



**ADVISORY COMMITTEE ON THE
FRAMEWORK CONVENTION FOR THE
PROTECTION OF NATIONAL MINORITIES**

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Fifth Report submitted by Azerbaijan

**Pursuant to Article 25, paragraph 2 of the Framework
Convention for the Protection of National Minorities –
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**Fifth Periodic Report of the Government of the
Republic of Azerbaijan on the Framework
Convention for the Protection of National
Minorities of the Council of Europe**

Introduction

In accordance with paragraph 2 of Article 25 of the Framework Convention for the Protection of National Minorities of the Council of Europe (CoE) (hereinafter the Framework Convention), the Government of the Republic of Azerbaijan submits its fifth periodic report for the period of 2016-2021 (hereinafter the Report).

The Report was developed by a working group of relevant authorities of Azerbaijan considering the provisions of the Framework Convention, as well as the Advisory Committee's Fourth Opinion on Azerbaijan ACFC/OP/IV(2017)006 adopted on November 8, 2017 and recommendations contained in the resolution of the Committee of Ministers of the Council of Europe on the implementation of the Framework Convention CM/ResCMN(2021)7, dated February 3, 2021.

Azerbaijan is known for its national and ethnographic diversity. Today, representatives of more than 30 ethnic groups live in the country. These people, who speak different languages and belong to diverse religions are equal citizens of Azerbaijan, consider themselves as Azerbaijanis and at the same time keep the elements of their culture and traditions.

One of the state's highest priority objectives is to ensure human rights and freedoms as well as the freedoms of national minorities. These main principles and rights are fixed and protected at the legislative level, contained in the Constitution of the country (Article 12 – "The highest priority objective of the state", Article 25 – "Right to equality", Article 44 – "Right to national identity", Article 45 – "Right to use native language") and other legal acts of the Republic of Azerbaijan.

Azerbaijan cooperates with various international organizations in the field of human rights protection, including the rights of ethnic minorities and minority nations. Azerbaijan has ratified more than 50 international treaties on the protection of human rights and persons belonging to national minorities such as the European Convention for the Protection of Human Rights and Fundamental Freedoms, the International Convention on the Elimination of All Forms of Racial Discrimination, the Convention on the Protection and Promotion of the Diversity of Cultural Expressions and other major international and regional legal human rights instruments. According to the Constitution of Azerbaijan, international treaties to which the Republic of Azerbaijan is a party are an integral part of the country's legislation system.

Advisory Committee's Fourth Opinion on Azerbaijan and recommendations contained in the Resolution of the Committee of Ministers of the Council of Europe on the implementation of the Framework Convention mentioned above were translated and disseminated among government agencies and non-governmental organizations.

Part I.

Measures taken to implement the main recommendations of the CoE Committee of Ministers' Resolution CM / ResCMN (2021) 7 dated 3 February 2021

- *ensure that the 2019 population census effectively provides for free and voluntary self-identification and the possibility to indicate multiple affiliations and more than one first language in order to reflect the multicultural character of Azerbaijan's population;*

Based on the information received from the State Statistics Committee of the Republic of Azerbaijan, the date of population census conducted in 2019 is currently being prepared, and statistical results will be released by the end of 2022.

At the same time, it should be noted that the census and questionnaires of the population, including questions on ethnicity and mother language held in Azerbaijan in 2019 were based on UNECE "Conference of European Statisticians Recommendations for the 2020 Censuses of Population and Housing", as well as the commitments arising from "Transforming our world: the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development" and the relevant decision, adopted during the 57th meeting of the Council of Heads of Statistical Services of CIS member countries held in Baku in 2017. It was discussed in detail with all interested parties, as well as with representatives of the UN Population Fund, UN Children's Fund, UN Development Program, and UN High Commissioner for Refugees, International Labor Organization and International Organization for Migration accredited in Azerbaijan. The census was also approved by the members of the Central Commission for Population Census Assistance represented by 19 state bodies of Azerbaijan and approved by the order of the State Statistics Committee dated April 16, 2018.

All questions from the questionnaire, including the questions - "What is your national (ethnic) affiliation?", "Your mother language?" and the sub-questions - "What languages do you speak fluently?", "What language do you usually speak at home?" were composed in accordance with the international methodology and were answered by the respondents freely without requiring any documents.

