



Convention on the Elimination of All Forms of Discrimination against Women

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

Replies of Turkmenistan to the list of issues and questions in relation to its sixth periodic report*

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* The present document is being issued without formal editing.



Replies to the list of additional issues and questions in relation to the consideration of the sixth periodic report of Turkmenistan on the implementation of the Convention on the Elimination of All Forms of Discrimination against Women

Reply to paragraph 1 of the list of issues

Women's rights and gender equality in relation to the coronavirus disease (COVID-19) pandemic, recovery efforts and global crises.

1. The national programme to mitigate the impact of the prevailing challenging situation on the global economy and to promote the sustainable development of the national economy for 2020–2021 and the plan of operational socioeconomic measures in Turkmenistan to counter the acute infectious disease pandemic defined a comprehensive package of measures to mitigate the negative impact of the global COVID-19 pandemic on the socioeconomic situation in Turkmenistan, with special attention to the most vulnerable population groups, in accordance with the principle of leaving no one behind.
2. In 2021, the Communicable Disease Prevention Act was adopted and the Acute Communicable Disease Preparedness and Response Plan was approved. Experts from the World Health Organization (WHO) Regional Office for Europe carried out technical advisory missions and issued recommendations in 2020–2021.
3. The Social Protection Code has been amended to provide that, if citizens apply in writing for a pension after they become eligible for it as a result of circumstances beyond their control (such as natural disasters, epidemics, pandemics or other emergencies), the pension is granted from the date on which they become eligible for it. This norm extends to events that arose after 1 March 2020.
4. Turkmenistan received a \$20 million loan from the World Bank to strengthen its response and readiness to respond to COVID-19. The skills of 6,000 health workers have been upgraded under a project to counter COVID-19.
5. Pregnant women have been immunized against COVID-19 since 2022.
6. From September 2021 to January 2023, a joint programme of the Government of Turkmenistan and the United Nations entitled “Empowering and engaging youth to mitigate the multidimensional risks and threats associated with the global pandemic” was implemented to empower and engage youth in contributing to the implementation of a socioeconomic response plan to mitigate the negative impact of the global pandemic on the socioeconomic situation in Turkmenistan, with special attention to the most vulnerable population groups, in accordance with the principle of “leaving no one behind”.
7. One of the programme’s objectives included building the capacity of government officials and civil society organizations by applying the concept of human security to effectively design and plan strategies to protect populations from the multidimensional risks of a global pandemic. One hundred and seventy-seven senior staff of government and civil society organizations (40 per cent women) were trained and 22 decision makers (35 per cent women) in Dashoguz and Lebap welayats (provinces) were supported in applying the concept of human security and integrating this approach into inclusive decision-making and planning processes.

Reply to paragraph 2 of the list of issues

Legal status and visibility of the Convention

8. Turkmenistan's legislation is based on the Constitution and the generally recognized principles and norms of international law.

9. Article 9 of the Constitution stipulates that Turkmenistan recognizes the primacy of the generally recognized norms of international law, and Turkmenistan's legislative acts incorporate the norms of the international conventions to which it is a party, including the norms of the Convention on the Elimination of All Forms of Discrimination against Women.

10. The norms of international human rights law are consistently integrated into national legislation, including the Constitution.

11. Between 2018 and June 2023, 18 international training sessions and workshops were conducted on women's rights, gender equality and domestic violence against women, in which 28 judges and other judicial officers were trained.

12. Over the period 2018–2022, 145 internal affairs officers participated in 52 workshops on gender equality held in Turkmenistan and abroad. For the period 2018–2022, 30 representatives of the youth organization participated in 22 workshops on gender equality organized by international organizations.

13. In 2023, with the assistance of the United Nations Development Programme (UNDP), a compendium of United Nations international human rights conventions was translated into the State language and published in electronic and hard copy, which has been distributed to State entities, law enforcement officials and civil society organizations.

Reply to paragraph 3 of the list of issues

Women and peace and security

14. In accordance with the State Guarantees of Equal Rights and Equal Opportunities for Women and Men Act, the State guarantees equal rights and equal opportunities for women and men in all spheres of State and public life.

15. Turkmenistan is a member of the Executive Board of the United Nations Entity for Gender Equality and the Empowerment of Women (UN-Women) for the period 2022–2024, and also previously served on the Commission on the Status of Women over the period 2018–2022.

16. The second National Action Plan on Gender Equality for 2021–2025, developed with advisory support from the United Nations Population Fund (UNFPA), was approved in December 2020. This document is aimed at ensuring conditions for the equal participation of men and women in all spheres of society.

17. The National Action Plan envisages a number of specific activities in various areas with a view to creating the necessary conditions for further increasing women's participation in the sociopolitical, socioeconomic, cultural and humanitarian life of the country.

18. Gender issues are also reflected in the 2021–2025 United Nations Sustainable Development Cooperation Framework between the Organization and the Government of Turkmenistan, the National Action Plan on Human Rights in Turkmenistan for 2021–2025 and the National Plan of Action for the Realization of Children's Rights in Turkmenistan for 2023–2028. Turkmenistan's next national action plan to combat trafficking in persons for the period 2023–2026 is currently being developed.

19. In order to give a high priority to gender equality issues in the Central Asian region, the first Dialogue of Women of the States of Central Asia was held on 6 August 2021 in the Avaza national tourist area on the margins of the consultative meeting of Heads of State of Central Asia. The forum was attended by representatives of the United Nations Regional Centre for Preventive Diplomacy for Central Asia and UNDP. During the event, representatives of Central Asian States exchanged views and experiences on the potential of the region's countries to further promote gender equality.

20. At the initiative of Turkmenistan, the Interparliamentary Forum and the Dialogue of Women of the States of Central Asia and the Russian Federation were held in Ashgabat on 12 and 13 May 2022. The theme of the forum was devoted to the role of women in sociopolitical and socioeconomic development. The Dialogue of Women of the States of Central Asia and the Russian Federation has given a new impetus not only to the development of cooperation between the participating countries, but also to the overall strengthening of international cooperation to enhance and promote gender equality.

21. The annual final meeting of the Dialogue of Women of the States of Central Asia was held on 10 December 2022 in Ashgabat with the participation of representatives of the countries of the region and the heads of regional United Nations entities. The meeting took stock of the Organization's activities in 2022 and discussed the prospects for the Dialogue's expansion and the work plan for 2023.

22. The Dialogue of Women of the States of Central Asia is geared towards regional and interregional cooperation on gender equality and the promotion of peace, stability and security in Central Asia (tasks derived from Security Council resolution [1325 \(2000\)](#) and from General Assembly resolution [76/141](#) entitled "Violence against women migrant workers", adopted on 16 December 2021).

