

Madam Chairperson,
Distinguished Members of the Committee,
Dear guests,

On behalf of the government of Azerbaijan, I'm honored to present our fifth periodic report on the implementation of the UN Convention on Elimination of all forms of Discrimination against Women. I would like to express my sincere appreciation to the members of the CEDAW Committee for invaluable inputs that improved our report with the list of questions and issues. Your experience, expertise and recommendations will help us in overcoming still existing gaps and challenges and assist to better implement CEDAW.

The government of Azerbaijan commends the CEDAW Committee for adoption of General Recommendation 30 on women in conflict prevention, conflict and post-conflict situation. We still have the unsatisfactory level of women's participation in conflict prevention and resolution and government takes necessary measures and educational work to strengthen their role in this field. The State Committee is taking stock of this very important General Recommendation which will better equip us in fulfilling our obligations under the Convention. The State Committee intends to organize the special trainings on GR 30 for key stake holders and NGOs. The government of Azerbaijan also realizes the importance of having comprehensive National Action Plan on resolution 1325 and other subsequent resolutions of UN Security Council on Women in Peace. The relevant technical assistance will be sought for that purpose.

A coalition of women from Parliament, state agencies, the NGO community, political parties and mass media has been already created in Azerbaijan to support of Resolution 1325. In the framework of regional project "Women for Conflict Prevention and Peace Building in the Southern Caucasus", advocacy work for increasing the role of Azerbaijan women in decision-making with regard to conflict prevention and resolution at the national, regional and international levels has been conducted. This "Coalition 1325" involved women refugees and IDPs in

peace building process, promoted the culture of peace and establish cooperation with women coalition working on similar issues abroad. Today women from this coalition are very active on high level posts, for example in national parliament, central election committee and etc .The use of GR 30 will help us to accelerate the process of including women in all peace negotiations efforts.

The present Report, which covers the period from 2008-2012, has been prepared in a participatory manner with all relevant Ministries and State Committees. There was regular consultation with civil society organizations working in the area of women's human rights and the final report was communicated to all of them.

In order to save time, I would like to brief you on the most recent developments on the implementation of key articles of the Convention. The establishment of the regional 11 Family Support Centers and two new Departments on work with Regional Centers and on Information and Social-Analytical research of the State Committee for Family, Women and Children Affairs was a very important achievement in strengthening the institutional framework to address the key gender issues and better implementation of CEDAW obligations. These regional centers as alternative service model carries out an important work in communities. In 2013- 2222, in 2014 -2349 women benefited from the work of these centers and 7 cases of early marriages were prevented. Centers also works on creation a community-based rehabilitation network in regions for incomplete families, women and children. The budget allocation to State Committee for necessary activities ensuring gender equality and women's empowerment has increased from 600 thousand USD since 2009 to more than 1 and a half million USD.

In accordance with the recommendation of the CEDAW Committee made after the examination of the 4th periodic report, the law "On Combating Domestic Violence" was adopted on June 22, 2010. Legislative acts on implementation of this Law were adapted and amendments were made to 8 laws, including the Criminal, Administrative Offences, Family Codes, and the Law on Execution of Court Decisions.

Also, “Rules of Prophylactic registration and educational-preventive work for persons who committed domestic violence”, “Organization and maintenance of data-base on Domestic Violence”, “Rules of Review of Domestic Violence complaints with no criminal act”, “Rules of work of assistance centers for domestic violence victims” and the “Rules of accreditation of non-government assistance centers” were adopted by the relevant decisions of the Cabinet of Ministers in 2013-2014.

Besides this, in accordance with the “National Action Plan for increasing the efficiency of protection of human rights and freedoms”, adopted on 27 December 2011, relevant authorities were charged with drafting rehabilitation programs for female victims of domestic violence, provision of legal protection instruments, necessary compensation, medical and psychological assistance. Even new state program on “Population development and demography for 2015-2025” includes the National Strategy and new National Action plan of preventing domestic violence.

Adoption of the law on “Social service” in 2011 has also become one of the important measures realized for the strengthening of social policy in Azerbaijan. It regulates the issues related to the victims of domestic violence, human trafficking and homeless persons. Currently complex measures are being conducted for elimination the problems of this group of people and provision of their equal participation in public life.