- *adopt, in close consultation with persons belonging to national minorities, and adequate legal framework for the protection of national minorities and comprehensive anti-discrimination legislation, and establish a specialized body to co-ordinate issues relating to national minority protection, and provide the opportunity for national minority representatives to effectively participate in decision-making processes affecting them;*

Ethno-cultural diversity in Azerbaijan, where multiculturalism is pursued as a state policy, is successfully and effectively regulated through this policy. One of the important examples of Azerbaijani state policy of multiculturalism is the high level of State-Religion relations. The Baku International Center for Multiculturalism (BICM) was established by the Decree of the President of the Republic of Azerbaijan dated May 15, 2014. The purpose of the Center and its main tasks are as follows:

- ensuring the protection, tolerance and cultural diversity in accordance with the ideology of Azerbaijanism;

- research of the cultural, social and political importance of reality within Azerbaijani multicultural and tolerant society and developing a promotional mechanism for this purpose;
- conduction of scientific-practical analysis of the tolerant bases of cultural and religious diversity in the country;
- preparation of recommendations for relevant state structures;
- conduction of searches for traces of ancient culture in various regions together with relevant scientific institutions (organizing archaeological research in accordance with the Law of the Republic of Azerbaijan "On the Protection of Historical and Cultural Monuments");
- taking measures aimed at the study and the preservation of cultural and ethnographic heritage;
- implementing projects directed at systematic elimination of certain lacunas which could occur in the cultural, scientific and other social spheres and impede the development of moral integrity of personality.

The Baku International Center for Multiculturalism has a Coordinating Council that represents ethnocultural organizations of persons belonging to national minorities.

In order to create a scientific-theoretical basis for the state policy of multiculturalism in the protection of persons belonging to national minorities, and to support the implementation of this policy by scientific methods and principles, the Executive Committee of the Institute of Philosophy and Sociology of the Azerbaijan National Academy of Sciences (ANAS) held a series of events which resulted also in the foundation of ANAS's Division of Multiculturalism, tasked with respective research area.

At the same time, issues regarding ethnic, as well as religious minorities, and issues of tolerance were included in the research agenda and involved in the studies held at the newly established Department of Political heritage of Heydar Aliyev and philosophy of Azerbaijanism, Department of Philosophical Problems of the Information Society and Department of Islamic Philosophy. The Institute regularly held scientific-theoretical conferences, seminars, and round tables on the theoretical and practical aspects of issues related to persons belonging to national minorities, and religious denominations, organized presentations and discussions of books and articles prepared by researchers, as well as prepared recommendations and proposals which were published in the press.

Although issues related to the participation of national minorities in the decision-making process are not directly regulated by law, the existing legislation, including Articles 25, 54-56, 85, 100, 121 and 126 of the Constitution of the Republic of Azerbaijan, and Article 27.1 of the Law "On Civil Service", the Article 3 of the Law "On the Status of Municipalities" does not provide any restrictions on the election (appointment) of citizens belonging to national minorities to positions in state bodies.

The participation of civil society in the decision-making process continues to grow. There are public councils under local and central executive authorities. Representatives of these public councils are Non-Governmental Organizations (NGOs), which participate in the decision-making process of each body they represent (financial issues, submission of draft laws to the consideration of the Parliament (Milli Majlis), etc.). NGOs are invited by Parliament to discussions on all draft laws, and this is one of the most

important factors in the participation of civil society in the decision-making process. The Agency for State Support of Non-Governmental Organizations of the Republic of Azerbaijan provides advice to public councils under local and central executive authorities.

c) remove obstacles to freedom of expression and freedom of association and take supportive measures so that persons belonging to national minorities can express their identities, voice their concerns, and participate in public decision-making, both individually and in community with others;

Freedom of thought and speech, freedom of conscience, freedom of assembly and right to association, as well as the right to free enterprise are enshrined in Articles 47, 48, 49, 58 and 59 of the Constitution of the Republic of Azerbaijan. The main organizations and national cultural centers of national and ethnic minorities in Azerbaijan are as follows:

