



**International Convention on  
the Elimination  
of all Forms of  
Racial Discrimination**

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COMMITTEE ON THE ELIMINATION  
OF RACIAL DISCRIMINATION

**REPORTS SUBMITTED BY STATES PARTIES UNDER  
ARTICLE 9 OF THE CONVENTION**

**Comments by the Government of Turkmenistan to the  
concluding observations of the Committee on the  
Elimination of Racial Discrimination\***

[23 January 2008]

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\* In accordance with the information transmitted to States parties regarding the processing of their reports, the present document was not formally edited before being sent to the United Nations translation services.

## **Supplementary report of Turkmenistan**

### **Context**

1. Multi-candidate presidential elections were held for the first time in Turkmenistan in February 2007, with the participation of international observers, during which Gurbanguly Berdymukhammedov was elected as head of State. The Government of Turkmenistan has made cooperation with international organizations, especially the United Nations, a foreign policy priority and expressed its commitment to fulfil its international obligations. In this respect, it welcomes open and constructive dialogue with United Nations treaty bodies, including the Committee on the Elimination of Racial Discrimination.
2. From its first days in office, the new Government has embarked on a course towards the development of democratic processes, the establishment of civil society and comprehensive major reforms in the area of education, health, social security and law enforcement as well as improvement in the welfare of persons living in rural areas.
3. The Government actively entered into constructive dialogue with the Office of the High Commissioner for Human Rights (OHCHR) in 2007. The United Nations High Commissioner for Human Rights, Louise Arbour, visited Turkmenistan in May 2007. In March 2007 the Government invited the Special Rapporteur on freedom of religion or belief for a visit, which is scheduled to take place in mid-2008. A joint OHCHR/UNDP (United Nations Development Programme) project on "Building of reporting capacities in Turkmenistan" initiated by the Government is now being successfully implemented. This project was launched in May 2007.
4. The Government is cooperating with OHCHR, the European Commission and UNDP on a joint project to strengthen the national capacity of Turkmenistan in the promotion and protection of human rights for 2008-2009 to promote constructive dialogue on human rights protection, further development of democratic processes and timely preparation of national reports.
5. An interdepartmental commission on ensuring Turkmenistan's compliance with its international human rights obligations has been established to foster the effective implementation of international legal standards and provisions of the human rights conventions and the timely submission of national reports to United Nations treaty bodies. The commission is a standing advisory body established for the purpose of coordinating the efforts of ministries, State committees, departments and executive bodies at the level of the community, enterprise, institution or organization to fulfil Turkmenistan's international human rights obligations.
6. The statute and composition of the interdepartmental commission were approved by Presidential order on 24 August 2007.
7. The commission's tasks include:
  - (a) Coordinating the activities of the relevant bodies responsible for implementing international human rights obligations;
  - (b) Preparing national reports on the status of implementation of international human rights agreements for submission to international organizations;

(c) Monitoring compliance of domestic legislation with international human rights standards;

(d) Drafting proposals to bring the legislation of Turkmenistan into line with the provisions of international human rights agreements to which Turkmenistan is a party;

(e) Promoting interaction and cooperation between State authorities, civil society and international organizations in the field of human rights;

(f) Publishing and disseminating national reports.

8. The National Institute for Democracy and Human Rights in the office of the President coordinates the preparation of national reports.

9. The interdepartmental commission approved its long-term action plan at its first meeting, which included monitoring the consistency of Turkmenistan's existing legislation with international standards, drafting proposals on the application of international standards at the national level, preparing a draft national human rights programme and scheduling the drafting of national reports on the status of implementation of human rights conventions for submission to United Nations treaty bodies. The deadlines for submission of the relevant national reports have been negotiated with the OHCHR regional office and take into account actual capabilities (the schedule for the submission of national reports is annexed).

10. A working group of experts has been established in accordance with the statute of the interdepartmental commission, which approved regulations governing the working group at one of its meetings.

11. The commission is actively engaged in dialogue with the OHCHR regional office and UNDP.

12. Among the commission's activities, members of the commission and working group held two round-table discussions with international experts: on international and national human rights systems on 5 October 2007, with Ms. Irina Liczek, chief technical adviser of the UNDP/OHCHR treaty body reporting project; and on preparing national reports on the status of implementation of the International Covenant on Economic, Social and Cultural Rights from 13 to 15 November, with the international expert Mr. A. Tikhonov.

13. Meetings and consultations were held on two occasions (28 August and 5 December) with the representative of the OHCHR regional office, Ms. Matilda Bogner.

