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Fourth Report submitted by Azerbaijan pursuant to Article 25,
paragraph 2 of the Framework Convention for the Protection of
National Minorities

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Fourth periodic report of the Government of the Republic of Azerbaijan
on the Council of Europe Framework Convention
for the Protection of National Minorities

Introduction

The ensuring of human rights and freedoms is stipulated as the highest priority objective of the state in the Article 12 of the Constitution of the Republic of Azerbaijan. According to Article 25 of the Constitution, State guarantees equality of rights and freedoms to every person irrespective of race, ethnic belonging, religion, language, sex, origin, property status, occupation, conviction, affiliation to political parties, trade unions and other public organizations. Restriction of human rights and freedoms based on race, ethnicity, occupation, religion, language, sex, origin, conviction and political or social affiliation is prohibited. The core principles for the ensuring protection of national minorities are reflected in the Article 44 (Right for nationality) and Article 45 (Right to use mother tongue) of the Constitution.

The Republic of Azerbaijan is a party to the European Convention on Protection of Human Rights and Fundamental Freedoms, International Convention on Elimination of All Forms of Racial Discrimination, Convention on Protection and Promotion of the Diversity of Cultural Expressions and other major international and regional instruments in the field of human rights.

It should be noted that the Republic of Azerbaijan is unable to guarantee the implementation of the provisions of the Council of Europe Framework Convention for the Protection of National Minorities in its territories occupied by the Republic of Armenia (the Nagorno-Karabakh region of the Republic of Azerbaijan and its seven districts surrounding that region) until the liberation of those territories from the occupation and complete elimination of the consequences of that occupation.

PART 1

Results of the fourth periodic report, (Opinion of the Advisory Committee on the Framework Convention for Protection of National Minorities, Comments of the Government of the Republic of Azerbaijan and a Resolution on the implementation of the Framework Convention for Protection of National Minorities) have been translated and distributed to government authorities and non-governmental organisations.

Azerbaijan considers the issue of protection of national minorities in the framework of its multiculturalism policy. Therefore, protection of national minorities is one of the main issues of multiculturalism policy of the state.

For the reporting period, the following measures have been done for further improving the level of multiculturalism and tolerance including the situation of national minorities:

1. 28 February 2014. Service of the State Counsellor for Multiculturalism, Interethnic and Religious Affairs of the Republic of Azerbaijan was established by the Order of the President of the Republic of Azerbaijan;
2. 15 May 2014. Baku International Multiculturalism Centre was established by the Decree of the President of the Republic of Azerbaijan;
3. 11 January 2016. The year 2016 was declared as the year of multiculturalism in Azerbaijan by the Order of the President of the Republic of Azerbaijan;
4. 11 March 2016. An action plan was adopted which announced the year 2016 as "The Year of Multiculturalism in the Republic of Azerbaijan" by the Order of the President of the Republic of Azerbaijan.

Fulfilment of one of the main objectives of the Service of the State Counsellor for Multiculturalism, Interethnic and Religious Affairs of the Republic of Azerbaijan is to preserve ethno-cultural diversity of the society, provide the state support to rights and freedoms of national minorities, and implement the state policy for national minorities. The Service of State Counsellor attaches great importance to close cooperation with Baku International Multiculturalism Centre in order to reach this objective.

In accordance with the Action Plan for "2016 the Year of Multiculturalism", Baku International Multiculturalism Centre in collaboration with a number of ministries and some other state institutions embarked on the following projects to protect national minorities:

1. Arrangement of national and international conferences, seminars, round tables, lectures, literary and art events dedicated to model of multiculturalism of Azerbaijan and models of multiculturalism of the world, tolerance and cultural diversity as well as the role of intercultural dialogue in conflict resolutions;
2. Arrangement of live performances given by actors and musicians in the areas populated by different national minorities;
3. Preparation of "My native land Azerbaijan" the 5th Art Festival of national minorities all over the country;
4. Release of CDs showcasing the music of the minorities living in Azerbaijan, production of a documentary about their life and traditions in foreign languages and publication of a photo catalogue.

The first international festival on "Protecting multicultural values" organised by Executive Power of Khachmaz district and Ministry of Culture and Tourism was held on 25 June 2016. Within the framework of the festival, exhibition named "Azerbaijan – one of the addresses of multiculturalism" consisted drawings of schoolchildren representing more than 10 districts of the country, culinary exhibition on dishes of national minorities, concert programme named "Azerbaijan – our homeland" consisted of folk-lore music of national minorities, as well as scientific-practical conference named "No alternative to multiculturalism" was held.

5th Republic Festival of National Minorities with the motto of "Azerbaijan – native land", as well as concert with the participation of more than 30 music and folk-lore

groups of national minorities representing 14 regions of the country were held on 28-30 June in Baku. Moreover, within the framework of the conference, photo exhibition was shown named "In one family" representing life and mode, ethnography of national minorities, the CD and photo-catalogue on "Examples of music and dance folk-lore of national minorities living in Azerbaijan" were represented in languages of Azerbaijan, English, French and German, as well as round table was organised with the theme of "Azerbaijani model of multiculturalism".

On 24 February, 2015 the department of "Azerbaijani multiculturalism" was established at Baku Slavic University. One of the major reasons for that was the elaboration of scientific and practical recommendations for further improving the multicultural environment in the country. Another direction of the department's activity is a training for specialists involved in teaching "Introduction to multiculturalism" and "Azerbaijani multiculturalism". The department organizes and conducts courses in these subjects. Currently lectures on "Introduction to multiculturalism" and "Azerbaijani multiculturalism" are delivered in 28 local universities. Furthermore, "Azerbaijani multiculturalism" is taught in master degree at 12 universities all over the world.

On 1-2 September 2014, the Government of the Republic of Azerbaijan in collaboration with the Council of Europe organized the Exchange meeting on religious aspect of intercultural dialogue titled as "Intercultural dialogue: interaction between culture and religion" in Baku. 99 experts from 18 countries, theologians, religious leaders and members of civil society organizations, as well as, numerous representatives of government institutions participated in the Exchange meeting of the Council of Europe held in Baku.

On 8 July 2016, followed by a presidential Order, the Government established a task group to prepare this report. High ranking officials from the Ministry of Foreign Affairs, the Ministry of Internal Affairs, the Ministry of Justice, the Ministry of Education, the Ministry of Culture and Tourism, the Ministry of Labour and Social Protection of the Population, the Ministry of Health, the State Statistics Committee, the State Committee on the Work with Religious Organizations, the State Security Service, State Counsellor for Multiculturalism, Interethnic and Religious Affairs constitute the task group. Also, members of local human rights organizations were also involved in preparation of the present report.

This report was drawn up in compliance with the structure of "Outline for the state reports to be submitted under the fourth monitoring cycle, in conformity with article 25 of the Framework Convention for the Protection of National Minorities adopted at the 1169th meeting of the Committee of Ministers of the Council of Europe.

Educative activities to enlighten youths on the issue have been carried out at schools of Baku for the reporting period. Meetings and interactive trainings on multiculturalism and tolerance have been held within the frames of the project entitled "We are all humans and we are all equal" in differing for their multi-

ethnicity, schools № 46, 138, 245, 23, classic gymnasium № 160 and “Taraggi” school.

The main goal of this training is to inform students about tolerance and multiculturalism in Azerbaijan, to show the importance of living in peace for all people regardless of their ethnicity, religion, race or culture.