Ronayi Kurdish Cultural Center, Lezgi National Center "Samur", Lezgi Mythology Study Center, Lezgi Youth Center, Dagestani Cultural Center, Ukrainian Community in Azerbaijan, Cultural Center "Sakhur", Talysh Cultural Center, Udi Cultural Center "Orayin", Albanian-Udi Christian Religious Community, Avar National Cultural Center, Charity Society "Lahij", Tat Cultural Center "Azeri", Russian Community Public Union in Azerbaijan, Slavic Cultural Center in Azerbaijan, Society "Sodrujestvo", Tugan Tel Tatar Cultural Society, Tatar Community in Azerbaijan, Azerbaijan Tatar Youth Center "Yashlek", Azerbaijani Georgian Community, Society of Akhiska Turks "Vatan", Cultural Center of Akhiska Turks "Akhiska", "Budug" Cultural Center, "Shahdag" Cultural Center, European Jewish Religious Community, Mountain Jews of Azerbaijan religious community, Georgian Jewish religious community, Jewish Agency "Sokhnut", Jewish Cultural Center, Azerbaijan-Israel Friendship Center, Hesed-Khershon, Joint and Vaad-L-Hetzola Jewish Charity communities, Yeva Women's Society, Jewish Youth Club "Alef", Jewish Student Cultural Center "Hilel", Judaica International Society, German National Cultural Society, Khinalig Cultural Center, Public Union "Assistance to the Development of Azerbaijan-Bulgaria Friendship.

The main activity of the communities and organizations of minorities living in peace and tranquility in Azerbaijan for centuries is to organize various public cultural events of people they represent, to disseminate these activities in the media which are published in their own languages, as well as to arrange education in their native languages in secondary schools. These organizations always operate under the attention and protection of the state. Thus, in addition, ethnic communities are regularly provided with financial assistance with the aim of supporting the organization of various activities, including cultural events.

d) Expand the scope of teaching of minority languages, inform about the right to learn minority languages, regularly assess the needs and demands for such teaching, and effectively enhance the quality of teaching through introducing teacher training at the university level.

Children of persons belonging to national minorities are enrolled in general education facilities (secondary schools), in areas which they inhabit on the basis of the same rights and are provided with opportunities to study their respective native languages 2 hours per week in each academic year. Lezgi language is taught in I-IX, Hebrew language in I-XI, and other languages (Talysh, Avar, Tsakhur, Udi, Kurdish, Khinalig) are taught in I-IV grades.

30817 students belonging to minorities are learning their native language in 378 secondary schools across the country. Thus, in the 2020/2021 academic year, the number of schools teaching the Talysh language is 254, the number of students is 20,240, the number of schools teaching the Avar language is 19, the number of students is 1,700, the number of schools teaching the Lezgi language is 95, the number of students is 8005, number of schools teaching Hebrew language is 2, number of students 123 people, number of schools teaching Sakhur language is 3, number of students 441 people, number of schools teaching Khinalig language is 1, number of students 101 people, number of schools teaching Udin language is 3, number of students 176 people and the number of Kurdish-language schools is 1 and the number of students is 31 (statistics in Annex 1). There are 10 Georgian-language secondary schools in the country. These schools are functioning in Gakh (7 schools), Zagatala (2 schools) and Balakan (1 school) districts. At the same time, Hebrew is taught in Jewish classes in School No. 46 of Baku. In the 2020-2021 academic year, 50 Jewish students studied at the school.

In order to preserve and develop the cultural heritage of persons belonging to national minorities, measures have been taken to prepare textbooks in their mother language on the basis of a new curriculum. The preparation of new textbooks in the Avar language (I-IV grade), Lezgi language (I-IV grade), Tsakhur language (I- Preparation of new textbooks on IV grade), Khinalug language (I-IV grade) and Talysh language (I-IV grade) has been completed. Also, textbooks for grades V-X in 2017 and grade XI in 2018 were translated into Georgian.

For students of Georgian-language secondary schools, 11600 copies in 58 titles for V-IX grades for 2016-2017 academic year, 1800 copies in 9 titles for X grades for the 2017-2018 academic year, XI grade for 2018-2019 academic year, 756 copies in 9 titles, 1076 copies in 9 titles for the 2020-2021 academic year were translated and printed and delivered to the places. It was planned to send 1222 textbooks and 2 teaching aids for the 2021-2022 academic year. By the Order of the President of the Republic of Azerbaijan dated October 29, 2018, the Alibeyli village secondary school named after Shota Rustaveli was built in Alibeyli village of Gakh region in November 2018.

