**STATEMENT**

**by H.E.Mr.Vepa Hajiyev, Deputy Minister of Foreign Affairs of Turkmenistan at the 44th session of the Working Group on the Universal Periodic Review**

*(Geneva, October 6, 2023)*

**Your Excellency,**

**Distinguished Mister/Madame Chair!**

**Distinguished members of the Human Rights Council!**

**Ladies and gentlemen!**

It is my pleasure to welcome you on behalf of the delegation of Turkmenistan to the 44th session of the Working Group on the Universal Periodic Review.

First of all, let me express our gratitude to the OHCHR Secretariat and the Troika Countries – Sudan, Malaysia and Montenegro for their kind assistance in preparing for this session.

**Dear Mister/Madame Chair!**

Our delegation, headed by me – the Deputy Minister of Foreign Affairs of Turkmenistan, and represented by the Chairman of the Parliamentary Committee of Turkmenistan, representatives of the Ministries of Internal and Foreign Affairs, the General Prosecutor's Office, the State Statistics Committee of Turkmenistan, the Institute of State, Law and Democracy, and the Permanent Mission of Turkmenistan to the UN Office in Geneva.

However, to the process of preparation of current report have been involved about 30 ministries, departments and public delegations – members of the Interdepartmental Commission on the fulfillment of Turkmenistan's international obligations in the field of human rights and international humanitarian law.

Turkmenistan consistently fulfills its international obligations under the core United Nations Human Rights instruments. To that end, a constructive dialogue is being pursued with United Nations treaty bodies, as well as with other statutory bodies and specialized agencies of the United Nations. Throughout the entire period of independence, Neutral Turkmenistan has pursued an open domestic and foreign policy in all spheres of the state and society.

At the same time, our country is on the way to implementing large-scale reforms and long-term national programs aimed at strengthening the foundations of the state structure, creating a multisectoral economic system, solving important social problems and improving the living standards of the people of Turkmenistan.

Let me to express my gratitude for the great attention to the issues of socio-economic development of Turkmenistan and assure you that the constructive dialogue with the delegation of Turkmenistan will contribute to further progress in addressing the tasks of consistently ensuring the rights and freedoms of citizens recognized by international conventions.

In my statement, I intend to highlight the main directions of Turkmenistan's policy on the realization of the undertaken human rights commitments and provide information on progressive changes in addressing a number of issues identified during the dialogue on the UPR of Turkmenistan held at the 2018 at the Human Rights Council session.

**Dear members of the Human Rights Council!**

Our country has approached the implementation of recommendations in the systematic way, through developing a road map for their implementation during review period and up to now. Over the past period, Turkmenistan has made significant progress in implementing the UPR recommendations.

The results of the analysis show that, compared to the previous cycle of the UPR, the percentage of implemented recommendations in the current cycle has increased one and a half times.

A complete census of the population and housing stock of Turkmenistan took place from 17 to 27 December 2022. The Government of Turkmenistan decided to conduct the census electronically, without the use of “paper carries”. Methodological guidelines for the preparation and conduct of the census were developed in accordance with the international standards and were highly appreciated by experts from the United Nations Population Fund.

As of December 17, 2022, the population of the country amounted to 7 million 57 thousand 841 people. Of these, 22.9% are in Mary province, 22% in Dashoguz province, 20.5% in Lebap province, 14.6% in Ashgabat city, 12.5% in Akhal province, and 7.5% in Balkan province.

Almost 50 percent of the population is male, more than 50 percent is female; 47.1 percent are urban residents and 52.9 percent live in villages.

The age structure of the population is dominated by people of working age is around 57%, the shares of the population younger and older than working age are 34, 9% and 8.1% respectively.

According to the census data, housing construction is going on at a high rate in all settlements of Turkmenistan. The number of residential buildings increased by 12.4% compared to the results of census in 2012, the number of residential houses - by 13.6%, their total area - by 24.5%.

The obtained statistical data serve as an information base for the preparation of programs and strategies of socio-economic development of the country and regions for the future.

It should be noted that multifaceted work is being carried out in the country to strengthen the Turkmen society's original democratic traditions and the broad realization of the political, economic, social and other rights of citizens.

Thus, the "Program of the President of Turkmenistan on socio-economic development of the country for 2022-2028" provides for structural reforms in the economy, creation of new jobs, stimulation of small and medium businesses, expansion of employment in the private sector and transfer of the informally employed to the formal sector, which opens new opportunities for the population, including persons with disabilities.