Participants have been informed about the Constitution of the Republic of Azerbaijan and the ideology of Azerbaijanism, Framework Convention for the Protection of National Minorities and the process of development of a pluralistic and democratic society in Azerbaijan based on respect to uniqueness of ethnicity, religion, culture and language of its citizens, as well as created conditions that allow to express, preserve and further develop this uniqueness.

Participants of the training have been acquainted with Article 14 of the Framework Convention which contains information about state of affairs in teaching languages of national minorities in Azerbaijan. It was stressed that in accordance with the Law on Education of the Republic of Azerbaijan, its citizens are entitled to education regardless of their religion, race, ethnicity, language, gender, physical condition, and social and financial status, occupation, and social background, place of residence, political views, and crime record.

It has been planned to arrange training not only in Baku next year, but also in Azerbaijan's northern, north-western and southern regions where national minorities populated largely. Schoolchildren, their parents and teachers of different national minorities are supposed to participate in the arranged courses.

It is considered to invite representatives of national minorities, NGOs, associations, cultural clubs, schools, the Meskhetian turks' "Vatan" organization, the Lezghins' national culture center "Samur", the Russian community's "Birlik-Unity", "Rus" societies, the Mountain Jews' community, the Tats' cultural centre, the Tatar's "Turqan-tel" cultural centre, the Ukrainian community, the Kurdish cultural centre, the Georgian community, the Ingiloy community, the Talysh cultural centre, the Avar community, "Kapelhaus" German community, the Udin cultural centre, "Polonia" Polish cultural centre, "Budug" cultural centre, "Sakhur" cultural centre and others for planned events have been invited to exchange ideas on preserving and teaching of national languages, preserving cultural heritage, and sharing views on available educational resources.

Representatives of the Ministry of Education, Baku City Education Department, and Baku International Multiculturalism Centre, the "Great Silk Way" International Youth Union, the Young Azerbaijani Lawyers Union, the "Green pen" educational network of teachers and journalists and the "Elderly People Education" Association are also expected to participate as instructors and experts.

PART 2

Allegations of violation of rights of particular people - persons belonging to national minorities, and defenders (lawyers) of them, have not been revealed as a result of investigation conducted by law enforcement bodies of the Republic of Azerbaijan. On the whole, no cases of violation of rights or discrimination of any national minority or their representatives, who reside in the Republic of Azerbaijan, by state authorities, no cases of persecution or detention without a court order for their views or use of their primary rights and freedoms, including freedom of speech and freedom of assembly, have been revealed.

Article 61.1.6 of the Criminal Code of the Republic of Azerbaijan outlines that the perpetration of a crime on grounds of ethnic, racial or religious hatred or intolerance accompanied by other factors are considered aggravated offence; article 154.1 strictly forbids discrimination including that based on ethnic, religious and language grounds; article 167 forbids illegal impediment to the implementation of religious rites and rituals; article 283 forbids to create strife on ethnic, racial, social or religious grounds, humiliate ethnic dignity or discriminate. Article 103 of the Criminal Code stipulates that acts of Genocide should be punished; article 111 provides punishment for a policy or system of segregation or discrimination held by one ethnic group against another ethnic group on racial grounds (apartheid); paragraph 2.12 of article 120 (circumstances aggravating murder) specifies more severe punishment for committing a deliberate murder on the grounds of ethnic, racial, religious hatred or enmity.

By the decree of the President of the Republic of Azerbaijan dated 27 December 2011, "National Action Program on Increasing Efficiency of Protection of Human Rights and Freedoms in the Republic of Azerbaijan" was approved. Chapter II of this program is devoted to the protection of rights of various groups of population. Therefore, relevant state bodies have been tasked to continue regular activities for preservation and development of the cultural heritage of the national minorities of the country.

Article 4 of the Convention

According to Article 25 of the Constitution of the Republic of Azerbaijan, everyone is equal before the law and court.

According to Article 11 of the Criminal Code of the Republic of Azerbaijan, criminal proceedings in the Republic of Azerbaijan are carried out on the basis of equality of all persons before the law and court. The judicial authorities should not advantage any participant of the criminal proceedings regardless of citizenship, social status, sex, race, ethnicity, political affiliation, religion, language, origin, property status, occupation, conviction, and place of residence or for any other reason that is not based on law.

In addition, according to Article 26 of the Code, criminal proceedings in courts of the Republic of Azerbaijan shall be conducted in the official language of the Republic of Azerbaijan or in the language of the majority of population of their local area of

residence. Judicial authorities should guarantee the subjects of criminal proceedings the right to use their native language if they do not speak the language used in the court, to communicate through an interpreter, free of charge during a criminal investigation and court hearings, in order to be fully familiar with all the documents relate to the case and criminal prosecution.

The judicial authority should provide all the relevant people with necessary documents in the language that is used during the trial. People who do not know the language used at the trial should be provided by documents written in their native language or any other language they know.

On 22 may 2012, Law "On ensuring rights and freedoms of persons held in places of detention" was adopted. The Law ensures and regulates the rights and freedoms of imprisoned persons taken into custody in conformity with the procedure, established by the Criminal Code of the Republic of Azerbaijan.

Great attention is paid to educational activities on protection of minority rights and eradication of discrimination. In Baku and all over Azerbaijan, 300 attorneys and 34 practicing lawyers were trained within the framework of the biennial (2013-2015) project on professional development of lawyers and human rights defenders implementing the European Convention on Human Rights and European Social Charter (revised) at the local level. In 2015, within the framework of the project, 20 attorneys and practicing lawyers were trained on the prohibition of discrimination subject of Article 14 of the European Convention on Human Rights.

Furthermore, lectures on "National Action Program in the field of improvement of efficiency of the protection of human rights and freedoms in the Republic of Azerbaijan", "Article 14 of the European Convention on Human Rights", "Prohibition of Racial Discrimination in the European Convention on Human Rights and National Legislation", "Treatment of Convicts in Compliance with the European Convention on Human Rights" were added to the training curricula of the 2014-2015 courses organized by the Academy of Justice for the newly hired judges, attorneys, lawyers of the law enforcement agencies. On 26-27 May 2016, the Academy of Justice in collaboration with the Council of Europe held training for 24 judges on the prohibition of discrimination that is subject of Article 14 of the European Convention on Human Rights.

Besides, in conformity with relevant decrees of the Cabinet of Ministers of the Republic of Azerbaijan, in 2011 and 2013, 800 000 AZN were allocated from a special reserve fund of the state budget of the Republic of Azerbaijan to meet religious demands of non-Islamic religious organizations through establishing favourable conditions for them. Furthermore, on 27 November 2014, followed by the decree of President Ilham Aliyev, the Government assigned 2 500 000 AZN from the President's Reserve Fund to the State Committee on Religious Associations for projects raising religious awareness via country's religious institutions supporting and encouraging national and moral values. 400 000 AZN of the assigned amount were allocated to non-Islamic religious communities of the country.

Also, under the President's decree dated 5 July 2016, 1 800 000 AZN from President's Reserve Fund of the 2016 state budget was allocated to religious communities to support and improve their financial status. 800 000 AZN of the assigned amount was allocated to non-Islamic religious communities of Azerbaijan. The amount of money allocated to non-Islamic religious institutions was calculated for fitting the number of their followers.

