

I would like to answer to the questions relating to the issue of Government anti-discrimination policies that were raised by Belgium, Germany, Netherlands, Norway, Switzerland.

The Government of Armenia condemns discrimination in any of its forms and manifestations. Armenia pursues a policy, which prohibits any manifestation of discrimination or its trends against individuals, groups or institutes. The issue of discrimination is covered comprehensively in the Armenian legislation - all forms of discrimination based on any ground such as sex, race, color, ethnic or social origin, language, religion or belief, political or any other opinion, birth, disability, age or other personal or social circumstances are prohibited by the Constitution of Armenia, and is criminalized by the Criminal Code and forbidden under the Civil and Labor Codes.

Armenia has joined most of the UN, OSCE and Council of Europe basic instruments which stipulate the principles of equality and has ratified Protocol No.12 to the European Convention on Human Rights. It has thus already given all persons under its jurisdiction the possibility of taking complaints regarding alleged discrimination to an international judicial forum.

All human rights programs adopted by Armenia are the basic components of the national anti-discrimination policy the main goal of which is to ensure monitoring the effective implementation of national legislation as well as incorporation of international obligations assumed by the State in this field into national policies and agendas. The adoption and further implementation of these national strategies is a targeted work, whereby one Program of Actions is followed by the next one, containing detailed plans for each year. For example the activities included in the Gender Policy Strategic Action Plan for 2011-2015 are implemented in a number of directions - strategy for gender policy implementation in the management sector and at decision-making level, in the social and economic area, in the area of healthcare, education, culture and public information, in the area of prevention of violence and human trafficking. Activities covering development and introduction of evaluation and monitoring indicators for dynamics of the gender situation were initiated within the framework of the approved actions. Activities are carried out targeted at reinforcing the uniform system including national and institutional mechanisms for development and implementation of the policy on gender equality,

introducing a gender component in budgeting and planning processes (applying gender budgeting (gradual) in different phases of the budget cycle).

The latest report submitted by Armenia to UN was the 5th and 6th joint periodic report sent to the UN Committee on the Elimination of all Forms of Discrimination against women.

Armenia decriminalized homosexuality in 2003; with this regard, the relevant legislative changes have been made.

In 2005, we amended the Constitution and introduced Article 14.1 on comprehensive non-discrimination.

The principle of equal treatment is emphasized in many other articles of the Armenian Constitution such as Articles 18, 19, 20, 25, 30, and 39.

The issues of appropriateness of the adoption of a separate law "On the fight against discrimination" included into the Plan of Action for the National strategy on human rights protection.

The Office of the Ombudsman has an explicit mandate to investigate complaints on discrimination.

There are no restrictions for sexual minorities regarding access to health care, education, employment and implementation of all other rights in Armenia.

Being concerned by the fact that representatives of some women's NGOs are intimidated and harassed in social networks and offensive articles are published by some media outlets, Women's Council, chaired by the Prime Minister, advocates for an end to such behavior. Council also urges the law enforcement bodies to be more vigilant in order to prevent such cases and, if needed, to punish the perpetrators. Representatives of the UN, EU, OSCE and Council of Europe Office and US Embassy in Yerevan welcomed the November 22, 2014 statement of the Women's Council reaffirming the Government's commitment to gender equality.

Since the first UPR cycle Armenia has taken a number of legal and institutional steps to strengthen the protection of persons belonging to national minorities.

Since 2012, the amount [~~of 10 million drams that was annually~~] allocated to national minorities by the Government of the Republic of Armenia has doubled [~~reaching 20 million drams~~]. At the same time, the procedure for the distribution

of the amount among the minority groups was revised by the decision of the Coordinating Council. The order for allocating grants hasn't been elaborated by the Government of the Republic of Armenia, but as previously, has been agreed on with all representatives of national minorities included in the Coordination Council.

Some of the national minorities in Armenia, such as Assyrians, Kurds and Yezidis, do not have a kin state which means that they need even special attention and protection. Incorporation of these minorities within the palette of national minorities is equally both an asset enriching Armenia's culture and a measure of responsibility for the state committed to stipulate the preservation and development of this ethnic group unambiguously regarding Armenia as their homeland. Textbooks for different grades for Yezidi language and literature were published during recent years and distributed free of charge to the students of the Yezidi Community. An Assyrian ABC book was published, and is distributed also free of charge to the relevant schools. These textbooks were elaborated with participation of representatives of national minorities, with an aim of providing a balanced response to their specific needs and ensuring their equitable access to the resources available.

Continuous contribution to the preservation, dissemination and development of the cultural heritage and culture of national minorities is one of the priorities of the cultural policy of Armenia. All historical and architectural monuments, cultural and religious buildings, irrespective of their ethnic or religious belonging are under State protection. All historical and architectural monuments, cultural and religious buildings, irrespective of their ethnic or religious belonging are under State protection. Among them there are more than 50 monuments of Islamic art in various marzes of Armenia.

The territory of the Jewish settlement and cemetery of Yeghegis, in the Vayots Dzor marz, dating back to the 13th century, are currently under reconstruction.

Armenia very closely co-operates with the European Commission against Racism and Intolerance (ECRI) which is the Council of Europe human rights monitoring body specialized in questions relating to racism and intolerance.

ECRI in its latest, fourth monitoring cycle underlined [I quote] that "considerable efforts have been made by the Armenian authorities in the field of ethnic-minority education and culture. There are no limits on the amount of time private broadcasting stations may spend on ethnic-minority programs. The State has provided the Jewish community with help to preserve its heritage. As before,

there is no hostility vis-à-vis ethnic minorities and non-nationals (including those who are not ethnic Armenians) and little or no evidence of anti-Muslim feeling” [end of quote].

Over the past years following independence adequate legislative framework has been established in Armenia which provides for appropriate conditions to ensure religious diversity in the country. According to data as of 2014, 66 religious organizations are registered in the State Register of Legal Entities of the Republic of Armenia whereof 9 are the religious organizations of national minorities (including Russian, Assyrian, Jewish, Yezidi religious communities). Pursuant to Article 5 of the Law “On freedom of conscience and religious organizations” the terms established for registration of religious organizations are not compulsory for religious organizations of national minorities and the latter benefit from preferential and simplified terms prescribed by law when obtaining state registration.