



Convention on the Elimination of All Forms of Discrimination against Women

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**Committee on the Elimination of Discrimination
against Women**
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Responses to the list of issues and questions with regard to the consideration of the combined third and fourth periodic report

Armenia*

Responses to the list of issues and questions with regard to the consideration of the combined third and fourth periodic report of Armenia on the implementation of the Convention on the Elimination of All Forms of Discrimination against Women

General

1. *Please provide further information on the process of preparation of the combined third and fourth periodic report of Armenia. This information should include whether non-governmental organizations, particularly women's organizations, and the human rights defender of the Republic of Armenia were involved in the preparation of the present report and the nature and extent of the involvement and if the report was adopted by the Government and presented to Parliament.*

An interdepartmental working group was established for the purpose of preparing this report. The group included experts from all the ministries and departments concerned.

The working group collaborated with non-governmental organizations (NGOs) in preparing the report. The draft report was presented and discussed during a joint meeting of the working group with representatives of NGOs. The following NGOs, among others, participated in the preparation of the report: the National Council of Women, the Centre for Women's Rights, the Mothers' Centre, the Association of Women University Graduates, "Democracy Today" and "Mothers of Soldiers".

* The present report is being issued without formal editing.

Data collection and analysis

2. *The report contains limited statistical data disaggregated by sex on the situation of women in areas covered by the Convention. Please provide information on the status of data collection in the country in general, and to what extent such data collection takes place on a sex-disaggregated basis. Please indicate how the Government intends to improve the collection of data disaggregated by sex pertaining to the areas of the Convention so as to support policymaking and programme development and to measure progress towards implementation of the Convention.*

The National Statistical Service of Armenia is aware of the importance of collecting statistical data disaggregated by sex, bearing in mind the principle that statistical data must reflect the place and role of women and men in society. In 2007, the National Statistical Service produced a study entitled “Women and men of Armenia” (a brochure in English is attached).

In 2006-2007, the Ministry of Labour and Social Affairs, together with the National Statistical Service and public organizations, conducted social surveys on issues of violence against women in the home and in the workplace.

3. *Please provide information on the results of the gender analysis of the Poverty Reduction Strategy Paper.*

Poverty indicators by gender and age groups

(%)

	2004		2007		Percentage of the poor population	Percentage of the total population
	Very poor	Poor	Very poor	Poor		
<i>Gender</i>						
Female	6.4	34.3	3.8	25.2	54.8	54.4
Male	6.4	35	3.8	24.7	45.2	45.6
<i>Age groups</i>						
0-5	8	41.9	6.7	33.2	10.0	7.5
6-14	7.2	36.6	4.1	24.8	12.3	12.4
15-19	6.1	35	3.4	23.9	8.8	9.2
20-24	6.4	35.4	4.0	25.7	9.6	9.3
25-29	6.7	39.2	3.8	25.9	7.7	7.5
30-34	8.4	37.5	3.8	27.7	7.0	6.3
35-39	6.6	35.6	4.3	23.1	5.0	5.4
40-44	5.5	32.7	3.6	22.7	6.5	7.1
45-49	5.8	29.3	3.5	24.0	8.0	8.4
50-54	5.4	30.2	2.3	22.3	5.9	6.6
55-59	4.6	30.5	3.8	22.6	4.4	4.9
60-64	6.3	30.3	3.8	23.2	2.5	2.7
65+	5.3	31.5	2.7	23.9	12.3	12.9
Total	6.4	34.6	3.8	25.0	100	100

Poverty indicators by gender of the head of household

(%)

<i>Head of household</i>	<i>2004</i>		<i>2007</i>		<i>Percentage of the poor population</i>	<i>Percentage of the total population</i>
	<i>Very poor</i>	<i>Poor</i>	<i>Very poor</i>	<i>Poor</i>		
Male	6.0	34.2	3.5	23.4	69.5	74.2
Female	7.5	35.8	4.6	29.6	30.5	25.8
Female without children	5.6	23.5	0.4	22.3	7.8	8.7
Female with children	8.3	41.3	1.1	33.2	22.8	17.1
Total	6.4	34.6	3.8	25.0	100	100

Number of students who had withdrawn from general education schools at the beginning of the 2007/2008 school year, by *marz* (region) of Armenia

<i>Regions</i>	<i>Total</i>	<i>Including girls</i>
City of Yerevan	1 663	697
Aragatsotn	97	33
Ararat	313	113
Armavir	4	3
Gekharkunik	262	108
Lori	254	107
Kotaik	34	10
Shirak	420	150
Syunik	1	1
Vaiots Tsor	31	13
Tavush	127	58
Total	3 206	1 293

Number of students who withdrew from crafts, fine arts and music schools and from child and youth creative centres by *marz* (region) of Armenia, 2002-2007

<i>Regions/year</i>	<i>Total</i>						<i>Including girls</i>					
	<i>2002</i>	<i>2003</i>	<i>2004</i>	<i>2005</i>	<i>2006</i>	<i>2007</i>	<i>2002</i>	<i>2003</i>	<i>2004</i>	<i>2005</i>	<i>2006</i>	<i>2007</i>
City of Yerevan	221	214	70	203	126	56	95	125	45	118	94	16
Aragatsotn	18	—	13	—	—	—	5	—	7	—	—	—
Ararat	8	19	—	—	—	—	5	8	—	—	—	—
Armavir	120	75	47	23	52	25	100	46	34	7	30	6
Gekharkunik	—	—	72	97	53	—	—	—	51	64	35	—
Lori	16	—	24	28	36	46	13	—	14	15	23	30
Kotaik	67	146	25	64	27	21	54	109	20	32	14	17

