphasized that Turkmenistan fully supports that document and presented a number of initiatives aimed at unifying international efforts to implement the objectives of the post-2015 development agenda. Turkmenistan became one of the first countries in

the world to begin consultations aimed at adapting the Sustainable Development Goals. Thus, in a first phase, a significant portion of the SDG indicators were adapted. In the ongoing second phase, they are now being integrated into the Presidential Programme for the period 2017-2021, as well as into various sectoral plans and strategies.

8. In September 2016 the Programme based on the seventeen SDGs adopted by the United Nations, along with its list of relevant national-level targets and a set of indicators, was adopted by Turkmenistan as a guide for the development of policies for the period up to 2030. The third stage involves the development of a measurement system for assessing progress in implementing the Goals and targets.

9. Turkmenistan has participated in the global periodic review processes and submitted a report on its progress with respect to its international obligations in the field of development. It has also participated in the universal periodic review process. Actions to meet those commitments found their expression in the significant achievements of the country on various socioeconomic indicators, including those related to the advancement of women.

10. Evidence of that can be seen in the fundamental reforms being carried out by President Gurbanguly Berdimuhamedov in all spheres of social and political life. Systemic reforms of various aspects of the life of our society have been undertaken in order to create the necessary conditions for a decent life for all citizens of Turkmenistan.

11. The Government has been systematically implementing measures to promote gender equality. Achieving gender equality is an integral part of the State policy of Turkmenistan, which involves consistently improving national legislation, designing and implementing programmes aimed at the active involvement of women in the activities of State executive and administrative bodies, and increasing their level of education and training.

12. The Government of Turkmenistan has taken significant steps to improve the social and economic status of women in Turkmenistan through the development of mechanisms and legislative support for measures to ensure the equal participation of women in all spheres of public life. In order to ensure equal rights and freedoms for women and men, the Government is working to adapt its citizens to market conditions and to create equal opportunities for women and men to exercise their rights.

13. The Government of Turkmenistan is also carrying out further reforms of the national human rights protection system, and thereby persistently and consistently implementing the commitments that it has assumed towards the international community.

14. Issues of gender development are reflected in the national socioeconomic development programmes of Turkmenistan. Important goals for the national programmes include advancing the integration of women into the socioeconomic and cultural development of Turkmenistan.

15. The National Presidential Programme on the improvement of social and living conditions in villages, towns, cities, districts and district centres for the period until 2020, as well as the National Programme for the socioeconomic development of

Turkmenistan for the period 2011-2030 and other strategic programmes of the country, have embraced gender development. It must be emphasized that the main purpose of those programmes is to achieve political and social well-being, sustainable development and the economic welfare of the people, based on the principles of freedom, human dignity and equal opportunities for everyone. Those programmes include public investment in the construction and renovation of socially significant and industrial facilities and structures that contribute to the creation of new jobs and employment for both the urban and the rural populations, including women, as well as to the growth of the cash incomes of households.

16. The most important feature of the country's legislation in the field of gender equality lies in the fact that it complies with international requirements and standards in that area. It should be noted, in that connection, that the process of improving the legal and normative framework relating to the further deepening of democratic reforms and the implementation of our country's international obligations in the field of human rights and freedoms continues at an accelerated pace.

17. Turkmenistan pays careful heed to the accepted international obligations and consistently implements, in its national legislation and practice, the generally accepted international legal norms and regulations, including those relating to the creation of equal opportunities for men and women, and focuses its efforts on the creation of machinery to ensure such equality.

18. Under the leadership of President Gurbanguly Berdimuhamedov, the country is working actively to improve its legislation.

19. The newly revised Constitution, adopted on 14 September 2016 at the session of the Council of Elders of Turkmenistan, serves as the foundation for the national legal system and the guarantor of the rule of law and human rights and freedoms. The 2016 Constitution of Turkmenistan includes 28 new articles, 107 articles that have been amended and supplemented, and a new section. In addition, several articles were edited, without changing their content, so as to improve their fit in the relevant chapters. The new version of the Constitution, our Basic Law, was prepared, taking into account suggestions by experts from international organizations and with the active participation of the general public.

20. The new wording of the Constitution reflects a higher standard for the establishment of State guarantees of gender equality in all spheres of public life. Under article 29 of the revised Constitution, men and women in Turkmenistan have equal rights and freedoms and equal opportunities for the realization of those rights. Gender-based violations of equality are punishable under the law.

21. That represents a clear confirmation of our country's commitment to the generally accepted international standards on gender equality. At the constitutional level, gender equality is ensured, as called for under the United Nations Convention on the Elimination of All Forms of Discrimination against Women and its Optional Protocol.

22. Currently, the Parliament (*Mejlis*) of Turkmenistan is preparing a bill on a human rights Ombudsman in Turkmenistan, which takes into account the recommendations set out in the annex to United Nations General Assembly

resolution 48/134 of 20 December 1993, relating to the status of national institutions for the promotion and protection of human rights (the Paris Principles).

23. The National Action Plan of Turkmenistan on gender equality for 2015-2020, approved on 22 January 2015 by a presidential order, is also in the process of being implemented.

24. In order to further improve the work of the State bodies and public organizations of Turkmenistan aimed at ensuring human rights and freedoms and at implementing international humanitarian law in the national legislative and enforcement practice, the National Action Plan on human rights in Turkmenistan for the period 2016-2020 was approved by a presidential order on 15 January 2016.

25. On 18 March 2016, the National Action Plan of Turkmenistan on combating trafficking in persons for the period 2016-2018 was approved by presidential order.

26. It is important to note that in the development of those Plans the recommendations of the relevant United Nations Committees and the recommendations adopted by the country in the context of the universal periodic review in 2013 were taken into account and given due consideration.

27. The implementation of the comprehensive measures contained in those documents has contributed to the further deepening of democratic processes in Turkmen society and the active participation of citizens in the economic, political and cultural life of the State and the strengthening of civil society.

28. A review of the main indicators relating to the status of women and to gender differences in the development of women shows that there has been some progress in various areas, and the development of gender policy continues.

II. Information on the implementation of the concluding comments of the Committee on the Elimination of Discrimination against Women on the combined third to fourth periodic reports of Turkmenistan

Clear evidence of the implementation of the Convention, the Optional Protocol and the general recommendations of the Committee

29. After considering the Committee's 2012 report with its concluding comments, Turkmenistan prioritized the dissemination of information on the Convention on the Elimination of All Forms of Discrimination against Women and the Optional Protocol to the Convention, as well as the main recommendations of the Committee, so as to provide them with greater visibility throughout the country, with a special focus on women and girls living in rural and remote areas. In addition, Turkmenistan continues to disseminate information about the other international and national legal instruments in the field of human rights and freedoms. In Turkmenistan, the Convention and its Optional Protocol, as well as the Committee's recommendations, find clear expression in the widely distributed monthly women's

magazine *Zenan Kalby* (Woman's Soul), which, guided by the provisions of the Convention, covers the whole spectrum of the life of Turkmen women.

30. In concert with representatives of international organizations and foreign embassies accredited to Turkmenistan, long-term humanitarian programmes are being implemented with a view to increasing public awareness of the fundamental international instruments in the field of human rights and freedoms, with a particular focus on the Convention and on targeting women and girls.

31. The Convention and its Optional Protocol have been translated and issued in the Turkmen and Russian languages and are being widely disseminated through the media. Dedicated radio and television programmes are being broadcast, and articles and reviews are regularly being published in newspapers and magazines.

32. The Ministry of Foreign Affairs, the Ministry of Justice (*Adalat*), the Ministry of Culture, the Ministry of Education, the Academy of Sciences, the State Statistics Committee, the National Presidential Institute for Democracy and Human Rights, the Presidential Institute of State and Law, as well as higher education institutions, the public associations in the country working with the assistance of United Nations agencies (UNICEF, the United Nations Development Program (UNDP), the United Nations Population Fund (UNFPA), the International Organization for Migration (IOM)), the Organization for Security and Cooperation in Europe (OSCE) and other international organizations in Turkmenistan, publish collections of international instruments, including the Convention, as well as national legislation that reflects the provisions of CEDAW. They also hold joint seminars, round tables, conferences and presentations in the capital and in all of the provinces (*wilayat*) of the country for representatives of state institutions, law enforcement bodies and public associations.

33. In that connection, a collection of articles entitled "Women's Rights in Turkmenistan" was published through a joint project of the European Commission, the Office of the High Commissioner for Human Rights (OHCHR) and the United Nations Development Programme entitled "Strengthening the national capacity of Turkmenistan to promote and protect human rights", initiated by the Government of Turkmenistan. A publication entitled "International Legal Instruments and the Legislation of Turkmenistan", prepared by the National Presidential Institute for Democracy and Human Rights with the assistance of the UNFPA representative in Turkmenistan, was also issued.

34. In order to increase awareness on the part of civil servants, students, representatives of local authorities, law enforcement agencies, non-governmental organizations (NGOs) and other stakeholders in the field of human rights, including women's and children's rights and gender equality, the Human Rights Information Centres regularly held talks, meetings and round tables covering issues relating to the development, maintenance and implementation by the State and legal authorities of human rights and freedoms, including gender equality.

35. On a regular basis during the reporting period (2013-2015 and ten months of 2016) seminars have been held in all of the provinces of Turkmenistan with the goal of enhancing awareness of gender-equality issues, furthering the implementation of the principles of gender equality in all spheres of life, and strengthening the role of women in society. The seminars attracted a wide range of representatives of the civil

service, education, health, law enforcement and public associations. At those workshops, participants were familiarized with the international instruments and national legislation in the field of the rights and freedoms of women, as well as with the 2012 report containing the concluding recommendations of the Committee on the Elimination of Discrimination against Women.

36. In May 2013, a review workshop was held for members of the Interdepartmental Commission on compliance with Turkmenistan's international commitments in the field of human rights and international humanitarian law (4 May), as well as for members of the working group of the Interdepartmental Commission (2-3 May), with the participation of an international expert, aimed at reviewing the recommendations of the Committee on the Elimination of Discrimination against Women relating to the results of the dialogue with the Committee in October 2012 on the Convention.

37. The National Action Plan on gender equality in Turkmenistan for the period 2015-2020 has been published in three languages and distributed among the Government agencies, public organizations and members of the scientific community that are involved in its implementation, as well as to international organizations accredited to Turkmenistan.

38. In cooperation with the Office of the United Nations Population Fund (UNFPA) in Turkmenistan, a presentation of the National Action Plan on gender equality in Turkmenistan for the period 2015-2020 was made on 26 March 2015 for representatives of State and public organizations, law-enforcement agencies, United Nations agencies, diplomatic missions, scientific institutes and the media.

39. In order to raise awareness on gender issues, the representatives of the Women's Union of Turkmenistan, jointly with the UN-Women Office in Turkmenistan, conducted a series of seminars in October and November 2015 in Ashgabat and the provinces of the country for the newly elected members of the local self-government bodies (*gengesh*).

40. In order to familiarize representatives of State bodies and public associations with the National Action Plan on gender equality for the period 2015-2020, 14 seminars, with a focus on the issues of reproductive rights and reproductive health services, were conducted in 2014-2015 across the country with the assistance of the UNFPA Office in Turkmenistan. The seminars were attended by representatives of provincial and city administrations (*khyakimlik*), public health departments, education, social protection and public associations. In 2014, 105 people participated, and in 2015, 106 people.

41. Efforts to raise awareness, especially among young people, with regard to equality in the family and in marriage relations have been carried out and continue. The Women's Union of Turkmenistan held seminars and round tables during 2015 and 2016, with the participation of representatives of the Mejlis, the Ministry of Health and the Medical Industry, the trade unions, the Turkmen Youth Union and the National Presidential Institute for Democracy and Human Rights.

Articles 1 and 2

Legal status of the Convention and the definition of discrimination against women

42. Turkmenistan's commitment to its international obligations is reflected in the Basic Law of the country. In accordance with the new wording of the Constitution, Turkmenistan unfailingly "recognizes the primacy of the generally recognized norms of international law" (article 9). The equality of the rights and freedoms of citizens before the law regardless of nationality, skin colour, sex, origin, property or occupational status, place of residence, language, religion, political opinion or other status is guaranteed under article 28 of the Constitution of Turkmenistan.