In recent years, the Government of the Republic of Azerbaijan has focused its efforts on construction and rehabilitation of not only Mosques and Holy Muslim Places, but also Churches and Synagogues. A new Synagogue of the Mountain Jews was built in downtown Baku and opened for service on 5 April 2011. High ranking state officials, religious leaders of communities, members of the Jewish community, as well as guests from Israel, Russia and other countries attended in the ceremony of opening the synagogue, which is unique for its architectural features and size among other Jewish temples not only in Azerbaijan, but also in the whole region. Chotari Albanian-Udi Church, which is situated in Nij settlement of Gabala district, largely populated by Udi community, has been reconstructed recently. Besides, the Orthodox Church Religious-Cultural Centre of Baku and Azerbaijan Eparchy were built at state expense. President of Azerbaijan participated in the opening ceremony on 15 November 2013.

Protection of rights of working people in the Republic of Azerbaijan, implementation of policy of productive labour, steady employment and social protection of population, improvement of the national labour legislation, and fulfilment of material, moral, social and other vital requirements of the employees are considered as the major social and economic priorities of the State.

Article 3 of "The State's Targeted Social Aid" Law (July 1, 2006) of the Republic of Azerbaijan specifies that families which per capita monthly income is low, for reasons that do not depend on them, are eligible for social aid. According to Article 4 of the same Law, social aid is granted to all low-income families on the basis of selective support of low income groups, social justice and equality principles. Citizens of the Republic of Azerbaijan and stateless persons permanently residing in the Republic of Azerbaijan irrespective of their ethnicity, race, origin, religion, language can benefit from social assistance system.

According to Law on "Amendments to the Targeted Social Aid Law of the Republic of Azerbaijan" dated 24 February 2015, the state's 2 year term social assistance program was set up on 17 March 2015.

Draft Law on the "Rules on request, assignment, payment and rejection of the state's targeted social aid" dated 5 February 2016 was adopted by the Cabinet of the Ministers of the Republic of Azerbaijan to ensure implementation of paragraph 4.2 of the Decree of the President of the Republic of Azerbaijan dated 23 February 2015.

The draft plan of the Cabinet of Ministers of the Republic of Azerbaijan on amendments to the "Rules on memorializing martyrs and granting privileges to

families of martyrs" was approved by the Cabinet of Ministers on 15 January 1994", submitted for consideration of the Government on October 2015 and adopted by the Cabinet on 26 April 2016.

According to Article 38 of the Constitution of the Republic of Azerbaijan everyone upon reaching a certain age legally defined as eligible for social protection gets it in case of illness, disability, loss of a breadwinner, unemployment and other cases specified in the law.

The "Law on Social Benefits" (1 January 2006) provides social protection for the segment of society that doesn't receive pensions.

According to Article 3.2 of this Law, unless otherwise provided by international treaties Azerbaijan is a party to, stateless persons and foreign citizens permanently residing in the Republic of Azerbaijan, except for the case of a life pension paid to civil servants, are eligible for monthly and lump sum payments on terms specified for citizens of the Republic of Azerbaijan by this Law.

The Law on "Social Service" that was adopted on 30 December 2011, substitutes the repealed Law "On social services provided for the elderly". The law applies to those citizens of the Republic of Azerbaijan who are in need of social services. Also the law is applicable to the stateless persons and foreigners who permanently reside in the Republic of Azerbaijan. The purpose of social services is to prevent worsening of a life quality of people, deterioration of a social and psychological environment that result in marginalization, as well as to ensure the provision of social services to the poor.

The abovementioned laws imply that all citizens are equally entitled to social protection. Ethnicity should not be a basis for limitation or discrimination.

The legislation of labour and social protection of the Republic of Azerbaijan prohibits any discrimination, including that based on origin.

To improve social and economic welfare of a vulnerable group of population, the amount of the Presidential scholarship and social benefits was increased by 10% through Decrees and Orders of the President of the Republic of Azerbaijan on 1 February 2016. This increase has had a considerable impact on 38% of the population.

Efforts were made to develop the infrastructure and social services through increasing the amount of investments, creating new employment opportunities, increasing employment rate and reducing poverty all over Azerbaijan within the framework of the "2014-2018 state program on social and economic development of the regions" with vast national minority population.

Poverty level was reduced to 5%. Non-oil sector was enlarged to 8.4%. 68000 enterprises and 1 400 000 million new jobs were created. Realization of social and

infrastructural projects is still underway. Nearly 3000 schools were constructed including those built in the regions, more than 600 hospitals were constructed and rehabilitated. It should be noted that despite the global recession the GDP increased by 1.1% in 2015.

According to part 1 of Article 16 of the Labour Code of the Republic of Azerbaijan any discrimination on the basis of citizenship, sex, race, religion, nationality, language, place of residence, property status, social-public status, age, marital status, conviction, political views, affiliation to trade unions and other public institutions, occupation as well as other factors unrelated to job qualifications, professional competence and results of the work, privilege that originated directly or indirectly from these factors and limiting their rights is prohibited.

According to Article 6.2.1 of Employment Law dated 2 July 2001, it is a legal, economic and organizational basis of the state's employment policy. It entitles providing of equal opportunities to all citizens in the implementation of right of freely choosing of labour and employment irrespective of race, nationality, religion, language, sex, family status, public-social origin, place of residence, property status, conviction, as well as political, trade union, other affiliations.

(Statistical data pertaining to the information given in the Article is provided in Annex 1 and Annex 2)

Article 5 of the Convention

Article 6 of the Law "On Culture" (adopted on 21 December 2012) provides for rights and freedoms in the field of culture in Azerbaijan in conformity with principles and norms of the international law.

At the same time, Article 30 of the Law specifies that cultural models of national minorities of the Republic of Azerbaijan are an integral part of the country's cultural heritage. Cultural heritage of national minorities of the Republic of Azerbaijan is protected by the State.

The culture and equality of rights and freedoms of national minorities living in the country and the equality of determination and protection of culture of national minorities living in the country and restoration, strengthening and improvement of their cultural heritage are provided equally.

Baku International Multiculturalism Centre (BIMC) has implemented a number of projects related to conversation and development of cultures of national minorities:

1. "The tale of how Basat killed Tapagoz" which is a part of Azerbaijani epic poem "The Book of Dada Gorgud" translated and published by Heinrich von Diez, an outstanding German orientalist and diplomat, into German in 1815 has been translated into Azerbaijani and languages of national minorities such as Khinalig, Tat, Kurdish, Talish, Armenian, Udi, Lezgin and Georgian;

2. BIMC and "Kultura plyus" Internet TV channel have broadcasted language courses for some national minorities (Avar, Sakhur, Khinalig, Udi and Lezgin) of Azerbaijan;
3. On 1-5 July 2015, BIMC arranged a concert program for Lezgins, Tatars, Ahiskha Turks, Kurds, Ingloys, Russians, Avars, Udis and Sakhurs;
4. In October 2015, cultural items of the local minorities were exhibited in Lahich (Ismayilli region);
5. Udi textbooks for primary schools are being prepared by the BIMC;
6. On 21 May of 2015 and 2016, on the occasion of the UN World Day for

Cultural Diversity for Dialogue and Development, BIMC organized a round table with participation of representatives of national minorities living in Azerbaijan. Participants of the round table discussed contemporary issues of multiculturalism in Azerbaijan.