23. The following events were held under the chairship of Turkmenistan in 2022:

- A regional preparatory conference for the sixty-sixth session of the Commission on the Status of Women, focusing on achieving gender equality and the empowerment of all women and girls in the context of climate change in Central Asia.
- The inaugural meeting of the International Community of Needlewomen of Central Asia.
- A meeting of the discussion club for women entrepreneurs from Central Asian countries.
- Cooperation exchange within the framework of the discussion club for women entrepreneurs from Central Asian countries.
- A meeting of the coalition of Central Asian countries working on the WAGE programme (women's entrepreneurship development and gender-based violence reduction coalition).
- A regional conference of women from Central Asian countries.
- A regional workshop for girls from Central Asian countries.
- A regional forum with civil society organizations regarding the implementation of Security Council resolution [1325 \(2000\)](#) in connection with strengthening the role of women in ensuring peace and security in Central Asia.

24. These efforts centred on:

- Increasing the level of women's involvement in political and socioeconomic transformations.

- Increasing women's representation in government and the corporate sector, and their participation in decision-making processes, and stimulating the role of women in post-pandemic economic recovery.
- Increasing the participation of women and girls in the development and implementation of policies to protect the environment and address pressing environmental issues.
- Improving the system of lifelong professional education and retraining to ensure decent employment for women, including women with disabilities.
- Improving the quality of life of women and girls, including those in rural areas, and supporting young women parliamentarians, politicians, academics and volunteer activists.
- Ensuring decent employment and social protection for pandemic-affected and vulnerable women.
- Improving the economic empowerment of women, and in particular expanding their access to financial services and increasing their financial, legal and business literacy; and helping women to fulfil their potential in the digitization of the economy, science, advanced information technology and knowledge-intensive innovation sectors.
- Supporting women's entrepreneurship and business ties between women entrepreneurs from Central Asian countries by promoting business forums, joint projects and exhibitions of goods (handicrafts) from businesswomen of the region.
- Preventing and overcoming gender-related violence in all environments.
- Improving the health-care system for women and girls.

25. The development of a new joint programme between the United Nations and the Government of Turkmenistan focused on youth and peace and security was initiated in 2023. The main message of this programme is to recognize the key role of young people in shaping peaceful societies. It aims to support and protect human rights, achieve gender equality and fulfil the rights of women, girls, adolescents and youth with disabilities in education, employment, freedom of information and freedom of expression. The following quantified targets have also been set under the joint programme:

- Raising awareness among young women and young men of their rights and opportunities.
- Empowering women and adolescent girls.
- Initiatives to engage men in efforts to achieve gender equality.
- Supporting and funding youth projects that promote peace and security.
- Strengthening institutional capacities to provide better services and protection for young women and men.

26. The uniqueness of this joint programme is its new component related to the introduction of youth-friendly and gender-sensitive approaches to two-year conscripted military service. This component aims to foster dialogue among young people during their military service, empower them to make informed choices about their future after military service and, importantly, activate their potential to promote gender justice, i.e. to combat negative gender practices and gender-based violence, and also to promote reproductive health and rights and more equitable gender relations. In addition to benefiting young men, it will also indirectly benefit the

families, women and communities that the young recruits will return to following their military service.

27. The topics “Gender, equality and sustainability” and “Gender equality in emergency situations” formed an integral part of the training programme of the Red Crescent Society of Turkmenistan. Participants received initial information on gender in emergency situations. The theme “Gender equality in emergency situations” was integrated into a series of workshops conducted in 10 schools in the city of Ashgabat and in Ahal, Lebap and Dashoguz welayats. Nearly 1,000 schoolchildren, boys and girls, raised their awareness of key aspects of gender in emergency situations, advocating for gender equality in emergencies.

28. Capacity-building activities involving over 300 school administrators and teachers, as well as staff and volunteers from the Red Crescent Society of Turkmenistan, helped to initiate an open conversation and to identify gaps in knowledge and skills on gender issues, with a particular focus on gender equality in emergency situations.

Reply to paragraph 4 of the list of issues

Legislative framework and definition of discrimination against women

29. In view of the fact that all discrimination is prohibited and the equality of individuals and citizens is guaranteed by the Constitution and laws of Turkmenistan, parliament is discussing the advisability of adopting a comprehensive anti-discrimination law. Committees of the Mejlis held over 10 meetings and discussions with representatives of the scientific community, experts, specialists and representatives of ministries and departments and voluntary associations on this issue and on the study of international practice. A number of laws have been adopted and/or amended to further improve legislation on gender equality.

30. In April 2022, a new version of the Criminal Code of Turkmenistan was approved, which took effect on 1 January 2023.

31. In March 2019 an amendment was made to the Labour Code, under which restrictions on the employment of women in harmful and/or hazardous (particularly harmful and/or particularly hazardous) working conditions were removed, in agreement with social partners represented by the Ministry of Labour and Social Protection, the National Trade Union Centre and the Union of Industrialists and Entrepreneurs, in order to create equal opportunities for men and women in the workplace and promote women’s professional abilities.

32. The Labour Code prohibits the unjustified refusal to conclude an employment contract. Refusal to conclude an employment contract is recognized as unjustified in respect of women on grounds related to pregnancy and also for women with children under the age of 3 (or with a child with disabilities under the age of 18).

Reply to paragraph 5 of the list of issues

Access to justice

33. Justice in Turkmenistan is administered on the basis of equal rights and freedoms, the principle of adversarial proceedings and the equality of all before the law and the courts, regardless of nationality, race, gender, origin, financial situation, official status, place of residence, language, attitude towards religion, political convictions or any other circumstance.

34. The courts of Turkmenistan regard access to justice as an integral part of a democratic legal system. Under article 11 of the Code of Criminal Procedure, everyone has the right to judicial protection of his or her rights and freedoms. The State guarantees all persons access to justice and compensation for damages in cases and under the procedure established by law.

35. The framework for the development of the judicial system of Turkmenistan for the period 2022–2028 was approved by a presidential decision of 5 July 2022. Its objectives are to improve the quality of the administration of justice and the judicial protection of human and civil rights and legitimate interests, to ensure the openness and accessibility of justice, to improve the conditions for the administration of justice and to ensure the independence of the judiciary.

36. Under article 26 of the Criminal Procedure Code, everyone has the right, in the course of criminal proceedings, to receive legal assistance in accordance with the provisions of that Code.

37. Under article 59 of the Code of Administrative Offences, administrative liability is established for the direct or indirect violation or restriction of human and civil rights and freedoms on the grounds of nationality, skin colour, sex, birth, property, official position, place of residence, language, attitude to religion, political convictions, party affiliation or lack of affiliation to any party.

38. Under the Code of Administrative Procedure (2020), everyone has the right, in accordance with the procedure established by law, to apply to a court for protection of his or her violated or contested rights, freedoms or legally protected interests.

39. In order to facilitate access to justice, the courts receive citizens on short notice, taking into account the remoteness of their place of residence, especially rural women.