During the reporting period, taking into account the recommendations of the Human Rights Council, the National Plan of Action on Human Rights in Turkmenistan for 2016-2020 and 2021-2025, the National Plan of Action for Gender Equality in Turkmenistan for 2015-2020 and 2021-2025, the National Plan of Action for the Realization of Children's Rights in Turkmenistan for 2018-2022 and 2023-2028, the National Plan of Action for the Elimination of Statelessness for 2019-2024, and the National Plan of Action to Combat Trafficking in Persons for 2020-2022 were approved and are being implemented. The next National Action Plan to Combat Trafficking in Human Beings in Turkmenistan for 2023-2026 is currently being developed and preparations are underway for the mid-term evaluation of the implementation of the NAPHR (National Plan of Action on Human Rights) 2021-2025.

As part of the ongoing legal reform, during 2018-2023, new legislative acts were adopted in Turkmenistan to strengthen mechanisms for the protection and promotion of human rights, as well as additions and amendments to existing laws. Full information on this is contained in the submitted National UPR Report, but some legislative innovations should be noted.

In particular, the amendments introduced in 2023 to the Law of Turkmenistan “On Court” concerning the powers of the Qualification Collegiums of Judges contribute to ensuring the principle of the independence of courts and judges. So, the Supreme Court selects judicial candidates on the basis of the opinion of the Qualification Collegiums of Judges. The Qualification Collegiums of Judges: assess the readiness for judicial work of each candidate nominated for the first time as a judge; conduct qualification attestation of candidate judges; give opinions on the possibility of nominating a candidate as a judge; and conduct qualification attestation of a judge.

Taking into account International Labour Organization (ILO) recommendations, the legislator has removed from the Labour Code provisions on restrictions on women's labour rights in harmful and hard working conditions. The amended Criminal Code criminalizes, inter alia, the direct or indirect violation or restriction of human and civil rights and freedoms on the basis of ethnic background, color, gender, origin, property, official position, place of residence, language, attitude towards religion, political convictions or other circumstances, and inducing a person to commit acts of a sexual nature in the work place.

Since 2018 Turkmenistan has acceded to a number of international treaties, including:

* International Labor Organization Convention No. 144 of 1976 on Tripartite Consultations to Promote the Application of International Labor Standards (2019);
* Marrakesh Treaty to Facilitate Access to Published Works for Persons Who Are Blind, Visually Impaired or Otherwise Print Disabled (2020);
* Convention against Discrimination in Education (2021);
* Convention No. 122 on Employment Policy (2021);
* Act on amendments to the ILO Declaration on Fundamental Principles and Rights at Work (2022);
* Convention on the Recognition of Qualifications concerning Higher Education in the European Region (2022).

Consistent work is being carried out by national experts and relevant institutions on Turkmenistan's accession to other international treaties.

In particular, national legislation is monitored for its compliance with the provisions of international instruments, and the provisions of international instruments and mechanisms for accession to them are under consideration. To that end, in cooperation with international organizations, information seminars are held for representatives of Parliament and other relevant State structures.

Related to the national human rights institution, the following should be noted.

The Office of the Ombudsman and UNDP in Turkmenistan in cooperation with the OHCHR Regional Office for the Central Asia implemented a joint project "Institutional Capacity Building of the Office of the Ombudsman of Turkmenistan for 2021-2022", which aimed at developing the institutional capacity of the mentioned office to study the process of accreditation by the Global Alliance of National Human Rights Institutions, as well as capacity building of the staff of the Ombudsperson’s Office.

In October 2022, a team of experts from the Asia-Pacific Forum, UNDP and the Office of the High Commissioner for Human Rights conducted a capacity assessment of the Office of the Ombudsman of Turkmenistan and developed a multi-year strategic plan for the Ombudperson’s Office.

Within the framework of the project "Assistance to Strengthen the Institutional Capacity of the Office of the Ombudsman of Turkmenistan" for 2023 between UNDP and the Office of the Ombudsman, there is a component on "Facilitating the Ombudsman's interaction with the Global Alliance of National Human Rights Institutions and the Asia-Pacific Forum". The process of applying for accreditation of the Office of the Ombudsman to the Global Alliance of National Human Rights Institutions has already begun.

The State Committee on Statistics has completed the process of creation of Turkmenistan's national platform for SDG data collection and dissemination within the framework of the joint project "Platform for Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs)" implemented by the UNDP and the Ministry of Finance and Economy of Turkmenistan. The SDGs Platform is available on the website of the State Committee on Statistics.

The National Platform is based on the list of SDG indicators adopted by Turkmenistan. The National Platform for SDG reporting and the developed multifunctional software contain detailed information, including slides describing the country's achievements, metadata, charts, graphs and levels of disaggregation by SDG indicators.

The creation and implementation of a national SDG statistical reporting platform aims to build a data monitoring and results assessment system for planning and tracking progress towards achieving the SDGs in the country, fulfilling international reporting obligations, and producing national SDG reports that will be available to a wide range of users, including government agencies, the private sector, and public organizations.

