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Note verbale dated 28 February 2012 from the Permanent Mission of Azerbaijan to the United Nations and other international organizations in Geneva addressed to the President of the Human Rights Council

I have the honour to submit herewith the interim report of the Government of the Republic of Azerbaijan on the implementation of the recommendations contained in the outcome of the universal periodic review on Azerbaijan (A/HRC/11/20).*

The working group on the implementation of the recommendations reflected in the report of the Working Group on the Universal Periodic Review on Azerbaijan was established on 22 December 2010. The above-mentioned interim report on the follow-up to accepted recommendations is presented by the Government of Azerbaijan on a voluntary basis as a sign of its serious and steady commitment to the promotion and protection of all human rights in the country.

The Republic of Azerbaijan considers the protection and promotion of human rights an issue of priority for its internal and foreign policy agenda. Hence, addressing the human rights issues contained in the recommendations is among the main duties of the Government of the Republic of Azerbaijan and is constantly exercised. The protection of human rights and freedoms is a fundamental objective of the State in the Constitution of the Republic of Azerbaijan.

* Reproduced in the annex as received, in the language of submission only.

Annex

Interim report of the Government of the Republic of Azerbaijan on the implementation of the recommendations of the Working Group on the Universal Periodic Review with respect to its first report on the Republic of Azerbaijan

1. Address shortcomings in the area of human rights promotion and protection, including promotion of a culture of human rights among the society, strengthening of national capacities, the rule of law and adequate protection of vulnerable segments of the population (Iran);

Issues indicated in the recommendation are one of the main duties of the Government of the Republic of Azerbaijan and is always being carried out. Protection of human rights and freedoms was defined as the highest goal of the State in the Constitution of the Republic of Azerbaijan.

In order to ensure the sustainability of the “Baku process of intercultural dialogue” initiated during the conference of the CoE Ministers of Culture held in Baku on December 2-3, 2008 the VI Conference of the Ministers of Culture of the OIC Member States was held in Baku on October 13-15, 2009. The first day of the conference, a round table on the topic “Baku process: a new call for a dialogue among civilizations” was arranged between a number of European states and the OIC member states by mediation of ISESCO and the Council of Europe, by the initiative of the Government of the Republic of Azerbaijan.

The participants of the round table adopted a final communiqué at the end. The issues of cooperation at bilateral, regional and international levels, exchange of experience, development of intercultural dialogue between the Islamic world and Europe, implementation of projects and programs in this field, as well as joint measures regarding the protection of cultural heritage in conflict regions were indicated in the communiqué.

The World Intercultural Dialogue Forum was held on April 7-9, 2011 in Baku under the leadership of the President of the Republic of Azerbaijan, Mr. Ilham Aliyev. The Forum showed that intercultural dialogue is one of the urgent duties in the world we live manifesting itself protuberantly at the global level.

The Republic of Azerbaijan has acceded to “The Convention on protection and promotion of the diversity of cultural expressions” of UNESCO by the Law of 26 November 2009.

A specific plan of measures is being prepared according to the abovementioned UNESCO Convention. The implementation of the project “Cultural diversity is our cultural unity” is planned within the framework of the plan of measures. It is planned to hold workshops on the topic of national cultural solidarity in the regions where national minorities and local nations live densely on the country territory, organize trainings for cultural workers, persons possessing talent and self-expression in the regions for the purpose of integrating into cultural life of the country, prepare research work on the state of intercultural dialogue and publish booklets and brochures reflecting cultural diversity of the country, hold exhibitions, concerts, competitions and other events within the framework of the project.

The Programme on “The People’s Creativity Capitals for 2010-2014” was approved by the Republic of Azerbaijan. The announcement of Ganja “Legends Capital of Azerbaijan”, Sheki “Mastery Capital of Azerbaijan”, Qazakh “Folklore Capital of

Azerbaijan” for 2010, Shabran “Legends Capital of Azerbaijan”, Lankaran “Folklore Capital of Azerbaijan” and Ismayilli “Mastery Capital of Azerbaijan” for 2011 according to this programme created conditions to develop creative potential of cultural workers helped the improvement of socio-economic life in those regions.

