

UZBEKISTAN

PERMANENT MISSION OF THE REPUBLIC OF UZBEKISTAN
TO THE UNITED NATIONS



(Check against delivery)

STATEMENT

by H.E. Dr. Akmal SAIDOV

**Chairman of the National Human Rights Center of the
Republic of Uzbekistan, Head of the delegation of Uzbekistan
at 36th session of the CEDAW**

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**Dear Madame Chair!
Distinguished members of the Committee!
Ladies and Gentlemen!**

Above all, let me welcome you on behalf of the Government of the Republic of Uzbekistan. Today the Committee is considering the Second and Third Combined periodic report of the Republic of Uzbekistan on implementation of the provisions of the Convention on Elimination of All Forms of Discrimination against Women in preparation of which 20 governmental bodies and more than 10 Non-Government Organizations took part.

We would particularly like to draw your attention to the active participation of NGOs in preparation of the periodic report. Close cooperation with NGOs has become a customary practice in both – preparation of periodic reports of Uzbekistan to six main treaty bodies of the UN and implementation of the recommendations of those bodies. The Government of Uzbekistan will further continue its partnership with non-governmental organizations.

Our today's dialogue, which to our hope would be interesting and constructive, is also based on our responses to the written questions of the Committee and information on the realization of the National Action Plan of Uzbekistan on implementing the recommendations of the Committee produced after the consideration of the country's initial report. It should be noted that the implementation of the Action Plan is closely monitored by the Government. To date 25 out of 28 recommendations of the Committee have been fully implemented in the country.

In our introductory statement we would like to draw you attention to the changes which took place for the past two years, after the submission of our report to the Committee. In addition we have given you supplementary materials demonstrating the latest tendencies in improvement on gender issues in Uzbekistan.

Madame Chair,

Uzbekistan has been committed to the provisions of the Convention, and also to the principles of gender equality as well as to its obligations to meet, on a timely and effective manner, the Millennium Development Goals.

The Government of Uzbekistan has been undertaking legislative, administrative, economic and other measures to implement the provisions of the Convention. The five principal aspects of the work of the Government on implementing the provisions of the Convention should be highlighted:

First is the legislative aspect of protection of women's rights

Provisions of the Convention have consistently been applied to the national legislation of Uzbekistan since its ratification by the Parliament. All fundamental women's rights are guaranteed by the Constitution of the Republic of Uzbekistan. For the past years more than 100 laws were adopted in this sphere and they are fully consistent with the provisions of the Convention. The Provisions of the Convention are given priority attention in the national legislation system.

Permanent attention of the Government to the issue of improving the status of women in the country was once again demonstrated by the Presidential Decree dated 2004 "On undertaking additional measures to support the activities of the Women's Committee of Uzbekistan" and also the Government Programme to implement the Decree.

Adoption and realization of the Law on Additional Privileges for Women, Presidential Decree on Additional Measures to Strengthen the Social Protection of Women, Government Programmes on Year of Family, Year of Women, Year of Mother and Child, Year of Healthy Generation, Year of Health and other legal standards have significant importance.

Thus perfection of national gender legislation in conformity with the norms of the

Convention is one of the principal objectives of the bicameral Parliament of Uzbekistan.

Second is the institutional aspect of protection of women's rights

In Uzbekistan there has been established both Governmental and None-Governmental system of institutions on protection of women's rights. Ensuring the protection of women's rights is one of the main responsibilities of such state bodies as Ministry of Labour and Social Protection, Ministry of Health, Ministry of Public Education, Ministry of Higher and Secondary Special Education. The overall activity of the governmental bodies on this sphere is coordinated by the Cabinet of Ministers of Uzbekistan.

Uzbekistan has an effective system of monitoring the protection of women's rights.

In accordance with the Vienna Declaration and Programme of Action national human rights institutions have been established, in particular: Ombudsman, National Human Rights Center of Uzbekistan, Institute of monitoring the legislative acts in force.

Under the Ombudsman conjointly with the Women's Committee of Uzbekistan a Consultative-analytical Council has been created which with the assistance of the local government bodies carries out monitoring of the realization of the national laws and the Convention as well as other international documents related to women's rights and interests.

There are actively functioning civil society institutes in Uzbekistan on protecting women's rights: Women's Committee of Uzbekistan Association of Business Women, Fund "Mahalla", trade unions and etc. The number of women's non-government organizations is increasing.

In order to provide social, legal, psychological or other kind of support for women and also organize for them various educational programmes all self-governing local institutions (their total number is more than 10 thousand) hold consultant positions that are filled with women who have significant life experience and ability to provide social and psychological help to women and youth. This practice has been continuing since 2004.