40. Turkmenistan has six bar associations, four of which are headed by women. Of the 250 attorneys working to provide legal assistance to the population, 136 are women, including 43 in the city of Ashgabat; 9 in Ahal welayat; 11 in Balkan welayat; 20 in Dashoguz welayat; 28 in Lebap welayat; and 25 in Mary welayat. In addition, 109 lawyers are practising under a licence, of whom 20 are women.

41. From 2019 to 2022, the following amount of free legal aid was provided to women by attorneys:

	2019	2020	2021	2022
Turkmenistan, including:	3 617	3 851	4 075	4 075
Ashgabat	36	45	88	41
Ahal welayat	915	964	820	638
Balkan welayat	194	135	117	138
Lebap welayat	405	460	535	682
Dashoguz welayat	1 723	1 885	2 110	2 127
Mary welayat	344	362	405	449

42. Between 2022 and 2023, the Women's Union of Turkmenistan assisted women in finding employment in response to more than 35 requests from citizens and provided more than 150 legal consultations.

43. In the period from 2022 to 2023, the Women's Union received 14 requests for employment assistance and 35 requests pertaining to housing and domestic issues. All were assisted, including in getting on the waiting list for apartments.

44. There were 29 applications related to family and other social issues. Consultative assistance was provided to meet all requests.

Reply to paragraph 6 of the list of issues

45. No cases of enforced disappearance have been recorded in Turkmenistan.

46. To ensure the prompt criminal investigation of crimes, the country has a legal framework and the competent authorities' staff are trained as a whole to detect and investigate crimes.

47. Activities to detect, disclose and investigate crimes are carried out in the form of investigative activities and pretrial proceedings. Pretrial proceedings are carried out in two forms: inquiries and preliminary investigations.

48. Under the Social Protection Code, survivors' pensions are granted to children left without parental care. Pensions are transferred by the local bodies of the Pension Fund to the children's bank accounts. The bank account funds of children without parental care accumulate interest at the rate specified in the deposit agreement concluded with the bank, but not lower than the refinancing rate established by the Central Bank of Turkmenistan.

49. Mothers and wives are also entitled to survivors' pensions if they have reached the age of 57 or have disabilities and are not receiving a pension or State benefit.

Reply to paragraph 7 of the list of issues

National machinery for the advancement of women

50. Turkmenistan has an Interdepartmental Commission for ensuring compliance with international human rights and international humanitarian law obligations. The Interdepartmental Commission is a permanent consultative body established to coordinate the activities of ministries, State committees, departments and local executive authorities, enterprises, institutions and voluntary associations in the implementation of Turkmenistan's international legal obligations in the area of human rights, including gender issues.

51. The following bodies have been established under the Interdepartmental Commission:

- A working group of national experts.
- A working group on international humanitarian law.
- A working group to survey women's health and status in the family.
- A working group to combat trafficking in persons.

52. Members of the Interdepartmental Commission and its working groups participate in activities to study international experience in the field of human rights, including gender equality issues. The Interdepartmental Commission and its working groups cooperate constructively with the United Nations agencies accredited in Turkmenistan, the Organization for Security and Cooperation in Europe (OSCE) Centre in Ashgabat and other international organizations.

53. Information on the mandate and composition of Turkmenistan's Interdepartmental Commission for ensuring compliance with international human rights and international humanitarian law obligations was reflected in the fifth (2016) and sixth (2022) periodic national reports of Turkmenistan.

54. The National Plan of Action for Gender Equality in Turkmenistan for 2021–2025 is monitored and evaluated on a regular basis. Key findings from the monitoring and evaluation help to identify achievements and determine areas where it is still necessary to strengthen effective measures for successful implementation of the strategic actions of the Plan. Monitoring and evaluation help to maintain a positive momentum and to resolve any issues that may arise during implementation in a timely fashion. In the context of monitoring, round tables and consultative working meetings are held in the city of Ashgabat and in all welayats of the country to raise awareness among representatives of State and civil society organizations about the implementation of the Plan, to discuss the results and to develop proposals and recommendations for further improvements.

Reply to paragraph 8 of the list of issues

National human rights institution

55. Within the bounds of the Ombudsperson's competence, he or she verifies reports of violations of women's rights and freedoms. This may be done on the basis of complaints received, or on the Ombudsperson's own initiative. Appeals to the Ombudsperson are routinely analysed in detail, and a breakdown is provided by gender and by region.

56. In 2022, the Ombudsperson's Office accepted 523 appeals, of which 356 were written complaints and 167 were oral complaints. The appeals were mainly related to housing and labour issues or involved disagreements with court rulings, dissatisfaction with the actions of law enforcement officers or land law and migration issues (www.tdh.gov.tm).

Distribution of the number of citizens who filed written complaints in 2022 by region and gender (persons)

No.	Regions	Total	Persons, including	
			Women	Men
1	Turkmenistan	620	350	270
2	Ashgabat	214	124	90
3	Balkan welayat	148	75	73
4	Dashoguz welayat	120	62	58
5	Lebap welayat	41	26	15
6	Mary welayat	67	46	21
7	Ahal welayat	29	16	13
8	From outside Turkmenistan	1	1	–

57. When monitoring the exercise of the rights of persons sentenced to imprisonment, the Ombudsperson pays particular attention to ensuring the rights of a special group of convicted persons: women. For example, in 2022, an inspection was carried out at the DZ-E/8 facility of the Dashoguz welayat police department, where female inmates are held.

58. At the time of the inspection in 2022, there were a total of 1,498 inmates held in the general maximum security facility. At that time, there were no underage incarcerated inmates. Checks were made in places housing convicted persons to ensure that sanitation standards were fully met and that opportunities for health care,

food, cultural and sporting activities, work, and short- and long-term visits with close relatives were provided.

59. In 2022, the Ombudsperson's Office did not receive any petitions from women sentenced to imprisonment. One oral petition disagreeing with the criminal investigation and the court sentence was received from a woman's close relatives. In accordance with the relevant provisions of the Ombudsperson's Act, the petitioners were advised on the legal means of protecting their rights.

60. Experience-sharing activities also continued in 2022 with the Ombudspersons' offices of OSCE participating States. For example, on 6 July of the reporting year, under a project of the OSCE Centre in Ashgabat to build the capacities of the Ombudsperson's Office, the Ombudsperson's Office of Turkmenistan and the Office of the People's Advocate of Moldova held an online exchange of views on the role of national human rights institutions in protecting women's rights and promoting gender equality. During this meeting, participants discussed legal instruments and mechanisms to protect women's rights and promote gender equality.

61. The Ombudsperson's Office actively cooperates with international organizations within the framework of its mandate. The upward trend in cooperation is underpinned by the implementation of a number of joint activities based on short- and long-term plans, which are aimed at strengthening the national legal foundations for the protection of human rights and freedoms.