43. The Constitution of Turkmenistan affirms the pre-eminence of the legal order set forth in the international conventions and treaties ratified by the country, and is therefore in full compliance with the provisions of the United Nations Convention on the Elimination of All Forms of Discrimination against Women and the Sustainable Development Goals.

44. In the legislation of Turkmenistan, the term "gender discrimination" means the restriction or denial of human rights and opportunities, or belittling the dignity of persons, on the grounds of sex, and the term "equal rights" refers to the rules and regulations established and protected by the State that seek to ensure the equality of women and men in all spheres of State and public life.

Article 2

Legal framework for the protection of the equality of men and women

45. On 18 August 2015, the Parliament (*Mejlis*) of Turkmenistan adopted the State Guarantees for Equal Rights and Opportunities for Women and Men Act. Under that Act, the State guarantees the equality of women and men in the exercise of their civil rights and their equal participation in the management of the affairs of society and State and the electoral process.

46. Article 3 of the Act guarantees women and men equal rights, equal opportunities and gender equality in all spheres of public life, as well as equality before the law, regardless of nationality, race, sex, origin, property or occupational or marital status, place of residence, language, attitude towards religion, political views, party affiliation or lack of affiliation to any political party.

47. Article 6 prohibits discrimination on the grounds of sex. It also indicates what does not constitute discrimination on the grounds of sex:

(1) The adoption, on the basis of the Act, of temporary special measures aimed at achieving gender equality in all spheres of public life;

(2) The protection of maternity and paternity;

(3) Distinctions, exclusions, preferences and limitations at work based on the specific characteristics of the type of work concerned or motivated by special State

concern for certain people in need of social and legal protection, as established under the legislation of Turkmenistan;

(4) The establishment of requirements based on professional qualifications that reflect the capacity of only one specific sex to perform the functions concerned;

(5) The performance exclusively by men of universal military service in cases stipulated in the legislation of Turkmenistan;

(6) Specific aspects of the protection of women's rights in criminal proceedings in accordance with the law.

Necessary measures and sanctions to deal with violations

48. Article 26 of the Act provides for the protection of the rights of persons subjected to gender-based discrimination, as follows:

“A person subjected to discrimination on the grounds of sex shall have the right to appeal to the appropriate competent body.”

49. The competent body shall, within ten calendar days, review the complaint and take action on it.

50. Where the facts reveal the existence of gender discrimination, the competent body may submit written instructions to State bodies, local executive authorities and local self-government bodies and the heads of enterprises, regardless of their form of ownership, on the elimination of the discrimination discovered, indicating the deadline for implementation. In the event that the entities concerned do not comply with the instructions for addressing the identified cases of discrimination based on sex, the competent body may submit the matter to a court in the manner stipulated in the legislation of Turkmenistan.

51. Women and men who are foreign nationals or stateless persons permanently residing in Turkmenistan are guaranteed gender equality, equally with women and men who are citizens of Turkmenistan, as established in the Act, unless otherwise provided for by the legislation of Turkmenistan and international treaties to which Turkmenistan is a party.

52. Under article 59 of the Code of Administrative Offences of Turkmenistan, the direct or indirect violation or restriction of the human rights and freedoms of a person or citizen on the grounds of his or her nationality, race, sex, origin, property and occupational status, place of residence, language, attitude towards religion, political convictions, party affiliation or lack of affiliation to any political party shall be subject to administrative penalties. Those penalties may take the form of a fine amounting to from five to ten times the basic fine unit (*bazovaya velichina*) or administrative arrest for up to fifteen days.

53. The sanctions and responsibility for violations of the equality of citizens of Turkmenistan have been established by the Code of Administrative Offences and the Criminal Code of Turkmenistan.

Training of judges and jurists

54. With the goal of training judges and lawyers, the Ministry of Justice (*Adalat*) and the Presidium of the Bar Associations of Ashgabat and the provinces (*wilayat*) have conducted, over the past four years, 2613 workshops and lectures to raise awareness of national legislation, including international conventions and treaties on human rights. In 2013 — there were 709 such workshops; in 2014 — 619; in 2015 — 708; and in the nine months of 2016 — 577.

55. The Ministry of Justice (*Adalat*) held a seminar for NGOs to explain the legislation of Turkmenistan, and also plans to hold a conference in November 2016 on the topic “Ways of improving the work of lawyers under modern conditions”, which will highlight the importance of CEDAW and other major international conventions concerning human rights in the work of lawyers and encourage them to invoke the provisions of the Convention and other international instruments on human rights before the court.

56. On the issue of women’s access to justice, bearing in mind article 5 of the Courts Act, justice in Turkmenistan is based on the equality of rights and freedoms and the competition of the parties to the proceedings, as well as on the equality of all before the law, regardless of nationality, race, sex, origin, property and occupational status, place of residence, language, attitude towards religion, political views, party affiliation or lack of affiliation to any political party, as well as other circumstances not specifically provided for by the laws of Turkmenistan. That equality is also enshrined in article 28 of the Constitution as amended.

57. Also, under article 11 of the Criminal Procedure Code of Turkmenistan, everyone, regardless of gender, has the right to the judicial protection of their rights and freedoms.

Article 3

National machinery on the advancement of women

58. The mandate of the national machinery has been reviewed. In order to promote the rights of women mentioned in article 9 of the State Guarantees for Equal Rights and Opportunities for Women and Men Act, the designation of bodies with the status of competent bodies for the protection of gender equality has been introduced. Such competence includes the following areas: the implementation of the unified State policy in the field of protecting equality; the adoption of normative legal acts in the area of gender equality; the implementation of programme documents on the protection of gender equality; the development of action plans aimed at strengthening gender equality; the consideration of complaints and statements by persons subjected to discrimination on the grounds of sex, as well as the protection of their interests in court; the implementation of informational and educational activity on gender equality; the monitoring of the implementation of measures to protect gender equality by other State bodies, local executive authorities and local self-government bodies; the presentation to the Cabinet of Ministers of Turkmenistan of annual reports on efforts to protect gender equality; the monitoring of regulatory legal acts in the field of gender equality; interaction

with international gender-equality bodies; and the performance of other functions in the field of the protection of gender equality.

59. It should be noted that, in accordance with the Act, the process of promoting gender issues also includes other State bodies involved in the implementation of the unified State policy in the field of gender equality, as well as of the programme documents and action plans aimed at gender equality. Those bodies adopt normative legal acts in the area of gender equality and implement measures aimed at protecting maternity and paternity; they provide local executive authorities, local self-government bodies and public associations with organizational, informational and methodical assistance on issues of gender equality (article 10).

60. The local executive authorities and local self-government bodies that implement the unified State policy in the field of gender equality, along with other State bodies, participate in the implementation of policy documents and action plans on protecting gender equality; they adopt normative legal acts in the area of protecting gender equality and implement measures aimed at protecting maternity and paternity; they provide other State bodies and public associations with organizational, informational and other assistance in the organization of activities aimed at protecting gender equality, and they interact with public associations on the issues of protecting gender equality (article 11).

61. In addition to the Government agencies provided for under the Gender Act, public associations engage in activities relating to the protection of gender equality through the implementation of policy documents and action plans for the protection of gender equality. Public associations have the right to nominate candidates for elected bodies in the manner prescribed by the law and to support those candidates whose programmes include issues of gender equality. They are entitled to propose initiatives on gender equality and to participate in the decision-making bodies of State power and local self-government bodies relating to gender equality (article 12).

National action plan on gender equality

62. On 22 January 2015, the President of Turkmenistan, Gurbanguly Berdimuhamedov, approved the National Action Plan on gender equality in Turkmenistan for 2015-2020.

63. The National Action Plan defines the overall strategy and priorities of the State policy on gender equality and provides for the implementation of an integrated system for the implementation of gender equality measures in all spheres of life in Turkmenistan.

64. Building on the base provided by the Constitution of Turkmenistan, the National Action Plan was drawn up in line with the basic provisions of the Universal Declaration of Human Rights, the International Covenant on Civil and Political Rights, the International Covenant on Economic, Social and Cultural Rights, the United Nations Convention on the Elimination of All Forms of Discrimination against Women, the Convention on the Political Rights of Women, the outcome of the fourth World Conference on Women (Beijing, 1995), and the Sustainable Development Goals, as well as documents of the World Health

Organization, the International Labour Organization, the United Nations Children's Fund (UNICEF) and other international organizations.

65. The development of the National Action Plan included serious consideration of the recommendations of the Committee on the Elimination of Discrimination against Women, made during the dialogue in October 2012 at the Committee's fifty-third session, those of the Committee on Economic, Social and Cultural Rights in 2011, as well as the recommendations adopted by Turkmenistan during the dialogue on the universal periodic review of Turkmenistan in 2013.

66. The National Action Plan was also developed in consultation with and with the support of the United Nations Population Fund (UNFPA).

67. The National Action Plan on gender equality in Turkmenistan for 2015-2020 is a comprehensive document that sets objectives and measures aimed at promoting gender equality in all spheres of life in Turkmenistan.

68. The National Action Plan provides for a number of specific measures in various fields aimed at creating the necessary conditions for the further expansion of women's participation in the sociopolitical, socioeconomic, cultural and humanitarian life of our country.

69. The National Action Plan consists of 14 main objectives and more than 60 measures. In particular, the Plan includes the monitoring of the national legislation of Turkmenistan in terms of its compliance with international standards in the field of gender equality and the further improvement of methods for collecting and analysing comprehensive data on the status of women. It provides for raising public awareness on gender issues, the professional development of women, increasing women's representation in all spheres of public, political and professional life and in other areas, as well as the stimulation of the development of entrepreneurship among women. Along with those measures, a major concern is the protection of motherhood and childhood, and the health of women and men. In that regard, an important part of the activities of the relevant ministries and departments consists in the implementation of activities and special programmes aimed at preventing and treating diseases in women and teaching them preventive measures, in general, helping them to achieve a healthy lifestyle.

70. Particular importance is attached to strengthening and deepening international cooperation in this field, especially cooperation with the United Nations and other international organizations, which contributes to the development of further strategies for the realization of gender policy in the region and to the improvement of national legislation, the empowerment of women and the general protection of their interests.

71. On 10 April 2015, Turkmenistan was elected to the Executive Board of the United Nations Entity for Gender Equality and the Empowerment of Women (UN-Women) for the period 2016-2018.

72. That represents another step confirming Turkmenistan's position of promoting gender equality in the country and close cooperation with the United Nations in that regard.

73. In the interest of ensuring a full and comprehensive implementation of the measures provided for in the National Action Plan, the Ministry of Internal Affairs

broadened the activities of some of the relevant departments of the Ministry so as to be able to focus on achieving a gender-sensitive approach to dealing with some of the issues concerned.

74. In order to be able to monitor the timely organization and implementation at the appropriate level of the aforementioned tasks, those activities on the part of the relevant subdivisions of the Ministry were included in the Plan for the main activities of the Ministry of Internal Affairs for 2016.

National institutes for the promotion and protection of human rights

75. At present, the Parliament of Turkmenistan is preparing a bill on the authorized representative for human rights in Turkmenistan. In the drafting of the bill, the recommendations set forth in the annex to United Nations General Assembly resolution 48/134 of 20 December 1993 have been taken into account; they lay down the principles relating to the status of national institutions for the promotion and protection of human rights (the Paris Principles). In addition, due consideration was given to the recommendations made by foreign countries during the dialogue with the delegation of Turkmenistan on the occasion of the universal periodic review on human rights in March 2013.

76. In particular, the bill lays down the rules for the conduct of an independent investigation into complaints of human rights violations and for the provision of an annual report on the work done. The principles governing the activity of the representative of the High Commissioner for Human Rights, such as transparency, objectivity and impartiality, are enshrined in the relevant legal norms of Turkmenistan.

