

Dear Committee Members,

I would like to highlight that the key for combating any kind of discrimination is meaningful participation in decision-making processes. The same applies for achieving gender equality. Overall, women are underrepresented in the economic and political life of Azerbaijan, despite of the fact that several key government positions are currently held by women, such as the First Vice-President and the Chairperson of the Parliament and the percentage of female members of the Parliament increased, as of 2020, there were only 22 women in the 125-seat Parliament (17.6%).

Speaking about gender equality in employment, we welcome the fact that the authorities of Azerbaijan expressed their intention to abolish the List of about 700 professions and jobs banned for women. To achieve gender equality in employment, it is necessary not just to repeal discriminatory bans, but also to create conditions for the training and hiring of women for jobs previously inaccessible to them by supporting training for women and girls in “non-traditional areas” and by encouraging their interest in professional realization. As a response to the disproportionate impact of the COVID-19 on women, special measures are needed to maintain women’s employment.

Having the implementation phase of gender equality policies adopted paves the way to ensuring legal basis and law enforcement to combat domestic violence. In 2020, Azerbaijan’s government approved a [3 years action plan](#) on combating domestic violence in Azerbaijan. It is prepared in detail and covers cross-sectoral cooperation to fight domestic violence in Azerbaijan. Nevertheless, there is a very weak budgetary base and financial support to effectively implement those strategies. In addition to that existing data gap and lack of academic research/survey drastically impacts evidence based approach to policy making.

Even though a new department on the work with domestic violence has been established within the State Agency for Social Services under the Ministry of Labour and Social Protection in 2021, its operation has not been yet supported with international standards and response mechanisms to domestic violence cases have not been approved by the government yet. In 2021, compared to 2020, the number of domestic violence crimes committed toward women increased by 19% including femicides, severe beating, or rape. Unfortunately, administrative data is not enough as there is no updated prevalence data on GBV, especially the one indicating intimate partner violence.

There is no specialized shelter for domestic violence survivors led by NGOs either: both survivors of human trafficking and domestic violence are placed under the same roof.

Another unfortunate example of gender-based violence is GBSS practice, which is widely spread in Azerbaijan. Sex ratio at birth has drastically changed in the past 30 years where Azerbaijan currently ranks on the first place demonstrating 115 new born boys to 100 new born girls.

We recommend to:

- Allocate states funds for building regional shelters for victims of domestic violence in at least in 5 economic regions of Azerbaijan by providing different funding opportunities on the government level to Local Executive Powers /Municipalities and civil society organizations from those regions;
- Apply multi stakeholder approach when it comes to the implementation of programmes on achieving gender equality including CSOs;
- Approve national standards to effectively respond to domestic violence cases against women;
- Develop national programme on work with perpetrators and ensure their integration to the society;
- Adopt National Action Plan on Gender Equality;
- Adopt UN 1325 Security Council Resolution;
- Sign and ratify Istanbul Convention on Preventing and Combating Violence Against Women and Domestic Violence;
- Conduct nationwide Gender-based violence (GBV) prevalence survey/research in order to identify gaps in addressing gender equality.

Thank you for your attention.