

STATEMENT

by

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Item 7 – Preventing and eliminating violence against women and girls

Mr./Ms. Moderator,

Combating violence against women, including domestic violence is among the human rights priorities of Armenia spelled out in the Strategic Program Against Gender Violence (2011-2015). The Strategic Program Against Gender Violence 2011-2015 was drawn up on the initiative of the Ministry of Labor and Social Affairs and approved upon the Decision of the Government of the Republic of Armenia in 2011, which defines the core directions of the state policy for reduction of gender violence.

According to the Decision of the Prime Minister of Armenia an Inter-Agency Commission on Combating Gender Based Violence was established. The mandate of the Commission is to raise the effectiveness of measures, compile information and establish information exchange mechanisms aimed at preventing gender based violence and, as a matter of priority, to develop a National Action Plan on Combating Gender Based Violence.

With the view of improving the services provided to the persons subjected to violence and arranging protection of the persons subjected to gender violence and the services provided thereto in a more efficient manner, the Ministry of Labor and Social Affairs of the Republic of Armenia, by support of US Agency for International Development, implemented the "Program on Enhancing the Quality of Services to Women Victims of Domestic Violence in Armenia" during 2012-2013.

Currently the only shelter in the Republic of Armenia is run by the "Women's Support Centre", however both the Ministry of Labor and Social Affairs, and any other civil society partner can refer victims of domestic violence to that shelter. The Ministry of Labor and Social Affairs of the Republic of Armenia cooperates with the specialized non-governmental partner organizations involved in the fight against domestic violence through the exchange of information, arrangement of training courses, coverage, elaboration of documents, etc. "Women's Support Centre", "Women's Rights Centre", Tufenkian Charitable Foundation are such partner organizations. Memoranda of Mutual Understanding on cooperation have been signed between "Women's Support Centre" and Tufenkian Charitable Foundation on domestic violence.

Taking into account that legal and judicial reforms are underway in the Republic, the Government of the Republic of Armenia has assigned the Ministry of Justice and the Ministry of

Labor and Social Affairs of the Republic of Armenia: "to ensure the inclusion of the manifestations of domestic violence, as well as effective mechanisms for responding thereto and preventing thereof" while making amendments to a number of legal acts within the framework of the mentioned reforms; in addition, it was assigned to discuss the possible new measures with the NGOs and include them in already functioning social assistance and protection programs.

Further, the draft Law of the Republic of Armenia "On social assistance" was elaborated, wherein victims of domestic violence and trafficking were included in the list of "persons in a difficult life situation" and relations pertaining to the provision of assistance thereto were prescribed respectively. The draft was approved by the Government of the Republic of Armenia and submitted to the National Assembly of the Republic of Armenia in the prescribed manner

Fight against human trafficking

In Armenia, the struggle against trafficking in human beings – one of the internationally defined modern slavery types characterized by illegal transportation, coercive exploitation of persons – has been envisaged since 2002. Armenian Government declared fight against human trafficking as a priority and during these years initiated numerous reforms on national level as well as actively cooperated with all International Organizations active in the field. The structural approach is based on establishing collaboration among all the agencies and stakeholders dealing with the phenomenon.

All the anti-trafficking activities implemented in Armenia are supervised by the Council to Combat THB, chaired by the RA Deputy Prime Minister, Minister of Territorial Administration of the RA. Heads of all the line ministries and stakeholder agencies are involved as members of this Council. The representatives of the relevant NGOs and international organizations accredited in Armenia actively participate in Council's activities.

All the anti-trafficking activities implemented in Armenia are based on 3P approach, which includes prevention, prosecution and protection and their correlations. While the main goal of the first and second National Action Plans was to create the required legislative framework along with the implementation of preventive activities, carrying out assistance and protection projects for the victims of trafficking, starting with 2010 the activities are mainly directed towards maximum enhancement of the state efforts especially in the spheres of prevention and assistance, through establishing and strengthening the necessary structural, sub-legislative, financial bases, as well as through capacity building of the players active in the area.

In order to ensure the effectiveness of the anti-trafficking response, the RA Government through its Resolution of November 20, 2008 approved the National Referral Mechanism for Trafficked Persons. The NRM focuses on identifying and effective way for providing services to the victims of trafficking, including those related to provision of shelter, access to professional medical and psychological assistance, consultancy, educational or training programs.

Armenia prohibits both sex trafficking and labour trafficking through Articles 132 and 132.2 of its Criminal Code, which prescribe penalties of five to 15 years imprisonment – penalties that are sufficiently stringent and commensurate with those prescribed for other serious crimes, such as rape. In latest amendments to the Criminal Code in March 2011, Armenia strengthened its anti-trafficking status; the amendments increased the amount of time a trafficking offender must serve before being eligible for an early release, introduced a separate

article specifically prohibiting trafficking of children and persons with mental disabilities, and introduced new punitive sanctions against traffickers that deprive them of the right of employment in certain occupations or practice certain activities for up to three years.

The Republic of Armenia has adopted all the international and regional legal documents related to combating trafficking in human beings.