Every two years, the Art Festival of National Minorities is held under the motto “Azerbaijan –native land”. Conditions are created for all national minorities living in our country as a part of the culture of Azerbaijan to present the samples of their national cultural expression.

On June 14-18, 2011 the next art festival of national minorities living in Azerbaijan was held under the motto “Azerbaijan- native land” with the support of the Haydar Aliyev Foundation organized by the Ministry of Culture and Tourism.

On April 14, 2011, the State Committee for Family, Women and Children Affairs of the Republic of Azerbaijan conducted study workshops on the topic “Combating violence against children” in Baku European lyceum. Reports were made on the topic of “Combating violence against children”, and presentation of the Law of the Republic of Azerbaijan on “Prevention of domestic violence” was held within that event. Then, the students of the Baku European lyceum presented a “Theatre - Forum” performance. By means of this performance children showed their attitude towards the violence against children committed by parents, teachers and children of the same age, as well as the impact of violence on them. Children addressed their mates among the audience and learned their attitude towards the violence. This range of activity is conducted constantly and is planned to be held in various regions of the country on a regular basis.

A project “Development of common sense and principles of humanism among the young generation” was implemented in regions of the Republic (Salyan, Bilesuvar, Neftchala, Shirvan, Hadjigabul and Guba regions) during April-May 2011. Reports were made on human rights, self-esteem, healthy way of living, combating drug addiction, gender culture, tolerance within the framework of the programme; the responses were made to the questions of participants regarding those problems.

The State Committee for Family, Women and Children Affairs has been implementing the project “Early marriage - social contacts and relationship” since last year jointly with the United Nations Children’s Fund to learn the attitude of population towards the problem of early marriages and shape the strategy in this direction. As the next phase of the project, a number of meetings were held in various villages of Lankaran, as well as Masalli and Lerik regions of the Republic in the first half of 2011 to plan the measures regarding the problem of early marriages. A strategy plan has been elaborated to eliminate the problem of early marriage on the basis of proposals made as a result of the meetings.

Particular attention was attached on support to the projects dedicated to promotion and protection of human rights, as well as the conduct of various researches and monitoring in this sphere within the financial aid competitions held in 2009 and 2010 by the State Support Council to NGO’s under the Prezident of the Republic of Azerbaijan. Thus, 21 projects in 2009 and 24 projects in 2010 were financed by the Council in this field.

The above-mentioned projects covered not only Baku, but also most of the regions of the country. The projects were mainly dedicated to the organization of trainings and seminars, meetings and conferences with the society, preparation of new publications, conduct of monitoring and researches, provision of legal advice, and arrangement of awareness-raising actions and exhibitions.

Main target groups of these projects included children and women, refugees and IDPs, the disabled and elderly people, students and the youth.

Public hearings were held in 58 towns and regions of our country by the Commissioner for Human Rights of the Republic of Azerbaijan (Ombudsman) in July-September of 2010 with the participation of representatives of state bodies, the city and region executive authorities, municipalities, bodies of internal affairs and prosecutor's office, courts, as well as non-governmental organizations and the mass media for the purpose of promoting the "National Action Plan on protection of human rights in the Republic of Azerbaijan" approved by the Presidential Order of 28 December 2006 and monitoring the situation of its application, assessment of achievements obtained in the process of implementation of this document- being a new stage in protection and provision of human rights in our country, taking appropriate measures aimed at removing the difficulties and shortcomings through analysis.

"The National Action Programme in the field of increasing the effectiveness of the protection of human rights and freedoms in the Republic of Azerbaijan" was approved by the Order of the President of the Republic of Azerbaijan in 27 December 2011.

By improving the concept of state activities in the field of protection of human rights, the mechanism of the conducting, implementing, coordinating, monitoring and assessment of a number of measures in different directions and the main purposes were defined in National Action Programme.

The specific measures are planned in the fields of development of the human rights and freedoms, the improvement of legislative basis, and the effective protection of human rights of the different groups of population.

Thus, the Programme includes the ideas of guiding the human rights criteria while adopting legislative acts, the continuation of the acceding process of the Republic of Azerbaijan to the international treaties in the human rights sphere, adoption of new legislative acts, strengthening the fight against corruption, increasing the transparency, and continuation of the close cooperation with the civil society in the field of improvement of electron service to the population.

