



ARMENIA

February 28, 2008

52nd session of the Commission on the Status of Women

Agenda item 3 (a)(i): Follow-up to the Fourth World Conference on Women and to the 23rd special session of the General Assembly entitled: "Women 2000: gender equality, development and peace for the 21st century". Implementation of strategic objectives and action in critical areas of concern and further actions and initiatives: financing for gender equality and the empowerment of women

Statement by Ms. Nouneh Zastoukhova, Ministry of Foreign Affairs

Mr. Chairperson,
Excellencies,
Distinguished delegates,

It is my honor to extend my sincere congratulations to you Mr. Chairperson and other Bureau members on your election and wish you every success in your work. My delegation stands ready to assist you in successful dispatch of your mission.

The Constitution of the Republic of Armenia is the main warrant of equality between all its citizens, irrespective of their gender, race, ethnic or social background, language, religion, and political or other views. There are no legal acts in RA that are discriminatory against women.

Armenia ratified the UN Convention on the Elimination of All Forms of Discrimination against Women in 1993 and 2006 ratified the Optional Protocol to the Convention. The Convention on Political Rights of Women is currently in the process of being ratified by the RA. Within the period of 2004-2006 Armenia ratified a number of Conventions and Protocols of ILO and Council of Europe, which directly or indirectly deal with the issue of gender equality and the empowerment of women.

On December 27, 2007 Armenia submitted to the CEDAW Committee its third and fourth Periodic Reports, covering the period 2002-2008 and providing the information on the legislative and institutional measures taken by the state to improve the situation of women in the society, including through the elimination of all forms of discrimination against women and equality between men and women.

In 2003 the Armenian Government approved the Poverty Reduction Strategy Paper and adopted the 2004-2010 National Action Plan on Enhancing Women's Status and Empowering Women in Society. Currently the PRSP is being revised to enhance gender related activities in it among others.

To cut down unemployment in the country the State Employment Service undertook a number of actions in 2007, including:

- a. providing job for around 3800 unemployed persons, among which 56% were women
- b. providing social payments for unemployment
- c. organizing training courses for unemployed and persons with disabilities, etc.

As a result of the program on Social support and optimization at schools, more than 1700 unemployed teachers obtained jobs, and 93% of those were women. In 2008 the salaries of teachers and university professors have been raised by 21%.

In 2008 the Government is planning to increase social payments to around 145000 unemployed (among which 70% are women); to organize paid public works for them (35% are women); as well as to organize vocational trainings for handicapped (40% are women) and for around 1400 unemployed (65% women). The Government partially compensates employees for recruiting unemployed people from vulnerable social groups (45% women), as well as provides financial assistance to unemployed to start entrepreneurship activities (40% women). In comparison with 2007 the Government will increase the budget for those programs by 70% in 2008.

In cooperation with international and foreign organizations and through special state programs in 2002-2006, more than 16 thousand beginning and active entrepreneurs received assistance, 24% women. The results showed that women entrepreneurs are more active in making use of the provided credit, training, consultative and other similar assistance programs.

An important factor of improving the living conditions of women in rural areas is the creation of employment opportunities outside of the agricultural sector, which is provided for by the Strategy for Sustainable Development of Agriculture for the period until 2015. The Government in cooperation with the international organizations is undertaking certain measures to provide low-interest credit availability, encourage entrepreneurship among women living in rural areas, as well as further promotion of their economic empowerment.

Armenia's Gender Index is relatively high, and the main component keeping it such is the equal involvement of women in education. Armenia currently meets the MDG2 for education.

Although the RA legislation ensures equal political rights for men and women, and the Election Code provides a quota of 15% to women running through the proportional representation lists, instead of the 5% in the past, it should be noted that in practice under-representation of women at the levels of decision-making is still observed. In the National Assembly there are only 11% are women. Three of them are occupying higher posts: the post of the Vice-Chairman of the National Assembly, Chair and Vice-Chair of Standing Committees. We have only one woman-Minister, two Deputy Ministers and one Regional Governor. A more balanced representation of men and women is observed in the mid levels of government.

The law on "Medical care and population medical service" guarantees women and men equal rights to medical care. Furthermore, maternal and child health care are one of the main priorities of the Government's social policy. The Government annual programs guarantee free medical care and service to women from low-income groups during their pregnancy, delivery, and emergencies.

One of the main concerns of the Government for women's health and quality health care is the ratio for maternal mortality. Though it dropped in comparison with 90s, but still is too high: 19 per 100 000 live births.

The Government increased the financing for women health care by 65% in 2008 in comparison with 2007.

Although the gender situation in Armenia does not feature severe inequalities, there are still challenges, including the improvement of social-economic conditions of more than 300 000 refugees and IDPs (more than half of them are women and children) as a result of unleashed war. These issues require systematic work and concerted efforts.

Thank you, Mr. Chairperson.