14. Consultations are held on an ongoing basis with the chief technical adviser of the UNDP/OHCHR project, Ms. Liczek.

15. On 28 November 2007 the President signed a decree on the establishment of a State commission to update the country's legislation for the purpose of strengthening the foundations of the rule of law, furthering democratization, improving the legal basis for the political, social, economic, scientific and cultural reforms taking place in the country and bringing domestic

legislation into line with generally recognized international legal standards. In pursuance of the decree, the interdepartmental commission on ensuring compliance with Turkmenistan's international human rights obligations is working on a plan to update human rights legislation in accordance with the provisions of international conventions.

16. The Government of Turkmenistan was informed that the next periodic report on the implementation of the Convention on the Elimination of All Forms of Racial Discrimination was due on 29 October 2007. In the light of actual circumstances and with the agreement of the OHCHR regional office, the schedule for the submission of reports to United Nations treaty bodies has been approved as follows:

- (a) Common core document in mid-2008;
- (b) Universal periodic review in September 2008;
- (c) Initial report on the status of implementation of the International Covenant on Economic, Social and Cultural Rights at the end of 2008;
- (d) Initial report on the status of implementation of the International Covenant on Civil and Political Rights at the end of 2009;
- (e) Initial report on the status of implementation of the Convention against Torture and Other Cruel, Inhuman or Degrading Treatment or Punishment at the end of 2009;
- (f) Sixth and seventh reports on the status of implementation of the International Convention on the Elimination of All Forms of Racial Discrimination in mid-2010;
- (g) Periodic report on the implementation of the Convention on the Elimination of All Forms of Discrimination against Women by the end of 2010;
- (h) Periodic report on implementation of the Convention on the Rights of the Child at the end of 2010.

#### **Paragraph 11**

17. The Government is taking all necessary practical and legal steps to eliminate all forms of racial discrimination and to prevent incitement to acts of violence against any individual or group of persons of another colour or ethnic origin.

18. In particular, on 19 February 2007 the Government signed a decree establishing a State commission in the office of the President to review complaints by citizens regarding the activities of law enforcement agencies in order to improve procedures for the review of complaints by citizens on matters relating to law enforcement agencies.

19. The interdepartmental commission on compliance with international human rights obligations also monitors these matters as part of its functions.

### **Paragraph 13**

20. Domestic legislation does not provide for the conduct of “third-generation tests”, and such tests are not currently performed for recruitment purposes in Turkmenistan.

21. There are no restrictions on the basis of ethnic origin on employment, including in the public sector, or on access to higher education.

22. According to information received from the State Statistics Committee, no statistical data has been collected on the participation of members of national minorities in the labour force, in particular in public sector employment. The interdepartmental commission on compliance with international human rights obligations has proposed collecting such statistics to provide more comprehensive information to the United Nations treaty bodies.

### **Paragraph 14**

23. In accordance with the Constitution and the Refugees Act, Turkmenistan grants the right of asylum to persons who are persecuted in their countries for reasons specified in relevant international legal agreements. The implementation of the Convention relating to the Status of Refugees of 1951 and the Refugees Act, and cooperation between the Government of Turkmenistan and the Office of the United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees, have resulted in the extension, unprecedented in its scope and significance, of Turkmen citizenship and residence permits in Turkmenistan to more than 16,000 displaced persons and refugees (ethnic Afghans and Tajiks).

24. In accordance with the Presidential decree of 4 August 2005, 13,245 refugees living in Turkmenistan have received Turkmen citizenship.

25. In accordance with the Presidential order of 4 August 2005, 3,053 refugees have received permanent residence permits in Turkmenistan. The Government abolished the previous restriction on freedom of movement in Turkmenistan for all citizens. The Presidential order of 13 July 2007 abolished the internal visa regime for citizens of Turkmenistan, including in the border areas. The relevant amendments will be incorporated in migration law.

### **Paragraph 15**

26. Radical reforms in the education sector are under way in Turkmenistan. Beginning on 1 January 2007, in order to improve the education system and bring it into line with international standards, a Presidential decree set the length of study at 10 years in secondary education, 5 years in higher education and 6 years in medical subjects and specific arts subjects.

27. Together with innovations in the education sector, appropriate changes were made in the Education Act.

28. Article 13, paragraph 1, of the Act provides that “10-year general secondary education, which is the foundation of instruction, offers citizens the opportunity to acquire deep knowledge in accordance with the requirements of the age, for the proper development of their creative abilities, and the raising of their cultural level and physical training”. On 28 May 1996

Turkmenistan ratified the 1979 Convention on the Recognition of Studies, Diplomas and Degrees concerning Higher Education in the States belonging to the Europe Region and the 1983 Regional Convention on the Recognition of Studies, Diplomas and Degrees in Higher Education in Asia and the Pacific. In the context of reforms in education and science, the new Government also confirmed the obligatory recognition of education documents issued in foreign countries in accordance with international standards. Currently a special commission in the Ministry of Education has stepped up its work and is examining statements on the above-mentioned subject.