Moreover, in accordance with the Programme it is planned to continue the educational, scientific-analytical activities in the human rights sphere, as well as to realize the joint cooperation programmes with the international organizations, including the UN agencies specialized in the human rights sphere, High Commissioner for Refugees, UNESCO, UNICEF, World Bank, Council of Europe, European Union, OSCE and with other regional organizations as well.

The cooperation programmes realized with different international organizations, the reform process of legislation of different fields, the Guidebook of the UN High Commissioner for Human Rights on the preparation of National Action Plans, as well as the case law of the European Court of Human Rights were taken into account in the course of preparatory process for National Action Programme.

2. **Continue its efforts to further strengthen institutional and policy frameworks in the area of promotion and protection of human rights (Brazil); continue to take the necessary measures to increase transparency in local and national institutions and to optimize the potential of the country (Palestine); establish an inter-institutional mechanism, in which relevant civil society actors will participate, in order to implement UPR recommendations as well as Human Rights Council's Special Procedures and Treaty Bodies' recommendations (Mexico);**

The issues of promotion of human rights among the society, strengthening of institutional and political frameworks in this area were indicated in the "National Action Plan on protection of human rights". In accordance with the plan, the NGOs and international organizations are involved in implementation of the National Action Plan, as

well as preparation of reports submitted to the UN specialized agencies, their cooperation with the state bodies is developed.

During the past period, a number of measures were carried out in the field of promotion and protection of human rights within the framework of the Eastern Partnership with the European Union by the Ministry of Justice of the Republic of Azerbaijan, as well as the State Committee for European Integration, EU-Azerbaijan Cooperation Committee, Sub-Committee on justice, freedom, human rights and democratization, EU-Azerbaijan Action Plan, Working Group on the issues of human rights and democratization, as well as the Association Agreement to regulate the cooperative relations between the EU and Azerbaijan and the concept document of Comprehensive Institutional Building Program.

Promotion of joint projects with the EU has been continued, and in order to start the implementation of “The Program of Support to reforms in the field of justice” jointly with the European Commission aimed at improvement of the penitentiary service, Justice Academy and regional justice offices, the relevant Financing Agreement and Action Plan were approved by the Cabinet of Ministers in 2010, besides the complex annual plans of action adopted by relevant agencies of the Ministry of Justice to carry out the terms and conditions envisaged in the agreement were sent for submission to the European Commission.

The Justice Academy was established by relevant decrees of the President of the Republic of Azerbaijan within the Ministry of Justice and its Charter was confirmed. In the Academy training and professional development, as well as legal teaching are provided to justice employees, to newly-recruited justice and prosecution candidates, to the judges, candidates for judge, to the court employees, to lawyers and candidates for lawyer, to special notaries, and within the framework of the Academy’s main aims and duties to listeners from other categories. The Academy’s teaching program contains topics on urgent international documents regulating the protection of human rights, besides the UN and CoE Conventions, the precedents of the European Court of Human Rights, as well as innovations in the national legislation.

New courts - regional courts on grave crimes were created in four regions of the country on the basis of the Court on grave crimes to facilitate the possibilities for the population to apply to the courts; administrative-economic courts were also created in seven regions to ensure the strict observation of human rights by the state bodies; the military judicial system was improved.

On June 18, 2010, a Law was adopted on appropriate amendments and supplements to the legislation on implementation of court decisions in the legislative initiative of the President and its application started by Presidential Decree of 15 July 2010.

614 new municipalities were created as a result of merging 1651 municipalities paying a special attention to the improvement of the activity of municipalities in our country, increasing the efficiency of the use of their economic resources and their role in the solution of issues of local importance.

The establishment of 16 regional centers for legal advice services in the regions was ensured by the Ministry of Justice within the framework of the “State Program on Poverty Reduction and Sustainable Development” (2008-2015) to provide free legal assistance to the population, in particular the vulnerable groups and raise their awareness.

