



# ARMENIA

February 24, 2011

**55<sup>th</sup> Session of the Commission on the Status of Women**

**Agenda item 3 (a)(i): Follow-up to the Fourth World Conference on Women and to the 23<sup>rd</sup> special session of the General Assembly, entitled: “Women 2000: gender equality, development and peace for the 21<sup>st</sup> century”. Implementation of strategic objectives and action in critical areas of concern and further actions and initiatives: (i) Priority theme: access and participation of women and girls in education, training, science and technology, including for the promotion of women’s equal access to full employment and decent work**

Statement by Ms. Nouneh Zastoukhova, Ministry of Foreign Affairs of the Republic of Armenia

Mr. Chairman  
Excellencies  
Distinguished delegates

I would like to express my delegation’s readiness to assist you in the successful dispatch of your mission during the 55<sup>th</sup> session of the Commission on the Status of Women.

We welcome the establishment of UN Women, the new entity dedicated to women’s rights, gender equality and strengthening gender mainstreaming throughout the UN system. We are positive and hopeful that the emergence of UN Women will help to strengthen the capacity of the international community in empowering women, promoting gender equality and countering violence against women and girls. We wish the UN Women every success in all its endeavours.

Armenia aligns itself with the EU Statement made by the honourable Minister of Hungary at the opening of this session. Allow me to make some remarks on our national capacity.

Armenia is a state party to the Convention on the Elimination of All Forms of Discrimination against Women. CEDAW determines the key principles of gender equality and outlines the actions needed to be taken by nations to end discrimination against women. Armenia addresses these principles in its Constitution and in the National Action Plan for 2004-2010 on Improving the Status of Women in the Republic of Armenia. Armenia has also ratified the Optional Protocol to the CEDAW and the Convention on the Political Rights of Women, as well as joined the European Social Charter. Nevertheless, my country still experiences legislative gaps in properly defining gender equity and discrimination. We have made it as priority in our agenda to gradually approach these concerns and present them for expert evaluation, examination and further reforming.

The Gender Policy Concept Paper was approved by the Prime Minister of Armenia in February 2010, and acts as the first ever national strategic document of the primary importance, which defines the main directions and strategies of a state policy in relation to men and women enjoying equal rights and opportunities by all citizens in all spheres of social life regardless of their sex. This Concept Paper focuses on the main aspects of gender policy embracing all spheres

of life, including education. Similarly, the Prime Minister established the National Interagency Committee to Combat Gender-Based Violence in Armenia in March of 2010.

Armenia takes pride in its serious efforts to carry out possible required reforms in compliance of the UN Strategy on Education for Sustainable Development, aiming to tailor the results of the reforms so as to have significant influence on the economic growth, poverty reduction, easing of inequality, maintaining ecological security and human development processes both in short- and long-term perspectives.

Educational criteria has been introduced, a full transition from 10 to 12-year education has been completed, and the methods of school graduation exams have changed, thus contributing to overcoming the gap between secondary school and high school. High school has switched to a dual-degree teaching system, while a credit system is being developed in line with Armenia's commitment under the Bologna Process.

Raising gender awareness through gender education allows in upgrading the issues of State gender policies and of overcoming all forms of discrimination against women on a national level.

Nevertheless, the adopted laws and programs aimed at the development of the Armenian education system have not undergone gender expertise to ensure the creation of a gender oriented educational strategy and to study the impact of the reforms on boys and girls, as well as the issue of actual access to education for women and men in the situation of world socio-economic instability and globalization.

No gender study has been conducted in respect to the education as of yet. However, methodological curricula have been introduced in public schools, especially in social sciences that shape democratic beliefs and civil values.

There is also a gender imbalance among the teaching staff in the public schools of Armenia, where male teachers constitute a low 15.8%. The gender component is introduced slowly into the content of education in specialties like economics, law, political and social sciences.

Given the dominating presence of girls in bachelor's and master's studies (60.5%), they still remain underrepresented in the technical and natural sciences education spheres, which opens a window for entry into highly respected and highly demanded occupations in the labour market, in particular occupations in the information and communication technology sector. There are four times as less women with doctoral degrees than men. In comparison, the number of girls are significantly higher in private universities (59.6%). Despite the fact that women constitute 84.2% of the total secondary school staff, the number of men prevails among school directors, equalling 60.2%.

The main goals of the Gender policy in the education sector of Armenia are: establishing gender balanced representation at all levels of the education sphere, educating socially active and responsible citizens; shaping an egalitarian gender culture; supporting gender equality in society, social justice and enjoyment of social freedoms. Integration of the gender component into the

state education policy; ensuring equal access to quality education at all levels for both sexes, step-by-step integration of gender knowledge into the education sector directed at shaping an egalitarian gender culture among the rising generation and preparation of socially responsible, active, democracy oriented citizens is among priorities of this sphere.

There are major challenges in this respect, large amounts of work have been carried out, and yet still much remains to be done by the Government in Armenia. It has formulated the Gender Policy Implementation Strategy in the Education sector, which includes several significant steps for its implementation as follows:

- To establish a body within the Ministry of Education and Sciences to conduct gender expertise of prospective and mid-term development programs, training-methodological curricula for professional development of pedagogical staff and other training literature;
- Create a training-methodological framework for teaching the basics of gender related knowledge;
- Develop a methodology for conducting gender expertise of education, legislation, policies
- Design and introduce special programs which keep in mind the encouragement of women and men to choose professions not typical for their sexes, where they remain underrepresented
- Institute state education loans based on gender differences with longer repayment periods and low interest
- Increase women's representation in the management of educational institutions directed at the further democratization of the education sphere and improvement of morale and psychological environment of educational institutions.

With the successful implementation of the activities envisaged in both the Gender Policy Concept Paper, the Gender Policy Implementation Strategy in the Education Sector and the Strategy for Sustainable Development of Armenia, my country would be in a position to register great advancements in the equal representation of women and men in all spheres of the society. It is our goal to remain on this path towards improvement and eliminate all forms of factual discrimination against women which exists in the Armenian society.

Mr. Chairman,

Armenia believes that national human rights institutions have a distinct and independent role to play at CSW. Such independent standing would provide a greater impetus for participation by national institutions in the work of the Commission, and an incentive to transmit an understanding of CSW work into concrete proposals to advance gender issues and help to ensure its outcomes are better translated into action at national level.

Thank you, Mr. Chairman.