62. For example, the Ombudsperson's Office and UNDP in Turkmenistan, in cooperation with the Regional Office for Central Asia of the Office of the United Nations High Commissioner for Human Rights (OHCHR), implemented a joint project entitled "Strengthening the institutional capacity of the Ombudsperson's Office of Turkmenistan for 2021–2022", the main objective of which was to develop the institutional capacity of the Ombudsperson's Office to study the process of accreditation by the Global Alliance of National Human Rights Institutions and to build the capacity of the staff of the Ombudsperson's Office.

63. The activities scheduled under this project have been implemented and positive results have been achieved, including:

- Developing a draft road map for the Ombudsperson's Office for accreditation to the Global Alliance of National Human Rights Institutions.
- Developing recommendations on the monitoring and evaluation of national human rights institutions
- Analysing compliance by the Ombudsperson's Act with the Paris Principles.
- Developing a draft normative legal act to strengthen the Ombudsperson's Office.
- Raising public awareness of the role of the Ombudsperson's Office in ensuring human rights in the country with the participation of representatives of law enforcement agencies, ministries and departments and voluntary associations from all five welayats and the city of Ashgabat.
- Establishing consistent and progressive cooperation with the Asia-Pacific Forum of National Human Rights Institutions and the Global Alliance of National Human Rights Institutions.
- Conducting a series of workshops, training sessions and study visits under the project, which contributed to building the capacities of staff at the Ombudsperson's Office and strengthening cooperation between the Ombudsperson's Office and the country's law enforcement agencies, the main ministries and departments in Ashgabat and the welayats of Turkmenistan, in

order to raise awareness of the Ombudsperson's work among the staff of these institutions and, through them, among the general public.

- Concluding an agreement between the Ombudsperson's Office and the Asia-Pacific Forum.
- Conducting a capacity assessment of the Ombudsperson's Office by a group of experts from the Asia-Pacific Forum, UNDP and OHCHR in October 2022. The final report containing recommendations for building the capacities of the Ombudsperson's Office and following up on accreditation with the Global Alliance of National Human Rights Institutions was received in May 2023. The final report with recommendations from the Asia-Pacific Forum was also received in May 2023.

64. Under the project to provide assistance to strengthen the institutional capacity of the Ombudsperson's Office of Turkmenistan, there is a separate component for 2023 between UNDP and the Ombudsperson's Office on facilitating cooperation between the Ombudsperson's Office and the Global Alliance of National Human Rights Institutions and the Asia-Pacific Forum. The application to the Global Alliance of National Human Rights Institutions for accreditation of the Ombudsperson's Office is scheduled for 2023.

65. The budget of the Ombudsperson's Office of Turkmenistan was increased twofold compared with 2021.

Reply to paragraph 9 of the list of issues

Temporary special measures

66. Of the total number of staff employed in the judicial system, 44.6 per cent are women. Of the total number of employees at the Ministry of Justice, 57.14 per cent are women. As of July 2023, women accounted for 7.4 per cent of total staff working in the internal affairs bodies of Turkmenistan.

67. Women account for 70.4 per cent of all staff at the Ministry of Health and the Medical Industry and 58.7 per cent of doctors. Women account for 70 per cent of the total number of employees in the education system.

68. As at 1 January 2023, there were 1.08 million union members, over 42 per cent of whom were women.

69. In total 900,000 people are currently members of the Youth Organization of Turkmenistan, 53 per cent of whom are girls.

Reply to paragraph 10 of the list of issues

Stereotypes

70. Automated centres with modern equipment from the Korean company "NEO Information Systems Co. Ltd." have been put into operation in the city of Ashgabat and all welayats of Turkmenistan to examine and test driving skills for the purpose of obtaining a driving licence. The centres help to administer qualification tests and to assess the knowledge and skills of applicants for driver's licences to operate motor vehicles. Exams to obtain a driver's licence consist of theoretical and practical parts. The theoretical exam is conducted by programme control of knowledge using an automated system and the practical exam is conducted directly on the automated driving range.

71. The introduction of new technologies in the work of the traffic control department of the Ministry of Internal Affairs, namely the launch of automated centres for exams and tests of driving skills to obtain a driver's license, has led to a reduction in contact between police officers and citizens, which has contributed to the elimination of the human factor in the theoretical and practical exams for obtaining a licence.

72. All of this shows that, by excluding the human factor from a driver's licence test, the traffic police inspectors authorized to issue driver's licenses cannot affect the result of the test or divide the candidates by gender. This proves that there is no discrimination on the basis of gender, in particular with respect to women.

73. Measures aimed at identifying women drivers without driving licences are not a driving ban but merely the standard procedure.

74. Under the Constitution, every citizen has the right to move freely and to choose his or her place of residence within Turkmenistan. Restrictions on entry to certain territories and movement within these territories may be established only on the basis of the law.

75. The Migration Act provides grounds for temporarily restricting the exit of Turkmen citizens from Turkmenistan. The application of these norms is made only if there are sufficient specific grounds, irrespective of gender. Nevertheless, it is important to note that Turkmenistan attaches due importance to the dangers of trafficking in persons and exploitation from the prostitution of women and is committed to suppressing all forms of such negative phenomena. The application of the provisions of the Migration Act to restrict women's travel is exceptional and non-discriminatory. In recent years, no incidents have been recorded of restrictions being applied for the purpose of sexual discrimination.

Reply to paragraph 11 of the list of issues

Gender-based violence against women

76. According to the State Guarantees for Ensuring Equal Rights and Equal Opportunities for Men and Women Act, the State safeguards and ensures equal protection for women and men against domestic violence manifested in the form of physical or psychological impact or damage (harm) committed by one family member against another family member.

77. Since 2019, work has been carried out to study and set up a system for ensuring a multi-agency response to gender-based violence against women. With the assistance of UNFPA, the Interdepartmental Commission and its working group were briefed on the concept of a multi-agency response to gender-based violence.

78. An assessment of existing practices to prevent and address domestic violence against women was conducted with technical assistance from UNFPA.

79. Draft standard operating procedures have been developed for health-care workers, police officers and social workers. Standard operating procedures were piloted for health-care workers in 2020 and for police officers and social service workers in 2021.

80. A sample survey on the health and status of women in the family in Turkmenistan was conducted jointly with UNFPA in 2022 (<https://turkmenistan.unfpa.org/en>). Information was included in the sixth report for the Committee on the Elimination of Discrimination against Women and in the second voluntary review of Turkmenistan (<https://hlpf.un.org/countries/turkmenistan/voluntary-national-reviews-2023>).