Also, Knowledge Foundation under the President of the Republic of Azerbaijan has been involved in implementation of projects related to conservation and development of cultures of national minorities, such as:

1. Advocacy and promotion of multiculturalism, conversation of ethnic and moral values of national minorities;
2. Organization of study trips for local and foreign researchers to regions of Azerbaijan largely populated by national minorities.

Article 6 of the Convention

Fulfilment of state religious policy on protection and development of centuries- old traditions of tolerance, as well as, reinforcement of mutual understanding and dialogue between religious confessions within the country has been one of the priorities for years. Promotion of tolerance and intercultural dialogue in pursuit of mutual respect, understanding and bilateral cooperation of different creeds and national minorities have been done.

State Committee on the Work with Religious Organizations has held a number of events dedicated to combating religious radicalism and extremism. Efforts have been made in support of ethnic and moral values, traditions of tolerance and multiculturalism, as well as multiculturalism as an alternative to radicalism and fanaticism.

International presentation ceremony of National Centre for Tolerance took place within the II World Forum on Intercultural Dialogue held in Baku Business Centre on 29 May 2013. The National Centre for Tolerance has paid special attention to encouragement of joint cooperation between different religious creeds, has been closely involved in the process of their integration into the society and participation in the life of the country. The National Tolerance Centre's "Unite for Respect" project for religious communities provides a good example of it. Within the framework of this project, social projects are jointly implemented by at least three different religious communities representing different national minorities in the field of

helping disabled teenagers to meet their needs for education with further access to higher education, providing rehabilitation of prisoners and facilitating their integration to the society and strengthening family and family values.

On 12 November 2013, a report was presented with the support of the State Committee on the Work with Religious Organizations titled "Non-Muslim Minorities in Azerbaijan: from the Past towards Secular Azerbaijan" prepared by the "Borderless Human Rights" International NGO in the European Parliament.

The State Committee on the Work with Religious Organizations' activities have always been fulfilled in an atmosphere of mutual understanding with national and religious minorities. State Committee on the Work with Religious Organizations held more than 200 educational seminars aimed at protecting human rights within the framework of "A Month of Human Rights" (18 May-18 June), "A Peace Month" (21 August-21 September), "A Month for Children's Rights" (20 October-20 November).

"Religious leaders are messengers of peace", "Rights of the Child in Islam", "November 16 - Day of Tolerance", "Tolerance, unity, ethnic identity" events dedicated to the International Tolerance Day were held throughout Azerbaijan to advocate peace and human rights, strengthen religious tolerance and inter-confessional dialogue, support traditions of tolerance existing in Azerbaijan. Representatives of religious and national minorities, NGOs as well as religious communities actively participated in those events.

On 8 September 2015, another important international conference on "Religious Tolerance: Culture of living together in Azerbaijan" was held within the framework of "Azerbaijan is in the heart of Paris" project by Haydar Aliyev Foundation in Paris.

Paragraph 2.1 of the Charter of Baku International Multiculturalism Centre specifies that the main goal of the Centre is to ensure tolerance in Azerbaijan through protection of its cultural, religious, linguistic diversity in compliance with the ideology of Azerbaijanism and to promote Azerbaijan as a centre of multiculturalism, as well as to research and support existing models of multiculturalism.

According to subparagraph 14.1.4 of "2014-2020 National Strategy on development of information society in Azerbaijan", which was approved by the Presidential Order of 15 May 2014, it is important to pay attention to the expansion of the ethnic content, protect and develop Azerbaijan's ethno-cultural heritage, use this heritage by means of modern technologies and increase the population's level of knowledge under the circumstances of developing information society. The main activity direction is to create and develop e-resources on ethno-cultural achievements, traditions of national minorities.

According to Paragraph 2.4 of "The Concept of Culture in the Republic of Azerbaijan", approved by the Presidential Order of 14 February 2014, state policy in the field of culture, as well as other areas of state development, must be based on detailed cultural and political researches and relevant innovations. The Concept

emphasizes that the improvements in supply of information depend on prevention of violence, discrimination on the grounds of social status, race, ethnicity and religion, as well as on prevention of behaviour and activities contradicting national and moral values.

State publications are aimed at providing information on protection of human rights and freedoms, prevention of discrimination, promotion of peace and tolerance, likewise the Ministry of Justice which provides relevant information through its web site.

On 22 September 2006, a Public Committee comprised of influential human rights activists and representatives of national minorities was established to ensure public control and transparency in the country's system of Justice. Members of the Committee visit penitentiaries regularly, meet with penitentiary inmates, as well as with national minorities, became familiar with their detention conditions, food, material and medical support, measures taken for their correction and their connections outside the prison. The committee also provides legal assistance to penitentiary inmates.

A Permanent Monitoring Group, which operates under the Ministry of Justice, becomes familiar with the Republic's system of justice and courts, studies public opinion by carrying out anonymous surveys and contributes to the observance of rights of citizens, including national minorities of Azerbaijan.

Within the framework of the "Support to reforms in Justice" program of EU, free legal assistance is provided to a low-income group of population, disabled people, IDPs, and representatives of national minorities by legal clinic established in the Academy of Justice.

Besides, different segments of the country's population are provided with free legal assistance of legal consultation services established by the Ministry of Justice in the regions.

Article 283 of the Criminal Code (instigation of ethnic, racial, social or religious hatred or strife) specifies criminal responsibility for explicit activities (including those exploiting mass media) aimed at instigating ethnic, racial or religious strife, injuring the sense of ethnic dignity, restricting citizens' rights or establishing superiority over a certain group of people on the grounds of their ethnic or racial background.

Moreover, rules and regulations ensuring protection of rights of national minorities are reflected in Articles 103 (Genocide), 109 (Persecution), 154 (Violation of equality of rights), 167 (Obstruction of performance of religious rites), 168 (Encroachment on citizens' rights on the pretext of performance of religious rites) of the Criminal Code.

Nobody was sentenced on the basis of articles 103 (Genocide), 109 (Persecution), 154 (Violation of equality of rights), 168 (Encroachment on citizens' rights on the pretext of performance of religious rites) by the courts of the Republic of Azerbaijan

during the years of 2011-2015, whereas 1 person was convicted on the basis of article 167 (Obstruction of performance of religious rites) and 16 persons were convicted on the basis of article 283 (instigation of ethnic, racial, social or religious hatred or strife).

Article 7 of the Convention

Freedoms of thought, speech, conscience, assembly, association, enterprise are enshrined in Articles 47, 48, 49, 58, 59 of the Constitution of the Republic of Azerbaijan.

There are following main organizations and national cultural centres of national minorities functioning in Azerbaijan:

"Ronayi" Kurdish Cultural Centre, "Samur" Lezghin National Centre, Training Centre of Lezghin Mythology, Lezghin Youth Centre, "Dagestan" Cultural Centre, Ukraine Community of Azerbaijan, "Sakhur" Cultural Centre, Talish Cultural Centre, "Orayin" Udi Cultural Centre, Alban-Udi Christian religious community, Avar National Cultural Centre, "Lahij" Charity Society, "Azeri" Tat Cultural Centre, Russian Community Public Association of Azerbaijan, Cultural Centre of Azerbaijan Slavs, "Sodrujestvo", "Tughan tel" Tatar Cultural Society, Azerbaijan Tatar Community, "Yashlek" Azerbaijan Tatar Youth Centre, Azerbaijan Georgian Community, "Vatan" Society of Akhiska Turks, "Akhiska" Cultural Centre of Akhiska Turks, "Budug" Cultural Centre, "Shahdagh" Cultural Centre, European Jews Religious Community, Azerbaijan Mountainous Jews Religious Centre, Georgian Jews Religious Centre, "Azerbaijan-Israel" Society, Azerbaijan Jewish Women Organization, "Lidaika" International Society, German National Cultural Society, "Khinalig" Cultural Centre, "Association in Support of development of Azerbaijan-Bulgaria friendship", Polish Community of Azerbaijan and etc. These organizations play an important role in the solution of social-economic and cultural issues of national minorities and their integration into the society.