In 2023, Turkmenistan submitted its second Voluntary National Review on the implementation of the global Sustainable Development Agenda. The Voluntary National Review provides information on the implementation of a range of human rights indicators.

Considerable efforts are being made in the country to increase women's participation in all spheres of the social and political life of the State.

Women are widely represented in the Parliament, State bodies, local executive and representative authorities, local self-government bodies and all three political parties registered in Turkmenistan.

As a result of the elections held on March 26, 2023, 125 members of Parliament were elected throughout the country. 25.60% of the elected members of Parliament are women.

In local representative bodies: 28.75% - members of velayat/regional halk maslahaty (National Council), 29.58% - members of etrap/district halk maslahaty, in local self-government bodies 28% of Gengesh members are women.

Notable that the Speaker of Parliament, the Ombudsperson, one of the Deputy chairpersons of the Cabinet of Ministers, all deputy heads of local bodies at all levels of executive bodies (mayors and governors) on social issues are women, as well as the rectors of several higher education institutions and the editors-in-chief of the central media are also women.

In 2020, a sample survey on the health and status of women in the family in Turkmenistan was conducted jointly with the UNFPA Office.

A Roadmap for implementing the survey recommendations for 2022-2025 has been developed with specific actions to work on key survey findings.

In November 2022, a round table "Practical experience of ratification of the Optional Protocol to the UN Convention against Torture" organized by the OHCHR Regional Office for Central Asia with the participation of the Ombudsperson, representatives of ministries and agencies was held in Ashgabat. The roundtable discussed the Optional Protocol to the UN Convention against Torture and the feasibility of accession to it, as well as the possibility of establishing a national preventive mechanism for the prevention of torture.

The amendments to the Law "On Public Associations" introduced in 2020 provide for simplification of state registration, as well as the abolition of certain restrictions for public associations. More detailed information provided in the submitted report.

In September 2023, a Memorandum of Understanding was signed between the Government of Turkmenistan and the ILO on the survey of working conditions during the cotton harvest in Turkmenistan in 2023.

Within the framework of cooperation with the ILO and implementation of the Roadmap, since September 2023, the ILO delegation has been conducting a qualitative survey with visits to cotton fields during the harvest period in selected districts of the country for systematic monitoring of working conditions. During the survey, meetings are organized with representatives of relevant ministries and departments, local executive authorities (hakimliks), public organizations, educational institutions, health care institutions, as well as interviews with representatives of local executive authorities, dayhans, farmers/tenants and other agricultural producers. This survey will continue until December 2023.

One of the key components of Turkmenistan's State policy is humanitarian issues. The Government, in cooperation with the United Nations and other international organizations, is taking appropriate measures to safeguard the rights of refugees and stateless persons.

Over the entire period of independence, nearly 30,000 persons have been admitted to Turkmen citizenship and nearly 6,000 persons of 26 nationalities have been granted residence permits. On the eve of the celebration of Independence Day, this year the President of Turkmenistan signed a decree granting the Turkmen citizenship to 1,301 stateless persons permanently residing in Turkmenistan. They represent 32 nationalities. The head of state also decided to issue residence permits to 265 foreign citizens from 13 countries who arrived in Turkmenistan and submitted personal applications.

A regional conference on the elimination of statelessness is scheduled for 2024 in Turkmenistan.

Every year, by presidential decrees, wages of employees of budget-financed institutions, self-financing enterprises and voluntary associations, pensions and state benefits, as well as scholarships for students and interns are increased by 10 percent. The next decree on increasing wages, pensions, state benefits and scholarships in 2024 was signed on July 14, 2023.

**Distinguished members of the Human Rights Council!**

During the plenary session of the 78th session of the UNGA, the President of Turkmenistan, noting Turkmenistan's principled position, stated: “As it has been for a decades since its foundation, the UN is today the only universal and legitimate organization responsible for maintaining peace and ensuring universal and comprehensive security and sustainability of the modern architecture of international relations”.

Strengthening the democratization of society and bringing national legislation and its implementation mechanisms into line with international human rights instruments is a matter of paramount importance for our country.

In this regard, priority and long-term measures are envisaged to further reform the national system for ensuring, observing and protecting human rights and freedoms in Turkmenistan.

And I would like to express our intention to continue to participate in the work of UN Committees and Commissions dealing with human rights issues.

All this testifies to the fact that our country is working purposefully to implement the basic provisions of international conventions and the norms of national legislation relating to the protection of citizens' rights.

During our interaction dialog, we will try to answer questions of interest, provide additional information and comments that will help to identify ways and forms of further work to make progress in this direction.

In conclusion, I would like to emphasize that Turkmenistan is ready for open and constructive cooperation with the members of the Human Rights Council and other international structures.

Thank you for your attention.