29. During official visits by the Presidents of the Russian Federation, Kazakhstan and Turkmenistan the question of cooperation was settled at a high international level in bilateral agreements on humanitarian matters, including education. The heads of State agreed to open schools for the diasporas of the States concerned, and specifically, the Presidents of the Russian Federation and Turkmenistan laid the foundation for a Turkmen-Russian school for 800 pupils in Ashgabat.

30. In 2007 students were accepted without any restrictions on ethnic or other grounds in various higher educational establishments in the Russian Federation - the I.M. Gubkin State Oil and Gas University in Moscow, the Ufa State Oil Technical University, the Tomsk Polytechnical University, the Tyumen Oil and Gas University and the Almeteyev Oil Institute.

31. Also in the new academic year over 1,000 young men and women became students of prestigious higher educational establishments abroad in accordance with intergovernmental and interdepartmental agreements.

32. Over 1,700 general secondary schools are in operation in Turkmenistan, with around 2,000 classes using Russian, Kazakh and Uzbek as the language of instruction. Representatives of ethnic minorities living in Turkmenistan are able to study in ethnic and mixed schools.

33. According to official information received from the Ministry of Education, curricula are devised taking into account the age and psychological characteristics of students, universal human values and established ethnic traditions, customs, culture and educational standards.

34. The new curricula lay down the principles governing the organization of the educational activities of schools, and ways and means of checking the knowledge and skills of students at all levels of study. All curricula pass through several stages of review and further development prior to approval. Textbooks for all disciplines are prepared in keeping with the curricula. Creative teams composed of young people and practising teachers are involved in the preparation of the textbooks.

35. Ruhnama is not a prominent subject in the curriculum of general secondary schools (an annual programme for the academic year 2007/08 is attached to the supplementary report).

36. In 2007, 10 secondary schools in Mara and 10 secondary schools in Ashgabat were provided with free Internet access during the joint UNDP/Turkmenistan Government project entitled "InfoTuk" (Phase II) (Information-sharing for sustainable human development).

37. Phase III is currently being implemented. It is proposed to extend the project to establish computer centres in schools in other provinces and connect them to the Internet.
38. The educational reform is aimed at large-scale computerization and provision of Internet access to all the country's schools in the future.
39. In the exercise of the right to education and access to advanced technologies, any restrictions imposed on ethnic or other grounds are unacceptable and constitute offences.
40. The Government has taken a decision to open Internet cafes for public use in the capital and the provinces.
41. Dozens of new textbooks have been published and teaching aids supplied. In all, 836,000 new textbooks were printed and 1,349,000 teaching aids supplied.
42. Legislation on education does not stipulate the wearing of Turkmen national dress by schoolchildren, whether ethnic Turkmen or those from other ethnic minorities. Every school has the right to choose its school uniform.
43. The foreign policy of Turkmenistan, which is pursued by the Government of Turkmenistan, is aimed at good-neighbourly, constructive cooperation with other States on a basis of equal rights. Special emphasis in cooperation is placed on the humanitarian sphere: education, science, culture, tourism and sport.
44. The bilateral and multilateral agreements signed for the purpose of developing inter-State humanitarian relations (with Kazakhstan, Russia, Tajikistan and Uzbekistan) - the treaty on friendship and cooperation between Turkmenistan and Tajikistan of 4 October 2007, the joint Turkmen-Uzbek communiqué of 18 October 2007, etc. - contain provision for the holding of culture festivals, concerts, exhibitions, conferences, the expansion of television broadcasting, print media, student exchanges and joint scientific projects in the spheres of culture, education, science and youth policy.
45. Specifically, the Ministry of Culture, Turkmenistan television and radio, the Embassy of Uzbekistan and the Union of Artists of Turkmenistan held an exhibition under the title "Art of Uzbekistan in the period of independence".
46. On 28 May 2007 the Presidents of Turkmenistan and Kazakhstan agreed to increase the range of television broadcasts and newspaper distribution with the aim of preserving a common cultural, educational and information space.
47. Turkmen scientists together with scientists from Kazakhstan, Kyrgyzstan, Tajikistan and Uzbekistan are to participate in a joint regional project for writing the general history of Central Asia. The project will be carried out in the Institute of Oriental Studies of Kazakhstan.

## **Paragraph 20**

48. The educational reform in Turkmenistan has included a revision of secondary school curricula, the countrywide introduction of classes in foreign languages and physical education, and also new rules for acceptance in secondary and higher educational establishments.

49. In accordance with the Presidential decision of 4 March 2007 on improving the work of educational institutions, the secondary school curriculum is being expanded to include study of the laws governing the development of society, the foundations of legal, moral, economic, political and ecological cultures, social science classes and physical education. The new curricula include periods for the study of music and world artistic culture.