Moreover, measures defined in “The National Strategy on Increasing Transparency and Anti-Corruption” adopted in 2007 in respect of all the activities are carried out by the state bodies and public control mechanisms are applied. The provision of transparency at the justice agencies was always the focus of attention, the composition of Competition Commission on medical service recruitment has been considered in the board of the

ministry and expanded, related international and local NGOs have been involved in this work.

Relevant monitoring groups were formed within the measures on increasing transparency and anti-corruption, controls were made at subordinate agencies, and the revealed shortcomings were removed in place, and immediate consideration of complaints related to the corruption received by the Ministry, in particular through the hot-lines and operative implementation of necessary measures were provided. In this regard, the implementation of additional efficient measures is being continued. At the same time, an appropriate section has been created on the internet site of the ministry to comprehensively inform the population about the state dues for services provided to the citizens at the justice agencies.

The Decree of the President of the Republic of Azerbaijan on “Strengthening the fight against offences in relation to the corruption in state management and municipal properties and resources” was adopted on June 22, 2009. Relevant instructions were given to the Ministry of Justice and bodies of prosecutor’s office in the Decree on strengthening the fight against law violations in the usage of municipal resources, the ownership, use and disposal of municipal property to completely eliminate the corruption,

Furthermore, in order to increase the transparency in the activities of state bodies and eliminate the cases creating conditions for corruption the President of the Republic of Azerbaijan on May 23, 2011, signed a Decree on “Certain measures in organization of provision of electronic services of state bodies”.

The total number of the Prosecutor’s office staff of anti-corruption department under the Prosecutor-General of the Republic of Azerbaijan was increased from 60 to 100 according to Presidential Decree of 11 March 2011. On March 18, 2011, the Parliament (Milli Majlis) of the Republic of Azerbaijan by amending the Laws “On Operational-investigative activity” and “On Prosecutor’s Office” authorized the Anti-Corruption Department under the Prosecutor-General of the Republic of Azerbaijan to carry out operative-search activities.

Regulation of controls conducted for the purpose of protecting the rights of consumers according to modern standards, prevention of the cases of abusing authorities during controls, provision of transparency and effective protection of the rights of consumers according to the results arrived during those controls were indicated in the Presidential Decree of 13 April 2010 on “Certain measures on regulation of controls in the field of entrepreneurship and protection of the rights of consumers”. The Regulations on single register of controls in the field of entrepreneurship was approved under Decree of 15 April 2011 and its conduct was entrusted to the Ministry of Justice of the Republic of Azerbaijan. The register in question has started to operate since May 1, 2011.

At the same time, the draft of Azerbaijan Corporative Management Standards has been drawn up on the basis of existing legislation and principles of corporative management of the Organization of Economic Cooperation and Development and was affirmed under Order F-09 of 28 January 2011 by the Minister of Economic Development of the Republic of Azerbaijan.

Children and Family Support Centres have been operating in 11 regions of the republic attached to the State Committee for Family, Women and Children Affairs since 2007. Children and Family Support Centres promote the well-being and protection of children; present modern mechanisms and methods of individual approach to define and satisfy their needs in the areas they operate. During 2011, the mentioned Centres held several trainings aimed at encouragement of the rights of children in need of special care, refugees and IDPs in the communities they operate, implemented measures jointly with local state bodies directed at provision of their rights.

“Training courses on promotion of the Convention on the Rights of the Child” through the method of “from child to child” have been held since 2009 by the State Committee for Family, Women and Children Affairs for pupils of all secondary schools of Baku from different nationalities getting education in different languages, study materials related to the children’s rights and the Convention of the Rights of the Child have been distributed among the pupils. The campaign continued in 2011 with holding trainings by the persons educated accordingly in the field of human rights in the previous years for other peers.

Methodical textbook “Recommendations on children development” was prepared by the State Committee for Family, Women and Children Affairs for parents and experts within relevant period of time and its distribution among the communities was provided. The main objective in preparation of such textbook is to help raising the awareness of every person working with the children about childhood, stages of child development and indicators of usual development.

On December 22, 2010 a Working Group was established by Order 118 of the Head of Presidential Administration of the Republic of Azerbaijan regarding the implementation of recommendations in the final opinion of the Working Group of the UN Human Rights Council on the Universal Periodic Review on the first report of the Republic of Azerbaijan.