Lankaran State University, which is engaged in teacher training in Lankaran, the region densely populated by minorities, Guba branch of the Azerbaijan State Pedagogical University in Guba, its Sheki branch in Sheki, at the same time, pedagogical education colleges in these regions contribute to the expansion of educational opportunities of persons belonging to national minorities.

Instructors engaged in the teaching of the national languages of the minorities are regularly involved in professional development courses in accordance with the relevant regulations. The Ministry of Education has a Council for the development and publication of textbooks and programs in the languages of persons belonging to national minorities.

Part II

The measures taken towards article-by-article implementation of Framework Convention

Article 4

1 The Parties undertake to guarantee to persons belonging to national minorities the right of equality before the law and of equal protection of the law. In this respect, any discrimination based on belonging to a national minority shall be prohibited.

2 The Parties undertake to adopt, where necessary, adequate measures in order to promote, in all areas of economic, social, political and cultural life, full and effective equality between persons belonging to a national minority and those belonging to the majority. In this respect, they shall take due account of the specific conditions of the persons belonging to national minorities.

3 The measures adopted in accordance with paragraph 2 shall not be considered to be an act of discrimination.

Article 12 of the Constitution of the Republic of Azerbaijan states that ensuring human rights and freedoms is the highest goal of our state. The State shall guarantee the equality of rights and freedoms to everyone, irrespective of race, ethnicity, religion, language, sex, origin, property status, occupation, beliefs or affiliation with political parties, trade union organizations or other public associations.

Guided by the mentioned provisions of the Constitution, national legislation, international instruments to which Azerbaijan is a party, as well as the Framework Convention for the Protection of National Minorities, conditions were created for the free exercise of constitutional rights and freedoms for all segments of the population and the ethnic groups. Socio-political stability, civil solidarity, and ethnoreligious tolerance exist in Azerbaijan today, as in previous years. The approach to the representatives of all nations is the same, and every value and every difference are respected.

All necessary measures are being taken to prevent racism and xenophobia. As a logical consequence of the state guarantee of the right to equality recognized by the Constitution and the practical measures taken in this area, the necessary measures are taken to promptly eliminate actions aimed at inciting national and racial hatred, humiliating national dignity, as well as restricting the rights or obtaining privileges of citizens, regardless of nationality and race, and problems that may lead to a violation of the right to equality, and their appeals are treated with sensitivity.

A number of amendments were made to the Constitution of the Republic of Azerbaijan by the Referendum Act dated September 26, 2016. As a result, Article 25, Part III of the Constitution states that the State shall guarantee the equality of rights and freedoms to everyone, irrespective of race, ethnicity, religion, language, sex, origin, property status, occupation, beliefs or affiliation with political parties, trade union organisations or other public associations and prohibits the restriction of human and civil rights and freedoms on the basis of ethnicity.

In addition, the amendment to Part III of Article 47 of the Constitution states that agitation and propaganda inciting racial, national, religious, social discord and animosity or

relying on any other criteria is inadmissible. Within the framework of harmonization with the mentioned amendments, the legislation of the Republic of Azerbaijan (“On Education”, “On Civil Service”, Election Code, “Model Charter of Preschool Education Institution”) approved by the Cabinet of Ministers on October 2, 2012 “Model Charter of the first vocational education institution” approved by the decision of December 29, 2013, as well as other relevant draft legal acts were prepared and submitted accordingly.

In the performance of their duties, deputies shall be impartial, during the performance of their duties shall not allow superiorities of any person or group of persons on the grounds of on race, ethnicity, language, gender, social origin, property and official position, religion, as well as shall prevent the creation of conditions for such advantages. A similar provision is enshrined in Article 7.1 of the Law on Rules of Ethical Conduct of Municipal Members, adopted on May 31, 2017.

Article 8.0.4 of the “Law on Employment” of June 29, 2018 states that one of the main duties of the state in the field of employment is ensuring all persons regardless of race, ethnicity, religion, language, gender, disabled (except the cases where it is difficult to do this because of their disability) and family status, social origin, place of residence, property status, beliefs, affiliation with political parties, trade unions and other public associations, equal opportunities in exercising the right to free choice of job and employment.