Article 8 of the Convention

Ethnic and religious minorities in Azerbaijan:

Christianity in Azerbaijan

Christianity has ancient historical roots in Azerbaijan, distinguished by its ethnic-religious diversity, tolerant environment, and multicultural society. Ancient Christians came to the country in early days of Christianity during the period of apostles of Jesus Christ. Christianity became a state religion of the Caucasian Albania in 313 A.D. and an independent Albanian Church was institutionalized.

Followers of Christianity contributed to social development and cultural enrichment of the country. The very example is Kish church, which is the first one built in the Caucasus, churches built by the Germans in Baku, Shamkir, Goygol and Ganja, a Catholic Polish Church in Gusar, a number of Russian Orthodox churches of XIX century and other monuments of Christianity.

Almost all churches are represented in modern Azerbaijan. The Orthodox Church, the Catholic Church, the Udi Albanian Church, which belongs to the ancient Eastern group of churches, as well as a number of Protestant Denominations (sects), followers of new religions live and perform their religious rites freely.

Orthodoxy is the largest branch of Christianity in Azerbaijan. It is the second great religion after Islam by the number of its followers who comprise about 2% of Azerbaijan's population. It has two churches: the Russian Orthodox Church and the Georgian Apostolic Autocephalous Orthodox Church.

The numbers of followers of the Russian Orthodox creed dominate over those of the other Christian Churches of Azerbaijan. The country's all Russian Orthodox Churches have been subordinated to Baku and Azerbaijan Eparchy since XIX century. The Eparchy is comprised of 5 churches. Majority of Azerbaijan's citizens of the Russian, Belorussian and Ukrainian origin identify their ethnicity with the Russian Orthodox Church.

Local Orthodox Churches teach the catechism (a series of questions and answers about religious beliefs, which has to be learned by people before they can become full members of that Church) to adults.

Followers of the other branches of the Orthodox Church, like the Georgian Orthodox Church followers, reside in Gakh region of Azerbaijan. According to the population census held in 2009, 9900 people of Georgian origin live in Azerbaijan. There are 4 Georgian Orthodox Churches in Gakh region (Saint George Church in Gakh-Ingiloy village, Holy Sameba (Trinity) Church in Kotuklu village, Saint Michael Church in Meshabash village and Saint Nino Church in Alibayli village.

Two Georgian Orthodox Churches (Saint George Church and Saint Nino one) were registered by the State Committee on Religious Associations in 2009. In addition to followers of the Orthodox Christianity, there are followers of the Udi-Alban Apostolic Autocephalous Orthodox Church in Azerbaijan. Udins are successors of the ancient Eastern Church. This national minority lives in Oguz region and Nij settlement of Gabala region today.

As it has been mentioned above, the Albanian Church was an official church of the Caucasian Albania which lay in present-day Azerbaijan's territory. The Church that has lived since 1836 has gone its own, intrinsic religious path throughout time and managed to act independently, while reflected local religious and ethnic flavour despite all difficulties and struggle for existence. Tsarist Russia suspended its activity in an effort to place the Albanian Church under control of the Armenian Gregorian Church in 1836, while the Udins, residents of the ancient Caucasian Albania, have managed to preserve their religious and moral values regardless of difficulties.

Restoration of Azerbaijan's independence created an opportunity for a revival of religious traditions of the Albanian Church. That is, Udins' churches and holy places were restored with the support of the Government of Azerbaijan. The State

Committee on Religious Associations re-registered Albanian-Udi Christian community of Azerbaijan and Albanian-Udi Christian community of Oguz city in 2009. This was the first step taken for the restoration of the Albanian Church.

Today, there are two Albanian-Udi churches in the country – the Albanian Autocephalous Chotari Church in Nij settlement of Gabala region and Kiski Gerqes Church in the town of Oguz.

One of the Christian denominations typical for our country is spiritual Christianity. Spiritual Christians, who had fled to Azerbaijan from Tsarist Russia, and settled in different regions of our country, where they established many Russian settlements. They have had friendly relations with Azerbaijanis, who have always been remarkable for their tolerance, and become an integral part of our society.

Today spiritual Christianity has two branches in our country: Molocanism and Doukhorism. Molocans settled in Baku, Shamakhi, Sumgait, Ismailly region (Ivanovka village), Gobustan region (Hilmilly village), Gadabay region (Novoivanovka and Novosaratovka villages), while doukhobors live in Slavyanka village of Gadabay region. Total number of people who visit molocan chapels in the country is 400-450. Most of them belong to the elderly.

3 molocan religious communities (Baku, Sumgait, and Hilmilly village of Gobustan) were re-registered in 2009 by the State Committee on Religious Associations. Molocan religious community of Ismailly region Ivanovka village was registered for the first time in 2015.

One of the traditional Christian denominations in Azerbaijan is Catholicism. The Catholic followers started to operate in Azerbaijan in the beginnings of 14th century. Their activity became wider in 17th century. They opened twelve catholic monasteries in Nakhchivan at those times. Besides, monasteries, churches and schools of catholic followers were operated in Baku, Shemakha, Ganja and Tabriz at those times. Second development stage of Catholicism in the country started after the occupation of Azerbaijan by Tsarist Russia in the XIX century. The number of Catholics significantly increased in Azerbaijan due to deportation of Polish rebels from Poland and oil boom in Baku. Today, Catholics live mainly in Baku. Their number is approximately 600. About half of them are foreigners from Poland, Italy, Slovakia and other countries. It is worth to mention that, there are excellent relations between the Government of Azerbaijan and Holy See, and President Haydar Aliyev decreed a plot of land to be allocated for the construction of a Catholic Church in downtown Baku, where St. Virgin Mary Church was constructed later on.

The Board of Muslims of the Caucasus and representatives of other denominations of Azerbaijan contributed to the construction of this church that was opened on 7 March 2008.

Roman Catholic Church has been in close cooperation with Haydar Aliyev Foundation since 2009. A signed memorandum of understanding and cooperation between the

two organizations stimulated collaboration and ensured realization of different joint projects.

The Agreement between the Republic of Azerbaijan and Holy See on Legal status of the Catholic Church in the Republic of Azerbaijan was signed in April 2011, and the community was given a status of an Apostolic prefecture of the Roman Catholic Church in the Republic of Azerbaijan.

A plot of land was allocated to Mother Teresa orphanage which has been functioning since 2006. Also, there are various Protestant denominations in the Republic. The history of Protestantism dates back to the XIX century. Basle missionaries and German pietists were the first Protestants who came to Azerbaijan. German pietists settled in our country and contributed to the development of Anenfeld (Shamkir), Yelenendorf (Goygol) and other settlements.