Regions/year	Total						Including girls					
	2002	2003	2004	2005	2006	2007	2002	2003	2004	2005	2006	2007
Shirak	23	—	—	—	—	27	3	—	—	—	—	16
Syunik	28	18	—	15	53	23	19	—	—	14	37	17
Vaiots Tsor	—	—	—	4	—	—	—	—	—	3	—	—
Tavush	39	—	—	20	17	48	26	—	—	16	12	32
Total	540	472	251	454	364	246	320	288	171	269	245	134

Number of students who withdrew from preparatory vocational and technical schools or abandoned their studies, 2006-2007

	2006	2007
Total	78	92
Including women	16	22

Number of students who withdrew from secondary vocational and higher educational institutions or abandoned their studies, 2002-2007

	2002	2003	2004	2005	2006	2007
Total	1 768	1 575	1 091	1 369	1 404	1 513
Including women	556	439	348	390	364	425

Number of students who were dismissed from or withdrew from higher educational institutions, 2002-2007

	2002	2003	2004	2005	2006	2007
Total	5 059	3 744	3 216	4 159	5 177	5 370
Including women	1 563	1 411	868	1 020	1 090	1 318

Visibility of the Convention, Optional Protocol, legislative and institutional framework

4. Please indicate whether the Convention on the Elimination of All Forms of Discrimination against Women has been invoked in any domestic court cases and if so, which? Additionally, please specify what has been done to make widely known the Convention and the Optional Protocol which Armenia ratified on 14 September 2006 and to create awareness about the Convention and the Optional Protocol among the Armenian judges, prosecutors and lawyers.

The Convention and the Optional Protocol, like all other international treaties ratified by the Republic of Armenia, have been published in the official collections of international treaties issued by the Ministry of Foreign Affairs and are made

available to all official departments, public organizations, libraries and higher educational institutions of Armenia. Information on international treaties may also be found in the "IRTEK" database of Armenian legislation and on the website of the Ministry of Justice: www.arils.am.

5. *Please inform the Committee about the powers of the human rights defender of the Republic of Armenia with regard to the issues covered by the Convention. Please include information on actions taken to follow up on its recommendations, if any, and provide data disaggregated by sex and on complaints lodged on the basis of discrimination on the grounds of sex, as well as on the areas and rights for which such complaints were lodged.*

On 21 October 2003 the National Assembly of Armenia adopted an act establishing the institution of the human rights defender (ombudsman). Under article 7 of the act, the human rights defender considers complaints about violations by State agencies and local authorities and their staff of human rights and fundamental freedoms (including civil rights) laid down in the Constitution and laws of the Republic of Armenia, international treaties of the Republic of Armenia, and also the principles and norms of international law. The human rights defender is entitled to attend meetings of the Government and also of other State bodies, and to speak when issues relating to human rights and fundamental freedoms are being discussed, and also to submit for consideration at such meetings issues relating to violations of human rights and fundamental freedoms by those bodies or their subsidiary bodies or staff. The human rights defender is entitled to attend meetings of the National Assembly and to speak when issues relating to human rights and fundamental freedoms are being discussed, under the procedure established by the rules of procedure of the National Assembly.

Article 8 of the act specifies that any individual, regardless of ethnic or racial affiliation, citizenship, place of residence, gender, age, political or other views and legal capacity, may have recourse to the human rights defender. Legal entities may also contact the human rights defender.

6. *Provide information on the powers and the financial and human resources dedicated to the promotion of gender equality within the department of women's, family and children's affairs.*

Article 8 of the above-mentioned act specifies that any individual, regardless of ethnic or racial affiliation, citizenship, place of residence, gender, age, political or other views and legal capacity may have recourse to the human rights defender. The department of women's, family and children's affairs of the Ministry of Labour and Social Affairs has sufficient human resources to meet the goals established in the national plan of action to improve the status of women and to enhance their role in society for the period 2004-2010.

As to financial resources, along with State programmes, a wide range of local projects are being carried out in cooperation with international and public organizations. Over the past year alone, several information campaigns were organized at the *marz* (regional) level on gender issues, with the involvement of representatives, both of local bodies, and of the regional media and NGOs. The goal of these projects is not only to raise the level of gender awareness among those responsible for the implementation of the national plan of action in all regions of the country, but also to assist in the formulation of an annual plan of action that is

adapted more closely to each region, and to identify local potential and establish a professional network of persons involved in implementing the national plan of action.

Beijing Declaration and Platform for Action/National Plan of Action

7. *Please provide information on whether the national programme to improve the status of women and to enhance their role in society in the Republic of Armenia for the period 2004-2010 has led to a change in the areas mentioned in the State party's report (CEDAW/C/ARM/4, para. 27).*

The Ministry of Labour and Social Affairs, and the National Institute of Labour and Social Research attached to it, has carried out the following programmes under the national plan of action, with support from the "Gender and Politics in Southern Caucasus: Georgia and Armenia" project of the United Nations Development Programme (UNDP).

- With a view to increasing women's political participation, research has been conducted into the reasons for the underrepresentation of women in policymaking organs in the legislative, executive and judicial branches. The objective and subjective factors influencing the low level of women's participation in the decision-making process were identified, society's perceptions of women leaders were studied and women's professional and political experience was assessed. The results obtained and recommendations based on them were published and will be taken into consideration in the drafting of the 2009 workplan.
- A module on gender has been developed to enhance the training of Armenian civil servants in gender issues. The subject has been included in the list of disciplines to be taught in advanced courses for civil servants.
- A module on gender has been developed for teachers at higher educational institutions. Training courses for trainers have been organized as part of a pilot programme and attended by teachers from one institution in Yerevan and two regional institutions.
- The Ministry of Labour and Social Affairs will conduct a pilot project on the design and implementation of a gender-sensitive budget.
- A draft conceptual framework has been prepared for the Armenian Government's gender policy, along with a strategy for its implementation.
- A law has been drafted on guarantees of equal rights and equal opportunities for men and women.