77. It is assumed that all the powers and forms of activity of the authorized representative for human rights in Turkmenistan will be embodied in the above-mentioned legislative act under preparation, which would serve as a guarantee of the representative's efficient operation and of his carrying out an objective assessment of any event or situation linked to violations of human rights and freedoms, including in the field of gender equality.

78. The wide range of powers of that official, his independence and the high social and political status accorded him, as well as the organizational, legal and financial support of his activities granted him under the law, will ensure his real influence on the situation with regard to the protection of human rights and freedoms, as well as the success of his efforts to develop and expand international cooperation in this field.

Article 4.1 Temporary special measures

79. The National Action Plan of Turkmenistan for gender equality for the period 2015-2020 is a policy document aimed at ensuring the conditions needed for the equal participation of men and women in all spheres of society. It defines the specific measures required to improve the representation of women in all spheres of

public, political and professional life, particularly in positions of responsibility. To that end, the Plan provides for strategic actions, such as the holding of debates, the study of international experience, and the provision of training aimed at developing leadership skills so as to encourage women to participate in the electoral processes of political activity and other spheres. To that end, it provides for measures to improve, through the media, their awareness of the importance of women's participation in the public and political life of the country.

80. Under the National Action Plan the ministries and departments concerned and public organizations will be involved in the process of reviewing the need for quotas aimed at accelerating women's equal representation in all spheres of public, political and professional life, including the planning, implementation, monitoring and evaluation of development strategies and public projects.

81. One of the objectives of the National Action Plan is also to further increase the competitiveness of women in the labour market. In addition, it is planned to create new posts for women, especially in rural areas, within the framework of the implementation of temporary special measures. The provision of training for women through the creation of short-term and long-term training programmes and other activities is also provided for in the Plan.

Article 5(a)

Stereotypes and negative customs

82. Work on changing and eliminating stereotypes that lead to discrimination against women is one of the important components of the National Action Plan. In that context, the following activities have been planned and are being carried out:

1. Strengthening measures to further transform public consciousness with regard to gender equality and the eradication of patriarchal attitudes and deep-rooted stereotypes.
2. Raising public awareness in the broadest sense, as well as that of women and girls, about the necessity and importance of gender equality for men and women in all spheres of public and private life.
3. Including gender issues in the education system.
4. Developing, publishing and distributing information booklets on gender equality between men and women.
5. Preparing and publishing collections of the materials linked with international and national conferences on women's rights.
6. Preparing educational programmes on gender issues for media workers.
7. Providing extensive coverage of gender issues in the mass media.
8. Carrying out information campaigns on the subject of the equality between men and women and creating a positive image in society of the modern woman manager, the female politician and the woman entrepreneur. That would include publishing books, brochures and textbooks for women politicians and reference books about women leaders.
9. Developing international cooperation on gender issues.

Article 5

Violence against women

83. In Turkmenistan, there is no specific law on violence against women, although after the Committee's concluding comments of 2012 and its detailed recommendations, there has been an ongoing discussion on the need to adopt such legislation. The subject of violence against women is no longer a taboo subject, as it was before, which is, in the context of Turkmenistan, a significant achievement, given that gender-based violence, particularly domestic violence, was considered to be exclusively a subject belonging to private family life.

84. Under article 24 of the State Guarantees for Equal Rights and Equal Opportunities for Women and Men Act of Turkmenistan, the State shall guarantee the equal right of women and men to protection from sexual assault, their abduction and trafficking. That legislative norm is the basis for the improvements in the national legislation on those issues, as well as for further legislative work aimed at preventing violence against women in all its forms.

85. One of the objectives of the National Action Plan in the field of human rights in Turkmenistan for the period 2016-2020 is to analyse the legislation of Turkmenistan with a view to possibly adopting legislation criminalizing violence, developing and introducing training programmes on the prevention of domestic violence for inclusion in training courses for law-enforcement agencies and courts, and initiating a study on the distribution, causes and consequences of all forms of violence against women, including domestic violence. In that connection, the following steps have been decided on:

- Organizing a study/survey on the prevalence of violence and the kinds of violence against women and its root causes.
- Holding a consultation among the appropriate parties on the need to prepare a bill aimed at the formation and development of domestic violence prevention systems that would cover all forms of violence against women.
- Organizing events to raise public awareness of the zero-tolerance policy of Turkmenistan with regard to violence against women.

86. During the 2014-2015 period, workshops and study visits were held, in partnership with UNFPA and with the participation of the international expert, aimed at determining the methodology of such surveys and at gaining familiarity with the laws of foreign countries in the field of domestic violence and with the implementation of those laws.

87. In that connection, a seminar was held in February 2014, with the participation of the international consultant, Ms. Aysel Vazirova, aimed at demonstrating sample international best-practices surveys on domestic violence for members of the Interdepartmental Commission on compliance with Turkmenistan's international obligations in the field of human rights and international humanitarian law.

88. A seminar was also held, with the participation of the international consultant, Ms. Aysel Vazirova, on the methodology used in sample surveys on domestic violence, for the benefit of members of the Working Group of the above-mentioned Interdepartmental Commission. Participants in the workshops were familiarized

with the studies on the problem of violence against women, a brief history of the issue, the types of studies, and examples of the methodological approaches used in international practice, including the practice of Turkey, the United States, Azerbaijan and other European countries.

89. A trip was also organized for the members of the Interdepartmental Commission and the Working Group aimed at exchanging experiences, so as to get acquainted with practices in the areas of carrying out sample surveys, improving legislation in the field of gender equality and monitoring its implementation. After the trip a round table was organized (January 2016), where participants discussed issues resulting from the experience gained through the study tour and the additional information on the conduct of sample surveys and on improving legislation in the field of gender equality and monitoring its implementation.

90. On 3-4 October 2016 a methodological seminar on the theme “Strengthening the practice followed in the multi-agency approach to the prevention of gender-based violence in Turkmenistan” was organized for members of the above-mentioned Interdepartmental Commission and the Working Group with the assistance of the UNFPA delegation in Turkmenistan. The seminar was also attended by the Regional Programme Coordinator of the East European Institute for Reproductive Health, Ms. Ionela Horga.

91. Recently, a draft questionnaire has been developed as input for a study on the prevalence of violence against women and is in the process of discussion.

92. In addition, during the 2016-2017 period, training sessions have been planned for the training of interviewers. Based on the results of the study, proposals will be prepared for amendments and additions to the existing national legislation, and consideration will be given to the feasibility of developing a bill on domestic violence.

93. That process involves the Supreme Court of Turkmenistan, law-enforcement agencies, the Ministry of Education, the Ministry of Health and the Medical Industry, the Turkmen State Committee on Statistics and other interested ministries and departments.

94. The legislation of Turkmenistan does not include specific legislative acts relating to domestic violence. However, the Criminal Code criminalizes certain acts as wrongful, including when committed in the home. The provisions of those articles in the Criminal Code establish liability for wrongful acts that cause the humiliation of honour and dignity and lead to cruel treatment causing various types of injuries, including against women. In that connection, the following articles in the Criminal Code of Turkmenistan may be characterized as dealing with “domestic violence”: article 113 on torture, article 127 on the abduction of women for the purpose of entering into de facto marital relations, article 134 on rape, article 136 on the satisfaction of sexual needs in perverted forms, article 137 on coercion to perform sexual intercourse, article 162 on forcing a woman to marry and on obstructing marriage, and article 163 on polygamy, etc.

95. Specific efforts on the part of the relevant subdivisions of the Ministry of Internal Affairs have focused on achieving the objectives of programmes that seek to prevent and increase awareness of violence against women, including in the family setting, as called for in the National Action Plan.

96. Specific plans have been developed by sections of local police units, the Police Department of the city of Ashgabat and the provinces. The plans are prepared annually in conjunction with other law-enforcement agencies, as well as the Women's Union of Turkmenistan and the Makhtumkuli Youth Organization of Turkmenistan in enterprises and institutions of higher and secondary special educational institutions. In secondary schools and other educational institutions, meetings and discussions and lectures have been held for women and girls on the topics "The family is my fortress", "My friendly and happy family", "The sacred family begins with marriage", "The honour of girls is the honour of the people" and "Equality between men and women".

97. Furthermore, in accordance with the Plan for the main activities of the Ministry of Internal Affairs for 2016, local units of the police have held events twice a year entitled "Family". As part of those events, which last a month, monitoring is carried out at the places of residence of persons who have earlier committed dangerous and especially dangerous crimes affecting family relations, and additional preventive work is undertaken with them. At the end of the month, the results of the work are gathered into reports. Problem families are studied with special care. Adult members of the family are officially informed about the inadmissibility of violations of the country's legislation, and the appropriate report is prepared, explaining the possible legal consequences of such acts, i.e. prosecution of such illegal acts in a manner appropriate to their gravity.

98. The relevant units of the Ministry of Internal Affairs of Turkmenistan have undertaken targeted measures aimed at preventing violent acts against women. In the six months of 2016, 1051 complaints were received from women in families in which men occasionally abuse alcohol or use drugs. After checking the substance of the complaints, some of the cases and materials were submitted to the investigating departments of the police and the prosecutor's office for assessment of the offences involved under the Criminal Procedure Law of Turkmenistan, and in the remaining cases other measures of an administrative and preventive character were ordered, such as inscription on the police register as family miscreants. Some individuals were temporarily isolated from society by court order and sent to special rehabilitation centres for the treatment of alcoholism and drug addiction.

99. As part of the system of the Ministry of Internal Affairs that focuses on the implementation of activities called for under the National Action Plan, training programmes for the service and combat training of the staff of specialized units has included subject matter relating to gender-sensitive aspects of working with female prisoners.

100. In addition, the leadership of the Institute of the Ministry of Interior of Turkmenistan, which trains future employees of bodies reporting to the Ministry, is currently reviewing its educational programmes in the fields of labour law, family law and administrative law, as well as criminal law enforcement, which are taught at the Law Faculty and the law faculties of specialized agencies and the armed forces of the Ministry of Internal Affairs, with a view to possibly including specific topics such as gender equality, non-discrimination on the basis of gender, the nature and causes of violence against women and their children, the legal rights and remedies available to victims/survivors of violence, the legal duties of police officers with

regard to ensuring protection and assistance, and the methods of dealing with cases of violence against women and their children.

Article 6

Trafficking in persons and the exploitation of prostitution

101. A presidential order of 18 March 2016 approved the National Action Plan on combating human trafficking in Turkmenistan for the period 2016-2018. That comprehensive document outlines specific measures aimed at combating such trafficking.

102. That National Action Plan specifies the public authorities responsible for the tasks set out in the relevant sections of the document, including the task of preparing a bill on combating trafficking in persons.

103. Based on the provisions of the relevant United Nations conventions and other international legal norms and bearing in mind the suggestions and recommendations of international organizations and experts with regard to the existing Human Trafficking Act of 2007, a bill on combating trafficking in persons was drawn up. In October 2016, during the subsequent session of the Mejlis of Turkmenistan, the Countering Human Trafficking Act was enacted.

104. It defines the main directions of the State policy in the sphere of combating trafficking in persons, as well as the institutional and legal framework for combating human trafficking, and provides for a set of measures for the protection of trafficking victims and their rehabilitation and for providing them with assistance measures, as well as for the prosecution of traffickers.

105. In addition, the Act defines the powers of the Cabinet of Ministers, Government agencies, and the public and international organizations engaged in combating trafficking in persons, which, within their areas of competence, take measures to ensure the prosecution of traffickers and bring them to justice, and to identify and eliminate the causes and conditions that contribute to human trafficking and lead to the commission of related crimes. Those bodies also work to ensure the protection and rehabilitation of victims of trafficking.

106. The Act introduces regulations dealing with the identification of victims of trafficking and the procedures for granting persons affected by such criminal activities the status of victims of trafficking in persons. Also new is the inclusion of provisions governing the establishment and activities of the specialized agencies tasked with supporting and assisting victims of human trafficking and with repatriating foreign citizens and stateless persons who are victims of trafficking.

107. Some articles of the Act are dedicated to the social rehabilitation of victims of trafficking, and to assisting victims of trafficking and providing measures for their protection, bearing in mind the specific features associated with the provision of assistance to children who are victims of trafficking.