Today, approximate number of existing Protestant denominations and their members is almost 7000. Religious communities which belong to Protestant denomination and registered by the State Committee on Religious Associations of the Republic of Azerbaijan are as follows:

- "New Life" Christian Gospel religious community;
- Baku religious Community of Evangelical Lutherans;
- "Life word" Christian religious community;
- "Life word-2" Sumgait Christian religious community;
- Agape religious community of Baku Evangelical Christian Baptist Church;
- "Nehemiah" religious community of Christians believing in Gospel
- Baku Christian-Baptist religious community;
- "Star in the East" Christian Gospel religious community;
- "Adventists of Seventh day" religious community;
- Ganja Christian-Baptist religious community;
- Ganja "Adventists of the Seventh-day" religious community;
- Sumgait Christian-Baptist religious community;
- Baku Christian Pious religious community;

There are different religious educational centres (Alpha courses, Saturday and Sunday schools, Bible College, Ecclesiastical schools) attached to local protestant communities. They teach the fundamentals of Christianity and Bible.

Necessary conditions were ensured for religious activity of the Protestants who live in the country. For example, the Saviour Lutheran Church located in downtown Baku was reconstructed in compliance with decree of the President of the Republic of Azerbaijan dated 15 March 2010. At present, two different protestant communities of Azerbaijan (Baku religious Community of Evangelical Lutherans and "New Life" religious community) perform their religious rites freely on Sundays.

"New Apostolic Church", classified as a "marginal catholic" religious sect, is among well represented Christian churches in the country. Members of this community live

mainly in Baku (70 people) and in Ganja (10-15 people). This community was registered by the State Committee on Religious Associations in 2002.

Also, there is a sect of "Jehovah's Witnesses" in the Republic. This sect is classified as restorationist one (seeking to restore early Christianity). It has 2700 members, 1350 of them are active ones.

Judaism in Azerbaijan

The Jews settled in Azerbaijan 2600 years ago. They have mixed with local people for centuries even established ties of kindred. The Azerbaijanis have always had friendly relations with the Jews. The majority of the Jews of Azerbaijan live in Baku, Sumgait, Ganja, and both in Guba and Oghuz regions. Traditionally, they used to engage in crafts, trade, medicine, teaching, etc. Today, the Jews of Azerbaijan are represented by 3 communities, which are the Mountainous Jews, the Georgian Jews and the European Jews (the Ashkenazi Jews).

The Jews, like the other national minorities of Azerbaijan, entered a new phase of life after restoration of the independence of the country. Protection of ethnic minorities' rights and freedoms, government support to their culture and language opened a new opportunities for the Jewish communities of Azerbaijan. Communities are registered and carry out their activity freely. They build new synagogues and celebrate their ethnic festivals and holidays. Today there are 7 synagogues in Guba, Oghuz and Baku. 6 of them belong to the mountainous Jews, 1 to both communities of the European and the Georgian Jews. "Shmirat a-Shem" college for Jewish children functions in "Girmizi Gesebe" town of Guba region densely populated by the Jews. Israeli teachers teach Jewish ethnic traditions in this college.

200 year old synagogue of the mountainous Jews was reopened after restoration. An opening ceremony took place in October 2010. A new synagogue was constructed for the community on the initiative and with the support of the President Ilham Aliyev on 5 April 2011.

The Georgian Jews of Azerbaijan are descendant of the original Georgian Jews who moved to Azerbaijan long ago and settled mainly in Baku. Hundreds of families of the Georgian Jews of Azerbaijan moved to Israel, Europe and the USA in the sixties and the eighties of the last century. After restoration of Azerbaijan's independence, migration of the Georgian Jews to other countries considerably decreased. Today the Georgian Jews celebrate their ethnic and religious holidays freely, and the Jewish children of Azerbaijan have equal rights with the other children of Azerbaijan for everything including education in the Republic of Azerbaijan. Since 1995, every year, the President of the Republic has congratulated all the Jewish communities of Azerbaijan on the occasion of the Jewish New Year "Rosh ha-Shana" holiday. Like many other countries of the world, Azerbaijan commemorates the Holocaust day, when millions of Jews were killed by the German Nazis during the Second World War.

Migration of another Jewish community of the European Jews (the Ashkenazi Jews) to Azerbaijan coincided with the period of oil industry development, which is the

second half of XIX century, in Baku. There were many European Jews among architects, teachers, doctors, lawyers, intellectuals and etc., moved to Baku that time. The European Jews comprised the majority of the nearly 2500 Jews lived in Baku in 1897. In 1913 this number increased approximately to ten thousand. A synagogue that was constructed in 1910 in Baku became not only a prayer house of the European Jews, but also a school for many of them. Yeshivas, a special Jewish school, functioned in the city, and holy books, such as Bible, Talmud and Mishnah were taught in those schools. Special schools and colleges were opened for Jewish girls too. The Azerbaijanis have had good relations with the Jews for centuries, even during a wild burst of anti-Semitism all over the world.

Today the Ashkenazis like other Jews of Azerbaijan live in an anti-Semitism free environment of the country. Many years ago these Jews moved to Azerbaijan for business purposes, became decent citizens of the country, and the Republic of Azerbaijan became a motherland for them. Most of the Jews actively participate in political, economic and cultural life of the Republic. Today there are memorial boards on the buildings where famous Jews like Nobel Prize winner physicist Lev Landau, honoured physician of the Republic Solomon Guzman, Karabakh war hero Albert Agarunov lived.

Jewish religious communities registered in the State Committee on Religious Associations of the Republic of Azerbaijan are as follows:

- Baku religious community of the European Jews
- Baku religious community of the Mountainous Jews
- Baku religious community of the Georgian Jews
- Sumgait Jews religious community
- Guba region religious community of "Girmizi Gesebe" Mountainous Jews
- The Azerbaijani Jews religious community
- Oghuz Jews religious community
- Baku city "Light of Jerusalem" Jewish religious community
- Ganja Jews religious community

Jewish communities are the most active religious communities of the Republic of Azerbaijan.

"Sokhnut" Jewish agency, committees engaged in protection of "Joynt" and "Vaad-L-Khatzola" Jewish traditions, religious schools, like yeshivas, cultural centres of Jewish communities, "Eve" women community and other non-government organizations function in the country. Moreover, Hebrew is taught in the Middle Eastern and Central Asian faculty of languages of Baku State University.

One of the biggest synagogues in Europe is a Synagogue of the European and the Georgian Jews opened in Baku on 9 May 2003. Khabad-Or-Avner Jewish education centre was opened with the support of Haydar Aliyev Foundation in Baku on 4 October 2010. President of the Republic of Azerbaijan, Ilham Aliyev, Chief Rabbi of the Sephardim Jews Shlomo Amar and other high ranked officials participated in the

opening ceremony. Jews classes attached to school No: 46 were opened on 1994. Approximately 100 schoolchildren study in the school. Besides the subject of Hebrew language, all subjects that considered by the Ministry of Education are taught for them.

There are 682 Islamic religious communities registered in the country and 39 non-Islamic communities that received legal status through state registration.

According to research carried out by the State Committee on Religious Associations, 96% of them are Muslims, the rest 4% are the followers of other religions. Statistics of registered religious organizations indicate that Muslim organizations to Muslim population ratio are 1:15000 in Azerbaijan, whereas a registered non-Muslim organization/non-Muslim citizen ratio in the Republic is 1:10000. This proves that, the number of non-Islamic religious communities is greater than that of Muslim ones in Azerbaijan.