According to parts 3 and 4 of Article 16 of the Labor Code of the Republic of Azerbaijan, an employer or other natural person that allows discrimination indicated in Paragraph 1 of the Article shall bear responsibility in accordance with the legislation. A person subject to the discrimination may appeal to the court to restore their violated rights. In accordance with part 2 of article 154 of the Labor Code of the Republic of Azerbaijan, any reduction in the wages of employees in violation of the principles of non-discrimination provided in article 16 of the Code, and payment of less than the established minimum wage by the state is prohibited.

The “Employment Strategy of the Republic of Azerbaijan for 2019-2030” approved by the Order of the President of the Republic of Azerbaijan dated October 30, 2018, includes strengthening social protection of the unemployed, people with difficulty finding employment, integration into the labor market, involvement in active employment measures, improving the labor market, improving the quality of labor resources and increasing competitiveness, increasing economic activity, regardless of race, ethnicity, religion and language measures in the direction of creation are reflected.

The Ministry of Labor and Social Protection of Population has prepared a draft "National Strategy for the Development of Social Services in the Republic of Azerbaijan in 2021-2027", which reflects the country's policy, the essence of social development and regulatory mechanisms for the formation of the social service system. The mentioned document provides equal rights for all citizens in the field of social protection. No restrictions shall be imposed on a person depending on his or her ethnicity and no discrimination shall be allowed.

One of the social assistance programs, the Law of the Republic of Azerbaijan “On Social Benefits”, came into force in 2006. Social benefits and allowances are assigned to persons who are not entitled to a labor pension and are intended to provide a minimum standard of living, and no discrimination on the basis of ethnicity is allowed. The targeted

state social assistance program is one of the social assistance programs aimed at reducing poverty in the country. Social assistance is provided to all low-income families in accordance with the principles of targeting, fairness and equality. Discrimination on the basis of ethnicity is not allowed in the allocation of assistance under both programs.

According to Articles 1, 2 and 10 of the “Law of the Republic of Azerbaijan on Public Health”, medical services in state medical institutions are free in the Republic of Azerbaijan and guarantee the right of everyone to use these services, regardless of nationality, religion, race or gender.

Large projects in socio-economic, educational, cultural, health, and ecological fields were implemented in the southern, north-western and northern regions, the territories densely populated with national minorities during the past period in accordance with the decrees of the President of the Republic of Azerbaijan. According to these programs, hundreds of new schools, hospitals and diagnostic centers, sports and health complexes, tourism and recreation centers, industrial and production enterprises, etc. were built and put into operation in the areas where people belonging to national minorities live, and large landscaping and restoration work were carried out.

Within the framework of large-scale health care reforms implemented in the country, medical diagnostic centers, primary health care services and hospitals meeting international standards, fully equipped with the latest medical technologies and medical equipment have been put into operation in the northern, north-western, southern and central lowland regions inhabited by national minorities in Azerbaijan. Lezgi, Tsakhur, Avar, Ingiloy, Jewish, Ahiska Turks, Tat, Talysh and other Azerbaijani citizens living in these regions benefit from high-quality medical services. In recent years, the Ministry of Health has either built or overhauled more than 300 large health facilities in the regions of the country and in the capital, including areas inhabited by national minorities. In the lowland region inhabited by the Ahiska Turks, the Perinatal Center and other health facilities were created for communities after a major overhaul.

In accordance with Article 2 of the Council of Europe Convention on the Protection of Children against Sexual Exploitation and Sexual Abuse, approved by the Law of the Republic of Azerbaijan dated October 22, 2019, the implementation of the provisions of the Convention by the Parties, in particular the enjoyment of measures to protect the rights of victims, shall be secured without discrimination on any ground such as sex, race, color, language, religion, political or other opinion, national or social origin, association with a national minority, property, birth, sexual orientation, state of health, disability or other status.

Presidential Decree dated June 23, 2016, approved the “Rules for control over clerical work related to citizens' appeals in state bodies, state-owned legal entities and budget organizations”. According to Part 1 of this Regulation, these Rules regulate the control over the clerical work related to the receipt, registration, consideration, response and archiving of proposals, applications and complaints of citizens, including other individuals and legal entities, which are carried out by the above-mentioned bodies, legal entities and organizations, as well as persons defined by Article 5.8 of the Law "On Citizens' Appeals" (legal entities performing functions of public importance, as well as education, health, culture and social private legal entities and individual entrepreneurs providing services in the field). During the monitoring carried out by the relevant department of the Administration of the President of the Republic of Azerbaijan,

the restriction of the right of a person to apply for race, nationality, religion, language, sex, origin, property status, occupation, beliefs, as well as affiliation with political parties, trade unions and other public associations is indicated as one of the cases identified for the evaluation of this activity according to paragraph 2.3.