Third is the informational-educational aspect of protection of women's rights

In the framework of the UN Decade for Human Rights Education Uzbekistan has implemented National Programme of Action on Human Rights. Education of women on their rights was one of the major tasks of this Programme. To enlighten the citizens on the international standards in the sphere of human rights including the Convention for the past three years 7 collected works containing more than 100 international documents on human rights were published in Uzbek and widely circulated. They were published with assistance of UNDP, UNICEF, UNESCO, ICRC and OSCE. Taking this opportunity I would like to thank those UN agencies which rendered their invaluable support for the realization of this task.

Curriculum of all educational institutions include such courses like "Human Rights", "Basics of the Constitution of the Republic of Uzbekistan", "Basics of Law" in whose framework significant attention is devoted to gender issues.

National and international seminars, trainings and conferences are held in Uzbekistan on a regular basis aimed at raising legal culture and legal literacy of women. Some of the topics of these events: «Women and Business», «Women and Law», «Women and Health», «Women at decision making level» etc. Being implemented also a complex of practical measures on promoting public and political activities of women, and also on professional training of women. With the goal of promoting women to the high level posts in the Government special reserve group of women professionals has been established and training courses for women are functioning. A complex measures has been realized to promote creative activities of women. Various sports activities are being held.

Fourth is the parliamentary aspect of protection of women's rights

First of all, Parliament adopts laws that provide gender equality. Additionally, Parliament committees carry out parliament control over execution of laws regulating all rights of women as well as fulfillment of the provisions of the Convention.

In particular parliament control is often carried out to monitor the implementation such norms as Labor Code, Family Code and Housing Code, laws "On Employment", "On Pensions" and also other related state programs. Parliament control is being held on implementation of the provisions of the Convention in all regions of the country. Parliamentary hearings in the Senate the course of implementation of the Convention has become a practice.

Fifth is the international aspect of protection of women's rights

Uzbekistan fulfills its international obligations on all international documents on human rights and actively cooperates on this matter with the UN treaty bodies as well as other Charter bodies and specialized agencies the UN. We have close contacts, active and constructive dialogue with them. Only for the last year four national periodic reports of Uzbekistan were considered by four UN Treaty Bodies. We elaborated and are implementing National Plans of Action to consistently implement the recommendations of the treaty bodies.

Dear Madame Chair!

Uzbekistan is attaching a great importance to development of women's NGOs. Currently there are about 200 women NGOs' in the country. It shows that since the consideration of our initial report on implementation of the provisions of the Convention on Elimination of All Forms of Discrimination against Women the number of women NGOs increased by twice.

Today women's NGOs have become sizeable force in our society and joint activity of the government and non-government sectors has only increased the effectiveness of dealing with gender related issues. Women NGOs have been acknowledged in our society with their real and solid contribution to address the issues related to gender and women's rights, in particular though initiating various public events and conducting researches on gender.

Women's NGO's of Uzbekistan are working mainly on the following three directions:

First – providing women with social and professional assistance in the period of transition into market economy, ensuring their equal representation in the government authorities and decision making process at all levels, widening the role of women in economy and improving their situation in the labour and employment market.

Second – ensuring equal access to education, development, improving skills and qualifications; assisting in expansion of women's participation in implementation of state development programmes, attracting women to establishing, managing and implementing the projects on the reform of society; strengthening legal guarantees, improving the mechanisms of protection of women's rights, elevating women's legal literacy.

Among the most important issues for women's NGOs and also for NGOs working on projects related to women is the development of educational and enlightenment programmes. More than a half of the women NGOs work on educational projects.

Third - protection of maternity and childhood, family planning, strengthening reproductive health, work on protection of interests of mother and child; environmental issues, elimination of the factors negatively affecting women's health.

For the last year alone in the development of women's non-governmental sector of Uzbekistan the following events took place:

- established National Association of NGO's of Uzbekistan;
- established Fund on supporting NGOs;
- adopted the Strategy of achieving gender equality at the decision making level;
- organized Forum of women's NGOs on Place and Role of Women in Democratic Transformation of Society

- published various brochures and booklets on the issues of gender equality and protection of women's rights.
To put concisely, there is a constructive dialogue between the Government and women's NGOs, and also partnership work in addressing gender issues.

Dear Madame Chair,

In 2004 Uzbekistan held first elections to the bicameral Parliament.

Of significant importance is that prior to the parliamentary elections there had been amendments and additions to the laws of Uzbekistan on elections and accordingly 30 per cent quota for women in advancing candidates to the parliament had been allocated.

At present share of women in the Senate is 15 per cent, in Legislative Chamber 18 per cent, and in the judicial system 20 per cent.

The Government of Uzbekistan has been carrying out a consistent work on assisting socially vulnerable families and women with many children.

We understand quite well that employment is one of the chief conditions of women's independence, their active social and living status.

With this aim the Government has elaborated and adopted Regional Programmes for 2005-2007 of ensuring women's employment. The Programme considers the following:

First - annually creating new workplaces in every region in accordance with the need of women for employment, in particular through development of small businesses, services and also in-house-job;

Second – formation and improvement of the rational structure of women employment in rural areas.

