



**THE OFFICE OF THE COMMISSIONER FOR  
HUMAN RIGHTS OF THE REPUBLIC OF  
AZERBAIJAN**

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**SUMMARY OF THE INITIATIVES UNDERTAKEN  
WITHIN THE FIRST PHASE (2005 - 2009) OF THE  
WORLD PROGRAMME FOR HUMAN RIGHTS  
EDUCATION**

## **I. Introduction**

1. Since its establishment the institute of the Commissioner for Human Rights of the Republic of Azerbaijan has been implementing various activities with regard to the promotion and protection of human rights. One sphere of this work is the conduction of educational work on human rights. The Commissioner considers that the education is the most effective tool to improve the situation of human rights in the country and advance the equality among all members of the society. It should be mentioned that from the beginning of the first phase of the World Programme for Human Rights Education (2005-2009) the Commissioner has built the work of the institute in accordance with its key directions and objectives. The main aim of this work was to raise awareness of people of the country about their rights, strengthen the respect to human rights, promote gender equality, and eliminate discrimination among various strata of the population, and facilitate the inclusiveness of educational work and development process. During the implementation of the human rights education, age-sensitive and gender thematic approach was applied. Mainly, in its activities the institute of the Commissioner was guided by the principles and methodology of the action plan conducted for the first phase (2005 - 2009) of the above-mentioned Programme. This document provides short information on the initiatives undertaken by the Commissioner Office during this period of time.

## **II. Activities of the Commissioner for Human Rights of the Republic of Azerbaijan on Human Rights Education**

2. The first most important step for promotion of education on human rights in Azerbaijan was the establishment of the Legal Awareness Raising, Scientific-Analytical, Public Information and International Relations Department within the Commissioner Office. The main functions of this Department are raising legal awareness of population in order to prevent violation of human rights and freedoms, analysis of the cases of human rights and freedoms violations, ensuring public information, maintenance of the cooperation with the organizations engaged in protection of human rights, acting in the Azerbaijan Republic and abroad, as well as organization of the Commissioner's foreign relations.
3. Also, in order to facilitate people applying to the Commissioner, eliminate the necessity for the complainants to cover long distances and post service costs, accelerate the investigation processes on sites, and ensure more efficient awareness raising, with support of the United Nations Development Program Regional Commissioner Offices were established in four regions of the Republic of Azerbaijan: in Guba (covering 6 districts), Shaki (covering 6 districts) Jalilabad (covering 9 districts), and in Ganja (covering 12 districts). These centers regularly receive complaints, carry out legal education among various strata of the population in the surrounding regions and meetings with population by participation of the representatives of local executive powers, municipalities, law enforcement bodies and etc. The role of the regional centers of the Commissioner is very important in respect of realization of legal education events, trainings, seminars and conferences addressed to different groups of the population and covered all regions. With participation of the staff of four regional centers the activities were successfully maintained in all country districts.
4. In order to raise people's awareness on human rights as well as to contribute to the implementation of the UN World Programme for Human Rights Education (2005 - 2009), as well as UNESCO Decade "Education for All" the Commissioner Office conducted various trainings, seminars, workshops, and roundtable discussions. Most of these events had covered different regions of the country, including rural areas, settlements of the IDPs, refugees and ethnic minorities as well as orphanages, penitentiary facilities and etc. The population was provided with trainings on such topics as the protection of human rights, the fight against human trafficking, violence, drug addiction, HIV/AIDS and corruption, issues of the protection of the rights of inmates, detainees and consumers, entrepreneurs' rights, ecological rights, women's rights, the rights of the children, disabled and old people, freedom of expression and freedom of consciousness. Many of the events were attended by the parliamentarians and other officials from appropriate ministries, local executive governments, municipalities, courts, and enforcement agencies and representatives of the NGOs. and mass media. Moreover, the activity of the Commissioner covers explanation of voting rights to population and education of participants on the election processes, on current Electoral Code, and international conventions adhered by our Republic. Thus, during election processes in the

country, the Commissioner carried out enlightenment work on laws and rules on municipal and Parliament elections among the society. Consultations on the topic "Right to vote and voting rules", other conferences and seminars were organized in the run-up to the parliamentary elections and people in different regions were trained to exercise their right to vote. At the same time, the Commissioner and the staff of the Commissioner Office provide regular education on human rights and freedoms and on legal, psychological and medical aid to lonely and elderly people at the Ombudsman's Resource Center for Elderly People on the basis of the Education for All principle. Furthermore, the Office carried out trainings on juvenile justice for police investigators and inspectors.