50. The new curricula have been devised in the light of the experience of developed countries in the area of secondary education.

51. The main requirement as to the level of education is that it should meet international standards. Extensive reforms have fully covered even the highest school in the country. Obligatory two-year work experience has been eliminated, and students will be admitted to higher educational establishments on the basis of the results of entrance examinations, both written and oral. Under agreements signed by Turkmenistan with a number of foreign countries, graduates from secondary schools can independently enter higher educational establishments in those countries.

52. Reforms are being carried out with the aim of bringing the education system into line with international standards. This includes improving the quality of education by introducing new technologies into the educational process, extending the range of subjects, ensuring access to education for ethnic groups, and inculcating tolerance and friendship among peoples.



**Annex****CURRICULUM FOR THE 2007/08 ACADEMIC YEAR  
FOR SECONDARY SCHOOLS**

	Subjects	Numbers of hours per week, by grade										
		1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8	9	10	
1	Ruhnama of the Great Saparmurat	1	1	1	1	1	1	1	1	1	2	11
2	Turkmen language	12/10	9	9	6	6	5	4	3	1	1	56/54
3	Literature				3	3	3	4	4	4	4	25
4	Russian language	0/2	2	2	3	3	3	2	2	3	3	23/25
5	Foreign language	2	2	2	2	3	3	3	3	3	3	26
6	History of Turkmenistan				2			2	2	2	2	10
7	Universal history					2	2		2	2	2	10
8	Foundations of the State and the law of Turkmenistan								1			1
9	Social sciences									1	1	2
10	Natural history		1	1	1							3
11	Geography of Turkmenistan					2	2	2	2	2		10
12	Mathematics	6	6	6	6	6	6	6	6	5	5	58
13	Drawing						1	1				2
14	Basic computer studies								1	2	2	5
15	Physics						2	2	3	4	4	15
16	Astronomy										1	1
17	Biology					2	2	2	2	2	2	12
18	Chemistry										3	12
19	Figurative	1	1	1	1	1						5
20	Music and singing	1	1	1	1	1						5
21	Labour	1	1	1	2	2	2					9
22	Physical education	1	1	1	2	2	2	2				11
	Total	25	25	25	30	34	34	34	35	35	35	312
	Optional subjects	1	1	1	2	2	2	2	3	3	3	20
	Total	26	26	26	32	36	36	36	38	38	38	332

*Note:* In grades 8 to 10, 1 hour earmarked for physical education is allocated for optional subjects. If secondary schools offer appropriate conditions for teaching of computer studies, these periods may be used in grades 6-7.

**CURRICULUM FOR SECONDARY SCHOOL CLASSES WITH  
RUSSIAN AS THE LANGUAGE OF INSTRUCTION FOR THE  
2007/08 ACADEMIC YEAR**

	Subjects	Number of hours per week, by grade										Total hours per week
		1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8	9	10	
1	Ruhnama of the Great Saparmurat Turkmenbashi	1	1	1	1	1	1	1	1	1	2	11
2	Turkmen language	2	3	3	3	2	2	3	2	2	1	23
3	Turkmen literature				2	2	2	2	2	2	2	14
4	Russian language	12/10	9	9	6	6	5	3	2	1	1	54/52
5	Literature				3	3	3	3	3	3	4	22
6	Foreign language	0/2	2	2	2	3	3	3	3	3	3	24/26
7	History of Turkmenistan				2			2	2	2	2	10
8	Universal history					2	2		2	2	2	10
9	Foundations of the State and the law of Turkmenistan								1			1
10	Social sciences									1	1	2
11	Natural history		1	1	1							3
12	Geography. Geography of Turkmenistan					2	2	2	2	2		10
13	Mathematics	6	6	6	6	6	6	6	6	5	5	58
14	Drawing						1	1				2
15	Basic computer studies and computer technology								1	2	2	5
16	Physics						2	2	3	4	4	15
17	Astronomy										1	1
18	Biology					2	2	2	2	2	2	12
19	Chemistry							3	3	3	3	12
20	Figurative art	1	1	1	1	1						5
21	Music and singing	1	1	1	1	1						5
22	Labour	1	1	1	2	2	2					9
23	Physical education	1	1	1	2	2	2	2				11
	Total	25	26	26	32	35	35	35	35	35	35	319
	Optional subjects	1	1	1	1	1	1	1	2	2	2	13
	Total	26	27	27	33	36	36	36	36	36	36	332

*Note:* In grades 8 to 10, 1 hour earmarked for physical education is allocated for optional subjects. If secondary schools offer appropriate conditions for teaching of computer studies, these periods may be used in grades 6-7.

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