Stereotypes

8. *The Committee in its previous concluding observations expressed concerns at the persistence of deeply rooted patriarchal attitudes in the family and society. Please provide information on specific programmes being undertaken to overcome these attitudes and an overview of the outcome of the actions taken to combat discrimination against women.*

Armenian society is currently in a phase of actively seeking and formulating new approaches to family relationships. Stereotypical thinking and behaviour can be

tackled through targeted media efforts. In accordance with the fifth section of the national plan of action and in the context of cooperation with the media:

- Training seminars have been organized for media workers;
- Publications on gender issues have been produced;
- A series of round tables and talk shows have been held in which young people have discussed issues relating to the political, economic and social participation of women in national life, the reasons for their passivity in various spheres and how to remedy the situation.

Violence against women

9. *Please indicate if there is a national law on domestic violence, as recommended by the Committee in its previous concluding observations. Furthermore, please provide information on the penalties for rape and indicate if the State envisages the criminalization of marital rape.*

An interdepartmental working group was set up in 2007 to prepare a draft law on domestic violence. The group consists of representatives of the Police and of the Ministries of Justice, Health, Labour and Social Affairs, judges and lawyers. The law is being drafted in the context of a programme entitled “Legal initiatives against domestic violence” which is being implemented by the Centre for Women’s Rights.

Current legislation establishes responsibility for offences independently of the type of violence.

According to article 138 of the Armenian Criminal Code, rape — sexual intercourse of a man with a woman against her will, using violence or the threat of violence against the woman or some other person or taking advantage of a woman’s helpless situation — is punishable by a term of imprisonment of three to six years. Rape committed in aggravating circumstances (including by a group of persons, with particular cruelty to the victim or another person, involving a minor, or inadvertently causing the death of the victim or other serious consequences) is punishable by a term of imprisonment of 4 to 10 years, and rape of a girl under the age of 14 years is punishable by a term of imprisonment of 8 to 15 years.

All such cases are recorded by the Police according to the established procedure and statistics are compiled on that basis. In 2005, 23 cases of rape were recorded, in 2006 — 10 cases and in 2007 — 8 cases.

In cases of marital rape, legal action is taken in accordance with the relevant articles of chapter 18 of the Criminal Code on offences against sexual integrity and sexual freedom.

The Criminal Code criminalizes the following acts: coercion to commit suicide (art. 110); inducement to commit suicide (art. 111); intentional infliction of serious injury (arts. 112 and 113); battery (art. 118); torture (art. 119); and violent sexual acts (art. 139). These articles do not refer specifically to the perpetrators of violence; they merely prescribe penalties for committing the offences.

In 2008, amendments were made to the statute of the Ministry of Labour and Social Affairs that expand its functions in the area of combating domestic violence, in particular in relation to formulating measures to prevent domestic violence and provide social protection for victims.

The 2009-2011 medium-term budget includes appropriations for the establishment in 2010 of a crisis centre for domestic violence victims which is to provide a range of services to ensure protection of victims' social and legal rights.

At the present time, services for victims of violence, including a hot line, shelter and social support are provided by NGOs specializing in this area both in Yerevan and in the regions.

10. *Please provide information on steps taken or envisaged, in accordance with the Committee's general recommendation No. 19 on violence against women, to develop a comprehensive strategy to combat all forms of violence against women, as recommended by the Committee in its previous concluding observations, including capacity-building for the police, lawyers, and the judiciary and health workers.*

Armenia holds an annual campaign entitled "16 days against gender violence" and various activities are organized in that context to raise awareness and disseminate information on this issue.

In 2007 the Armenian Government joined the Council of Europe campaign "Stop domestic violence against women" with the slogan "Don't be silent, don't put up with it, unite. End violence against women". As part of the campaign, a programme of action was prepared which includes various activities such as meetings with representatives of State bodies, NGOs and international organizations and the translation and distribution of booklets, posters and other materials.

The national programme to improve the status of women and to enhance their role in society for the period 2004-2010 includes a component to address violence against women. Every year, the Government implements specific programmes designed to improve the situation of women and receives a report on their implementation. Special press conferences are also held every year for the Government to present its work in this area. The situation is analysed, current problems are reviewed and a strategy to address violence is devised.

The Armenian Police pays particular attention to preventing all acts of violence against women, including by improving security in public areas. Police units carry out precautionary and preventive work on a daily basis for that purpose and conduct targeted raids of public areas, parks and other places where people congregate.

11. *Please provide information on the scale of violence against women, including the number of women murdered by their husbands, partners or ex-partners in the past few years in cases of domestic violence, as well as on the availability of social services and shelters — safe houses and 24-hour-help phone line — to the victims. Also provide, if available, statistics concerning violence against women, including domestic violence, and the number of complaints, investigations, prosecutions and penalties handed down.*

Data on cases of violence against girls and women are compiled by the information centre of the Armenian Police.

In 2006, there were 1,680 complaints, reports and communications concerning violence against women. As a result, 446 persons were prosecuted under criminal law, 80 persons were prosecuted under administrative law and 297 preventive measures were taken.

In 2007, there were 1,648 complaints, reports and communications concerning violence against women. As a result, 190 persons were prosecuted under criminal law, 30 persons were prosecuted under administrative law and 224 preventive measures were taken.

The Police and the Ministry of Health, together with public organizations, have prepared a conceptual framework on violence against children and child neglect. The conceptual framework has been submitted to the Government and will be included in the list of measures for 2009.

The Armenian Police is collaborating with the Centre for Women's Rights, which in 2002 established a shelter for women and children victims of domestic violence. The shelter provides free accommodation and meals, psychological and legal counselling, and social and medical assistance. Over the period 2002-2007 assistance was provided to 63 women and 86 children. The Centre has been operating a telephone help line since 2007.