As a result, 3 shelters for the victims were opened in 2013. Moreover, in 2014 seven non-governmental Support Centers were accredited in order to render a social service for victims of domestic violence. The Government of Azerbaijan has already started the establishment of on-line database on violence against women. In cooperation with the OSCE and UN, we have started to build capacity in regions to increase skills in data collection, analysis, dissemination and use. We continue to engage civil society and the private sector in the work with victims of domestic violence and the families from risk groups. A number of cases of violence against women decreased from 4 489 in 2010 to 1803 in 2013.

In order to equalize the minimum age of marriage for women and men to 18 the amendment to the Family Code was made in accordance with article 16 of the Convention in November 2011. In order to facilitate the implementation of the new laws, consequential amendments were also made to several laws. For example, The Criminal Code was accordingly amended in order to prohibit early and forced marriages. Also it should be noted that in December 2014 a new amendment to the Family Code on free compulsory medical checkup before the marriage has been adopted.

New development concept "Azerbaijan -2020, once again proved that the gender problems remain in the center of attention. Measures to prevent gender violence, create equal opportunities for women on the labour market, promote women at work and expand their opportunities to occupy leading positions are defined as the main direction of the state policy. A number of such special documents as a national action plan on gender equality, "Azerbaijan's family strategy", creation of the system to monitor evasion of education and early marriages are being worked out for the implementation. In this framework ,the Decree "on Adoption of Rules of Overseeing the Provision of Gender Equality" which determines concrete duties of public authorities related to gender expertise of legislation and state programs, as well as provision of gender equality, has been drafted and is under consideration at the Cabinet of Ministers.

I must note that in order to fully consider the recommendations of the CEDAW Committee and better implementation of newly adopted laws , the special courses, specific training programmes on the principles and provisions of the Convention, its Optional Protocol as well as the 32 General Recommendations adopted by the Committee are provided to all Government agencies, public officials and, in particular, the legal profession and the judiciary.Short term advanced training course on main directions of gender policy, CEDAW Convention have been regularly conducted at the Academy of Public

Administration under the President of the Republic of Azerbaijan for high ranking state officials.

We actively use an international experience on gender initiative with the support of international organizations and our bilateral relations with the Western and Eastern countries. I will mention only some of them:

The EU Twinning project on Promotion and protecting the rights of vulnerable families and women jointly with French General Directorate on Social Cohesion;

“Strengthening Women’s political participation” and “Women in Local governance “with German International Cooperation;

“Empowering Women Victims of Domestic Violence with Improved Socio-Economic Capacity and Gender Awareness “ with EU, UNFPA and IOM.

All of them have great impact on increasing of women’s activity. They not only reinforced the legislative background in the field of women rights but also contribute to strengthen our capacity and develop concrete services for women in the regions.

Our country has become the host of important international conferences on women issues. The World Forum on the role of women in intercultural dialogue, the Ministerial Conference on women’s role in the development of OIC member states, International conference on women in strengthening religious tolerance, are just few of them.

Azerbaijan women are represented in all spheres of our society. We are seriously working on adjusting women to the changing needs of the society and economy by conducting vocational trainings, research and skills development. The government has taken concrete measures to challenge prevalent stereotypes and to encourage women to participate actively in political and public life especially in the regions and rural areas. In this work we succeed to create strong partnership with NGOs. We should emphasize the role of the Council of State Support to

NGOs under the President of the Republic of Azerbaijan. In 2010-2015 two million USD were allocated to NGOs to implement 331 projects, including 15 on gender equality, 23 projects on combating violence and 12 on early marriages.

In combating stereotypes we start prophylactic work from early ages .It helps young generation in awareness raising campaigns and choosing correct orientation in the life. With this goal in every two years we conduct All-Republican Forum of Children-Leaders. Girls jointly with state officials and members of parliament analyze and express opinions about challenges they encounter and try to find ways to solve them.

National Congresses of Azerbaijan women also have been very important in demonstrating the potential of women and their ability to make changes in society. In 2011 2000 women representing all regions of Azerbaijan participated at the Fourth Congress under the motto” Unity for the development”. Women are very active in political and public organizations. For example 46 % of the members of the Leading New Azerbaijan Party are women. There is special Women Council of the political parties which positively influence on enhancement of the role of women in the political life of the country.