By the Presidential Decree dated June 21, 2017, the “Rules for conducting interviews for the purpose of holding a civil service position” were approved. Paragraph 1.3 of this Rules defines the principles (legality, objectivity, equality, etc.) implemented by the interview commission. The principle of equality in sub-clause 1.3.5 of the Rules stipulates that all candidates, regardless of race, ethnicity, religion, language, sex, origin, property status, the position of service, beliefs, affiliation to political parties, trade unions and other public associations are intended to be guaranteed equal rights to conduct interviews. Paragraph 3.1 of the “Rules and Standards of Corporate Governance in State-Owned Joint Stock Companies” approved by the Cabinet of Ministers on June 4, 2019 not depending on the form of ownership, size of shares, citizenship, religion, ethnicity and gender, all shareholders should be treated equally.

Resolution of the Cabinet of Ministers No. 111 and 112 of April 26, 2021 "Rules on the admission of children to family-type small group houses established by the state and municipalities, leaving the group houses, organization of services in the group houses, as well as provision and living conditions of children in the group houses" and “Rules on the admission of children to social service institutions established by the state and municipalities, their departure from these institutions, organization of services in orphanages, as well as provision and living conditions of children in orphanages”. Paragraph 1.2 of the Rules stipulate that discrimination against children on the basis of race, ethnicity, religion, language, gender or origin in social service institutions, such as group homes and orphanages is prohibited.

In 2016-2021, the programs of training courses organized for candidates for judges and employees of the Ministry of Justice at the Academy of Justice included lectures on "Features of protection of human rights belonging to different groups" and "Prohibition of discrimination". In total, 708 listeners participated in these trainings with 170 of them being candidates for judges.

Also, following trainings were held for judges, lawyers and court staff in 2016-2021:

- On May 26-27, 2016, a training on “Article 14 (Prohibition of Discrimination) of the European Convention on Human Rights” was organized by the Council of Europe and the Academy of Justice. 24 judges participated in the training.
- On May 4-5, 2017, a training on “The right to property under the European Convention on Human Rights and prohibition of discrimination” was organized by the Council of Europe and the Academy of Justice with the participation of 23 judges.
- On May 11-12, 2017, two-day training on “Article 6 (Right to a fair trial) and Article 14 (Prohibition of Discrimination) of the European Convention on Human Rights was held in Sheki. The training was attended by 17 lawyers and 18 court staff. In total, 47 judges, 17 lawyers and 18 court staff participated in these trainings.

For the purpose of the successful implementation of state programs on socio-economic development of the regions of the Republic of Azerbaijan adopted to ensure sustainable

and balanced development of cities and regions inhabited by national minorities in Azerbaijan, including improving the quality of public services, infrastructure, and ensuring the effectiveness of measures related to the improvement of the population's well-being, the composition of economic regions was revised and on July 7, 2021, the Decree "On the new division of economic regions in the Republic of Azerbaijan" established in the economic regions of Karabakh and East Zangazur.

Relevant measures aimed at the improvement of ensuring communal services and social infrastructure, the development of entrepreneurship, the creation of new enterprises and workplaces, as a result, the direction of increasing the employment of the population and improving the standard of living have been taken within the framework of the state programs on socio-economic development of the regions of the Republic of Azerbaijan, including the economic regions of Lankaran, Guba-Khachmaz and Sheki-Zagatala, where people belonging to national minorities live compactly. Within the framework of these state programs, the following activities have been carried out since 2017 to further improve and develop living conditions in these economic regions:

In **Lankaran-Astara economic region** 37 settlements were gasified, 2551 km of power lines were laid or restored, 746 km of drinking water and 497 km of sewer lines were laid, 669 km of roads of local and republican importance were built and reconstructed. Significant work has been done in order to improve the social infrastructure, 94 schools, 12 kindergartens, 15 health facilities and 2 cultural, 2 youth-sports facilities have been built or overhauled. As a result of the work done during the first quarter of 2017-2021 1030 new enterprises and 69,619 jobs were created in the Lankaran - Astara economic region.