For underage girls, there is a 24-hour Children's Help Centre where doctors, social workers and psychologists provide help to victims of violence.

Trafficking and exploitation of prostitution

12. Please provide, as requested in the Committee's previous concluding observations, information as to whether the State party has formulated and implemented a comprehensive programme, including legislation, to address exploitation of prostitution. Also please provide further information on the measures undertaken and budget allocated in order to ensure rehabilitation, social reintegration and physical and psychosocial recovery for victims of trafficking and prostitution, including for women and girls who wish to leave prostitution exploitation.

In 2007, the second national programme to combat trafficking in persons for 2007-2009 was drafted by the interdepartmental commission against trafficking and adopted by the Government. It includes all of the necessary components to combat trafficking: prosecution, prevention and protection.

Under Prime Ministerial decision No. 861-A of 6 December 2007, the Armenian Council on Trafficking Issues, headed by the Deputy Prime Minister, was established. The Council's membership comprises the following Ministers: Foreign Affairs; Sport and Youth Issues; Justice; Economic Affairs; Finance; Education and Science; Labour and Social Affairs; Health; and also the Prosecutor General, the director of the Armenian Government's national security service and the Chief of Police.

The Council currently has a standing working group which is responsible for the preparation of activities. In 2008 the working group prepared the operating procedures for the national referral mechanism for victims of trafficking. The procedures were approved by Government decision No. 1385-A of 20 November 2008. A system was thus established for coordination between State bodies and local authorities on issues relating to referral of trafficking victims to receive comprehensive assistance. The purpose of this system is to streamline efforts to provide assistance to trafficking victims, which includes the provision of shelter in addition to specialized medical and psychological assistance, counselling and reintegration.

The national Police has special units to combat trafficking in persons.

The actions taken to combat trafficking in persons include legal regulation of labour migration, measures to raise public awareness of the dangers of trafficking, provision of training for specialists to combat trafficking in persons, economic support for at-risk groups and also direct work with the community to identify victims and encourage appropriate social attitudes to victims.

Under the national referral mechanism, the Ministry of Labour and Social Affairs, in cooperation with NGOs, is responsible for the rehabilitation, social reintegration, and physical and psychological recovery of victims of trafficking. Over the period 2004-2006, 143 trafficking victims were identified. They received medical, psychological, social and legal assistance from the rehabilitation and assistance centres established by NGOs.

The 2009 budget includes appropriations for the establishment of an assistance and support centre for trafficking victims.

On 10 November 2008 a memorandum of understanding was signed between the Ministry of Labour and Social Affairs and the Yerevan office of the Organization for Security and Cooperation in Europe on the establishment of a support centre for the protection of victims of trafficking. Under the agreement, the Centre will provide assistance in capacity-building to the Ministry and other authorized bodies and will facilitate cooperation on issues relating to combating trafficking. The newly-established Centre will perform the following functions: analysis of Armenian legislation on combating trafficking in persons, evaluation and analysis of the implementation of international commitments and legal norms, provision of information to structures engaged in combating trafficking, provision of data and sources of information regarding the risks of trafficking and the safety of migration; and organization of seminars for social workers, representatives of public organizations, journalists, law enforcement agencies and other interested participants.

13. *Please provide statistical data on the extent of trafficking in women and girls into, through and from Armenia as may be available. This information should include data on the number of individuals arrested, prosecuted and sentenced as a result of their involvement in trafficking.*

During the reporting period the number of prosecutions for offences covered under article 132 of the Criminal Code (recruitment, transport, delivery, concealment or receipt of persons for purposes of exploitation) was as follows:

<i>Year</i>	<i>Number of cases</i>	<i>Prosecutions/including women</i>
2003	0	0/0
2004	2	3/2
2005	11	15/7
2006	12	8/8
2007	4	3/3
2008	3	1/1
(first half of year)		

The number of prosecutions for offences covered under article 132.1 of the Criminal Code (incitement to prostitution or other forms of sexual exploitation, forced labour, enslavement or holding in slavery or a condition equivalent to slavery), which entered into force in 2006, was as follows:

<i>Year</i>	<i>Number of cases</i>	<i>Prosecutions/including women</i>
2006	1	1/0
2007	4	4/4
2008 (first half of year)	2	1/1

Political participation and participation in public life

14. *Please explain the reasons for the continuing under-representation of women in public and political life and in decision-making positions. Also, describe measures that the Government has taken, including temporary special measures taken in accordance with article 4, paragraph 1, of the Convention and the Committee's general recommendation No. 25, to increase the number of women in the National Assembly, the Government, the diplomatic service, regional and local/municipal bodies and the judiciary, and the impact of such measures. Please provide updated statistical data in that regard.*

There are various reasons for women's passive participation in the country's political life, ranging from inequalities in starting opportunities for men and women in pre-election processes to gaps in legislation. On the initiative of the Ministry of Labour and Social Affairs and with the support of the UNDP project "Gender and politics in Southern Caucasus: Georgia and Armenia", in 2006-2007 a gender analysis was conducted on a number of laws, including the labour, family, electoral, criminal and nationality codes of the Republic of Armenia and the Act on employment and social protection for the unemployed. Based on the results of a comparative analysis of the provisions of the CEDAW Convention and the sections of the above-mentioned texts having to do with women's rights, proposals were drafted for making amendments and additions to that legislation. The department of women's family and children's affairs is currently preparing a package that will be circulated to all relevant ministries for review, after which, taking into account their proposals, it will be submitted to the Government.

The Constitution uses the terms "everyone" and "each citizen" to refer to the rights and freedoms of individuals and citizens, making no distinction between men and women. Article 14.1 of the Constitution prohibits discrimination on the grounds of sex.

