



## Economic and Social Council

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### Commission on the Status of Women

#### Fifty-ninth session

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**Follow-up to the Fourth World Conference on Women and  
to the special session of the General Assembly entitled**

**“Women 2000: gender equality, development and peace for  
the twenty-first century”**

### **Statement submitted by Karabakh Foundation, a non-governmental organization in consultative status with the Economic and Social Council\***

The Secretary-General has received the following statement, which is being circulated in accordance with paragraphs 36 and 37 of Economic and Social Council resolution 1996/31.

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\* The present statement is issued without formal editing.



## **Statement**

### **Activity Pursuant to Declaration and Platform for Action**

“The Azerbaijani Democratic Republic guarantees to all its citizens within its borders full civil and political rights, regardless of ethnic origin, religion, class, profession, or sex.”

– Article 4, National Charter, Azerbaijani Democratic Republic, 1918

In 1918, soon after becoming the first democratic republic in the Muslim world, Azerbaijan granted women the right to vote. Giving women equal political rights with men is a legacy still felt today in Azerbaijan. During the Azerbaijani Democratic Republic’s few short years (1918-20), women’s rights were treated as a fundamental component for ensuring progress in society.

When the Beijing Declaration and Platform for Action was released in 1995, Azerbaijan had only been independent from the Soviet Union for four years. Nonetheless in 1995 the Republic of Azerbaijan joined the Convention for Elimination of All Forms of Discrimination against Women and the Optional Protocol of the Convention. The republic would do so again in 2001.

In 2006 the Republic of Azerbaijan adopted “On Guarantees of Equal Rights for Women and Men” into the Law of Azerbaijan. In 2010 the republic added “On Prevention of Domestic Violence.” To further the intent and effectiveness of anti-discrimination, Azerbaijan has modified legislative acts and introduced other pertinent actions, pertaining for example to poverty, labour, and disabilities.

The State Committee for Family, Women and Children Affairs of the Republic of Azerbaijan organizes training for government officials as well as for women of the country. An emphasis of the training for women is technical-vocational instruction, particularly for women in Azerbaijan’s regions, outside of the capital city of Baku.

### **Women in society**

Azerbaijani women are active in virtually every sector of society, from the technical professions to Parliament. The First Lady of Azerbaijan, Ms. Mehriban Aliyeva, maintains a visibly active presence, in large part as leader of the Heydar Aliyev Foundation (established in 2004). The Foundation identifies itself as “actively participating in building a new society and contributing to the social and economic development of the country, by implementing various projects in spheres such as education, public health, culture, sports, science and technology, environment, and social and other spheres.” Ms. Aliyeva also is active in the United Nations Educational, Scientific and Cultural Organization and the Islamic Educational, Scientific and Cultural Organization. The First Lady supports a number of women’s programs, including a young magazine dedicated to Women and Health.

The image of a strong, accomplished, and independent woman is well established in Azerbaijani history and sensibilities. One notable figure is Khurshidbanu Natavan (1830-97), the daughter of the last khan of the Karabakh khanate. Natavan was a highly respected lyrical and humanist poet who also engaged in civic activity designed to better her community. One of the accomplishments still cited today was the building of a water pipe that addressed the

water problem in her native town of Shusha, one of the centres of the Karabakh region. Azerbaijanis to this day revere Natavan and note her influence on Azerbaijani society.

Statues in Baku dedicated to Azerbaijan's heroes and martyrs include tributes to a number of women. One prominent sculpture depicts Ayna Sultanova (1895-1938). Working during Soviet times, Sultanova organized the Women's Section of the Azerbaijan Communist Party's Central Committee. She also served as the first editor of Eastern Woman (Sherq Qadini) magazine (which later became Azerbaijani Woman [Azerbaycan Qadini]). As Commissar of the Azerbaijan Educational Commissariat, head of the Culture department of the Caucasian Federation's Trade Union Council and head of the women's department in the Caucasian Country Committee, Sultanova served Azerbaijan during tumultuous Soviet years.