81. A road map was developed for implementation of the survey recommendations in 2022–2025, which include improving legislation and specifically developing and adopting a law on the prevention of domestic violence, and building a coordinated system of services to support and protect women victims of violence.
82. Pursuant to the amendments and additions made to article 135 of the Criminal Code, the coercion of a person to engage in acts of a sexual nature in the workplace has been criminalized.
83. In accordance with the Health Care Act of 23 May 2015, health check-ups are carried out by medical institutions to determine citizens' state of health and detect their diseases at an early stage.
84. A health check-up is a form of therapeutic and preventive care in which citizens undergo an examination.
85. In accordance with the Act, a medical evaluation is understood as research that is conducted in accordance with the established procedure to establish the state of health of a citizen, to determine his or her ability to perform labour or other activities and to establish a causal relationship between the impact of any events or factors and the citizen's state of health.
86. The Ministry of Internal Affairs has no information regarding the forcing of women and girls to undergo gynaecological examinations to determine their virginity. The internal affairs bodies have similarly recorded no complaints or appeals of such a nature.
87. In order to fully and comprehensively implement the measures specified in the National Action Plan, the Ministry of Internal Affairs has supplemented the plans for the main activities of the Ministry and its relevant units with a view to obtaining information and analysing work on gender-sensitive issues. An initiative known as "The Family" is currently scheduled to be conducted twice yearly by the units of local police departments in accordance with the plan of core activities for 2023. As part of this initiative, during a one-month period, checks are carried out at the homes of persons who have previously committed dangerous or especially dangerous crimes and who live with families (wives and children), and additional preventive work is undertaken (such as home visits and interviews). When the exercise is completed, the results of the work done are summarized. Dysfunctional families are placed on a special register. The adult members of these families, including those with previous convictions, are officially warned that infringement of the law will not be tolerated, with a record drawn up to that effect. The possible legal consequences of unlawful actions on their part are explained to them.
88. The Ministry of Internal Affairs holds meetings and outreach activities to implement prevention and awareness-raising programmes on the unacceptability of violence against women, including in the family. The special plans drawn up each year by departments of local police representatives, in conjunction with other law enforcement agencies, the Women's Union and the Youth Organization of Turkmenistan, include meetings and talks at enterprises and institutions, higher and specialized secondary education establishments and general education schools, during which lectures and advisory sessions are held.
89. Over the period 2018–2022, eight training sessions were held on topics related to gender-based violence in the internal affairs bodies of Turkmenistan in more than 5,000 training groups.

Reply to paragraph 12 of the list of issues

Trafficking and exploitation of prostitution

90. In view of the sporadic cases of trafficking in persons in Turkmenistan over the past few years, it is appropriate to note the absence of mass manifestations of this negative phenomenon, which indicates that the problem is not acute in the country. In 2016, the Trafficking in Persons Act was adopted, an article was introduced into the Criminal Code and the National Action Plan to Combat Trafficking in Persons, 2020–2022, was implemented. Turkmenistan's next national action plan to combat trafficking in persons for the period 2023–2026 is currently being developed.

91. In Turkmenistan, crimes related to trafficking in persons are not widespread. During the period from 2018 to 2022, one criminal case was initiated.

92. Between 2018 and 2022, 141 officers of the internal affairs agencies and 90 staff members from the Office of the Public Prosecutor participated in 52 and 42 anti-trafficking activities, respectively, held in Turkmenistan and abroad. One hundred and fifty-seven judges and court officials participated in 36 activities to combat trafficking in persons. Over the period 2018–2022, staff from the Ministry of Justice participated in 12 activities to combat trafficking in persons.

93. The Ministry of Internal Affairs carries out activities to combat trafficking in persons by preventing, detecting and suppressing trafficking crimes.

94. The work carried out by internal affairs agencies to prevent trafficking in persons, child prostitution and child pornography consists of two parts: prevention of trafficking offences; and suppression of trafficking offences.

95. Preventive work is carried out not only with potential offenders, but also with potential victims.

96. Within internal affairs agencies, units in offices of district inspectors and youth affairs inspectorates are responsible for preventing trafficking in persons, child prostitution and child pornography.

97. Since the victims in a number of cases are children and young girls, youth affairs inspectorates play a special role in preventing trafficking in persons.

98. In order to prevent and suppress crimes committed not only by but also against minors, representatives of Ministry of Internal Affairs youth affairs inspectorates hold lectures and talks in secondary schools, specialized educational establishments and higher education institutions throughout the country.

99. From 2018 to 2022, 50 representatives of youth organization participated in 19 anti-trafficking workshops organized by international organizations.

100. There are several telephone hotlines for trafficked persons in the country. Between 2018 and 2022, the Ynam Voluntary Association's hotline provided information and support to over 23,000 citizens on various social issues, including trafficking in persons.

101. Scheduled training sessions are regularly held to build the capacities of all internal affairs personnel on trafficking issues, in particular on preventing, combating and investigating trafficking in persons. For example, over the period 2018–2022, 719 training sessions on the above-mentioned topics were held in the internal affairs bodies of Turkmenistan. The following table shows that Ministry staff also participated in workshops and training sessions conducted by international organizations, both at home and abroad, during the period 2018–2022.

<i>Topic</i>	<i>Number workshops and training sessions held in the country</i>	<i>Number of participating employees</i>	<i>Number workshops and training sessions held abroad</i>	<i>Number of participating employees</i>
Trafficking in persons	49	137	3	6

Reply to paragraph 13 of the list of issues

Participation in political and public life

102. Much work is being done in the country to increase the participation of women in all spheres of social and political life in the State. In accordance with the law, women have equal rights with men to membership of representative, executive and judicial bodies at all levels of government.

103. Women are widely represented in parliament, State bodies, local executive and representative authorities, local self-government bodies and all three political parties registered in Turkmenistan. They actively participate in the social and political life of Turkmenistan.

104. As a result of the elections held on 26 March 2023, 125 members of parliament were elected across the country. Women accounted for 25.60 per cent of the elected members of parliament.

105. In local representative bodies, women make up 28.75 per cent of the members of people's councils (halk maslahaty) in welayats, 29.58 per cent of the members of people's councils in etraplar (districts) and 28 per cent of the members of the Gengeshi.

106. The Speaker of parliament is a woman, as is the Ombudsperson and one of the Deputy Chairs of the Cabinet of Ministers; all deputy heads of local bodies at all levels of executive power (häkims) on social issues are women; and the rectors of several higher education institutions are women, as are media editors-in-chief.

107. The Women's Union, in cooperation with parliament, regularly organizes informational events on the importance of the role of women in public and political life. These events are organized in all regions of Turkmenistan in the form of meetings and round tables. During the period 2022–2023, 215 events on gender equality were organized in the form of meetings, round tables and workshops.

108. At present, the Women's Union has established and runs the Businesswomen's Centre, the Centre for Women Scientists and the Centre for Women's Embroidery Art.

109. The Businesswomen's Centre aims to involve women working in business and economic fields in the country's public life. Branches of the Centre have been established in all welayats. The Centre organizes lectures, exhibitions and round tables and provides methodological, legal and other assistance and advice to women planning to start entrepreneurial activities. For the period 2022–2023, 31 events were conducted by the Centre.

110. The Women's Union of Turkmenistan is conducting a number of activities aimed at improving the living conditions of the country's women and strengthening the family.

