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## **FOLLOWING THE PATHWAY OF THE BEIJING GLOBAL CONFERENCE OF WOMEN TO THE SUSTAINABLE DEVELOPMENT GOALS**

Dear participants of the launch event of the “Circle of Inspiring Women for Sustainable Future. Building Bridges of Cooperation”!

I would like to greet all of you and to thank organizers of this important event, for inviting me as a key-note speaker.

It is not my first experience of participating at the international conferences dedicating to actual topics, so I hope my speech will be a contribution to the work of today’s event.

And the aim of this regional structure is to find out the best ways to strengthen cooperation, share experience and best practices in the name of better promotion and protection of human rights and to move forward dynamically UN global Sustainable Development Goals, which replaced nowadays Millennium Development Goals. As you know this conference takes place in the time when the problems of transition from MDGs to SDGs are being discussed worldwide, in all countries, and the main goals of the post 2015, including raising of the effectiveness of the providing Human Rights of all groups of population are being analyzed and discussed globally.

Due to lack of time I would like to be focused on the priorities of protection of human rights of women. As you know women consist about half (50%) of population in almost each country, and they use their creative capacity that can play key role in the sustainable development.

And the crucial issue is taking into consideration that women are not homogeneous mass and each of group among them: girl child, adults, aged and disabled persons etc., have specific rights hereby the general ones, that should be taken into consideration from the development perspectives:

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| Girl child       | - early marriages and education           |
| Adults           | - reproductive health and family planning |
| Aged persons     | - health and labour issues                |
| Disabled persons | - social protection and inclusion         |

And all of them have specific problems in appropriate access to the general constitutional rights, including the right to health, to education, to shelter, to privacy etc.

But how can deal with all of these issues? I would like to share with you some of our visions and practices on how to ensure success:

- The institution should be rationally structured, covering all of these issues (our structure);
- Staff should be professional, skilled and specialized on concrete issues (specialized advisors, internal and international trainings);
- Collaboration with governmental bodies, NGOs and CBOs – Council of Independent Experts functioning at the Ombudsman Office
- Attracting of volunteers;
- Inclusiveness of the targeted groups themselves;
- Strategizing, planning of work (strategies, national action plans and programs);
- Regular monitoring and reporting;
- Close work with complainers ;
- Cooperation with the international organizations, counterparts (UPR, treaty bodies, UN bodies etc);
- Preparing and presenting the governmental bodies of proposals and recommendations;
- Analyses of their implementation;
- The month-long campaigns of public awareness (covering all country districts with involvement of local and central executive power bodies, communities, civil society institutions, mass media etc.), also a range of public hearings (conducting in regions for monitoring and evaluation of the state of implementation of the national plan and programs on human rights);
- Publication of books, brochures, leaflets, posters and their distribution among state bodies, NGOs and libraries all over the country;
- Numerous events: conferences, training, round table discussions, seminars etc. are organized with big number and category of participants.

The activities on Human Rights of women have been focused on the main strategies, enshrined in the Beijing Platform for Action, adopted at the United Nations Fourth Conference on Women in September 1995.

The 12 main concerns of that document are as the following:

1. Women and poverty;
2. education and training of women;
3. women and health;
4. violence against women;
5. women and armed conflicts;
6. women and economy;
7. women in power and decision making;
8. international mechanisms for the advancement of women;
9. human rights of women;

- 10.women and media;
- 11.women and environment;
- 12.the girl child.

Generally speaking, progress on gender equality has been made in some areas in the past twenty years. But all of these concerns are in force up to now, when we celebrate the 20<sup>th</sup> anniversary of that global conference. We need to use full potential of women for their equal participation in all areas of sustainable development.

The empowerment of women in all aspects of life is more crucial as never before due to new challenges of contemporary times and difficulties faced by all generations. Let me give you one example – migration across Mediterranean Sea, which became more actual and visible as a result of wars and armed-conflicts. This is not only migration phenomenon, but also is a refugee crisis that opens path to mass violation of human rights of women.

We have undergone problem of refugees in near past and despite the difficult social, economic and political situation we faced as a result of carried out policy Azerbaijan has overcome with challenges and built solid ground for improvement of situation with human rights, especially women's rights.

The implementation and promotion of women's rights take important role of the state policy as an integral part of human rights. It is noteworthy that currently the world, including Azerbaijan has been paid to the issues of promotion of gender equality, equality of women and men and women's rights.

By getting its independence the Republic of Azerbaijan joined to almost all significant international legal documents on the protection of women's rights. Azerbaijani ratified the UN Convention on Political Rights of Women in 1992, the CEDAW in 1995 and the Optional Protocol, thereto in 2000.

The State has some achievements in its gender equality policy. The Government of Azerbaijan has established the State Committee on Women and Child Affairs by the Presidential Decree of 14<sup>th</sup> January, 1998 with a view to promote the gender policy. The main priorities / aims of the Committee are the protection of women's rights and increasing their role in the social and political life of the country.