108. In accordance with the National Action Plan on combating human trafficking, the inter-agency working group on the development of the Plan has started drafting standard operating procedures for the identification of victims of trafficking. The purpose of developing standard operating procedures for the identification of

victims of human trafficking is to ensure the identification of the victims of all forms of trafficking, including internal trafficking in human beings, in order to restore and ensure respect for the rights of victims.

109. There is also a plan, in the near future, to prepare draft normative acts on machinery aimed at redirecting trafficking victims to specialized assistance agencies, and on machinery to ensure the safety of trafficking victims, including minors, and other measures.

110. Looking at the proceedings of criminal cases on human trafficking, one can see that the victims of sexual exploitation are mainly citizens of Turkmenistan, whereas the crimes themselves are committed in the territory of other States (the Republic of Turkey, the Republic of India, the United Arab Emirates). Police units in the territory of Turkmenistan detect and bring charges of human trafficking against persons (mediators) who recruit women under various pretexts (mostly employment) and send them out of the country.

111. Wishing, through international, regional and bilateral cooperation with countries of origin, transit and destination, to strengthen efforts to prevent trafficking by enhancing information exchange and the harmonization of legal procedures for the prosecution of traffickers, Turkmenistan has signed the following bilateral intergovernmental agreements:

1. Cooperation Agreement between the Government of Turkmenistan and the Government of the Republic of Turkey on combating serious crime, in particular terrorism and organized crime, signed on 29 February 2012;

2. Agreement between the Government of Turkmenistan and the Government of the Republic of Latvia on cooperation in combating terrorism, organized crime, illicit trafficking in narcotic drugs, psychotropic substances and precursors, and other crimes, signed on 14 May 2013;

3. Agreement on Cooperation between the Ministry of Internal Affairs of Turkmenistan and the Ministry of Internal Affairs of the Russian Federation, dated 25 March 2009;

4. Agreement between Turkmenistan and the People's Republic of China on cooperation in the fight against terrorism, separatism and extremism, signed on 3 April 2006.

112. Turkmenistan's plan for international cooperation in the criminal prosecution of persons engaged in human trafficking involves fruitful cooperation with the competent authorities of foreign countries and specialized international organizations with a view to identifying such individuals and ensuring the inevitability of criminal punishment.

113. Turkmenistan is a party to various relevant international agreements:

The multilateral Convention on Legal Assistance and Legal Relations in Civil, Family and Criminal Matters (signed at Minsk on 22 January 1993);

Agreement between Turkmenistan and Georgia on mutual legal assistance in civil and criminal matters (1996);

Agreement between Turkmenistan and the Republic of Uzbekistan on legal assistance and legal relations in civil, family and criminal matters (1996);

Agreement between Turkmenistan and the Republic of Armenia on legal assistance and legal relations in civil, family and criminal matters (2000);

Agreement between the Government of Turkmenistan and the Government of the Islamic Republic of Iran on mutual assistance in criminal matters (2005);

Agreement between Turkmenistan and the Republic of Turkey on legal assistance in civil and criminal matters (2012).

114. On 12 January 2016, the Mejlis of Turkmenistan adopted the State Protection of Victims, Witnesses and Other Participants in Criminal Proceedings Act, which establishes a system of measures aimed at ensuring protection by the State of victims, witnesses and other participants in criminal proceedings, including the security and social protection of such persons, and also defines the grounds and procedures for the implementation of such measures.

115. According to the Information Centre of the Ministry of Internal Affairs of Turkmenistan, only two people in the territory of Turkmenistan filed claims that they had been victims of human trafficking during the first half of 2016.

116. In order to ensure uniform implementation of the laws aimed at combating human trafficking and at intensifying the struggle in that area, the General Prosecutor of Turkmenistan issued, on 12 June 2014, an order on the functions of the Prosecutor's Office in monitoring the implementation of the laws aimed at combating human trafficking.

117. According to the statistics for 2015, four criminal cases against five persons were brought in Turkmenistan on charges of human trafficking. For the seven months of 2016 — two criminal cases against two persons were brought. In three criminal cases involving three persons (for the seven months of 2016 — one person), the preliminary investigations were completed, and the cases were sent to the court for its consideration. The accused were found guilty of the charges against them and were sentenced to various terms of imprisonment.

118. Of the criminal cases brought in 2015, one case (for the last seven months of 2016 — one criminal case) has been suspended.

119. Of those who committed such crimes in 2015, four persons (for the seven months of 2016 — two persons) are women, all of them citizens of Turkmenistan; the victims for 2015 include 13 people (for the seven months of 2016 — six persons), all of them citizens of Turkmenistan.

Articles 7 and 8

Participation in political and public life

120. The integration of women into the political and public life of society is one of the basic elements of democratization in Turkmenistan. The country's legislation enables women to have suitable representation in the elected bodies of the Government and State administration. Under article 45 of the Constitution, Turkmen citizens have the right to participate in managing the affairs of society and the State,

both directly and through their freely elected representatives. The Electoral Code of Turkmenistan of May 2013 allows citizens who have attained the age of eighteen to elect, be elected and participate in voting (article 3). Any direct or indirect restriction, based on nationality, race, sex, origin, property and occupational status, place of residence, language, attitude towards religion, political views, party affiliation or lack thereof, of the rights of Turkmenistan citizens to vote, be elected and participate in a referendum is prohibited. Under article 22 of the Civil Service Act of Turkmenistan of March 2016, citizens of Turkmenistan who have reached the age of 18 and able to speak one of the official languages of the country have the right, regardless of nationality, race, sex, origin, property and official status, place of residence, language, attitude towards religion, political views, party affiliation or lack of affiliation to any political party, to enter public service, with due account taken of their qualifications, types of training and other restrictions established by the law. Details on this matter can be provided.

121. Under the Political Parties Act of Turkmenistan of 10 January 2012, Turkmen citizens have equal rights and enjoy equal opportunities to establish political parties and to freely participate in their activities. Citizens of Turkmenistan have, on a voluntary basis based on their political opinions, the right to form political parties and to freely join the in the prescribed manner or to refrain from joining them, to take part in the activities of political parties and to freely withdraw from membership. The membership of citizens in political parties or their lack of membership in parties shall not lead to any restriction of their rights and freedoms. It is forbidden to grant or deny citizens privileges and benefits on account of their political party affiliation or lack thereof (article 2). Details on this matter can be provided.

122. Under article 3 of the Act on Trade Unions and their Rights and Guarantees of 11 September 2013, Turkmen citizens have the right, on a voluntary basis, to form a trade union, and in the prescribed manner, to freely join or refrain from joining a union, to take participation in trade union activities and to freely withdraw from membership. The union is created on the basis of the principle of the equality of its members. Details on this matter can be provided.

123. According to the Mass Media Act of Turkmenistan of 22 December 2012, the citizens of Turkmenistan have the right to use all forms of media to express their views and opinions, to seek, receive and disseminate information and to receive, through the mass media, information about the activities of State bodies, public associations and officials. Furthermore, the freedom to seek, receive and impart information cannot be limited except in accordance with the law if necessary to protect the constitutional order and the health, honour and dignity and private lives of citizens, and public order (article 4).

124. The country is working to increase the participation of women in the public and political life of the State, which can be measured by the number of women in the Parliament and those serving as managers and administrative staff in professional and technical positions. In Turkmenistan that number is quite high and suggests that women have a wide range of opportunities in the social, political and economic life of the country.

125. Today, the structure of the population of Turkmenistan is such that women make up more than 50 per cent of the population and are well represented in the

elected bodies of the Government. Currently, the leadership of the country includes a substantial number of women, including the Deputy Prime Minister, ministers and deputy ministers, diplomatic staff, deputy heads of regional, city and district administrations, and the heads of media, universities and research institutions, and the leadership posts in the electoral commissions at the central and local levels.

126. As of 1 September 2016, 27.42 per cent of the deputies of the Mejlis of Turkmenistan were women and 72.58 per cent were men.

127. Women are also represented in the representative and executive bodies of the Government at all levels. The representative bodies of the people's power in towns, districts (*etrap*), villages and rural municipalities (*gengeshlik*) are the local self-government bodies (*gengesh*). In 2015, elections of members to the *gengeshes* were held on a competitive basis. In the elections to those bodies, 1,215 women were elected (20.11 per cent) and 4,826 men (79.89 per cent).

128. As a result of elections held on 23 November 2014 female representatives of various professions were elected to the local representative bodies of the people's power, namely, the people's councils (*halk maslakhaty*). Of the total number of members of the provincial (*wilayat*) people's councils and the people's council of the city of Ashgabat, women make up 18.33 per cent and men 81.67 per cent; in all of the district and town people's councils, women make up more than 23.65 per cent and men, 76.35 per cent.

129. Gender equality in access to public services at the legislative level is enshrined in the Civil Service Act of Turkmenistan (2016).

130. According to the Act of Turkmenistan on amending and adding to the Military Duty and Military Service Act of Turkmenistan of 8 November 2014 (article 15), the reserve officers training programme provides for the military training of female citizens as well. Currently, female cadets train with the male soldiers; the officer corps also includes women.

131. Women as well as men are involved in managing State affairs, as well as in foreign policy matters. For example, among the diplomats, the Ambassador (Permanent Representative) of Turkmenistan to the United Nations and the Ambassador of Turkmenistan to China are women.

132. In the judicial system of Turkmenistan there are 391 women currently serving, which amounts to 45.7 per cent of the total number of employees. Of them, 41 are judges, 36 are department heads, and there are 314 in other posts.

133. In the territory of Turkmenistan there are six bar associations, five of which are headed by women. There are 200 lawyers working to provide legal assistance to the population, including 111 women:

- City of Ashgabat — 43
- Ahal Province (*wilayat*) — 8
- Balkan Province — 8
- Dashoguz Province — 12
- Lebap Province — 26
- Mary Province — 14

134. In addition, 68 lawyers are authorized to deal with human rights activities, ten of them — women.

135. The high level of representation of women in the various branches of Government is not only important for the realization of the possibilities of individuals, regardless of gender and age, but also for society as a whole. Women are also well represented in the three parties registered in Turkmenistan.

136. The development of the potential of women is accomplished through gender mainstreaming in the socioeconomic development strategy of Turkmenistan and in national programmes. Those programmes include, among other measures, the creation of new jobs, the improvement of the professional skills of women, the promotion of entrepreneurship among women, and the strengthening of their participation in sectors with high levels of pay.

Civil society and non-governmental organizations

137. Under article 4 of the Public Associations Act of Turkmenistan of 5 March 2014, the right of citizens to establish public associations is realized either directly through associations of individuals or through legal entities, such as public associations.

138. The right of association includes the right to form associations to protect common interests and achieve common goals, the right to join existing public associations or refrain from joining them, as well as the right to freely withdraw from public associations.

139. Citizens have the right to establish associations, as a matter of their choice, without prior permission from the State or local self-government authorities, as well as the right to join such associations, subject to the provisions of their charters.

140. In the event that an application to register a public association is denied, that decision may be appealed to the court (article 23 of the Act).

141. Among the registered non-governmental organizations, there are some such as *Ynam* (Trust), *Ýenme* (Overcoming) and *Maşgala* (Family) that are concerned with issues relating to the family, mothers and disabled people and carry out human rights activities.

142. Thus, the public organization *Ynam* is a member of the working group that was involved in developing the strategy and the National Action Plan of Turkmenistan on combating human trafficking.

143. Within the framework of the project entitled “Information for those going abroad” the Hotline for combating human trafficking has been working around the clock. During the 2015-2016 period there were 3408 calls to the Hotline and to the advisor, of which 1638 were placed by women. During that period, advertisements for the Hotline for combating human trafficking were placed in the newspapers *Business Advertising*, *Zaman* and *Neutral Turkmenistan*; their circulation was 14,000, 62,000 and 35,468 copies respectively.

144. In its around-the-clock operation the Hotline service has respected the following three basic principles:

- Information and consultation services are free of charge;

- Anonymous treatment;
- Protection of confidentiality.