111. A "Woman of the Year" competition is held every year at the initiative of the Women's Union in seven categories, including one for women serving in the armed forces or the law enforcement system. The conditions of the contest help to create a positive image of modern women leaders and entrepreneur in society and promote

more active involvement of women in the development of democratic processes in the country. The contest helps to overcome gender stereotypes.

112. The Youth Organization, in conjunction with the relevant ministries, departments and civil society organizations, regularly carries out activities aimed at raising awareness among young people about Turkmenistan's legal and regulatory instruments and about the norms of international law on human and civil rights and freedoms, including in rural areas.

Reply to paragraph 14 of the list of issues

Civil society, non-governmental organizations and women human rights defenders

113. The constitutional rights of citizens to establish voluntary associations are regulated by the Voluntary Associations Act (2014). Under the Act, citizens have the right to establish voluntary associations of their choosing without the need for prior permission from the State or local government authorities and also the right to join such associations, provided that they abide by the associations' charters. A decision to refuse to register a voluntary association may be appealed before a court of law.

114. On 22 August 2020, amendments to the Voluntary Associations Act were adopted to simplify State registration and also to abolish certain existing restrictions.

115. An important point in the Act is the lifting of restrictions on participation in the activities of voluntary associations by persons convicted of a serious or particularly serious offence or declared incompetent by a court.

116. A refusal to register a voluntary association is not an obstacle to the resubmission of documents for registration.

117. A decision to refuse to register a voluntary association may be appealed before a court of law.

Reply to paragraph 15 of the list of issues

Education

118. The Institute of International Relations of the Ministry of Foreign Affairs is actively engaged in the work of the school for young diplomats, the scientific centre for strategic research and the department for digital systems and communications. Young women and girls, on an equal footing with young boys, study key issues of international relations and diplomacy in Turkmenistan and the countries of the world, engage in scientific work on topical international issues and participate in various national and international events. Young women and girls account for 59 per cent of all members at the school for young diplomats and for 33 per cent of total staff in the department for digital systems and communications.

119. The Ministry of Education and the United Nations Children's Fund (UNICEF) are actively cooperating on implementing the State policy on gender equality and the National Plan of Action for Gender Equality in Turkmenistan for 2021–2025. As part of the joint annual work plan between UNICEF and the Ministry of Education for 2023, the National Institute of Education of Turkmenistan has developed a training programme for the professional development of teachers on gender-oriented pedagogy and three training manuals on promoting gender equality in education in the State and Russian languages: "Gender-oriented pedagogy for teachers", "Gender-oriented pedagogy for parents" and "The basics of gender knowledge" for schoolchildren. These manuals are developed taking into account the requirements of

the State youth policy, national values and international best practices in the field of gender-oriented pedagogy. Following the publication of these manuals, joint training sessions will be held using the training materials developed to enhance the skills of teachers and increase awareness among students and parents.

120. Enhanced international cooperation in education in Turkmenistan provides positive support for young men and women to study in higher education institutions in various countries. In accordance with part two of the regulations on the education of Turkmen citizens in the higher and secondary vocational educational institutions of foreign countries, approved by a presidential decree of 19 April 2013, citizens of Turkmenistan may go to the higher and secondary vocational educational institutions of foreign countries on the basis of all forms of study (full-time, part-time (evening) and correspondence) on the instructions of ministries, departments, municipal administrations of welayats and the city of Ashgabat, as well as privately.

Reply to paragraph 16 of the list of issues

Employment

121. A separate chapter of the Labour Code contains specific provisions regulating the work of women and other persons with family responsibilities.

122. The Labour Code prohibits the employment of pregnant women for night work, overtime work and work on weekends, public holidays and memorial days, or sending them on business trips.

123. Pregnant women working in the agricultural sector in field conditions are provided with a shortened working day of six hours, while maintaining the average payment for work.

124. The Labour Code regulates the transfer of women to other, lighter work. Pregnant women, in keeping with medical findings, are given lower production and service quotas or transferred to other, lighter non-hazardous work, while retaining the average wage from their previous job.

125. Until another lighter non-hazardous job is found for a pregnant women, in keeping with the medical findings, she may be released from work while retaining, at the expense of the company, the average wage for all working days missed as a result.

126. If women with children under the age of 1 and a half years of age are unable to carry out their previous work, they also transferred to other, lighter non-hazardous work. They retain the average wage from their previous position until the child reaches 1 and a half years of age.

127. The Labour Code of Turkmenistan regulates the prohibition for women to manually lift and move heavy weights exceeding the maximum standards approved by the Ministry of Labour and Social Protection, in coordination with the State Standards Bureau (Turkmenstandartlary) and the Ministry of Health and the Medical Industry of Turkmenistan.

128. The Labour Code regulates the specific working arrangements for women and other persons with family responsibilities: women with children under 3 years of age (or with a child with disabilities under 18 years of age) may, with their written consent, be required to perform night work, overtime work and work on weekends, public holidays and memorial days, and may also be sent on business trips; and women with children 3 to 14 years of age (or with a child with disabilities under 18 years of age), may, with their written consent, be required to work overtime or sent on business trips. The above categories of women must be informed in writing of their right to refuse such work.

129. The labour market is characterized by high female employment. Currently, about 42 per cent of the employees of large and medium-sized enterprises are women.

130. As of 2020, the percentage of women in leadership positions was 23.8 per cent. It reached the 25.3 per cent mark in 2021.

131. The State provides the same support to men and women engaged in agricultural production. The development of market relations in the agroindustrial sector is being stimulated. A number of incentives for agricultural producers have been introduced. These measures make it possible to attract more people into entrepreneurship in rural areas. The proportion of women entrepreneurs has been increasing in recent years. Thus, while women accounted for 23.1 per cent of entrepreneurs in 2015, this increased to 32.5 per cent in 2022.¹

132. In 2021, 1,039 land plots were allocated to members of the Union of Industrialists and Entrepreneurs of Turkmenistan for agricultural production, including 472 for men, 54 for women and 513 for private organizations. In 2022, 4,616 land plots were allocated to members of the Union of Industrialists and Entrepreneurs of Turkmenistan for agricultural production, including 3,715 for men and 901 for women.

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Health

133. The country is implementing, inter alia: the health information system development strategy, 2019–2025; the national programme on enhancing resistance and disease control, 2020–2025; the national programme for developing sanatorium and spa services, 2021–2025; the national strategy for strengthening measures to control viral hepatitis, 2019–2030; the national strategic plan for delivering tuberculosis control services, 2021–2025; the national programme for preventing the harmful effects of alcohol, 2018–2024; the national strategy for the prevention and control of non-communicable diseases, 2015–2020; The national healthy diet programme, 2020–2025; the national “Healthy mother – healthy child – healthy future” strategy, 2021–2025; and the national early childhood development strategy, 2020–2025.

134. Under the State health programme, investments in the health sector for 2019–2023 amounted to more than 2.5 billion manat. Between 2019 and 2023, 11 rural health facilities were built or renovated.