Islamic religious communities of Azerbaijan are united under their historic Islamic religious Centre, the Caucasus Board of Muslims, whereas a non-Islamic religious community has the right to be subordinated to a religious association which has its headquarters abroad. It also has the right to choose another religious authority to obey. Moreover, the Republic of Azerbaijan allows non-Islamic religious communities which have their headquarters abroad to be guided by regulations of their headquarters if these regulations do not contradict with the legislation of the Republic of Azerbaijan. Today, religious centres of most non-Islamic religious associations like Russian Orthodox, Catholic, Lutheran, Protestant, Georgian Orthodox Churches, including those of Jewish religious organizations are located abroad. Their preachers and rabbis are appointed from their overseas religious centres.

Religious centres and boards in Azerbaijan have business relations with their overseas centres and closely participate in international religious events. Stability of religious environment combined with high level of tolerance and complete absence of religious discrimination in the country create favourable conditions for religious associations to act as freely as legal entities can in their prayer houses, carry out religious rites, and celebrate religious holidays and ceremonies.

Equal opportunities are ensured for all communities. Preparation and receipt of their documents, verification of compliance with the legislation and registration are carried out properly. Registration of religious communities is currently being continued. Christian and Jewish educational institutions, Sunday schools under Orthodox Churches, Bible courses of Protestant communities, Jewish courses of Hebrew, the Jewish religion and culture, together with religious communities and prayer houses function in Azerbaijan. Furthermore, there also are followers of Krishnaism and Baha'i Faith, whose prayer houses function in the country.

Article 9 of the Convention

Today the Government of Azerbaijan sponsors radio broadcasts in Kurdish, Lezghian, Talish, Georgian, Russian and Armenian.

Ethnic communities of Azerbaijan publish the following newspapers:

Samur (in Lezghian) newspaper, Gusar (in Azerbaijani and Lezghian) newspaper, Chirag, Alam, Tolishi sado (in Talish), Soz (in Azerbaijani and Talish) magazines, Khinalig newspaper (in Khinilag), Shelale newspaper (a page in Georgian), Birlik, Yedinstvo newspapers and Gudyal magazine (published by Girmizi Gesebe Jewish community of Guba region), Denge kurd newspaper (The voice of Kurds is published by Ronayi Kurdish Cultural Centre); Vestnik, Oko newspapers (published by Sodrujestvo Russian Community), Akkord newspaper (published to support the development of friendship between Azerbaijan and Bulgaria) Visnik newspaper (published by the Ukrainian community of Azerbaijan).

Article 11 of the Convention

In accordance with article 6 of the Law "On Mass Media", mass media of Azerbaijan should use state language of the Republic of Azerbaijan. Citizens of the Republic of Azerbaijan engaged in publishing and broadcasting activities have the right to use other languages used by the people of Azerbaijan, as well as other languages widely used all over the world in published media and broadcasted programs.

"Rules on Naming and Changing First Names, Patronymics, Last Names" approved by decree No.79 of the Cabinet of Ministers of the Republic of Azerbaijan on 12 May 2011, provide that naming and changing of first names, patronymics and last names of the citizens who are representatives of national minorities of the Republic of Azerbaijan, and the stateless persons who are natives and permanent residents of the Republic of Azerbaijan are carried out at their request and pursuant to this Rule.

Guided by the abovementioned rules, regional (city) registry departments of the Ministry of Justice of the Republic Azerbaijan has fully complied with national minorities' (of Lezghin, Russian, Avar, Georgian, Kurd, Arabic, Bashkir, Jewish, Ukrainian origin) requests for naming and changing of first names, patronymics and last names.

Articles 12-14 of the Convention

Ensuring the right for learning

Article 7 of the Law "On Education" specifies that language of Azerbaijan, the state language of the Republic of Azerbaijan, is the language that should be used for education in educational institutions of the Republic of Azerbaijan.

However, in cases specified by international treaties to which the Republic of Azerbaijan is a party to or with the consent of related authorities, and taking into consideration interested citizens and founders of educational institutions, general education in secondary schools may be provided in other languages in compliance

with education standards of the Republic of Azerbaijan, and provided that the language of Azerbaijan language and literature, as well as history and geography of Azerbaijan are taught.

In accordance with article 5.2 of that Law, government grants every citizen the right to get education regardless of their gender, race, language, religion, political affiliation, ethnicity, social status and health status.

Languages of national minorities are taught the I-IV grades of primary public schools 2 hours a week in regions densely populated by national minorities all over the country.

Programs on teaching native languages the 1st - 4th grades of primary schools were published in 2003. In 2006, "Let's learn our language" text book was published to allow first grade school children of all national minorities to learn their languages. Moreover, textbooks on Lezghian, Talysh, Kurdish, Tat, Avar, Tsahur, "Native Language" (made for the 2nd class), "Talysh Language" (made for the 3rd and 4th classes) have also been published. "On Teaching Talysh language", "Azerbaijani-Talysh school dictionary", "Lezghin-Azerbaijani-Russian dictionary", "Methodology on Alphabet of Tat language" were published and distributed to schools as additional aid to teaching languages of national minorities. Textbooks on "Udin language" ("Nanay muz" for the 2nd, 3rd and 4th grades) were published in 2010, 2013 and 2015. Currently, Udin Alphabet for the 1st grade is being prepared for publishing.

As a matter of fact, in conformity with the Decree of the President of the Republic of Azerbaijan on "State support for protection and development of rights, freedoms, language and culture of ethnic minorities of the Republic of Azerbaijan" dated 1992, 16 textbooks and teaching aids were published and distributed among educational institutions.

Preparation, publication and supply of books in languages of national minorities are done on a regular basis. It is planned to publish books in languages of national minorities of the Republic of Azerbaijan for the next year curriculum.

Teaching methodology of national minority languages for primary school children is included into curriculums of colleges that function in regions densely populated by national minorities to meet demands for national minority language teachers.

National minority language teachers are hired with approbation of local education authorities. Also, Georgian language teachers are hired by education authorities of Zagatala and Gakh regions.

Employment of secondary school teachers has been provided directly by the Ministry of Education since 2011. Every effort has been made to meet demands for secondary school teachers in regions densely populated by national minorities for the last 6 years.

In accordance with the decree of Cabinet of Ministers of the Republic of Azerbaijan dated 14 April 2010, "On steps to encourage college and university alumni to engage in teaching in secondary schools", young professionals under 35, who have been employed in regional secondary schools for 3 years have been paid 60 AZN to meet public utility bills and 100 AZN in addition to their monthly salary. Thus, demand for school teachers in regions densely populated by ethnic minorities, such as Guba, Gusar, Lerik and Astar, have been met.

The teaching of the state language – language of Azerbaijan - is another way to integrate national minorities with the society they live. Knowledge Foundation - under the President of the Republic of Azerbaijan- arranged free Azerbaijani language courses to meet this need of national minorities.

(Statistical data on the articles is in Annex 3 and Annex 4).

Article 15 of the Convention

There is no official statistical data on the number of national minorities employed in government institutions, because the law of the Republic of Azerbaijan does not specify the necessity of including information about ethnicity of a citizen into his/her identity card. Nevertheless, it is obvious that ethnic minorities are well represented in legislative, executive and judicial branches of government. Representatives of national minorities employed in government institutions are public officers, heads of departments, directors of departments, their deputies and etc. Absolute majority of national minorities are employed in government institutions in the regions densely populated by national minorities.