145. Through the distribution of booklets and materials, awareness-raising and preventive activities target the population at large. Each booklet contains the addresses and phone numbers of non-governmental organizations abroad that can provide real help or advice to migrants, as well as the phone numbers of the embassies and consulates of Turkmenistan abroad.

146. The non-governmental organization *Ýenme* is working on the rehabilitation and integration of vulnerable groups, and on protecting their rights and interests and promoting the idea of the equal participation, accessibility and inclusion of people with disabilities in society.

147. As part of its social assistance programmes, the public organization *Ýenme*, during the period 2015-2016, assisted people in obtaining legal aid aimed at protecting legitimate rights and interests. In cooperation with the Legal Aid Office of Ashgabat, 62 people, including 45 women, were sent for consultations with that Office on issues relating to family, housing and legal matters.

148. In the implementation of the project entitled “Rehabilitation Centre for victims of human trafficking”, two people were provided with legal aid in the recovery of documents; efforts was also initiated to achieve family reunification.

149. The organization conducts quarterly workshops for persons with disabilities and works to strengthen the level of their legal knowledge and familiarity with the national and international legislation. The seminars were attended by 70 people, including 33 women with disabilities, 22 women who are raising children with disabilities and 15 men.

150. The public organization *Keyik Okara* implemented three projects:

1. Prevention of domestic violence and the provision of assistance to its possible victims;
2. Legal assistance to stateless persons in Turkmenistan;
3. Social, medical and legal assistance to refugees.

151. During the course of the first project for the 2015-2016 period, there were 1070 people who signed in on the telephone hotline, and 24 people were sent to the shelter (the shelter provided social assistance and assistance in finding and obtaining employment, nutrition and hygiene products), 473 people received a consultation with a psychologist, and 207 people were provided with legal assistance

152. In 2015, three training courses were held on the theme “Preventing and combating domestic violence”, which were attended by 36 people, including 13 men and 23 women.

Article 10 Education

153. The right to education is a fundamental and inalienable constitutional right of the citizens of Turkmenistan.

154. Improving education as the basis for the spiritual, social, economic and cultural progress of society is a priority development goal in Turkmenistan.

155. At present, the relevant legislation in Turkmenistan is the Education Act of 4 May 2013, as amended and supplemented on 8 November 2014. The revision of the Act was required when the transition to a 12-year secondary education system was introduced on the basis of the presidential decree on the improvement of the education system in Turkmenistan and the presidential order on secondary education in Turkmenistan, which were approved on 1 March 2013. On the basis of those rules and regulations, 12-year general secondary education was introduced in Turkmenistan as of the beginning of the 2013/14 school year.

156. Under the Act Turkmen citizens are guaranteed access to education, regardless of their nationality, race, sex, origin, property and employment status, place of residence, language, attitude towards religion, political views, party affiliation or lack thereof, as well as age and health condition.

157. The State guarantees citizens general and free access to education in public schools, as well as access, on a competitive basis, to free professional education in State educational institutions, provided the citizen interested obtains the relevant professional education at the appropriate level beforehand.

158. The Act and other applicable legal rules and regulations guarantee equal rights, opportunities and conditions for all children, including girls, to take advantage of all of the rights, freedoms and privileges provided under the law, as well as their access to education at all levels, including free and compulsory secondary education, and the realization of their abilities, interests and needs.

159. The fact that education is free and accessible ensures a high level of education and literacy. According to the 2012 population census, the literacy of the population aged 15 years and older was 99.8 per cent among women and 99.9 percent among men, and for those aged 15-24 years, both women and men stood at 99.9 per cent. The literacy rate of men and women in Turkmenistan is very high and almost identical across the sexes. That was facilitated by the high level of the educational coverage of children and young people in Turkmenistan at both the primary and secondary levels.

160. Students are admitted to educational institutions at their request, regardless of their sex, nationality, race, origin or social status. The general admission requirements for citizens of Turkmenistan to educational institutions are the same for both males and females and are regulated by the Education Act and the specific regulations applying to educational institutions of various types and forms of ownership. Both general secondary and occupational and professional education are available equally to male and female applicants.

161. In secondary education the number of students is growing rapidly in all grades. Gender asymmetry is practically non-existent; the sex ratio is close to 1:1. The ratio between the sexes in primary and secondary education is 100 boy students for every 96 girls. That is due to the prevalence in the population of male children and youth.

162. Currently, the vocational and professional education system in Turkmenistan includes three types of education — basic, second-level and higher professional schools. Many sectors of the modern economy (restaurants and hotels in the service

sector, drivers and car repair, etc.) do not require, in their activities, highly skilled experts (university graduates); however, they do require certain skills. Such workers are prepared at the basic vocational schools.

163. Educational institutions at the basic vocational level in Turkmenistan are managed by the relevant line ministries and agencies, which are responsible for determining the scope of the training needed to meet the needs of enterprises in their fields.

164. The gender features of the composition of the students in the basic vocational schools reflects a prevalence of men, which, in turn, reflects the broader composition of the blue-collar occupations, whose young members are prepared in that type of educational institution. The proportion of girls enrolled in basic vocational education was 42.6 per cent in 2015.

165. In the 2015/16 academic year, there were 42 second-level vocational and professional schools in Turkmenistan, which had 20,000 students, of which 52.5 per cent were women. Women predominate in a wide range of occupations in the total number of students, with the exception of some specialized fields: industry — 37.6 per cent, transportation — 38.5 per cent and construction — 26.8 per cent.

166. Youth have the opportunity to obtain higher professional education at the country's 24 higher education institutions. They have 35,500 students.

167. The system of higher education has maintained certain disparities in the distribution of men and women in the various education profiles. The proportion of women enrolled in higher education during the 2015/2016 school year was 35.5 per cent, while certain education profiles remained predominantly "male", such as industry, where the proportion of women was 20.0 per cent, agriculture — 21.2 per cent, transport and communications — 20.7 per cent, and law — 29.4 per cent.

168. Furthermore, boys and girls have the opportunity to study at leading universities and secondary professional schools abroad, both nearby and further abroad. During the 2015/16 academic year, there were 2,804 people studying abroad under various international agreements.

169. All children can study in the general education schools appropriate for their ages. The difference in the number of girls and boys depends only on fertility, that is, the number of girls and boys of the corresponding age groups in the country leads to the sex difference among those studying in educational institutions at each age, and that difference should not be perceived as discrimination. The educational institutions, whatever their type, pose no restrictions on the admission of citizens on the grounds of sex, which gives us every reason to assert that in the field of education there is no discrimination against women.

170. The current worldwide stereotypes with regard to "women's professions" and "men's professions" have not been eradicated, either in Turkmenistan or in other countries. The country is actively working to eliminate stereotypes in the choice of professions and training fields. Various activities and explanatory measures targeting students have been initiated in educational programmes, text books and other educational materials aimed at eliminating stereotypes and focusing on equal opportunities for girls and boys in choosing a profession, based on existing

examples of women choosing complex technical professions and of men choosing subtler psychological professions.

171. Girls and boys have equal rights during their education in educational institutions and receive the same education in accordance with the state educational standards and with their subsequent educational interests, as well as the same free access to textbooks and educational literature; they also enjoy the same social protections and are provided scholarships and places in student hostels and boarding schools.

172. For individuals who, for whatever reason, do not complete the general secondary education programme in a timely manner, there is a system providing general secondary education through external studies under regulations revised on 16 April 2015. Admission to the external studies system is also not restricted on the grounds of sex.

173. In all educational institutions providing vocational and professional education, people of either sex have equal access to the study of the scientific and technical disciplines. Educational institutions fully support and encourage interest on the part of young people of either sex in science and technology and sports. Both boys and girls participate actively in various competitions, contests, and other intellectual activities in both the technical and the humanistic areas. One can cite the example of recently held international scientific competitions for university students: at the International Mathematical Olympiad, held in the city of Rusa, Bulgaria, where, from among 32 teams from five countries, Turkmen university students won nine medals, including three gold, three silver and three bronze. Of the six winners of silver and bronze medals, three were girls.

174. Women are equal to men in their participation in sport and pursue the same sports. For example, at the Olympics in Rio de Janeiro, Turkmenistan was represented by nine athletes, of whom five were women, three of whom were on the judo and weightlifting teams.

175. The publicity given by the media to such developments also serves as a means of influencing girls to choose non-traditional areas of employment.

176. The preschool education system is considered today to be one of the factors in improving and maintaining the health of children. In 2015, there were 1,039 preschools in Turkmenistan, attended by 230,500 children. The proportion of girls in the total number of children attending preschool institutions amounted to 51.1 per cent.

177. In preschools, secondary schools, and basic, second-level and higher vocational and professional schools, girls and boys are taught and educated together. In Turkmenistan, the education system has no separate educational institutions for a particular sex, such as a school for girls and another one for boys. Besides the State educational institutions at all levels, parents participate in addressing issues related to girls, their education and training. Under the legislation of Turkmenistan they share responsibility for their children's education and training, their safety and health, and their social well-being with the educational institution, law-enforcement services, health authorities, local authorities, governments, the Youth Union, the Women's Union, and others.

178. The reform of the education system of Turkmenistan is moving ahead at a fast pace in important promising areas. In the course of the reforms, provision has been made for further implementation of the Plan for the transition to 12-year general secondary education, the State Programme for the development of the education system in Turkmenistan for the period 2012-2016, and other relevant documents.

179. All of the activities carried out by the education system and the State are aimed at ensuring equal treatment for women and men.

Article 11

Employment

180. The State Guarantees for Equal Rights and Equal Opportunities for Women and Men Act is fully consistent with the provisions of article 11 of the Convention. The Act stipulates that the State guarantees equal rights for women and men in the matters of employment. In particular, women and men are guaranteed equal employment opportunities, the free choice of profession, occupation and place of employment, opportunities for entrepreneurial activities, training and re-training, and the reconciliation of work with the responsibilities of parenthood.

181. The extent of women's participation in the labour market reflects the level of the economic activity of women.

182. Within the economically active population, women made up 42.6 per cent in 2015, and out of the number of people employed in the economy — 44.9 per cent (Table 1.2).

183. Under article 21 of the State Guarantees for Equal Rights and Equal Opportunities for Women and Men Act, the State guarantees women and men equal pay for work of equal value, as well as equal treatment in the assessment of the quality of their work in accordance with the labour legislation of Turkmenistan.

184. Under the current legislation, remuneration depends on the skill-level of workers, the quantity and quality of their labour, its complexity and intensity, and the conditions under which it is performed. Based on those parameters and collective agreements (contracts), the pay rates, salaries, incentives and other benefits of workers are determined, as are the ratios between the wages of the various categories of workers.

185. Certain minor differences in pay between men and women can be explained primarily as the result of required professional qualifications that have been set, based on the ability of only one specific sex to perform the functions concerned, as well as by the existence of differences, exceptions and preferences relating to a particular job that are derived from the characteristic of that type of work. Under the legislation of Turkmenistan, such considerations do not generate discrimination (Table 3.4).

186. Through presidential decrees each year, the wages of men and women are raised.

Article 13

Economic and social benefits

187. The main goals of the system for the social protection of the citizens of Turkmenistan include the realization of the constitutionally guaranteed right of citizens to a pension in their old age, State support for certain categories of citizens, and the adaptation of the social security system to the conditions of the newly developing market relations in Turkmenistan.

188. The basic legal document in that regard is the Social Protection Code of Turkmenistan, adopted in October 2012, which entered into force on 1 January 2013 and which establishes State guarantees for pensions based on the State pension insurance system, and ensures public benefits for certain categories of citizens and determines social protection measures for them in compliance with the principles of social justice.

189. Article 23 of the State Guarantees of Equal Rights and Equal Opportunities for Women and Men Act, adopted on 18 August 2015, provides for State guarantees of gender equality in the field of social protection in the form of material benefits and social services through pension payments, State benefits and the provision of social benefits in the manner and in cases stipulated by the legislation of Turkmenistan.

190. Under the Social Protection Code of Turkmenistan, the mother or father or guardian of a newborn child, regardless of whether that person is employed in a socially useful activity, shall be entitled to a lump-sum welfare payment upon the birth of the child and a monthly allowance for the care of the child until the child reaches the age of three, which are to be paid from the State budget.