By implementing projects on participation of women in politics, including Mentorship and the Women’s Participation programs, we try to increasing representation of women during elections. As a result significant progress has been achieved at the municipal level. Representation of women in municipalities increased from 4 % in 2004 to 27% in 2009 and 35 % in 2014 elections. With the special intention to increase the activity of women in regions, the President, H.E.Ilham Aliyev issued the special order on women appointment to position of Deputy Heads of executive power. As a result we have now 76 women on this position out of 86 regions. This decision has forthcoming goal on increasing number of women on leading positions.

In responding to today’s challenges we want to see educated and highly sophisticated Azerbaijan women without any differences between central and rural areas. Government strives to build women’s human capital and capabilities and

position them as agents of change towards sustainable development. That's why the government prioritizes the provision of high quality education services to the population, especially women as a strategic line. Besides beginning reforms on the development of the education system (2009-2014), government increased volume of funding by 3 times. The spending on education in 2007 was about 500 million USD, in 2011 this expenditures on education amounted to 1,50 billion USD. In accordance with the "State Program on education of Azerbaijan youth in foreign countries in 2007-2015" 1500 girls from total 3185 young people were sent for study abroad at the expense of the state on all levels of education.

Large scale work is also conducted on increasing level of children's involvement in pre-school education. By the special initiative of the First Lady, new support measures are carried out for expanding the chain of state, municipal and community kindergartens, preschool institutions in all regions. The fundamental reforms in education touched also preparation of new curriculum, teachers' training and attestation. The gender perspective was also incorporated in the reforming process.

Gender Studies were integrated into College and University Curricula. Besides revising and approving curricula on different gender courses, now there is a new position of Representative on Gender Issues within the ministerial structure, whose main mission is achievement of gender balance in the educational system. Out of a total of 42 higher institutions in Azerbaijan, Gender Studies was introduced into the curriculum of 4 state and 2 private universities with the establishment of gender-related literature libraries and resource centers. Special trainings on raising awareness of university professors and school teachers on the problem of gender equality have been conducted. We see increase a number of women on leading positions in education system to 41,2 %: 5 university rectors, 12 vice rector, 12 directors of vocational education institutions, 1202 principles of school are women.

The number of female judges in our country also increased from 52 in 2013 to 65 in 2015. 42 of them work at courts of first instance, 15 at courts of appeal, and 6 at the Supreme Court. 2 out of 9 judges of the Constitutional Court are women, one

of them holding the position of Deputy Chair. A woman member was appointed to the Judicial-Legal Council, which is the independent self-governing body of the judiciary. The number of women working in the justice system increase from 996 in 2013 to 1153 and that number represent 20% of all employees. Also, 84 of them hold leadership positions .In the last 5 years 665 female nominees participated in selections for acceptance to the justice service.

The funding to the healthcare system is dynamically increasing. More than 500 health institutions are being constructed, reconstructed, provided with modern medical equipment especially in the regions and rural areas. A state programme to improve women's and children's health have been worked out for 2012-2020 and preventive checkups , mass health examinations,including introduction of free mandatory medical insurance among children and women is being intensified.

One of the components of women's active participation in political and public life is their economic independence. The state adopted a set of measures aimed at ensuring women's employment, including fostering women's entrepreneurship. They facilitate poverty reduction, ensure advance in women's economic and social performance and in many cases eliminate gender based discrimination in society.

We have achieved the decrease of the poverty rate among women from 49 % to 5,9 % in due to the implementation of the State Program on "Poverty Reduction and Sustainable Development in 2008-2015

The involvement woman in business activities is very important avenue for their empowerment. Today 69,2 % of working women are involved in private sector and 30,8 % of them in public one.18 % of entrepreneurs are women.