Representatives of national minorities are also represented in the Consultation Council that was established under Baku International Multiculturalism Centre in December 2015. The main policy of the Consultation Centre is to ensure efficient participation of national minorities in social and cultural life of the country.

Besides, the Ministry of Health of the Republic of Azerbaijan pays special attention to improvement of knowledge and professional skills of medical officers and personnel all over Azerbaijan, including regions populated by national minorities.

Owing to a shortage of medical personnel in rural areas of the country, vacancies are still being filled through direct placement of alumni of the Medical University of Azerbaijan. 75% of graduates have been appointed to regions since 2010. Special attention has been paid to development of potential of human resources in regions populated by national minorities. 250 medical officers from Azerbaijan were assigned to leading hospitals of the world for professional improvement courses in 2015. 22 of them were representatives of national minorities.

At the same time, at least 250 representatives of national minorities are employed in the legal system of the country, and most of them are high ranked officers.

PART 3

Having focused on socio-economic and cultural issues of national minorities, the Council on State Support to NGOs under the President of the Republic of Azerbaijan arranged competitions for getting financial aid between local and foreign NGOs within the period under review. Since 2011 the Council has financed 15 projects of local NGO's dealing with national minority issues. Total amount of money spent on the projects is 95500 AZN (60000 USD). The projects were dedicated to preserve cultural heritage of national minorities, support activities of communities, sponsor anniversary events, host forums and congresses, encourage socio-economic development of national minorities, promote intellectual breakthrough, and arrange their rest and leisure time more effectively.

In the framework of these projects "Literary Works of Kurdish Writers" and "Contemporary Polish Literature" books have been translated and published; the 3rd Forum of the Russian community in Azerbaijan and the 20th anniversary of the Russian community activities in Azerbaijan have been celebrated in Baku and Ismayilli with participation of an invited Russian delegation; the 9th Congress of "Vatan Society" of the Meskhetian Turks has been held in Baku; the Congress of the Kurdish writers has been held in Baku; a TV program devoted to the ethnic and cultural life of the Meskhetian Turks has been broadcasted by Ses TV, a debate between Baku and Sofia has been broadcasted on radio.

The Law of the Republic of Azerbaijan does not stipulate compulsory registration for functioning of legal entities so that they can function freely in Azerbaijan.

In 2011-2016, the Council on State Support to NGOs under the President of the Republic of Azerbaijan, the Youth Foundation under the President of the Republic of Azerbaijan and other donors financed a few projects on promotion of national minority rights.

In the past 5 years, projects financed by the Council on State Support to NGOs under the President of the Republic of Azerbaijan have been addressed to protection of uniqueness of national minorities of Azerbaijan, preservation of their ethnic and cultural peculiarities, reinforcement of intercultural dialogue and development of international cooperation in this field. Moreover, reports, presentations and books dedicated to national minorities were published, television programs and radio debates were transmitted.

Besides, computer courses have been held, and cultural events have been organized in regions populated by national minorities in order to promote their socio-economic development. The Republic of Azerbaijan's Law on Mass Media does not specify the necessity of getting official permission to establish print media. It is important to mention that 15 prints of national minorities (the Talyshes, the Kurds, the Russians, the Lezgins, the Avars, the Jews, the Bolgars, the Akhiskhas and etc.) have been registered by the Ministry of Justice and have been functioning without any problem so far. Currently, there are 50 NGOs of national minorities registered in Azerbaijan.

The state continues to make every effort to promote civil society in the country. Establishment of the "Personal e-window" e-information system ensures exchange of information between NGOs and government institutions.

NGO Public Councils, in conformity with the Law of the Republic of Azerbaijan on Social Participation dated 1 June 2014, Public Councils of NGOs have been established within central and local executive authorities. This has enabled NGO Public Councils to conduct control at all levels of public administration, as well as to participate in the decision making process.

The Republic of Azerbaijan, which has declared its intention to obey the rule of law and to build a law-based, secular and democratic state, ensures that its Law contains no rule which denies issue of documents attesting a person's identity, as well as registration of a person's place of residence on the grounds of his/her descend or ethnicity.

Austerity measures have been taken to carry out official inquiries on the incidents of violation of human rights and freedoms incidents provoked by the police. Parties to a case are entitled to use their own native language or free of charge services of a translator during an investigation. Everyday control is exerted over the process of bringing a suspect to a police department, detainment, and imposition of a penalty, all of which should be carried out with strict observance of human rights and freedoms and in compliance with the Law.

All detainees are to be examined prior to their detention. Their requests for medical aid and refusals of medical assistance are to be officially recorded. Provisions of both the domestic legislation and international law which specify the necessity of providing detainees with legal (lawyer) and medical assistance (doctor) are strictly observed. Guidance and recommendations of foreign experts have been taken into consideration in order to improve domestic regulations on functioning of facilities of temporary detention. These domestic regulations have been brought to conformity with Law on ensuring rights and freedoms of persons held in places of detention dated 22 May 2012 including recommendations of foreign experts

The Law Enforcement Authorities ensure strict observance of the Law, human rights and freedoms within its own structure as well as full implementation of relevant provisions of the National Action Plan which plays an important role in fulfilment of the work in this field. Received complaints regarding relevant cases have been investigated comprehensively and objectively, violated rights of citizens have been restored.

Behaviour of police officers is based on the principle of absolute respect to rights of all individuals. Subject of protection of human rights has been included into a curriculum of the Police Academy. Professional legal assistance is given to all individuals who need protection and apply to the Law Clinics opened under the Academy's Department of State and Law Theory. Also such people receive assistance in being provided with necessary documents.

Furthermore, contests on “Evaluation of knowledge in the field of human rights” are conducted among police officers to promote spread of knowledge in the sphere of human rights and evaluate the level of staff awareness on this issue.

On the other hand, Article 5 of the “Law on Police” of the Republic of Azerbaijan specifies that police should protect rights and legal interests of all people regardless of their race, ethnicity, religion, language, gender, financial and occupational status, conviction, affiliation to a political party, trade union or other organizations in compliance with the Constitution of the Republic of Azerbaijan and international and intergovernmental treaties to which the Republic of Azerbaijan is a party.

Principles of equality before the Law and equality of every person before the Law and Court are reflected in article 7 of the Code of Administrative Offences and article 11 of the Code of Criminal Procedure of the Republic of Azerbaijan respectively.

Furthermore, 6% of the internal affairs bodies staff is comprised of representatives of Azerbaijan’s various national minorities including the Kurds, the Lezghins, the Talyshes, the Avars, the Russians, the Jews and etc.

Today, also high level cooperation is carried out with the Office of the UN High Commissioner for Refugees to avoid racial and ethnic discrimination against people seeking asylum, as well as to ensure additional forms of protection for people who has not been formally recognized as refugees and need protection. In general, efforts are being made within the scope of the “National Action Program on improvement of protection of human rights and freedoms in the Republic of Azerbaijan” in compliance with the recommendations of the UN and the Council of Europe. The program was approved by a Decree of the President of the Republic of Azerbaijan on 27 December 2011.

Note from the secretariat of the Framework Convention for the Protection of National Minorities: annexes 1-4 are available in English and Azerbaijani in a separate document.