191. Under the State Pension Insurance Act of Turkmenistan of 1 January 2013, Turkmenistan introduced a new modern pension system, the so-called notional defined contribution pension system.

192. The basis of such a system is the personal contribution account of each person to the pension system.

193. In the event that citizens, including those engaged in the informal sector or in personal ancillary, household and other work not based on a labour contract, as well as self-employed citizens, have concluded pension insurance agreements with branches of the Pension Fund at their place of residence and have paid in the compulsory pension contributions, such citizens, upon reaching retirement age, shall be awarded pension benefits.

194. The above-mentioned categories of citizens are also entitled to join the funded pension system by signing an agreement of voluntary pension insurance with the Pension Fund at their place of residence.

195. Under article 64 of the Social Protection Code of Turkmenistan, persons who are not, for one reason or another, entitled to a pension are guaranteed a State social benefit, which men may receive at age 62 and women at age 57.

196. If people employed in the informal sector or in personal ancillary, household and other work not based on a labour contract, as well as in self-employment, become disabled, they shall be granted a disability pension, regardless of how much they have contributed to the State pension insurance.

197. In the event of the death of people in these categories, family members who were dependent on them during life shall be granted survivors' benefits, regardless of the amount paid in by the deceased to the State pension insurance.

198. Thus, a legal framework, including in the informal sector, has been created to provide women with access to social security and other social protection measures.

199. The State statistical agencies have been conducting a quarterly sample survey of the labour force covering more than 2,500 households. The survey focuses on the population aged 15 to 72.

200. According to the 2015 survey, out of the total number of able-bodied respondents, men make up 57 per cent and women — 43 per cent. On average, the level of those employed in the informal sector was 7.5 per cent of the surveyed working population, of whom women made up 29.3 per cent. The proportion of the working population in the informal sector living in rural areas was 9.7 per cent, of them women made up 29.4 per cent (Table 5).

201. The State Guarantees of Equal Rights and Equal Opportunities for Women and Men Act guarantees women and men equal rights to safe working conditions.

202. Under article 1 of the Act, gender discrimination is defined as the restriction or denial of rights and opportunities or the belittling of a person's dignity on the grounds of sex.

203. Under article 6 of the Act, discrimination on the grounds of sex does not include the following: the protection of maternity and paternity; distinctions, exclusions, preferences and limitations at work motivated by the characteristics of the type of work concerned or by special State concerns for certain persons in need of social or legal protection, as established by the legislation of Turkmenistan; the establishment of professional qualification requirements based on the ability of only one sex to perform the duties in question; and others.

204. Based on the provisions of that article of the Act and on article 242 of the Labour Code, an order issued by the Minister of Labour and Social Welfare of Turkmenistan in August 2016, in coordination with the State Standards Service (*Turkmenstandartlary*), and the Ministry of Health and the Medical Industry of Turkmenistan, approved the norms for the maximum permissible loads for women involved in lifting and moving heavy loads by hand.

205. In the development of those standards, various factors were taken into account, including: high physical stress; awkward postures imposed by the work, which could lead to pathological changes in the body of a young worker; vibration from equipment and tools; adverse temperature conditions (high and low temperature of the air and the environment); underground work; the possible impact of industrial poisons (lead, arsenic, phosphorus and others), dust, x-rays, ionizing radiation and electromagnetic fields; significant mental stress; and increased risk of injury associated with the peculiarities of the work.

206. Currently, in accordance with article 243 of the Labour Code, work is under way to develop a list of jobs, occupations and posts involving harmful and hazardous (extremely harmful and extremely hazardous) working conditions, in which the employment of women is restricted. The list will take into account the limits on lifting and moving heavy objects by hand by women, as well as harmful

and dangerous (chemical, physical and biological) production factors, and the severity and intensity of the work process. Information on the approval process for the list will be presented later.

207. Under with the labour legislation of Turkmenistan, it is permitted to recruit women with children under the age of fourteen (disabled child — up to 18 years of age), with their written consent, for night work, overtime work, work on days off and on public holidays and commemoration days, and for work involving business trips. At the same time, with their written consent, women with children under the age of three years (disabled child — up to 18 years) may be recruited for shift work. Under earlier labour legislation, such employment was banned.

208. It should be noted that a woman should be apprised in writing of her right to refuse to be recruited for such work.

209. Under article 25 of the Social Protection Code of Turkmenistan. a new procedure was established for granting the right of workers to a job-related pension. In accordance with the established procedure, both men and women employed full-time in jobs subject to special working conditions, depending on the degree of hazard and/or the severity of the conditions of work, are entitled to a job-related pension with a reduction of 6 to 10 years in the retirement age set in the Old-age Pension Code, if they participate in the mandatory pension and professional insurance.

210. The assignment of jobs to work under special working conditions is carried out on the basis of the results of the certification of workplaces in accordance with the law.

211. The list of jobs, occupations and posts involving special working conditions (including those for the previous period), as well as the number of years of reduction in the retirement age of persons working in such work, is approved by an act of the President of Turkmenistan.

212. Presidential Decree No. 10732 of 25 December 2009 established the list of jobs, occupations and posts involving harmful and hazardous (extremely harmful and extremely hazardous) working conditions, which entitles individuals working in the jobs on the list to retire on favourable terms.

213. The latest session of the Mejlis of Turkmenistan, held on 18 June 2016, adopted the Employment Act of Turkmenistan, which established the main directions of the State employment policy. The preparation of the Act took into account the norms stipulated by the Conventions of the International Labour Organization on employment promotion and protection against unemployment and on benefits for persons who have been unemployed for reasons beyond their control.

214. Under article 6 of the Act, every State citizen is guaranteed the freedom to choose, at his or her own discretion, a profession, type of work and place of work. Workers are also guaranteed healthy and safe working conditions, equal rights and opportunities to prepare for a profession, remuneration corresponding to the quantity and quality of their labour, promotion in their posts, and the provision, through proposals by employers, of suitable employment for young professionals who were sent out by their employers for training and for graduates of educational institutions of the basic, second-level and higher vocational and professional education levels.

215. The Act provides for legal protection against any form of discrimination, unjustified refusal of employment, illegal dismissal or termination of an employment contract, unemployment protection, and assistance in vocational training, retraining and advanced training for the unemployed and persons seeking more suitable employment. For the purposes of social security and improving the competitiveness in the labour market of the unemployed and those seeking a more suitable job, a significant section in the legislation on employment is devoted to issues relating to assisting workers to obtain training, retraining and advanced training.

216. The Employment Act of Turkmenistan also ensures that unemployed citizens may receive unemployment benefits under the appropriate circumstances and conditions. In order to implement that guarantee, the establishment by the year 2017 of a State fund to promote employment is planned, whose structure and rules for the distribution of funds has been approved by the Cabinet of Ministers of Turkmenistan.

217. In January 2015, the National Action Plan on gender equality in Turkmenistan for 2015-2020 was approved by a presidential order, with a view to creating the necessary conditions for the further expansion of women's participation in all spheres of public life and society.

218. In May 2015 the Programme to improve the range of employment opportunities and create new jobs in Turkmenistan for 2015-2020 and the Action Plan for the implementation of the Programme were approved by presidential order.

219. In 2015, more than 80,000 people, 29 per cent of them women, registered in public employment agencies. The proportion of employed people has tended to grow — from 58 per cent in 2011 to 92.1 per cent in 2015. A positive trend is also seen in the employment of women. Thus, the share of employed women in 2015 constituted 89.3 per cent of the total number of women registered versus 50 per cent in 2011 (Table 6).

220. In order to implement the Social Protection Code of Turkmenistan and the Employment Act of Turkmenistan in order to promote the employment of citizens in special need of social protection, the Minister of Labour and Social Protection approved regulations in January 2016 governing the system of quotas at enterprises for jobs for persons with disabilities whose individual rehabilitation programme includes a recommendation for work, and for single parents and parents with numerous children and those with minor children or disabled children.

221. In addition, at the meeting of the Cabinet of Ministers of Turkmenistan held on 14 October 2016, President Gurbanguly Berdimuhamedov signed an order approving the Action Plan on ensuring the full realization of the rights of persons with disabilities to work and employment for the years 2017-2020. The implementation of the Plan rests with the Ministry, its branch offices, the provincial local governments (*khyakimlik*) and the city of Ashgabat. Also, measures will be taken to expand the opportunities for the self-employment and entrepreneurial activities of such persons so that they can run their own businesses. The document was prepared in conformity with the Convention on the Rights of Persons with Disabilities, ratified by Turkmenistan. It focuses on the social and labour rehabilitation of persons with disabilities and the realization of their creative possibilities. That again shows the work being carried out by the State to ensure the social protection of people.

Table 1
Structure of employment in the Turkmen economy, disaggregated by sex and economic sector

(in percentages)

<i>Sectors</i>	<i>2015</i>		
	<i>Total</i>	<i>By sex:</i>	
		<i>men</i>	<i>women</i>
Turkmenistan — total	100	100	100
– Agriculture, forestry and fishing	24.1	5.6	43.6
– Mining and quarry work	1.6	2.6	0.5
– Manufacturing	12.8	14.5	11.1
– Electrical power, gas, steam and air conditioning	1.2	1.9	0.4
– Water supply, purification, waste processing and extraction of recyclable materials	0.5	0.8	0.2
– Construction	9.3	15.2	3.0
– Wholesale and retail trade; car and motorcycle repair	8.6	9.8	7.3
– Transportation and warehousing	5.1	7.0	3.2
– Hotels and restaurants	1.1	1.2	1.0
– Information and communications	1.9	2.4	1.4
– Finance and insurance	0.7	0.8	0.5
– Real estate	1.6	1.9	1.3
– Professional, scientific and technical work	1.4	2.0	0.8
– Administrative and support activities	1.4	1.9	0.9
– State administration and defence; obligatory social insurance	2.1	3.2	0.9
– Education	13.1	14.5	11.6
– Health care and social services	5.9	6.3	5.3
– Art, entertainment and leisure	4.1	4.6	3.6
– Other service activities	3.7	3.7	3.6

Table 2
Structure of the workforce in large and medium-sized enterprises, disaggregated by sex and type of job*

(2015 data, in percentages)

<i>Type of job</i>	<i>By sex</i>		
	<i>Total</i>	<i>men</i>	<i>women</i>
Total of those who worked the entire month of November	100.0	59.7	40.3
Including:			
Legislators, senior professionals, managers (heads) of public agencies and management at all levels, including heads of enterprises	100.0	75.7	24.3

<i>Type of job</i>	<i>By sex</i>		
	<i>Total</i>	<i>men</i>	<i>women</i>
Experts	100.0	47.0	53.0
Professional and support staff	100.0	40.5	59.5
Staff involved in preparing information, documentation, accounting and information support	100.0	35.7	64.3
Service staff, housing and communal services, trade and related activities	100.0	64.0	36.0
Skilled workers in agriculture, forestry, hunting, fishing and fish-farming	100.0	79.0	21.0
Skilled workers in large and small industrial enterprises, artistic companies, construction, transportation, communications, geology and oil prospecting, workers in related professions	100.0	85.8	14.2
Drivers, equipment operators, mechanics operating machine tools, assemblers	100.0	91.3	8.7
Unskilled workers	100.0	48.3	51.7

* Based on the results of a one-off survey (in November).