Third – providing favourable credits to small businesses headed by women or with high number of women employees.

Fourth – organization of educational programs for unemployed women on different topics like "Basics of entrepreneurship", "Start your business" and etc.

Fifth - introducing amendments and additions to the legislative acts in force in order to ensure fixed quota in workplaces for women with children regardless how many children they have.

In the framework of realization of measures on women employment special attention is given to organizing and developing in-house-jobs. The Presidential Decree "On encouraging the expansion of cooperation among the large industrial enterprises and creation of services on the basis of in-house-job" set up favorable conditions for the employer in the sphere of in-house-job and will expand the scopes of this type of work among women.

With the aim of providing social and psychological support for women in the transition period local authorities have established in the regions the Adaptation Centers for women and their family.

Ensuring the protection of the rights of women also depends on strengthening organizational and legal mechanisms and procedures of their implementation, combining the efforts of governmental and civil society institutions, elevating the level of law culture of the people of the country.

Madame Chair,

Of course, there are certain difficulties and problems in implementing the provisions of the Convention. Among them I shall point out the following:

After obtaining its independence Uzbekistan has experienced serious economic, social and political problems that negatively affect particularly the vulnerable groups of the society.

It is necessary to take into account the combined influence of internal difficulties and external threats on the course and quality of realization of the provisions of the Convention in the country.

Internal difficulties are reflected in the process of transition from administrative- bureaucratic to democratic system of legislative, executive and judicial powers. Overcoming these difficulties are also twinned with the task of elevating the level of legal culture and adaptation of the mentality of the population to the demands of development civil society.

Ecological situation in Aral Sea zone is remaining acute and negatively affecting the food security and access to drinking water.

Another problem is explained with the geopolitical situation in the region. As you know that Uzbekistan is located in Central Asia, the region which experienced great difficulties in ensuring stability and peace. It has witnessed a civil war in Tajikistan, and witnessing long-time armed conflict in Afghanistan which, among other things, boosted drug business.

Threat of terrorism and religious extremism generates instability on one hand, and on the other hand, distracts the resources to fight against this problem.

Dear Chairman,

Recently published Report on implementation of the Millennium Development Goals in Uzbekistan, which was prepared by 9 specialized UN agencies such as UNDP, UNICEF, UNESCO, WHO, WB, UNAIDS, UNFPA, UNODK, UNHCR, underlines, I quote: **“Uzbekistan was more successful than most CIS countries in maintaining human development indicators; especially, from the second half of 1990s”** (END QUOTE).

Adaptation of MDGs to conditions and demands of Uzbekistan has become an important step in defining indicators to evaluate the achieved on implementation of the country's obligations under MDGs. This noble work has been done by joint efforts of the Government and United Nations Office in Tashkent.

National goals and priorities on realization of the MDGs have been included into 9 governmental programs in which a significant attention is given to gender issues.

In Uzbekistan MDGs are being realized by common efforts of the Government, civil society institutions, local communities and international partners. On several MDGs Uzbekistan has achieved impressive progress, and several others require attention and additional efforts. For instance, universal primary education has been fully achieved. There is no quantitative gender inequality in primary and secondary education. There is no problem in access of girls to all levels of education. The Government has put a new task: improving the quality of education. As it was mentioned above at the primary and secondary levels of education there is no gender disproportion and now a special attention is given to eliminate such a disproportion at higher education and also ensure more active participation of women in economic and political life.

On child mortality and maternal health we are trying to reach the best results, with the special focus of achieving commonly accepted world standards of viviparity. Achieving some of the MDGs bears some difficulties of internal and external character, for instance spread of HIV/AIDS.

Expanding women's rights and opportunities and ensuring gender equality play fundamental role in achieving all Millennium Development Goals.

Dear Chairman!

Dear members of the Committee!

In order to provide you with possibly wider information on the course and results of the work to implement the provisions of the Convention, we offer today the following materials for your attention:

- Information on realization of the National Action Plan on implementation of the recommendations of the Committee on the Elimination of Discrimination against Women and 3 books:
- Report on Millennium Development Goals;

- Concise handbook on gender issues: Gender and MDGs;
- Uzbekistan on the way to gender equality.

In addition we have given you the list of more than 40 books and brochures on gender issues which are displayed in this room. It is only a small part of the work being done in our country in the context of providing the citizens with sufficient information on protection of women's rights and interests.

We would also like to draw your attention to the fact that these information materials have been prepared not only by government bodies but also non-governmental organizations as well as institutions of civil society.

Madam Chair,

Uzbekistan is ready for constructive dialogue with the Committee in preparation and realization of the National Plan of Action on implementation of concluding recommendations of the Committee on second and third combined periodic report of Uzbekistan.

Thank you for your attention.