135. The volume of medicines produced by the Turkmendermansenagat consortium increased by 58 per cent between 2019 and 2022.

136. As at 1 January 2023, there were 138 hospital health-care (all medical institutions and services) facilities in Turkmenistan. A network of health centres has been developed, most of which are located in rural areas. New health-care facilities are provided with advanced apparatus and high-precision equipment. More than 30 new methods of prevention, treatment and patient rehabilitation have been introduced into national medical practice.

137. According to Turkmenistan’s second voluntary national review of the Sustainable Development Goals published in 2023, the maternal mortality ratio decreased to 1.7 in 2022 from 3.0 in 2015 (<https://hlpf.un.org/countries/turkmenistan/voluntary-national-reviews-2023>).

¹ State Statistics Committee of Turkmenistan, UNICEF.

138. Maternal mortality rates continue to decline thanks to the implementation of the national strategy on reproductive health and maternal, newborn, child and adolescent health for the period 2021–2025, as well as the development and implementation of regulations such as:

- An order of the Ministry of Health and the Medical Industry introducing a confidential audit of critical cases in obstetric practice at obstetrical institutions in Turkmenistan (2017).
- An order of the Ministry of Health and the Medical Industry approving the procedure for a confidential perinatal audit in Turkmenistan (2017).
- An order of the Ministry of Health and the Medical Industry approving the forms for statistical reporting on reproductive health and the instructions for its completion (2018).

139. Thirty-two clinical protocols were also developed and implemented, based on evidence-based medicine and the WHO 2018–2020 guidelines for obstetrics, including revised and supplemented versions.

140. Pursuant to an order of the Ministry of Health and the Medical Industry on conducting courses in reproductive health to primary care specialists on a regular basis, dated 2019, 223 obstetricians and gynaecologists out of 389 (57 per cent) working at the secondary and tertiary levels of obstetrics improved their knowledge and skills during a series of interactive training and simulation sessions in 2021 and in 2022. The clinical protocols and guidelines introduced are now used in 72 per cent of maternity hospitals across the country, and clinical practice standards have also been introduced into the Turkmen State Medical University programme.

141. In 2022, 76 gynaecologists were certified in methods to safely terminate pregnancies as needed, in particular medical and vacuum aspiration abortions.

142. The list of life-saving drugs was also updated in 2020, in accordance with an order of the Ministry of Health and the Medical Industry approving the list of life-saving drugs in health care for mothers and children.

143. The fertility rate among women between the ages of 15 and 19 in Turkmenistan remains one of the lowest in the region of Eastern Europe and Central Asia and continues to decline. In particular, this indicator in 2022 amounted to 22.9 births per 1,000 adolescent girls, and 24.5 in 2019 (second voluntary national review, 2023: <https://hlpf.un.org/countries/turkmenistan/voluntary-national-reviews-2023>). More than 90 per cent of these women were 18 to 19 years old.

144. As at 1 January 2023, 915 rural health centres and 599 rural health facilities were operational within district hospitals. This makes it possible to fully provide health-care services to the population, including women.

145. Obstetric facilities and antenatal care rooms in rural areas are represented in each central etrap (district) hospital. There are also inter-settlement maternity facilities at a distance of more than 50 km from the district centre. Maternity facilities are operational and they are also equipped and staffed in line with the principles outlined for three levels of obstetric care.

146. In accordance with an order of the Ministry of Health and the Medical Industry on improving reproductive health-care services for women (2017), the staff of 95 reproductive health offices visit the schools attached to them to inform adolescents about reproductive health, in addition to basic life skills lessons, which are compulsory in grades 7 to 11 of secondary schools. Since 2018, adolescents in Turkmenistan aged 15 to 19 years have had the right to obtain contraceptive drugs free of charge in reproductive health offices, which are available in every polyclinic.

147. Modern contraceptives, including emergency contraception, can also be purchased from the pharmacy network in cases where medical procedures are not necessary. Authorization is not issued for reproductive health services outside of hospitals and women can purchase contraceptives from the pharmacy network on an over-the-counter basis.

148. Girls over the age of 16 do not need parental permission to receive reproductive health services.

149. The percentage of women aged 15 to 49 who say they know where to get tested for HIV is 67.6 per cent (Multiple Indicator Cluster Survey (MICS 6), 2019)).

150. All HIV clinical protocols for all categories of HIV treatment were updated in 2022 (Countering the Spread of Disease Caused by the Human Immunodeficiency Virus (HIV Infection) Act (2016)).

Reply to paragraph 18 of the list of issues

Economic and social benefits

151. The basic legislative act guaranteeing the provision of pensions to citizens on the basis of the State pension insurance and the provision of State benefits to certain categories of citizens is the Social Protection Code of Turkmenistan (2012), which defines measures for the social protection of citizens in accordance with the principles of social justice.

152. As at 1 January 2023, the number of pensioners and recipients of benefits for all types of State social payments amounted to 998,600 people, including 543,700 pensioners and 454,900 recipients of State benefits. Between 2018 and 2022, the average monthly amount of pensions and State benefits almost doubled.

153. Persons with disabilities are one of the most vulnerable and socially disadvantaged population groups. Social assistance is provided to them in the form of State benefits and the privileges provided for in the Social Protection Code. As at 1 January 2023, there were 130,500 recipients of State disability benefits.

154. The State Pension Insurance Act (2012) introduced a new modern pension system in Turkmenistan, the defined contribution pension system, which is based on a personal record of each person's contribution to the pension system.

155. Citizens, including those employed in the informal sector, who perform personal subsistence and household work and other work without being employed on a contractual basis, as well as self-employed citizens, must conclude a pension insurance agreement with the Pension Fund office at their place of residence and pay in the mandatory pension contributions in order to be allocated an old-age pension upon reaching retirement age. The above-mentioned individuals are also entitled to join the funded pension system by signing an agreement of voluntary pension insurance with the Pension Fund office at their place of residence.

156. In November 2021, amendments and additions to the Social Protection Code were adopted. These introduced an early retirement procedure for women (reducing the retirement age for women depending on their number of children): for those who have given birth to five, six or seven children, or have a child with a childhood disability (regardless of when the child's disability was recognized), and who raised them until the age of 8, the retirement age is 54, provided they have participated in mandatory pension insurance for at least 15 years; for those who have given birth to, and raised until the age of 8, eight or more children, the retirement age is 52, provided they have participated in mandatory pension insurance for at least 10 years.

157. Under the Social Protection Code (2012), for persons who are not entitled to a pension for one reason or another, the legislation guarantees the allocation of State social benefits to men who have reached the age of 62 and to women who have reached the age of 57.

158. In accordance with the Social Protection Code (2012), the mother, father or guardian of a newborn child, regardless of their employment in socially useful activities, is entitled to a lump-sum State childbirth allowance and a monthly childcare allowance until the child reaches 3 years of age, paid from the State budget.