The Commissioner for Human Rights (Ombudsman) exerts control over the implementation of the recommendations on the UPR as an independent monitoring mechanism. The Ombudsman continued fruitful cooperative relations with NGOs, the public and civil society to implement the recommendations.

The participation of the civil society institutions, local NGOs and communities in public hearings held in all the cities and regions of our country was provided to monitor the situation of promotion and application of the National Action Plan, as well as raise the awareness of the population about the suffrage.

Guided by paragraph 5 of the Order on the adoption of the National Action Plan, the Ombudsperson actively involved the NGOs in the events organized at the Office of the Ombudsman at different times, to discuss the state of implementation of the National Action Plan.

3. Information on recommendations 6, 7, 8, 9, 10 and 26:

On June 22, 2010, a Law on the “Prevention of domestic violence” was adopted by the Milli Majlis (the Parliament) of the Republic of Azerbaijan. The Law determines and regulates the implemented measures aimed at the prevention of the violence committed by abuse of ties of relationship, cohabitation or previous cohabitation, its negative legal, medical and social consequences, the social protection of the persons suffered from domestic violence, their provision with legal assistance, as well as the elimination of cases causing domestic violence.

This Law envisages the organization of the state aid centers rendering free services for the suffered persons. These aid centers have different directions of activity for the people suffered from domestic violence, such as: rendering legal and/or medical assistance, helping them with the employment and acquirement of new professions etc. The capacity of the aid centers to provide temporary shelter for the people suffering from domestic violence when necessary has also been taken into consideration.

According to the Presidential Decree of the Republic of Azerbaijan of 1 October 2010, “Rules of considering the complaints with no criminal elements in complaints about domestic violence”, “Rules of prophylactic registration of the people committed domestic violence and execution of educative-preventive work with those individuals”, “Rules of

establishment and operation of the database concerning the domestic violence”, “Rules of activity of the aid centers for people suffered from domestic violence” and “Rules of accreditation of non-state aid centers for people suffered from domestic violence” were drafted and submitted to the Cabinet of Ministers of the Republic of Azerbaijan.

According to the Family Code, only the marriages registered by the state bodies are recognized and religious marriages have no legal value.

The Constitution of the Republic of Azerbaijan guarantees the protection of rights and freedoms of every person in the court, the legislation in force envisages the possibilities for legal and judicial protection of victims of domestic violence.

The Council of State Support to NGOs under the President of the Republic of Azerbaijan financed 2 projects in 2009-2010 submitted by the local NGOs each year, in order to eliminate the violence against women, strengthen measures in this field and draw the public attention to these issues.

4. **Continue with national programmes already undertaken to reduce any form of discrimination against women until it is totally eliminated (Cuba); Adopt specific legislation on violence against women and forced marriages, in conformity with CEDAW and CRC, in order to prevent and combat discrimination against women (Mexico); implement active policies and awareness-raising campaigns in order to overcome the situation of discrimination against women (Argentina); carry out public awareness campaigns about equal opportunities of women and men should be carried on (Lithuania); address the challenge of gender mainstreaming and equality in a purposeful manner (Bangladesh).**

The Republic of Azerbaijan does not consider cases of discrimination towards women as characteristic for the country.

The bodies of internal affairs of the Republic of Azerbaijan carry out preventive measures against the cases of discrimination towards women and violence against them according to the principles of equal rights of the citizens and gender in compliance with the Constitution of the Republic of Azerbaijan, the Law on “The Police” and international norms.

Continuous reforms have been implemented in the system of the Ministry of Internal Affairs in accordance with the experience of developed countries and in general, international practice, special plan of action, orders, new recommendations, regulations and instructions of the Ministry of Internal Affairs on women problems, human rights, fight against everyday violence in the democratic society were prepared and submitted for implementation

Special attention was attached to the projects dedicated to elimination of discrimination towards women at the competitions for financial aid of the Council of State Support to NGOs under the President of the Republic of Azerbaijan.

6 projects in 2009 and 5 projects in 2010 on equal rights of men and women, early marriages of underage girls and especially elimination of all kinds of discrimination against women were supported by the above mentioned Council.

These projects, taking the function of awareness-raising over, were mainly realized in various regions of the Republic of Azerbaijan.