Table 3
Average salaries in large and medium-sized enterprises disaggregated by sex and type of activity

(based on the results of a one-off survey)

(in manats)

<i>Sectors</i>	<i>2014</i>			<i>2015</i>		
	<i>Total</i>	<i>By sex:</i>		<i>Total</i>	<i>By sex:</i>	
		<i>men</i>	<i>women</i>		<i>men</i>	<i>women</i>
Turkmenistan — total	1 051.7	1 114.6	956.6	1 150.2	1 215.3	1 053.5
– Agriculture, forestry and fishing	899.7	907.5	850.9	978.4	986.8	925.3
– Mining and quarry work	1 493.3	1 546.8	1 015.0	1 659.9	1 714.4	1 111.7
– Manufacturing	922.2	993.5	799.2	1 028.0	1 091.0	915.6
– Electric power, gas, steam and air conditioning	1 044.0	1 069.7	930.3	1 138.0	1 164.9	1 014.3
– Water supply, purification, waste processing and extraction of recyclable materials	1 007.3	1 015.9	966.9	1 103.5	1 116.1	1 044.0
– Construction	1 086.0	1 109.4	854.0	1 133.7	1 155.0	921.4
– Wholesale and retail trade; car and motorcycle repair	780.4	846.3	643.6	842.8	904.9	707.5
– Transportation and warehousing	1 177.2	1 225.5	920.5	1 279.2	1 327.4	1 011.9
– Hotels and restaurants	983.6	1 036.4	945.3	1 069.5	1 156.4	1 008.7
– Information and communications	1 041.2	1 076.3	985.3	1 118.7	1 149.6	1 069.0
– Finance and insurance	1 245.0	1 297.5	1 192.0	1 350.0	1 411.5	1 289.1
– Real estate	900.0	938.9	832.7	976.6	998.7	937.2

Sectors	2014			2015		
	Total	By sex:		Total	By sex:	
		men	women		men	women
– Professional, scientific and technical activities	1 302.1	1 382.7	1 143.9	1 376.2	1 461.5	1 207.5
– Administrative and support activities	910.5	971.0	829.7	1 001.1	1 073.5	903.7
– State administration and defence; obligatory social insurance	1 317.8	1 407.9	1 001.2	1 449.8	1 547.7	1 098.0
– Education	1 048.6	1 096.4	1 025.6	1 165.9	1 248.2	1 126.7
– Health care and social services	1 008.6	1 090.7	977.7	1 096.2	1 166.2	1 070.7
– Art, entertainment and leisure	892.5	956.6	809.9	965.9	1 019.9	896.8
– Other service activities	857.5	907.2	794.4	974.6	1 026.5	902.6

Table 4
Women's wages and salaries as a percentage of men's in large and medium-sized enterprises, disaggregated by type of work*

(percentages)

Type of work	2015
All those who worked the entire month of November	86.7
Including:	
Legislators, senior professionals, managers (heads) of public agencies and management at all levels, including heads of enterprises	90.9
Experts	91.1
Professional and support staff	90.3
Staff involved in preparing information, documentation, accounting and information support	89.2
Service staff, housing and communal services, trade personnel and related activities	75.5
Skilled workers in agriculture, forestry, hunting, fishing and fish-farming	93.3
Skilled workers in large and small industrial enterprises, artistic companies, construction, transportation, communications, geology and oil prospecting, workers in related professions	66.5
Drivers, equipment operators, mechanics operating machine tools, assemblers	86.6
Unskilled workers	83.9

* Based on the results of a one-off survey (in November).

Table 5
Data from a study on the workforce in households

(in percentages)

Indicators	2015
Proportion of the labour force working in the informal sector	7.5
Proportion of women in that group	29.3

<i>Indicators</i>	<i>2015</i>
Proportion of the labour force working in the informal sector living in rural areas	9.7
Proportion of women in that group	29.4

Table 6
Number of women registered and working, as reported by the employment agencies of Turkmenistan

(thousands of people)

<i>Years</i>	<i>2011</i>	<i>2012</i>	<i>2013</i>	<i>2014</i>	<i>2015</i>
Total registered people	103.6	86.5	84.0	78.2	80.3
Number of women in that group	27.4	24.8	23.3	20.3	23.3
Proportion of women in the number of registered people (%)	26.4	28.7	27.7	25.9	29.0
Total people who have obtained work	60.3	61.1	71.7	72.5	74.0
Number of women in that group	13.7	14.5	17.7	18.4	20.8
Proportion of women with work out of the group of women registered (%)	50.0	58.5	76.0	90.6	89.3
Proportion of women among those who have obtained work (%)	22.7	23.7	24.7	25.4	28.1

Health care

222. The legal framework: the State Health Programme (2015); national programmes and strategies: Protection of reproductive health for 2011-2015; Protection of the health of mothers, newborns, children and adolescents in Turkmenistan for 2015-2019; Strengthening perinatal assistance for 2014-2018, Combating malignant tumours of the breast and cervical cancer in mothers, National Action Plan on the Minimum initial service package in times of humanitarian crisis; the Framework for introducing developmental paediatrics and a national early-intervention service in Turkmenistan and the Action Plan for 2015-2020; and orders issued by the Ministry of Health and the Medical Industry of Turkmenistan.

223. The Reproductive Health Service includes reproductive health centres for women, men and adolescents.

224. Services are provided on three levels: trained family doctors in rural health centres and 104 reproductive health offices, 6 regional centres and the National Reproductive Health Centre.

225. The population can obtain family-planning services, means of contraception, and advice and information materials on reproductive health. Ten brands of contraceptives are included in the list of essential medicines.

226. Under the Memorandum of Understanding between the Government of Turkmenistan and UNFPA (2013), the country will, by 2017, fully switch to Government procurement of modern contraceptives.

227. The CHANNEL management software enables the National Reproductive Health Centre to monitor in real time the use of methods and types of contraceptives, evaluate the availability of a sufficient level of reserves across the country (UNFPA support), make annual orders and distribute materials to the regions. This system is available in 83 per cent of the family-planning service offices.

228. In order to improve the health of expectant mothers, a new tool was introduced in 2013 for assessing the quality of the services provided in the field of family planning, groups at risk were defined, a new accounting form for the sector was introduced, as well as an indicator that determines the level of contraceptive prevalence among high-risk women. A medical passport for the reproductive health of mothers was introduced.

229. In 2015, an assessment was carried out of the level of the integration of family-planning services, antenatal care, obstetrics, sexually transmitted diseases, reproductive health services for adolescents, and the detection of cervical cancer.

230. Distance education on family planning was introduced in the State Medical University. Two employees of the University studied this method of teaching during training in Romania.

231. Contraceptives are not used in Turkmenistan for birth control but to improve health, including the reproductive health of women at risk. Contraceptive prevalence among that group of women rose 21 per cent (2013) to 69 per cent (2015).

Table

Proportion of women using contraceptives, 2010-2015

(In percentages)

	2010	2011	2012	2013	2014	2015
Proportion of women using contraceptives (in percentages)	34.0	32.6	29.2	27.0	25.4	25.0
Proportion of women at risk using contraceptives (in percentages)				21.0	48.0	69.0

232. During the period 2010-2015, the abortion rate dropped by 25 per cent in all age groups: up to 20 years of age — 22 per cent; 20-34 years old — 18 per cent; 35 years and older — 47 per cent.

Table

Number of abortions among women of childbearing age, 2010-2015, cases

	2010	2011	2012	2013	2014	2015
Overall number of abortions	15 306	16 273	18 270	11 641	12 082	11 465
By age:						
Up to 20 years old	1 028	1 250	1 067	828	802	798
From 20 to 34 years old	10 921	11 696	13 049	8 777	9 301	8 903
35 and older	3 357	3 327	4 154	2 036	1 979	1 764

233. A study on the implementation of the National Strategy for the prevention of cervical and breast cancer, developed in partnership with UNFPA, was carried out in 2013 in the assistance of a WHO expert, Lawrence von Karsa, of the International Agency for Research on Cancer in Lyon, France. It showed that the country has a well-functioning system for the early detection of breast cancer.

234. That was confirmed by the results of the STEPS risk factors survey, conducted using the methodology of and with the assistance of WHO in 2013-2014. “The percentage of women aged 30-49 years who have ever undergone a screening for cervical cancer” was 62 per cent.

235. In 2015, 19 specialists were trained in Israel in the fields of cytology and histopathology and received training in colposcopy for screening for cervical cancer.

236. In 2016, the country introduced the immunization of boys and girls as young as 9 years of age against human papillomavirus.

237. A survey of the availability and accessibility (affordability) of contraceptives in reproductive health facilities and the pharmacy network (2013) showed that modern contraceptive methods are generally available in public and private health facilities, most of which offer at least three contraceptive methods.

238. The reduction in mortality and morbidity among women was the result of the State Policy on the strengthening of health systems and the empowerment of women, improvements in socioeconomic conditions, the quality of services in maternity facilities, and ongoing work to improve the health of women of childbearing age.

239. Over the past five years, the WHO standards have been included in the national clinical protocols (over 30 of them) and guidelines, which are followed by more than 70 per cent of the maternity hospitals across the country. They have been introduced into the curriculum of the medical university. Clinical interventions have been updated in accordance with the latest achievements of science and international guidelines, and effective perinatal technologies have been introduced.

240. The widespread use of effective perinatal technologies has made it possible to reduce prenatal and postpartum bleeding and late gestosis. The frequency of Caesarean sections in 2015 as a back-up technique for reducing the perinatal and maternal mortality rate was 9.5 per cent, which did not exceed the indicators recommended by WHO (15 per cent). In many facilities, neonatal mortality decreased; there was a reduction in the number of radical obstetric interventions and the use of blood products, all of which resulted in a decrease in the expenditures on drugs.

241. According to data from the Ministry of Health and the Medical Industry, the maternal mortality rate declined by half over the five year period, and in 2015, was 3.0 per 100,000 live births. The main causes of maternal deaths were direct obstetric causes: pregnancy-related haemorrhaging and hypertension, and non-communicable diseases.

Table
Maternal death rate, 2010-2015

	2010	2011	2012	2013	2014	2015
Maternal death rate per 100,000 live births	6.9	5.9	3.8	3.1	3.0	3.0

Maternal death rate per 100 000 live births



Table
Proportion of live births accompanied by qualified obstetric assistance, 2010-2015

(In percentages)

	2010	2011	2012	2013	2014	2015
Proportion of live births accompanied by qualified obstetric assistance	99.9	99.9	99.9	99.9	99.9	99.9

242. Almost all births take place in maternity facilities and with the participation of qualified personnel, and the proportion of such births is high and stable: 99.9 per cent. The proportion of home births is 0.1 per cent of all births.

243. Evaluations of the implementation of the National Programme for safe motherhood were conducted by the Ministry of Health and the Medical Industry in 2009, 2011 and 2012 respectively, with the support of UNFPA, UNICEF and WHO, and they have revealed progress, while identifying areas where work needs to be continued.

244. Starting in 2014, regional organization was introduced and a 3-tier perinatal service was established; perinatal centres are also equipped with the necessary equipment and specialized vehicles; various schemes/algorithms have been devised for use by family doctors and obstetrician-gynaecologists in dealing with obstetric emergencies.

245. The WHO technique for analysing critical obstetric cases has been introduced and was used to analyse 30 critical cases in 5 pilot etraps (districts) in 2015.

246. In 2015, seminars for obstetrician-gynaecologists and statisticians on the classification of preventable maternal mortality were held in Ashgabat and five provinces, reaching 120 specialists.
247. Nine clinical protocols were developed for the most frequently requested topics in neonatal care and resuscitation, and doctors and nurses have been trained to follow those protocols.
248. Twenty-one specialists were trained in data collection for use with the BABIES Matrix and as a tool for improving the quality of neonatal services.
249. Managers and health professionals visited the Republic of Moldova to study that country's experience with the introduction of regionalization.
250. In order to increase public awareness, including that of children and adolescents, on reproductive health and sexually transmitted infections and HIV/AIDS, the Health Information Centre has been carrying out educational activities, distributing informational materials in the Turkmen and Russian languages to health-care facilities, educational institutions, factories, shopping malls and airplanes.
251. In collaboration with UNFPA, informational campaigns have been set up among teenagers on a "peer to peer" basis, and two youth centres have been opened in the cities of Ashgabat and Mary.
252. With the support of UNDP information materials were purchased for training centres.
253. Specialists on student health have been conducting interviews with university students, high-school students and military medics.
254. Young people call the "hot line" in the Health Information Centre for a free consultation with youth psychologist and a gynaecologist.
255. An Information Resource Centre for women at risk owing to their behaviour has been operating since 2007 in collaboration with UNFPA. The Centre is part of the National Centre for AIDS Prevention and receives financial support from UNDP.
256. Contraceptives can be ordered and are distributed free through AIDS prevention services, dermatological and sexually-transmitted-disease services, antenatal clinics and reproductive health centres.
257. In 2015, the National Centre presented 485 educational activities, 157 speeches, 888 lectures, 1,281 dialogues, 216 seminars and 485 round tables, reaching 31,926 people.
258. Every year, on 1 December — World AIDS Day — as part of the worldwide campaign in December, wide-ranging information activities are held across the country for various population groups under the banner "Let's unite to fight HIV infection", including various actions, drawing competitions, video screenings, skits, and so forth.
259. In their classes on "Basics of Life Safety" students learn about HIV/AIDS, sexually transmitted diseases (STDs), reproductive health and healthy lifestyles. Teachers teaching the subject attend seminars on HIV/AIDS/STD prevention. Teachers in the regions who teach this subject also attend seminars. With the help of

the National Red Crescent Society of Turkmenistan, 1692 instructors received this training in 2015.