In 2004, a new Labour Code was adopted, establishing as the basic principles of labour law the freedom to work, the prohibition of any form of forced labour and violence against workers, equal rights of all parties in employment relations regardless of sex, the granting to each worker of the right to fair working conditions, equal employment rights and opportunities, and so forth.

Articles 2 and 3 of the Electoral Code provide that citizens who have the right to vote may vote and be elected without regard to sex. Any restriction on the right to vote on grounds of sex is punishable under the law. Citizens participate in elections

on an equal basis. The State ensures equal conditions for the exercise of its citizens' right to vote.

Moreover, article 100 of the Electoral Code on the nomination of candidates to serve as deputies in the National Assembly according to the proportional system of election provides that at least 15 per cent of candidates for election as deputies in the National Assembly on party electoral lists must be women.

A draft law is currently being prepared on State guarantees of equal rights and opportunities which will regulate in a detailed and thorough manner the provision of guarantees of equal rights and opportunities, including temporary special measures.

Employment

15. *Please provide, as recommended by the Committee in its previous concluding observations, sex-disaggregated data on all aspects of women's employment, and especially wages.*

16. *The State party's report describes a variety of assistance and training measures for women entrepreneurs. Please provide data on the nature of the businesses women establish.*

All of the data from the recent statistical study on "Men and Women in Armenia — 2008" can be found at the site of the National Statistical Service at the address www.armstat.am, and is also available in English.

Stereotypes and education

17. *Please elaborate on initiatives that have been undertaken to challenge stereotypical attitudes, and list concrete policies formulated to promote the sharing of responsibilities between women and men in family and society and their impact.*

Reforms are presently under way in the area of education, aimed at democratizing and strengthening national society. Beginning in 2001, the subject of human rights has been required in the general educational institutions of the Republic. A special section in the textbook is devoted to issues of women's rights and gender equality.

At the same time, under the new order, changes have been introduced to school curricula, for example the addition of the subjects of gender equality and protection of women's rights. Thus, in the primary grades, a course entitled "Me and the world around me" is taught; in the middle grades, "Introduction to social sciences" and "Human rights"; and in the higher grades, "The law".

In the area of preschool education, a programme of parent education is being provided through which parents of preschool-aged children are given systematic help to raise their children correctly within the family.

18. *It seems that academic orientation is influenced by stereotypes. Please indicate if there are any measures in place to encourage girls and women to study non-stereotypical subjects and employers to recruit women for non-stereotypical posts.*

In recent years, women students have been in a majority in higher educational institutions in the following fields: economics, law, health care, teaching and the arts. While the fields of health care, teaching and the arts are traditional fields for

women, women's preference for economics and law is related to the increased demand for such professions in the labour market and the new priorities of society.

19. *Please provide further information on the pilot programme to reform secondary education (CEDAW/C/ARM/4, para. 145), including on the number of schools that have been closed and on the number of teachers, disaggregated by sex, who have lost jobs.*

Under the Education Act, the first goal of education is the student's ethical, social, intellectual and physical development. The State plan for general education which has been approved provides for a 12-year educational programme in three levels as follows:

1. Primary school — 4 years of schooling (grades 1-4)
2. Middle school — 5 years of schooling (grades 5 to 9)
3. Secondary school — 3 years of schooling (grades 10 to 12)

The transition to the 12-year system of instruction began with the 2006-2007 school year. Under the State plan, the following educational goals have been set:

In primary school: the development of the intellectual, ethical and physical abilities of the child, and also understanding of language, grammar, the foundations of logic and training in preliminary work skills. The primary school provides the necessary knowledge and an appropriate level of education to continue to middle school.

The goal of middle school education is to provide the necessary store of knowledge about the individual, nature and society, and also how to use those skills and knowledge in life at a level of mastery of the ethical and moral dimension sufficient to allow the student to continue education in secondary school or vocational institutions.

The basic educational goal in secondary school is to prepare students for occupational training and impart the necessary knowledge, skills and understanding to begin an independent life.

Data on the results of these reforms will be provided in due course.

20. *Please provide statistical data, disaggregated by region, on non-attendance, absenteeism and dropout of girls and women at all levels of education covering the period since the last periodic report, especially for ethnic minority girls (Yezidis and Kurds).*

Despite the fact that equal access to education is provided by law, a small percentage of children do not attend school. The number of children not enrolled in school is higher in the older age groups, in particular, among those 15-16 years old. The reasons for their non-attendance are often not just their own unwillingness, but also poor social and economic conditions. It should be noted that to a greater extent socially disadvantaged children, and children from large families, do not continue to attend school past the eighth grade. This is related to the fact that eight years of education are compulsory under the Education Act. The country does not have a special registry of children, including children from ethnic groups, who do not attend school. In-depth research is needed in this area to determine the exact number

of school dropouts and the objective and subjective reasons, and to produce gender-disaggregated data.

In terms of their progress, girls not only keep up with boys, but also show more interest and responsibility, as illustrated by a comparative analysis. After the eighth year of schooling, girls represent only 28.3 per cent of students who have dropped out; they make up 28.4 per cent of students who have to repeat eighth grade and 23.3 per cent of those dismissed. Girls represent 64.6 per cent of students graduating with honours from eighth grade. After ten years of schooling, girls represent 40 per cent of students who have dropped out or been dismissed and 55.6 per cent of those graduating with honours from ten years of education.

In secondary school the number of girls enrolled is higher, which is attributable to boys leaving school after eighth grade and entering vocational training institutions or starting working.

Girls make up 25.6 per cent of students in vocational training institutions who leave school or are dismissed, and in higher educational institutions this figure reaches 26 per cent. Naturally, in those groups the greatest number are students in the fee-based system.

In Armenia, there is no gender discrimination at any level of education or in access to education.