### **Social issues**

The entire time that Azerbaijan has been independent of the Soviet Union it also has been coping with an enormous issue of Internally Displaced Persons, that is, refugees within their own country due to Armenian occupation of the Azerbaijani region of Karabakh. The ongoing Nagorno-Karabakh conflict has led to more than a half million Internally Displaced Persons. The issue has had a massive and far-reaching impact on women, men, and children, and on the country's capacity to cope with other challenges.

The State's policies are designed to ensure women the same social and economic rights as men, as follows:

- The right to adequate food and to be free from hunger;
- The right to adequate housing;
- The right to social services and access to basic public services;
- The right to protection against poverty and social exclusion;
- The right to water;
- The right to sanitation;
- The right to live in a healthy environment;
- The right to equal participation in cultural activities and to participate at all levels in the determination of cultural policies;
- The right to equal participation in recreational, leisure and sporting activities; and
- Authors' rights.

Azerbaijan has effected extensive legislation, training, and other initiatives designed to cope with core issues such as employment access as well as with social problems such as domestic abuse. This outreach is extensively documented in the State Committee for Family, Women and Children Affairs of the Republic of Azerbaijan's "20th Anniversary of the Beijing Declaration and the Platform for Action National Report." The report is available online at [http://www.unec.org/fileadmin/DAM/Gender/publication/Beijing\\_20\\_FINAL\\_eng\\_](http://www.unec.org/fileadmin/DAM/Gender/publication/Beijing_20_FINAL_eng_)

2014\_with\_cover\_page\_Azerbaijan\_new.pdf. The following is excerpted from this report:

“The representation of women in the National Assembly has increased from 11 per cent (13 deputies out of 125) in the 2005 elections to 16 per cent in the last elections of 2010 (20 women out of 125 deputies).

The awareness raising campaign held in the regions of the Republic in the eve of the municipal elections of 2009 may be demonstrated as a positive example. Thus, the representation of women at municipal level has increased from 4 per cent to 26.5 per cent. Currently, 4137 municipality members and 302 municipality heads are women.

“There are 3 women deputy ministers out of 20 ministries of the country (the Ministries of Economic Development, Culture and Tourism and Health); the chairperson of one State Committee out of 10 (the State Committee for Family, Women and Children Affairs), the chairperson of one State Commission (the State Students Admission Commission), rectors of 3 higher education institutions (Azerbaijan Architecture and Construction University, Baku branch of Moscow State University and Azerbaijan Teachers Institute. The Deputy Prime Minister of Nakhchivan Autonomous Republic is a woman and so is the Commissioner for Human Rights (Ombudsperson) of the Republic of Azerbaijan and the Ombudsperson of Nakhchivan Autonomous Republic, the chairperson of the State Committee for Family, Women and Children Affairs of Nakhchivan Autonomous Republic, the Vice-President of the State Oil Company.

“68 heads of executive powers have a woman deputy.

“The number of women civil servants was 8115 in 2010. According to statistical information for January 1, 2012, the number of women civil servants was 7976, and the number of men 20565. The number of women Non-Governmental Organizations was 186 in 2010. The number of women entrepreneurs was 4315 in 2009 population census.

“Heads of 8 Inter-Parliamentary Working Groups out of 79 functioning in the National Assembly of the Republic of Azerbaijan are women. Heads of Working Groups for Azerbaijan-France, Azerbaijan-Georgia, Azerbaijan-India, Azerbaijan-Switzerland, Azerbaijan-Luxembourg, Azerbaijan-Egypt, Azerbaijan-Moldova, and Azerbaijan-Serbia Inter-Parliamentary Cooperation are women deputies. At the same time, heads of Delegations of the National Assembly of the Republic of Azerbaijan to Organization for Security and Co-operation in Europe Parliamentary Assembly and to Parliamentary Union of the Organization of Islamic Conference are women.

“The Chairpersons of the Racism and Xenophobia sub-committee of the Equality and Non-Discrimination Committee of the Parliamentary Assembly of the Council of Europe and the Cultural, Educational and Social Affairs Committee of the Parliamentary Assembly of the Black Sea Economic Cooperation and Parliamentarian coordinator of the PACE Campaign of “Fight for Violence against Children” to Azerbaijan are women deputies of the National Assembly.”