5. Moreover, public hearings in relation to the implementation of the National Action Plan (NAP) on Protection of Human Rights in the Republic of Azerbaijan approved by the Presidential Decree of 28 December 2006 were held in all districts of the country with participation of state bodies, their local offices, electoral commissions, municipalities, NGOs, mass media and different strata of the population. Five subgroups of the Working Group were established in accordance with the structure of the NAP. Human rights NGOs, including the members of the Council of Independent Experts at the Ombudsman Institution were involved into the activity of these groups. The conduction of these hearings encouraged people to express their opinions and proposals freely, serve for strengthening the belief that all people have equal rights, providing freedom of speech, expression and assembly, as well as improving the democratic governance. Also, the hearings ensured the cooperation with all groups of population based on national priorities and their participation in development processes. One of the main results of public hearings is their mass character. At the same time, during the public hearings the complaints were investigated, the problems were brought to the attention of concerning state agencies, and in a lot of cases the problems were immediately solved on the spot. Each state agency responsible for implementation of the NAP periodically presents to the Commissioner the information on implementation of its duties. After gathering, analyzing and summarizing all received data, the Commissioner draw up the general information and submits the corresponding report and proposals to the state administration and the society. Furthermore, in order to discuss the implementation of the NAP provisions, annual conference with participation of representatives of responsible state agencies, international organizations, as well as representatives of embassies of foreign countries, NGOs, mass-media and others were held . The materials of the Conference were published in the form of a book and sent to the governmental bodies and civil society, as well as widely disseminated among the population to be used as an important tool for sharing the experience in Human Rights protection.
6. Other best practice in this sphere is the organization of conferences and roundtables dedicated to human rights and important occasions. Among them can be named the international conference entitled "Protection of Children's Rights in Emergencies and National Human Rights Institutions" and dedicated to the 20th anniversary of the UN Convention on the Rights of the Child and the "Child Year"; the

roundtables on World AIDS Day and on Population Day; celebration of the 60<sup>th</sup> anniversary of the Universal Declaration on Human Rights and others.

7. The International Baku Conferences of Ombudsmen held each year in Baku with the participation of ombudspersons of different countries must be mentioned. Within the framework of these forums memorandums and declarations are adopted. These conferences were very useful in achieving goals with regard to more effective protection of human rights, created a space for exchanging of experiences. As a result, the conferences offered all necessary facilities in developing new methods of cooperation among human rights institutions of different countries.
8. The Commissioner pays attention to the spread of information via means of the mass media. First, it should be mentioned that the Commissioner Office conducted trainings and seminars for journalists with the aim to promote international legal acts as well as provisions of national legislation contributed to the enlightenment of the representatives of the media in the field of human rights. Traditionally, each year, on the occasion of 10 December – the International Human Rights Day, competitions of journalist articles in the theme of “Human Rights for everyone!” are hold.
9. The daily activity of the Commissioner is regularly highlighted both in pro-governmental and oppositional newspapers. In general, more than 2.245 press-releases and 7.556 articles related to the Commissioner’s activity were published. Besides, the statements that were addressed to the influential international organizations are published in periodicals and sounded in radio and TV programs.
10. Furthermore, the Commissioner Office conducted and disseminated various publications on human rights among civil society as well state agencies and officials. First, it should be noted that a rich library of legal literature on Human Rights was set up at the Commissioner Office. Upon the initiative of the Commissioner, an English-Russian-Azerbaijani glossary of legal terms has been prepared for the first time. Also, the Office prepared and spread different leaflets, booklets, posters, including the posters with hotline numbers disseminated at schools (916) and police stations and books titled “Rules of Application to the European Court for Human Rights”, “The Rights of Under-Aged in the Penitentiary Institutions”, “Introduction to the Gender Theory”, “Appeal to the Commissioner for Human Rights (Ombudsman) if Your Rights are Violated”, “Your Fundamental Rights and Freedoms”, “Legal Status of Victim”, “Legal Status of Suspect”, “Legal Status of Special Accuser and Civil Plaintiff”, “Legal Status of Accused”, “Legal Status of Imprisoned Person”, “No to Torture”, “What you Should Know while Being Detained”, “What you Should not Forget when You are Arrested” and other. Besides, the books named “Human Rights and Good Governance”, “Police and Human Rights”, “Human Rights: a Manual for the Members of Parliament”, “Human Rights Defenders: Protecting the Right to Defend Human Rights”, “A New Chapter for Human Rights” and “Economic, Social and Cultural rights: Textbook for National Human Rights Institutions (NHRIs)” were translated from the English language into Azerbaijani and published. At the same time publications were prepared regarding the role of the Commissioner in the state

ruled by law, observance of human rights and the restoration of violated rights, thematic placards and posters were printed on human rights and video clips reflecting the ombudsperson's activities were made.