Health

21. *The report states that “unfortunately, abortion is one of the most widespread methods of family planning in Armenia” (CEDAW/C/ARM/4, para. 212). Please indicate what action has been undertaken by the Government to change “usage of abortion” as a method of family planning and ensure the availability and accessibility of affordable contraceptives, promote programmes of sex education and foster responsible sexual behaviour.*

The first programme established in Armenia under the 1995-2005 national strategy for the improvement of women’s health and reproductive health was a family planning programme; under that programme, 77 family planning services were established in all regions of the country, scientific literature was published for medical workers and instructors were trained to provide refresher training to medical personnel, including obstetricians/gynaecologists, midwives and family doctors.

With the help of the media and the dissemination of information pamphlets, the population was introduced to the use of modern methods of contraception and prevention of unwanted pregnancies and abortions.

With the assistance of the United Nations Population Fund, Armenia was able to import modern contraceptives and distribute them to all family planning services in sufficient quantities to meet demand.

In 2007, the Government of Armenia adopted a decision approving the national programme to improve reproductive health and the temporary plan of action for 2007-2015, which specifies how to expand the use of modern contraceptives, prevent abortions and create equal opportunities for a healthy reproductive life for all population groups, and provides for implementation mechanisms. The range and accessibility of high-quality contraceptive services have

been expanded for all persons wishing to use them, without regard to age (including adolescents), sex (women and men), marital status (married, divorced) or socio-economic situation. Changes have been made to the educational programmes of schools and other educational institutions, in particular through the use of teaching materials relating to the reproductive and sexual system and modern contraceptive methods. Training has been provided to teachers and parents on the subject of safe sexual behaviour and modern contraceptive methods. Peer-to-peer courses have been organized for young people and adolescents on how to avoid unwanted pregnancies.

Efforts are currently being made to strengthen the family planning services network and provide continuous training for specialists and health education for the public. Public organizations that advocate the use of modern contraceptives are actively involved in the outreach effort.

22. Both child and maternal mortality rates remain high in the State party. Please indicate what steps have been taken in order to address the situation and what the results are in practice.

The Government and especially the Ministry of Health have always considered the improvement of maternal and child health and the reduction of maternal and child mortality rates to be priority areas for action. Efforts have been made to introduce legal reforms and also to enhance the quality of obstetric and gynaecological care and improve the technical equipment in maternity hospitals. On 1 July 2008, a programme for State certification of births was introduced in order to provide accessible and free childbirth services. One billion dram was allocated from the national budget to implement the programme.

The work of maternity hospitals in Yerevan and the regions (*Marzer*) was researched and analysed and the results were used to draft regulatory documents, including a classification of maternity hospitals by level. The emergency medical service was reviewed and expanded with the creation of rapid response teams. The teams have been successful in preventing many maternal deaths.

A sustained reduction has been achieved in the maternal mortality rate (number of maternal deaths per 100,000 births). A comparison of average three-month rates shows that the maternal mortality rate has followed a slow but definite downward trend over the past 17 years (1990-1992: 38.5; 2005-2007: 25.6). The maternal mortality rate is lower than the average rate in the countries of the Commonwealth of Independent States (CIS) (29.3/100,000), but is four times as high as in the countries of the European Union (6.4/100,000).

23. Please describe any strategies and measures taken to combat HIV/AIDS as well as discrimination against affected women and their impact. Please also elaborate on any awareness-raising campaigns undertaken.

HIV/AIDS indicators in Armenia have been kept at a low level by introducing voluntary counselling and testing services at all social and health institutions, HIV/AIDS screening services for pregnant women and preventive measures. In collaboration with public organizations, in order to prevent HIV/AIDS and other sexually transmitted diseases among individuals in at-risk groups (intravenous drug users, prostitutes and adolescents), awareness-raising and educational measures have been taken, condoms have been provided free of charge and access to medical care has been provided for persons living with HIV/AIDS.

Rural women

24. *Please provide further information on the steps taken by the State party in response to the Committee's previous recommendations regarding the development of special policies and programmes aimed at the economic empowerment of rural women and their access to health-care services. In that regard, please provide further information on how the Strategy for Sustainable Agriculture Development impacts on the situation of rural women.*

Significant efforts have been made to increase the quality and accessibility of medical services for rural women, including by renovating and equipping rural health centres. The centres are being provided with trained staff seconded from Yerevan, and medical workers undergo continuous training.

Mobile gynaecological and rapid response systems have also been introduced to serve the rural population. Leading specialists participate in open days, which are held on a regular basis.

Women with disabilities

25. *The State party's report is silent on the situation of women with disabilities. Please provide information on programmes and services for women with disabilities including any assistance given to them during pregnancy and/or after childbirth, or in their housework.*

As mentioned earlier, the Government of Armenia has a single policy for persons with disabilities of both sexes. The State provides persons with disabilities with prosthetic and orthotic devices and hearing aids, organizes their medical, social and psychological rehabilitation and administers a programme of home services for pensioners living alone.

The Republic of Armenia's policy on disability issues is designed to integrate persons with disabilities into the community. The State is committed to international standards and is taking new steps to provide persons with disabilities with equal opportunities in areas that include health, education, social services, rehabilitation and employment.

The Act on the social protection of persons with disabilities, and other legislation and Government decisions, provide the following benefits to persons with disabilities:

- Persons with disabilities have the right to free medical treatment;
- Persons with disabilities in the first and second categories have the right to free medicines and persons with disabilities in the third category receive a 50 per cent discount;
- Persons with disabilities in the first and second categories have the right to use public transport free of charge.

Disability is mainly defined by the degree of limitation on a person's ability to work. The medical and social assessment that certifies a person as having disabilities and determines the causes of the disabilities and when they were incurred also defines the form of social protection and the treatment required for rehabilitation.