In March, 2002, the president of the country has signed a Decree about the implementation of the promotion of state gender policy. This document considers promoting gender equality in all state bodies of the country, employing refugee and IDP women by preparing state programs, and revising the existed national laws from the gender issues perspective. It has been appointed national consultants on gender issues to the state bodies in order to overcome those tensions. According to the Decree, one of the deputies of each heads of the executive power offices throughout the country shall be a woman. This is already being fulfilled in some regions.

In June, 2000, the Cabinet of Ministers has adopted a National Action Plan on Gender Issues in Azerbaijan for 2000-2005 years. Taking into the consideration the national priorities, this Plan was prepared based on the Beijing

Declaration and Platform for Action. This Plan covered social, economic, political, cultural, educational and health issues, including the problems of refugee and IDP women. The interagency Group has been created for the implementation of this Action Plan. Both state bodies as well as non-governmental organizations are participating in the implementation of the Action Plan.

One of other significant measures in the national level was the adoption of the Law on Guaranties of Gender Equality (between men and women) of the Republic of Azerbaijan in December, 2006 by the Cabinet of Ministers in the field of the promotion of gender equality. The Law aimed at promoting equal opportunities for women and men in political, economical, social, cultural and other fields of social life and eliminating all forms of sex based discrimination.

The National Action Program on To Raise Effectiveness of the Protection of Rights and Freedoms in the Republic of Azerbaijan by the Presidential Order of 27<sup>th</sup> December 2011 was adopted and the Ombudsman was empowered for the coordination of execution of the document.

The Second Chapter of the Program entitled Protection of rights of various population groups covers increasing the competitiveness of women in the labor market, development of private entrepreneurship among the women, arrangement of courses for women for acquiring new professions; preparation of rehabilitation programs for women who have been subjected to domestic violence; strengthening the fight against violence, including domestic violence against women, securing the legal remedies, necessary compensation, rehabilitation, medical and psychological assistance to the victims of such violence.

As a consequence of the gender policy significant strategies are being successfully continued, the development of Azerbaijani women, active participation in the decision-making process are paid more attention. In spite of low rate of women in municipalities and public administration, the situation is being improved. Thus, during the elections to municipalities held in 2004, the women members of municipalities were 4 percent, 27 percent in 2007, but this number increased up to 35 percent in 2014. If the registered women candidates to municipalities in 2009 were 6115 (six thousand fifteen) but in 2014 this number raised over 54 percent and became 9439. The number of women parliamentarians is getting increased from election to election. If in 2005 only 14 women have been elected to the Parliament, in 2010 this number has increased to 20.

The Development Concept Azerbaijan 2020: Outlook into Future approved by the Presidential Decree dated 29<sup>th</sup> December, 2012 considers human resources development and taking actions for the gender equality within this framework.

I would like to call all of you to the collaboration on implementation of the aims, that have been defined by women leaders, to ensure enjoyment of the human rights of all groups of women as much as possible effectively without any discrimination on any ground as sex, race, nationality, religion, language,

political or other status, creating equal opportunities for enjoyment of equal rights.

Today's key issue is to find out effective ways of cooperation, collaboration and coordination within Black Sea Economic Cooperation (BSEC). In order to reach that aim each of 12 member states of region should be as much as possible aware on the current situation in each member countries

In conclusion, I would like to share with you some of my recommendations for improving our collaboration in future:

1. To create an Alliance (or Association) of the Ombudspersons and National Human Rights Institutions of the Countries of the Black Sea Economic Cooperation for raising the effectiveness of our regular coordinated activities in the name of further democratization of governance, peace and sustainable development in each member country and in the region in whole;
2. To provide online surveys based on the agreed standard questionnaires to make situational analyses of the promotion and protection of human rights of different groups of population, in member states; to find out the best practices for sharing among the members of network, as well as the shortcomings, challenges difficulties to be resolved at the national and regional levels;
3. To adopt agreed Plan (or Program) of Action addressed to learn the needs of any member country to organize bilateral or multilateral cooperation with the countries having good practices in the correspondent field and capacities to assist in the elimination of the current shortcomings, taking into consideration improving of legislation and good governance;
4. Organizing of the joint monitoring with participation and inclusiveness of the NGOs, civil society and community based organizations, the independent specialized experts (national and international) as well;
5. To promote legal education, regular seminars and training for governmental officers, journalists, specific groups of population (women, children, aged persons, persons with disabilities, detained persons and prisoners, minorities, migrants etc.);
6. To prepare the list of the specialized trainers, experts from each of member countries, capable in organizing of such kind of events;
7. To organize exchange of experience of the independent experts, leaders of woman movements from different groups of population, regular topical discussions for finding out the new innovative ideas;
8. The new mechanisms and tools should be developed to strengthen instrumental capacities to reach the sustainable development goals;
9. To organize regular trainings, seminars, round table discussions, public awareness campaigns and other events aimed at learning, advertising the SDGs main concerns and transmitting them into concrete actions;
10. To motivate and accelerate the leadership skills among women, youth, even mobilizing and bridging the capacities of aged persons.

11.Both documents should be learned, wide public awareness discussions should be organized in this regard and in compliance with priorities of each country the national action programs should be adopted.

Thank you for your attention!