11. The Commissioner conducted educational work also for employees of the Office, which is a new entity in Azerbaijan. Employees of the Commissioner Office has participated in a range of seminars and training courses on different aspects of human rights both in the country and abroad since it started operating in the country.
12. In her activity the Commissioner pays special attention to the training of specialists in the field of human rights. Thus, students of the law, international law, international relations and regional studies departments at the Public Administration Academy, as well as Baku State, Baku Slavic, Western and Caucasus Universities annually undergo internships at the Commissioner's Office.
13. It is noteworthy to mention that the sphere of children's rights is of outmost importance for the Commissioner. Thus, with the purpose of disseminating information on children's rights at schools, there were held seminars on human rights and child rights in the secondary schools in Baku within the framework of joint plan of action signed between Commissioner and the Ministry of Education for the implementation of the UN World Programmer for Human Rights Education and the plan of action for its first phase (2005-2009) to be applied in primary and secondary schools.
14. The Commissioner gives continuous attention to the dissemination of the Convention on the Rights of the Child and the conduction of educational events on children's rights and discussions on the problems encountered by them. The Commissioner and Office personnel visited and held meetings with schoolchildren, refugees and internally displaced persons, children institutions as well as correction centre of the Ministry of Justice and considering their age provided them with information on their rights. The awareness raising activities were also implemented among place of residence of minorities. In addition, the Commissioner and office personnel carried out a series of training courses on the "Convention on the Rights of the Child", "Protection of Children's Rights in Azerbaijan" in different districts with the participation of personnel of local executive power bodies, representatives of the commissions on affairs of adolescents and protection of their rights, courts, police departments, prosecutor offices, educational and health institutions, municipalities, caregivers of children institutions, and members of civil society organizations and children. Moreover, upon the initiative of Commissioner the Hierarchic Child Rights Education was conducted at secondary schools jointly with Ministry of Education and is still being applied. Various activities were taken up within the frame of the "Child Year" (2009), including trainings and round table discussions with NGOs, state bodies, and international institutions, meetings with children with disabilities, detained children, as well as schoolchildren of all over the country.

15. During the "Child Year", the Commissioner proposed to conduct "Child Rights Month Long Campaign" all over the Republic from October 20 to November 20, 2009. The campaign's motto was "Let us listen to children and ensure their participation" which is considered as one of the 10 steps of the UN campaign "Say YES for Children!". Seminars and round tables on children's rights, early marriages, elimination of violence against children, reproductive health, and on healthy lifestyle, art, thematic articles and painting competitions and other events were conducted by the Commissioner Office and its regional centers, respective state agencies, local executive powers at high and secondary schools, orphanages, and boarding schools with active participation of children themselves. In the frame of "Child Year" educational manuals titled "The Selected Topics Regarding Hierarchic Child Rights Education" were prepared under the editorship of the Commissioner. In another educational supply, which is called "Children's Rights for All", the selected provisions on children's rights enshrined in the Constitution of the Republic of Azerbaijan, UN Convention on the Right of the Child were visually indicated with different pictures that creates great opportunities for the children to learn their rights. Besides, in cooperation with the UNICEF, the Commissioner carried out seminars on "Human Rights Begin with the Child Rights" and set up Resource Center for Children's Rights and School of Leaders at the Ombudsman Office.
16. In order to ensure the provision of free-of-charge legal services and education on children's rights, further improvement of the situation on the protection of the given rights, and defence of their interests at court, the Commissioner Office in cooperation with the NGO Alliance on Children's Rights and with the support of the Embassy of Great Britain carried out a number of works on establishment of the network of Child Rights Clinic. It includes legal clinics of the Baku State University, Khazar University, Western University, Odlar Yurdu University and Azerbaijan University. Additionally, Child Rights Center under the Commissioner, supported by the UNICEF Office in Azerbaijan, has been successful in carrying enlightenment on child rights in various children's institutions, including secondary schools, children homes, boarding schools and child correctional institution in Baku and regions of the country as well as on arrangement of training courses on the "Children's Rights Protection Mechanisms in Azerbaijan".
17. During the reported period, wide contacts have been established with state authorities, NGOs and the public. In order to make this cooperation more useful and targeted, an independent consulting body, the Council of Experts, has been set up under the Commissioner Office. Besides state authorities, pro-governmental and opposition-minded NGOs have been represented in the Council, activities of which are directed at analyzing the provision and situation of human rights in Azerbaijan, as well as international conventions, making proposals on improving legislation and taking joint measures.
18. The Commissioner has implemented successful work on education on human rights together with various state agencies. Thus, the Commissioner Office and the Ministry of Internal Affairs had effective cooperation in providing human rights and