Rehabilitation is an essential element for integrating individuals with disabilities into the community. It consists of a system of medical, occupational and social measures which are designed to eradicate limitations on activity or achieve partial remediation.

Rehabilitation measures are intended to restore health, capacity for work and social status, which in turn promotes the social and financial independence of persons with disabilities, their full participation in public life, the exercise of their freedoms and rights to equal opportunities and the establishment of suitable living and working conditions, thereby facilitating their productive integration into society.

The rehabilitation of persons with disabilities is managed in the context of the State procurement system. An individualized rehabilitation programme provides persons with disabilities with remedial, prosthetic and orthopaedic facilities free of charge (it should be noted that every year the quality is improved and the range of facilities is expanded).

As of 1 January 2004, persons with disabilities incurred during the Great Patriotic War and soldiers whose disabilities were incurred during their military service receive financial assistance on a monthly basis for the use of certain services (electricity, transport, gas, water and heating).

A disability pension is granted to the following persons when certified as having disabilities by a medical and social assessment:

- Persons with disabilities in the first category and children with disabilities up to 18 years of age receive 140 per cent of the basic pension;
- Persons with disabilities in the second category receive 120 per cent of the basic pension;
- Persons with disabilities in the third category receive 100 per cent of the basic pension.

Education is one of the main contributing factors for the independence and social integration of persons with disabilities. The social influence of family or friends is also an important factor, but education in this context covers all stages of a person's life, including preschool, elementary, secondary, higher and special education, and also training throughout a person's lifetime. Access to a basic education is not only a positive indicator for the person with disabilities but also helps other individuals to gain an understanding of human diversity. The education system provides elementary and special education for persons with disabilities. Secondary and special educational institutions should be encouraged to work together to support persons with disabilities in local communities, but this work must be consonant with the goals of integration.

The Act on the social protection of persons with disabilities covers education for adults and children with disabilities. According to the Education Act and the Act on the education of persons with special educational needs, parents may choose for children with such needs to be educated either at regular schools or at special institutions under a special programme.

On 25 May 2005, the Government approved a strategy for inclusive education in order to lay the groundwork for organizing general education and reforming special education for children with special educational needs. As of 2008, the

inclusive education model is being used in 29 schools and the programme is to be expanded in 2009.

In view of the inability of persons with disabilities to compete in the labour market and their need to be integrated into the community, the Act on the social protection of the employed and unemployed population (2006) provides additional safeguards for such persons. The annual State programme for employment of persons with disabilities includes the following schemes:

- Vocational training and employment skills recovery for persons with disabilities;
- Employment for groups of persons who cannot compete on the labour market;
- Provision of financial support to persons with disabilities for State registration of entrepreneurial activity.

The State has also established a social day centre and social ventures.

On 3 November 2005 the Government approved a strategy for social protection of persons with disabilities for 2006-2015, based on the United Nations Convention on the Rights of Persons with Disabilities and the Council of Europe Action Plan for the rehabilitation and integration of persons with disabilities for 2006-2015. The strategy includes actions in almost all areas that will create conditions for integrating persons with disabilities into the community, thereby ensuring their full participation in public life.

Work is currently under way to prepare a strategy for the sustainable development of employment and social protection, including in the area of disabilities.

The State is taking steps to create an enabling environment for persons with disabilities. In 2006, the Government approved arrangements for making social facilities, public transport and technical infrastructure accessible to persons with disabilities and persons with limited mobility.

New programmes are also being implemented to ensure equal opportunities for persons with disabilities. A programme was started in 2006 for the publication of books in special script for persons with disabilities who lost their sight later in life and the use of a “talking books” service.

In 2007, the first programmes for free provision of eye prostheses and the provision of sound devices for persons with disabilities were implemented.

A programme launched in July 2008 is giving blind persons the opportunity to learn the “sun” system and provides technology that enables them to use a computer without assistance. This programme is long-term and is available to blind students at higher educational institutions and workers with disabilities.

In order to promote the creation of an enabling environment for persons with disabilities and ensure their active involvement in community life, the Ministry of Labour and Social Affairs announced an “accessible community” contest as part of the Social Protection Systems Strengthening Project implemented by the United States Agency for International Development.

Non-governmental organizations concerned with disability issues are actively involved and cooperate with governmental organizations. Efforts in the area of

social protection of persons with disabilities are based on the social partnership principle. Local authorities and NGOs work together to rehabilitate persons with disabilities. In particular, the views of NGOs are taken into account in the drafting of legislation and in programme planning, through the holding of joint discussions. State structures discuss or resolve issues relating to the interests of persons with disabilities with the participation of NGOs or with their direct agreement.

By a Prime Ministerial decision of 25 February 2008, a national commission was established to deal with disability issues. The commission's members include the deputy ministers of all relevant ministries and also representatives of NGOs. The commission is headed by the Minister for Labour and Social Affairs. Under the decision, commissions were also established for Yerevan and the regions. The members of these commissions include representatives of State and public organizations (governors (*marzpets*), representatives of local authorities and presidents of local NGOs).

On 30 March 2007 the Republic of Armenia signed the United Nations Convention on the Rights of Persons with Disabilities, which offers a timely solution to the main problems of persons with disabilities. The Convention has been translated into Armenian and the process of ratification has begun.

Action is being taken to bring local legislation into line with the provisions of the Convention.

At present the Ministry of Labour and Social Affairs is working on a strategy for social integration of persons with disabilities. In preparing the strategy, the working group is guided by the principles of the Convention. In 2009, efforts will focus on drafting a law on the social integration of persons with disabilities and in 2009-2010 work is planned on the transition to the European model of disability.