The National Fund on Assistance for Entrepreneurship expands funding sources for women. During 2007-2014 soft credit lines up to 55, 5 million AZN were given to 2773 women entrepreneurs. Last year the number of individual entrepreneurs totaled four hundred fifty five thousand, seventeen point nine percent of which were women. 60% of individual female entrepreneurs are doing business in regions, whereas 40% of them are running a business in the capital city. The

majority of Azerbaijani women entrepreneurs are involved in food, agriculture, textile industry, folk art, education, trade and service sectors. The state keeps its attention on the education of female entrepreneurs abroad and takes appropriate measures to help them in acquiring new experiences and to apply the achievements of foreign countries in Azerbaijan. In 2013-39, in 2014-46 women entrepreneurs were sent for the improving their skills. Special attention is given to the support of women from rural areas by providing free marketing and training services. As a result we have observed the dynamic of the broadening the spheres of women entrepreneurship. They are involved in IT technology and other large scale businesses which were always considered as the male spheres.

Government helps to develop and support of entrepreneurship among women refugees and IDPs. Our Committee is implementing a jointly project with international organizations on "Promotion of women from rural areas and regions in economic life". Only during 2011-2012 280 thousand USD was spent in one pilot region in order to support the increase the level of economic activity of rural women and strengthening their role in community based decision making. We have started project on building network of mentors for women entrepreneurs which helps to enforce promotion supporting and encouraging young female entrepreneurship. Despite of influence of armed conflict and psychological barriers of IDP and refugee women we see progress in developing of their small enterprises. Government also tries to strengthen women entrepreneurship by organizing of business forums, conferences and other events. In the framework of the United Nations Special Program for the Economies of Central Asia (SPECA), where Azerbaijan have been chairing for 6 years, we conducted two International Forums for women entrepreneurs'. This has given an additional opportunity to strengthen networks among women entrepreneurs at national, regional and global levels. We have already had an exchange visits among women entrepreneurs from more than 10 countries and we would like to continue this practice so as we see the positive results.

Appropriate projects are being prepared and implemented to prevent the isolation of the disabled women from society and to enable them to use the infrastructure without hindrance. In order to develop their skills and increase their employment opportunities, the government increases the number of social and professional rehabilitation enterprises. The special trainings are being conducted in order to provide disabled girls and women with opportunities to benefit from information and communication technologies .

In order to ensure a healthy and active lifestyle for the youth and their integration into society, a strategy for the development of the Azerbaijani youth is being implemented. The network of information and counselling services for young people, especially those living in remote and rural areas have been expanded. 30 Youth Houses are functioning in the regions and conducting awareness raising trainings and seminars on violence ,early marriages and etc. Young women and girls have become very active in such kind of sports as football, basketball, arm – wrestling ,taekwondo and etc. Baku ,Lenkoran and other regions were hosting 2012 FIFA Under 17 Women’s football World Cup and field hockey championship among women. By 2014, a number of training and appropriate sports bases ,children’s and youth sports schools have been increased four times. The number of women in sports increased from 78466 in 2009 to 84 095 in 2013.

We still have the unsatisfactory level of women’s participation in conflict prevention and resolution, disaster risk management and government takes necessary measures and educational work to strengthen their role in this field .Gradually a gender perspective is being integrated in all aspects of crisis management and peace building process. Jointly with the Ministry of Emergency Situation we have started trainings for women on gender perspective of disaster risk reduction from the regions with high risk of natural disasters.

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of Azerbaijan women in decision-making with regard to conflict prevention and resolution at the national, regional and international levels has been conducted. This “Coalition 1325” involved women refugees and IDPs in peace building process, promoted the culture of peace and establish cooperation with women coalition working on similar issues abroad. Today women from this coalition are very active on high level posts, for example in national parliament, central election committee and etc.

Madam Chairperson, distinguished Committee members,

I believe the above-mentioned measures, being only part of all work done for full implementation of the CEDAW Convention by the Azerbaijani government, will serve as good examples of our full commitment toward the implementation of the Convention and readiness to overcome every challenge along the way to eliminating all forms of discrimination against women. Despite of world economic crises, continuation of the conflict and violation of cease fire regime resulting in innocent victims among the population, Azerbaijan government aimed on improvement position of women in the country.

Unfortunately the limited time frame does not allow me be as specific and detailed as I would like to be. Therefore we have tried to include in our delegation representatives of all related state agencies. The list of the names of members of our delegation should be in front of you.