159. If citizens who have a disability and are engaged in the informal sector, or in personal, casual, household or other work without employment on a contractual basis, or are self-employed, they can be granted a disability benefit, regardless of the status of their payments of contributions into the State pension insurance scheme. In the event of the death of such a citizen, family members who were dependent on him or her during their lifetime receive a survivor's benefit regardless of the status of the payments of contributions by the deceased into State pension insurance scheme.

160. Thus, a legal framework has been established, including for those employed in the informal sector and domestic work (unpaid work at home), to provide women with access to social security and other social protection measures.

Reply to paragraph 19 of the list of issues

Disadvantaged groups of women

161. The constitutional principle of equality of human and civil rights and freedoms regardless of nationality, including in matters of access to employment, is enshrined in the Labour Code, the Employment Act and other legal and regulatory instruments.

162. Pursuant to the Labour Code, the labour law norms established by the Code and other legal and regulatory acts of Turkmenistan apply to the labour relations of Turkmen citizens, foreign citizens and stateless persons. Every citizen has the exclusive right to use his or her capabilities for productive and creative work and to engage in any activity not prohibited by law.

163. Every citizen has the right to free choice of employment by applying directly to an employer or through public employment agencies or services.

164. State safeguards related to employment are regulated by the Employment Act, which provides for free choice of profession, occupation and place of work, the creation of healthy and safe working conditions, and equal rights and opportunities for everyone in obtaining a profession, employment and remuneration commensurate with the quantity and quality of work, as well as promotion; and legal protection against any form of discrimination, unjustified refusal of employment, unlawful dismissal and termination of an employment contract.

165. Under the Act, foreign citizens and stateless persons permanently residing in Turkmenistan have equal rights with Turkmen citizens in the area of employment, unless otherwise provided for in the Act or in an international agreement of Turkmenistan.

Reply to paragraph 20 of the list of issues

166. In 2018 and 2019, Turkmenistan fully supported the General Assembly resolutions on the Global Compact for Migration and on the Global Compact on Refugees as a basis for a comprehensive approach to international migration in all its dimensions and taking into account the care of refugees, including in mixed flows.

167. In 2019, at the first Global Refugee Forum, Turkmenistan proposed to return to substantive consideration of the implementation of the Ashgabat declaration, as inextricably linked to the implementation of the commitments of the Global Compact on Refugees, and thereby to strengthen joint activities within the framework of the United Nations, the Organization of Islamic Cooperation and other international entities in order to implement the mechanisms laid down in the Compact, in accordance with its national capacities and priorities.

168. Throughout 2023, Turkmenistan has been actively participating in regional preparatory activities for the Global Refugee Forum in December 2023 and, taking into account the rational use of resources, also encourages considering opportunities to prevent and address indirect causes, including to strengthen the protection capacity of neighbouring countries interacting with forced displacement due to climate change, natural disasters, environmental protection and other indirect comprehensive measures to support refugees.

169. Turkmenistan supports investment in social services, including health and education, which are critical to the social and economic well-being of the country's population, and vulnerable groups such as refugees and other displaced persons. It thus provides targeted support to improve refugees' access to fundamental rights and freedoms.

170. Turkmenistan provides refugees and stateless persons with the following basic rights and freedoms on an equal footing with its citizens: the right to work (without work permits), to decent remuneration, to rest and to housing; access to education and to medical services; non-discriminatory access to the justice system, while respecting the principle of non-refoulement under administrative and criminal jurisdiction and the principle of family unity; and the right to a cultural identity and to naturalization. Identification cards and travel documents are issued free of charge to refugees and stateless persons using the latest biometric technologies.

171. Foreign citizens and stateless persons enjoy the same rights and freedoms and perform the same duties as Turkmen citizens. Pursuant to the generally recognized norms of international law, Turkmenistan grants asylum to foreign nationals and stateless persons in accordance with the procedure established by law. Under the Refugees Act (2017), persons are granted refugee status in Turkmenistan owing to a well-founded fear of persecution in their State of nationality on the grounds of race, sex, religion, citizenship, membership of a particular social group or political opinion.

172. According to the Civil Registration Act (2019), the birth of every child born in Turkmenistan must be registered with the State and a birth certificate must be issued.

Reply to paragraph 21 of the list of issues

173. At the women's correctional facility, in accordance with international standards, and in addition to the basic facilities necessary for the functioning of the institution, separate facilities have been established for the care of pregnant women and their children. All necessary conditions have been created to provide specialized care to women during pregnancy, childbirth and the postpartum period. There is also a children's home, which is a specially designated building where mothers with children under 3 years of age can live together.

174. Convicted pregnant women and nursing mothers are provided with improved living conditions, personal hygiene products and increased nutritional standards.

175. The correctional facility has a hairdressing salon, a laundry, a bathing facility and workshops for minor repairs of clothing, bedding and shoes.

176. Information about female inmates being coerced to have sexual relations with correctional officers has not been confirmed.

177. In order to prevent the above-mentioned actions with female inmates, video surveillance cameras and audio recording devices have been installed at the correctional facility. Furthermore, in the correctional facility where female inmates are held, the supervision of female inmates is primarily the responsibility of female staff who have access to all areas of the facility.

178. The correctional facility for female inmates is subject to regular inspections by higher and other competent authorities in accordance with the law.

179. The Ministry of Internal Affairs took preventive measures and imposed restrictions in the women's correctional facility in Turkmenistan in connection with the spread of the COVID-19 pandemic around the world. In particular, persons serving sentences who had no-contraindications to immunization were vaccinated three times free of charge.

Reply to paragraph 22 of the list of issues

180. Turkmenistan's criminal law establishes liability for male-to-male sexual relations. But sodomy is not widespread in the country and it is not prosecuted. Lesbian, bisexual, transgender and intersex sexual relations are not criminalized under the law.

Reply to paragraph 23 of the list of issues

Marriage and family relations

181. Men and women of marriageable age, regardless of nationality or religion, have equal rights to marry and found a family. The spouses are equal in the family relationship.

182. Under article 14 of the Family Code, men and women enjoy equal rights at the time of marriage, during the marriage and at the time of its dissolution.

183. Under article 75 of the Family Code, a child born to unmarried parents has the same rights and obligations towards the parents and their relatives as a child born to married parents.

184. Under the Turkmen Citizenship Act, the conclusion or dissolution of a Turkmen citizen's marriage to a foreign citizen or stateless person does not entail a change of citizenship.

185. A change in the citizenship of one spouse does not entail any change in the citizenship of the other spouse.

186. The dissolution of the marriage does not result in a change of citizenship for children born or adopted into the marriage.

187. A foreign citizen or stateless person who has contracted a marriage with a Turkmen citizen may be admitted to Turkmen citizenship if he or she expresses his or her will to do so and meets the conditions stipulated in the above-mentioned Act.