The Republic's social protection policy has an impact on family status. The acts on compulsory social insurance for temporary disability (2005) and on State benefits (2006) and decision N1530 of 27 December 2007 of the Government of Armenia establishing the scale of State benefits for 2008 defined the procedure for granting maternity leave, maternity benefits for working women, the one-time benefit for the birth of a child and the maintenance benefit for a child up to the age of two years. Prenatal and postnatal benefits and leave for employed and self-employed workers are defined as follows: (a) 140 days (70 prenatal and 70 postnatal calendar days), (b) 155 days (70 prenatal and 85* postnatal calendar days) in the case of birth complications and (c) 180 days (70 prenatal and 110 postnatal calendar days) in the case of a multiple birth.

An employed person who adopts or is appointed as guardian of a newborn receives a maternity benefit for the period of maternity leave only. The benefit is paid from the day of the adoption or appointment as guardian until the newborn is 70 days old (or 110 days old in the case of adoption or appointment as guardian of two or more newborns).

In the case of a premature or late birth occurring during the period of maternity leave, the total number of days of leave and the amount of maternity benefit paid remain unchanged. In the case of a premature birth after the 154th day of pregnancy and prior to the onset of maternity leave, the benefit is paid for the

* *Translator's note:* The Russian text has "70 postnatal calendar days".

period of maternity leave only. The maternity benefit is calculated on the basis of 100 per cent of the average wage regardless of the length of the insured period.

Refugee women

26. *The State party's report provides little information on refugee women. Please provide a comprehensive picture of the de facto situation of refugee women in all areas covered by the Convention and particularly focus on rural refugee women as they suffer from multiple discrimination. Furthermore, please indicate if refugee children, as recommended by the Committee on the Rights of the Child (CRC/C/15/Add.225), automatically acquire Armenian citizenship when their parents do so.*

Armenia has no separate programmes for refugee women, but the allocation of housing to refugee women is included in the priority housing allocation programme. Refugee women living in rural areas and in temporary shelters are in a particularly difficult housing and social situation. Families headed by women live in very poor conditions.

As for the citizenship of refugee children, article 16 of the Act on citizenship of the Republic of Armenia states that a child whose parents have acquired Armenian citizenship is entitled to Armenian citizenship up to the age of 14 years. If one of the parents acquires Armenian citizenship while the other is a foreign national or a stateless person, then their child is entitled to Armenian citizenship up to the age of 14 years if the parents consent or if the child lives in the Republic of Armenia and the parent who is an Armenian citizen consents.

At the same time, article 20 of the Act on refugees specifies that refugees who are minors lose their refugee status if their parents acquire Armenian citizenship or if, under the procedure established by the legislation of the Republic of Armenia, they are adopted by citizens of Armenia or by foreign nationals, except in cases when the adoptive parents are refugees or stateless persons.

27. *Please provide information on sex and gender-based violence within refugee communities.*

No statistics are compiled as there are few such cases.

Marriage and family relationship

28. *Please elaborate on the efforts undertaken by the Government to ensure that the minimum age of marriage is raised for both women and men to the age of 18, instead of the current minimum age of 17 years for girls and 18 years for boys, and to eradicate any exceptions to this minimum age, in accordance with article 16 of the Convention and the Convention on the Rights of the Child, including any draft laws under consideration.*

As mentioned above (see question 14), a package of proposed legislative amendments is being drafted. The proposed amendments to the Family Code include an amendment to raise the minimum age of marriage for girls to 18 years instead of the current age of 17 years.

Economic consequences of divorce

29. *Please provide information on regulations in place governing the distribution of assets/properties upon divorce. Please also provide information on the type of property that is distributed on dissolution of marriage or relationships, including in relation to unemployed women who have been taking care of the household and raising children.*

Family legislation in Armenia provides that women and men have equal rights on entering marriage, during marriage and on dissolution of marriage.

On dissolution of a marriage in legal proceedings, or on dissolution of a marriage in a registry office, the spouses may submit to the court an agreement as to with which parent the children will reside, the procedure for payment of child maintenance and/or maintenance for a spouse who is unable to work and has no means of support, on the amount of such maintenance or on the division of the spouses' common property. If the spouses have not reached agreement, the court must determine with which parent the children will reside after dissolution of the marriage and which of the parents should be required to pay maintenance, and in what amount. At the request of the spouses (or one of the spouses), the court must also determine how to divide any property considered to be jointly owned and, at the request of the spouse who is entitled to receive maintenance payments from the other spouse, establish the amount of those payments.

The Family Code provides that the following persons have the right to request maintenance through the courts from a former spouse who has sufficient financial means: (a) a former wife who is pregnant or who is caring for the spouses' common child until the child reaches the age of three years; (b) a former spouse with no means of support who is caring for a common child with disabilities who is a minor or a child with disabilities in the first category; (c) a former spouse who is unable to work and has no means of support and who acquired those disabilities prior to the dissolution of the marriage or during the year following dissolution of the marriage; (d) a spouse with no means of support who has reached pensionable age within five years of dissolution of the marriage, if the spouses were married for 15 years or more. The amount of such maintenance and the arrangements for its payment to the former spouse after dissolution of the marriage may be determined by agreement between the former spouses.

The court may release a spouse from the obligation to assist a spouse who is unable to work and has no means of support or limit that obligation to a specific period both during the marriage and after dissolution of the marriage if the spouse's inability to work occurred as a result of the abuse of alcohol, drugs and/or toxic substances or as a result of the commission of a premeditated offence, if the spouses had been married to each other for less than one year, or in the case of immoral behaviour affecting the family by the spouse requesting maintenance payments (marital infidelity or gambling, among others).

Amendment to article 20, paragraph 1

30. *Please indicate when the Government intends to accept the amendment of article 20, paragraph 1, of the Convention on the meeting time of the Committee.*

This issue will be considered in the near future.