5. Provide law enforcement and judicial officials with specific education/ sensitivity training towards the protection of children, women and persons of minority sexual orientation or gender identity (Czech Republic);

The Republic of Azerbaijan states that large scale activities are carried out in this direction.

Seminars were organized for judges, prosecutors and lawyers on the Convention of the Elimination of all Forms of Discrimination against Women and other main UN agreements on human rights by the Ministry of Justice of the Republic of Azerbaijan and the office of the UN High Commissioner for Human Rights.

In general, special attention was paid to the provisions of the Convention on the Elimination of all Forms of Discrimination against Women and the notion of gender equality at all trainings and seminars organized for the legal-judicial system in the Republic of Azerbaijan.

Close and mutual relations of cooperation have been established with the committees of the Council of Europe on “Protection of Human Rights” and “Against Torture”, as well as with other international organizations, and as a logical conclusion of the works carried out jointly, a special education program on protection of human rights and freedoms has been developed and at present lectures are given at the Police Academy and preparation system of the staff on the basis of the mentioned program.

Moreover, assistance is rendered to the persons in need of protection and applying to the “Legal Clinic” established attached to the “State and Law Theory” faculty of the Academy in drawing up the documents for the purpose of providing professional legal assistance.

Press conferences, briefings are held on the mentioned topics at the Ministry of Internal Affairs on a regular basis, relevant articles are published on the newspaper of the Ministry “Mübariz keşikdə” (“On guard”) in each of its edition. Informative interviews of the heads of structural bodies of the Ministry on protection of human rights and freedoms are provided on the web sites of various information agencies.

Central database of the Ministry of Internal Affairs has been improved to generalize the offences and law violations related to violence, exert operative control over the current situation in places, and official statistic data on crimes and the classification of crime victims have been included in the database.

Cooperation with international organizations, NGOs and other interested public institutes was expanded to establish reliable and stable “police-society” and “police-citizen” relations in prevention of the crimes of that type, a number of projects were realized.

Trainings were held approximately with 2000 field inspectors who are in close contact with the public and inspectors on work with the juvenile within the project “The role of police in protection of women’s rights in domestic violence” with the participation of the OSCE Baku office and 150 police officers were specially trained.

6. Information on recommendations 9, 10 and 13:

In accordance with the “National Action Plan of the Republic of Azerbaijan against trafficking in human beings” approved under Presidential Order № 208 of 6 May 2004 of the Republic of Azerbaijan, necessary measures were implemented; a number of normative-legal acts were confirmed by the Cabinet of Ministers regarding the implementation of the National Action Plan covering 2009-2013 years.

Thus, “National Directive Mechanism Rules regarding victims of human trafficking” has been prepared to establish an effective system that will provide the

protection of rights of victims and their surrender to related bodies, their security, repatriation and social rehabilitation and form the rules in this field and was confirmed by the decision of the Cabinet of Ministers. Taking into account that the identification of victims of human trafficking is one of the most important elements of the measures taken by the government in this field, also is one of the main factors for their reintegration into society, returning them back to normal life and reducing their risk of becoming victims of human trafficking again, “Rules (indicators) of identification of victims of human trafficking” were approved by the decision of the Cabinet of Ministers and submitted for implementation. The aim of the rules is to easily reveal victims, take urgent measures on protection of their rights, as well as provide the staff of relevant bodies with necessary information.

Human trafficking victims in need of help are accommodated in the shelters and most of them are reintegrated into society, all the victims are rendered legal, medical and psychological assistance. According to the relevant decision of the Cabinet of Ministers, the persons suffered from human trafficking are granted lump-sum allowance during their reintegration period and aid from the Fund to Aid for Victims of Human Trafficking.

A Memorandum of Understanding on cooperation was signed between the Ministry of Internal Affairs and the Anti-human Trafficking Coalition of non-governmental organizations incorporating 45 NGOs for the purpose of establishing and developing mutual relations with NGOs and other public associations acting in the Republic of Azerbaijan and a special work program on joint implementation of awareness-raising measure, which is one of the priority directions of the National Plan of Actions was developed and submitted for implementation.