freedoms and restoring protected and violated rights over the past years. Regional workshops were held under the schedules approved by the Commissioner and the Ministry of Internal Affairs, with the participation of the heads of police departments in Baku and in the districts for ensuring human rights and freedoms and joining efforts in this regard. In accordance with the agreement between Commissioner and the Ministry of Internal Affairs, a complex of measures has been carried out to provide information on national legislation and international acts on human rights, prevention of violence and tortures against prisoners. The Commissioner, who always pays attention to the education of police officials, prosecutors, investigators, judges, delivers lectures on the topic of "The Commissioner's role in protection of human rights and liberties and restoration of the violated human rights and liberties, directions of activity, including practice and work conducted in this field" at the trainings organised with the purpose of dissemination of culture of non-discrimination approach and non-violence.

19. It is important to mention that like in some other countries, the Commissioner for Human Rights (Ombudsman) of the Republic of Azerbaijan was defined as an Institution fulfilling the functions of National Preventive Mechanism (NPM) according to the Decree of the President of the Republic of Azerbaijan "On provision of implementation of the Optional Protocol to the "Convention Against Torture, and Other Cruel, Inhuman or Degrading Treatment or Punishment" dated January 13, 2009. As a NPM, the Commissioner paid regular planned or unplanned visits to penitentiary institution without prior notification; investigated appeals and information; conducted research-analytical work in this sphere and enlightenment activities in detention places.
20. Considering the proposal of the Commissioner, by the Decree of the President of the Republic of Azerbaijan, the date June 18 was approved as Human Rights Day. Accordingly, each year the date from 18 May till 18 June is declared by the Commissioner as "Human Rights Month" and a range of events are carried out within the framework of this month-long campaign by the different state institutions and NGOs. In the end, the activities are summarized and delivered to the public.
21. The Commissioner contributed to the advertising and efficient implementation of Universal Periodic Review (UPR) that is the recent mechanism in human rights field. The complementary report under UPR was prepared by Commissioner and submitted to the Office of the UN High Commissioner for Human Rights. Moreover, the Commissioner was involved in the preparation and presentation of state official report. The Commissioner pays close attention to follow up the recommendations under UPR. The Working Group guided by the Commissioner coordinates the activity on follow up the recommendations under UPR. Regular meetings are held by the Commissioner for discussion on the fulfillment process of recommendations with the participation of respective state bodies and the civil society. As a result, in accordance with the recommendations under UPR, several activities, such as amendments to the legislation are being implemented. In addition, the Commissioner continuously invites international experts for holding various trainings on human rights. Among them can be named

representatives of NHRIs of Georgia – D.Copadze, O.Kvachadze; Moldova – A.Y.Skvortsova; Poland – E.Davidchuk; Lithuania – S.Vidrinskayte; Estonia – K.Jurokovskaya; Great Britain – E.Stainerte, D.Long, K.O'Maulein; and of Caucasus regional office of the UN High Commissioner for Human Rights - V.Stephanov; as well as experts from the USA – D.Gotterer, Sh.Gotterer; from R. Wallenberg Institute of Sweden – R.Ring, J.Svedberg, B.Burdekin, B.Chapman, H. Andersen; from SIDA – M.Peterson, A.Rosendahl, M.Leid and others.

22. It is important to mention that at the end of each year the Commissioner for Human Rights prepares and submits annual reports on the work, including the activities on the implementation of the World Programme for Human Rights Education, carried out within the year to the state and provides appropriate recommendations for improving all aspects of human rights in Azerbaijan. The Annual Report is being discussed at the Parliament, published in the media and placed on the website of Commissioner for the public awareness.

23. Generally, the Commissioner for Human Rights of the Republic of Azerbaijan is implementing systematic work in order to promote the main directions of the first phase of the World Programme for Human Rights Education. It also should be mentioned that for future educational work on human rights, the Commissioner has prepared the Action Plan in accordance with the objective of the second phase of the Program.