260. The international sampling survey entitled “Health Behaviour in School-aged Children”, which targeted school-age children 15 years of age (2011) and students 13 and 17 years of age (2013), included a module on reproductive health, asking students about the fundamentals of healthy behaviour and their information sources. Among the 15 and 17-year-old respondents, 84 per cent responded that they had been taught about the dangers of the human immunodeficiency virus (HIV) and sexually transmitted diseases (STDs). More than three quarters of the respondents said that they had been informed in school of the dangers of early pregnancy; girls, as would be expected, remembered those lessons more often. Ninety-five per cent of them referred to the fact that they had been taught the basics of a healthy lifestyle.

Women in detention

261. Places of detention are under the constant supervision of the Supervisory Commission of the Prisons Department of the Ministry of Internal Affairs of Turkmenistan, which periodically visits prisoners and is concerned about their situation and their conditions of detention.

262. The Regulations on the monitoring commissions were approved by presidential order on 31 March 2010. In accordance with a plan approved annually, the commissions conduct visits to places of detention. During 2015 and the first six months of 2016, nine visits took place.

263. The Supervisory Commission monitors compliance with the law by the correctional institutions and compliance with the rules on the procedures followed and the conditions of detention of prisoners, on the provision of appropriate living and sanitary conditions for prisoners, on the involvement of prisoners in socially useful work, on the provision of medical assistance to prisoners, on compliance with the legislation on the early release of prisoners, on the replacement of the remainder of a prisoner’s term of punishment with a milder punishment, as well as on the organization and provision of prisoner visits by relatives and other persons, and others.

264. Occupancy in places of detention is set according to a limit that conforms to the rules for the containment of prisoners.

265. The Dashoguz Correctional Facility for Women, which is situated in the Dashoguz *velayat* (province), is designed to hold 2500 prisoners. Currently, this facility is almost 90 per cent full. It is the only correctional facility for women, and a new building was put into operation in October 2013. The facility conforms fully to international standards. That was verified by the head of the OSCE in Ashgabat, Mr. Yves Petrov, on 19 August 2014, who visited this facility, and by heads of diplomatic missions accredited in Turkmenistan, namely, Great Britain (Ms. Lyn Smith), the United States of America (Mr. Alan Mustard), Germany (Mr. Ralph Breeta), France (Mr. Patrick Pascal) and the heads of UNDP in Turkmenistan (Ms. Jacinta Barens) and the Ashgabat office of the European Union (Mr. Denis Danilidis) during their visit to the women’s correctional facility, which took place on 28 September 2015. Representatives of the International Committee of the Red

Cross (ICRC) — Christoph Sutter, Igor Lobzhanidze and Marcel Gabbazov, who are experts from the ICRC Regional Office for Central Asia — also visited the facility on 17 July 2014 and gave it a very positive assessment.

266. The total area of the facility is 90 hectares. The State allocated \$285,585,000 for its construction.

267. In this facility, the living-space norm per prisoner is a minimum of five square metres.

268. The premises used by female prisoners and all sleeping accommodations and sanitary facilities meet all sanitary and hygienic requirements and are appropriate for the climate conditions of Turkmenistan.

269. In addition to the main buildings of the facility, a separate complex has been set up for the care of pregnant women and their children. There, pregnant women and women in childbirth and in the postpartum period receive specialized care. The correctional facility has a children's home in a dedicated building, where mothers with children up to three years old live together.

270. Under article 8, paragraph 2, of the Correctional Code, prisoners are entitled to courteous treatment from the staff in the interest of strengthening their self-esteem and their awareness of their responsibility. They are not to be subjected to torture or to cruel, inhuman or degrading treatment, irrespective of any consent they might give, and cannot be subjected to medical or other experiments that endanger their lives and health.

271. In connection with the prevention of the torture and ill-treatment of female prisoners in the facility, it should be noted that surveillance cameras and audio recording devices have been set up in the facility.

272. Furthermore, measures needed to prevent violence in the facility have been adopted in accordance with the requirements of the Guidelines on the organization of the protection and control of prisoners in correctional facilities, which were issued by the Ministry of Internal Affairs of Turkmenistan on 21 May 2013.

273. Under article 11 of the Correctional Code of Turkmenistan, prisoners may submit proposals, statements and complaints, including on issues related to the violation of their rights and legitimate interests. The proposals, statements and complaints may be oral or written. They are considered without delay by the administration of the body responsible for the enforcement of sentences.

274. Prisoners have the right to provide explanations and to make proposals, statements and complaints in their native language or any other language they speak, using the services of an interpreter if necessary and in accordance with established procedures, and they are entitled to psychological assistance provided by the staff psychologists of the correctional facilities and by other persons authorized to provide such assistance.

275. The offices and officials to whom proposals, statements and complaints are addressed must consider them within the deadlines established by the law and inform prisoners of any decisions taken.

276. During 2015 and the 6 months of 2016 the Ministry of Internal Affairs of Turkmenistan received nine allegations from relatives of prisoners serving sentences

in the Dashoguz Correctional Facility for Women (DZ-K/8) concerning the ill-treatment of their prisoner relatives by prison staff. Each statement was investigated, and in none of the cases were the alleged facts of ill-treatment of prisoners by staff confirmed.

277. Training sessions are regularly held for employees who work directly with female prisoners, including doctors and guards, so as to ensure equal, dignified and safe treatment of all female detainees. The training programmes providing professional and combat training for the personnel of specialized agencies include topics on the gender-sensitive aspects of dealing with female prisoners.

278. Furthermore, the leadership of the Institute of the Ministry of Internal Affairs of Turkmenistan, where future penitentiary staff are trained, specifically the department of specialized agencies, has been given the task of revising and supplementing the topics in criminal and penal law in the curriculum, with a view to including topics devoted to the gender-specific requirements of working with female prisoners.

Article 16

Marriage and family relations

279. Under article 15 of the Family Code of Turkmenistan (10 January 2012) the age of consent to marriage is set at eighteen years. In exceptional cases, when there are valid reasons, the guardianship authorities may, at the request of the persons wishing to marry, lower the marriageable age, but by no more than one year. Under article 16 of the Code, a marriage may be concluded only with the free and mutual consent of the persons wishing to marry, when they reach the marriageable age.

280. Men and women of marriageable age are entitled to marry in order to establish a family, regardless of their race, nationality or religion. They are entitled to equal rights when entering into marriage, during marriage and upon its dissolution.

281. The Criminal Code of Turkmenistan (revised on 10 May 2010) has made polygamy a crime.

282. Polygamy, that is, cohabitation with two or more women within a single household, is punishable by a fine of from twenty to thirty times the average monthly wage, or correctional labour for up to two years (article 163 of the Criminal Code).

283. Under the Family Code of Turkmenistan, the goal of the family law of Turkmenistan is to establish the legal framework for the State policy on the protection and preservation of the family and the provision of care for the family by creating the conditions for economic independence and growth in the welfare of all of its members. The Code also seeks to ensure the payment of government benefits to families, organize the protection of their health, create conditions making it possible for parents to reconcile their work with their family responsibilities, develop domestic infrastructure, as well as implement the State policy on the protection and protection of the family, motherhood, fatherhood and childhood.

284. One of the main goals of the family legislation of Turkmenistan is to build family relations around the voluntary marital union of a man and a woman, based on

the equal rights of each spouse in the family, feelings of mutual love and respect, mutual understanding, mutual support and responsibility to the family on the part of all its members.

285. Article 6 of the Family Code provides for the application of the family and civil legislation of Turkmenistan to family relations by analogy.

286. If the relations between family members are not regulated by the family legislation of Turkmenistan or by an agreement between the parties, and in the absence of the norms of civil law directly governing those relations, the norms of family and/or civil law regulating similar relations (analogy of law) apply, provided that such application does not contradict the substance of those norm.

287. In the absence of such legal norms, the responsibilities of the members of the family shall be based on general principles and the principles of family or civil law (analogy of law).

288. The prosecuting authorities of Turkmenistan have not received any complaints, statements or reports about the infringement of the interests of women on the grounds of their sex or about cases of violence against women and girls.

289. Work has begun and is going forward to increase public awareness, especially among young people, with regard to equality in the family and marriage relations. Seminars and round tables have been held, in collaboration with the Women's Union, for the benefit of specialists from the *Mejlis* of Turkmenistan and representatives of the National Presidential Institute for Democracy and Human Rights, the Ministry of Health and the Medical Industry of Turkmenistan, Turkmen trade unions and the Makhtumkuli Youth Union of Turkmenistan.

Compilation of data

290. The State statistical system is continuing its transition to international standards, in accordance with the Programme for the development of the economic, financial and banking system of Turkmenistan for 2012-2016, approved by presidential order No. 12429 of 6 July 2012. The Programme provides for the coordination of the statistical work of the State statistical agencies and the departments, the improvement of the quality of the statistical information produced, the introduction into the country's statistical practice of the principles, indicators and methods accepted in international statistical practice, the development of internationally comparable statistical indicators that show to the fullest extent the development of society, and the continued implementation in the country's statistical work of modern technical and technological means for the collection, processing and transmission of data.

291. Bearing in mind international practice in accounting and statistics, the Turkmen Statistical Bureau (TurkmenStat) has developed a set of methodical and methodological projects in the field of social statistics and statistics on the standard of living, employment, investment, services, the non-State sector of the economy and other areas of statistics. Currently, work is continuing to improve the methodology and organization of a sample survey on household budgets and a labour force survey to be conducted on a quarterly basis. TurkmenStat is broadening the use of one-off sample surveys. The use of modern data-coding methods makes it

possible to compare the national statistical database with the data bases of the international community. Currently, the statistical accounting of Turkmenistan uses 22 classifiers. Of them, 12 qualifiers are based on international standards, and the rest are based on the laws and regulations of Turkmenistan.

292. In accordance with the National Plan to implement the Beijing Declaration and Platform for Action in the system of accounting and statistics of Turkmenistan, work has been going on for several years to redesign the reports containing the indicators of gender differences.

293. The introduction of the new indicators has required new methods for their preparation. The State Committee of Turkmenistan on Statistics (Goskomstat) has classified the existing indicators and developed a System of indicators on gender statistics, which takes into account national and regional specificities.

294. Besides the traditionally used indicators for assessing, mainly, the status of women, new indicators that characterize many aspects of the activities of men and women have been introduced into the System.

295. Turkmenistan cooperates fully with the United Nations and is taking concrete steps to implement the key objectives of the Global Agenda. Turkmenistan fully supports that document, and now work is proceeding on the adaptation of the SDGs. Systematic consultations are under way with the representatives of the country's ministries and departments and the specialized agencies of the United Nations. A joint technical working group has been formed to agree on goals and objectives, which will be adapted by Turkmenistan in accordance with the country's development priorities. Work will proceed in phases with the goals of developing strategies and targeted sectoral plans for the socioeconomic development of Turkmenistan in the context of achieving the SDGs, and for the definition of statistical methods to measure progress in their implementation.

296. Indicators have been developed to monitor the implementation of the National Action Plan on gender equality in Turkmenistan for the 2015-2020 period.