A number of workshops, conferences and round tables were held within the last 3 years jointly with the rights-protection institutes of the UN and OSCE acting in the country, including “Symmetry” Gender Association, “Pure world”, “Solidarity among women” and other organizations dealing with material-moral and domestic problems of women, for the purpose of learning from international practice and applying it in everyday activity.

On December 15-16, 2010 and February 2011 with co-organization of the Council of Europe and Ministry of Internal Affairs and with the participation of the Ministry of Foreign Affairs a seminar on the topic of “The fight against human trafficking in Azerbaijan and its prevention” was held in Baku.

About 20 conferences and deliberations were held in the regions with the participation of representatives of relevant ministries, state committees and local bodies of the Ombudman’s Office on violence problems during the last 3 years.

7. **Continue and intensify its efforts in favour of children and women generally, to ensure their safety in the domestic environment and to remove any obstacles to their education, development and access to equal opportunities (Indonesia); further developing measures against domestic violence against women (Lithuania), Victims of domestic violence should have possibility to use appropriate means of redress and access to shelters (Lithuania); take concrete steps and ensure that all necessary resources are provided to government agencies in order to increase the efficiency of a child protection system (Austria); continue efforts in the direction of the positive improvements in women and children’s rights, especially measures taken to combat domestic violence (Afghanistan);**

Protection of woman and child rights has always been the focus of attention of the Government of the Republic of Azerbaijan. A special body – The State Committee for Family, Women, and Children Affairs was established within the Government of

Azerbaijan in order to solve those issues. The year 2009 was declared as the year of Child in the Republic of Azerbaijan by the Presidential Order of the Republic of Azerbaijan.

Children with physical disabilities that do not hinder them from being engaged in any kind of art enjoy equal rights at the music and art schools for children acting within the system of the Ministry of Culture and Tourism of the Republic of Azerbaijan.

A specialized school with musical education – full-course (11-year school) Music School № 38 for children with eye-sight disabilities functions in Baku. This school was opened in 1980. During this 30-year period nearly one thousand pupils finished that school. Presently, nearly 200 pupils of 1st and 2nd disability groups study at the piano, tar, kamancha, garmon, naghara and singing classes. The pupils take an active part in the reviews, competitions and festivals organized by the Ministry of Culture and Tourism and Baku City Culture and Tourism department, they also regularly make concert programs at all events of the republic boarding-school for children with eye-sight disabilities, military units, Azerbaijan Association of the Blind Persons.

Textbooks were published in Braille system in Azerbaijani for the first time, “sound tales” were made for children with eyesight disabilities with the financial and organizational support of the Ministry of Culture and Tourism of the Republic of Azerbaijan.

On May 17-21, 2010, the 2nd republic competition on stringed instruments and in December 2010, the 2nd republic contest of folk musical instruments among the pupils of children’s music and art schools was held in Baku by the Ministry of Culture and Tourism in order to improve musical education on stringed instruments, reveal talented children, support them and enhance their creative potential.

A number of events were organized by the subordinate bodies of the Ministry of Culture and Tourism of the Republic of Azerbaijan within the “Child Rights Month” held under the motto “Let’s listen to the children and ensure their participation” from October 20 until November 20 concerning the 50th anniversary of the UN Declaration of the rights of the child, the 20th anniversary of the adoption of the Convention of the Rights of the Child and the declaration of 2009 as the Year of the Child.

Main goal of these events is to ensure “The right of every person to participate in cultural life, benefit from the cultural entities and cultural resources” in compliance with Article 40 of the Constitution of the Republic of Azerbaijan (Right of Culture), as well as to determine young talents, to provide state care for the development of child creativity and strengthen international cultural relations.

A film festival titled “The Azerbaijan family - 2011” was organized with support of the project “Combating violence against women in the 21st century” by the State Committee for Family, Women and Children Affairs, the Heydar Aliyev Foundation and the UN Population Fund.

Furthermore, lectures were organized for parents of underage IDP and refugee children by the State Committee for Family, Women and Children Affairs, the parents were informed about urgent topics like preservation of national-moral values, family culture, inter-generation relations parent-child relations, establishment of mutual relationship between teachers and parents, family problems and the ways of their solution.