

Statement by
H.E. Mrs. Zahra Guliyeva
Chairperson of the State Committee for Women's Issues
of the Republic of Azerbaijan

at the high-level plenary meeting of the 49th Session of the
Commission on the Status of Women
Follow-up to the Fourth World Conference on Women and to the special session of the General
Assembly entitled "Women 2000: gender equality, peace and development for twenty-first
century"

Madame Chairperson,
Distinguished delegates,

I have the honour to address this august assembly on behalf of the delegation of the Republic of Azerbaijan and to wish all the participants successful deliberations. Our congratulations go to the Chairperson and the Bureau of the Commission on assuming your important roles leading the ten-year review of the Beijing Platform for Action and the outcome document of the 23rd special session of the General Assembly.

I would also like to use this opportunity to express our appreciation to the Division on the Advancement of Women and its Director, Ms. Carolyn Hannan for holding in Baku the Experts' Group Meeting on "Achievements, gaps and challenges in linking the implementation of the Beijing Platform for Action, the Millennium Declaration and Millennium Development Goals", and to thank the experts and observers for fruitful discussions. We believe that the report of this meeting submitted to the Commission will contribute to defining and implementing gender strategies for the upcoming decade.

Madame Chairperson,

Azerbaijan reiterates its strong support and commitment to Beijing Platform for Action and the outcome of the 23rd special session of the General Assembly. Gender equality is also imperative for our country to achieve the MDGs.

In Azerbaijan, the reforms carried out over the last decade in the spheres of socio-economic development, education, health and institutionalization have made it possible to achieve macroeconomic stability and dynamic economic development, which in its turn have led to improving the living standards of population, including women. This has been reflected in the combined second and third periodic report of Azerbaijan submitted by the State Committee on Women's Issues to the UN Committee on Elimination of Discrimination against Women in 2004.

Mainstreaming gender policy into the overall development strategy of our country ensures equal distribution of programs targeting the *poor*. Integration of gender as cross-cutting issue into the State Program on Poverty Reduction and Economic Development (SPRED) was an important achievement which allowed to mainstream gender indicators into all sectors of the program. Specific measures aimed at achieving gender balance were included into the SPRED policy matrix on employment, education, health etc.

As a state signatory to the Millennium Declaration, Azerbaijan is committed *inter alia* to realization of the goal 3 which envisages achievement of gender equality and advancement of women, and we consider it as one of the priority directions of our national development agenda. The process of defining key gender issues specific for Azerbaijan has thus become an integral part of the process of achieving the MDGs.

Within the framework of cooperation between the SPRED Secretariat, the State Committee for Women's Issues and UNIFEM it is also envisaged to integrate gender perspective into the 10-year Development Program for 2006-2015.

In this regard, we attach particular importance to preparation of the National Human Development Report for 2005, which will be carried out by the State Committee and the UNDP with the financial support of the Embassy of Norway in Azerbaijan. Within this project, we plan to conduct a pilot survey on revealing gender attitudes within the society, the results of which will be reflected in the report, will stimulate public debate and trigger policy action for ensuring greater gender equality in the country. The results of this survey will give us an opportunity to explore social, economic and cultural grounds of gender imbalances in Azerbaijan.

Gender perspectives were also mainstreamed into the national programs and plans of action on a number of important areas such as employment, migration, counter-trafficking etc. We value the role of relevant international organizations, in particular the IOM, ILO, OSCE in elaborating and implementing these documents.

Madame Chairperson,

The report submitted by our country in reply to the UN questionnaire on review of implementation of the Beijing Platform for Action, stresses that the major factor impeding national development remains and ongoing conflict with Armenia resulted in occupation by the latter of significant part of the Azerbaijani territory and emergence of nearly one million of refugees and IDPs, of whom 420.000 are women. The Government of Azerbaijan spares no time, effort and resources to solve the problems of displaced population and has allocated through its Oil Fund 220 million USD for construction of new settlements, schools and hospitals to meet their basic needs. Nevertheless, the return of Azerbaijani displaced population to their homes remains one of our key priorities in the process of settlement of the conflict.

In its efforts towards peaceful solution of the conflict, Azerbaijan attaches increasing importance to the role of women in conflict prevention, conflict resolution and peace building.

In conclusion, Madame Chairperson, I would like to reiterate our sincere hope that the review of the implementation of our commitments made in Beijing will reveal the areas requiring further focus and more importantly will mobilize political will to implement them.

Thank you for your attention.