In **Guba-Khachmaz economic region** 54 settlements were gasified, 3678 km of power lines were laid or restored, 279 km of drinking water and 836 km of sewer lines were laid, 597 km of roads of local and republican importance were built and reconstructed. In order to improve the social infrastructure, 75 schools, 11 kindergartens, 7 health facilities, 9 culture, 2 youth-sports facilities were built or overhauled. As a result of the work done during the first quarter of 2017-2021, in Guba-Khachmaz economic region, 1549 new enterprises and 20552 jobs were created.

In **Sheki-Zagatala economic region**, 14 settlements were gasified, 2946 km of power lines were laid or restored, 241 km of drinking water and 200 km of sewer lines were laid, 625 km of roads of local and republican importance were built and reconstructed. Significant work has been done in order to improve the social infrastructure, 52 schools, 17 kindergartens, 11 health facilities, 13 cultural and 1 youth-sports facilities were built or overhauled.

1009 new enterprises and 25068 jobs were created during the first quarter of 2017-2021 in the Sheki - Zagatala economic region.

The followings were done by the Entrepreneurship Development Fund under the Ministry of Economy during 2016-2020 and 3 months of 2021:

AZN 26.1 million soft loans were provided to 1005 business entities in **Lankaran-Astara economic region** and 1766 new jobs were planned to be created due to these projects;

88.6 million manat soft loans were provided to 889 business entities in **Guba-Khachmaz economic region** and it is planned to create 2747 new jobs due to these projects;

AZN 32.2 million soft loans were provided to 608 business entities in **Sheki-Zagatala economic region** and 1448 new jobs are planned to be created due to these projects.

The Small and Medium Business House (Khachmaz SMB House), a single space for government - to - business (“G2B”) and necessary business - to - business (“B2B”) services based on modern innovations has been launched in order to improve public services for entrepreneurs, provide a comfortable, unimpeded and transparent access to services from a single space. This was a continuation of the state support measures provided to small and medium businesses (SMEs) in Khachmaz city of Guba-Khachmaz economic region on February 7, 2020.

Services regarding customs, tax, property, communal, food security, agriculture, e-commerce, post, advertising, certificate of origin, issuance of licenses and permits are provided by state bodies, as well as banking, leasing, insurance, brokerage, logistics, translation, stamp and seal preparation are provided by private entities in Khachmaz SMB House.

At the same time, the SMB Development Center in Khachmaz SMB House provides services on empowering entrepreneurship initiatives, startups, training, consulting and technical support on various topics aimed at supporting entrepreneurs in launching of startup projects and creation of new business and employment opportunities in of Guba-Khachmaz economic region.

Statistical data reflecting the number of newly created jobs and enterprises are provided in Annex 2.

Article 5

1 The Parties undertake to promote the conditions necessary for persons belonging to national minorities to maintain and develop their culture, and to preserve the essential elements of their identity, namely their religion, language, traditions and cultural heritage.

2 Without prejudice to measures taken in pursuance of their general integration policy, the Parties shall refrain from policies or practices aimed at assimilation of persons belonging to national minorities against their will and shall protect these persons from any action aimed at such assimilation

Azerbaijan has always created ample opportunities for people of different cultures, religions and denominations to live freely in mutual understanding without any obstacles, as well as for minorities to protect their ethnic and cultural values and take an active part in any sphere of public life.

“National Action Program to increase the effectiveness of protection of human rights and freedoms in the Republic of Azerbaijan” approved by the Decree of the President of the Republic of Azerbaijan dated December 27, 2011, increased the effectiveness of the protection of human rights and freedoms, protection of the rights of various groups of the population, and the strengthening of educational measures in the field of human rights and created conditions for the purposeful conduct of this work. In accordance with the National Action Program, the cultural heritage of ethnic minorities is preserved and developed.

The establishment of the Foundation for the Propagation of Moral Values by the President of the Republic of Azerbaijan under the State Committee for Work with Religious Organizations (SCWRA) on October 10, 2017 should be specially noted. Thus, the Foundation promotes the common values of all national and religious minorities living in Azerbaijan, regardless of nationality or religion, and provides support for existing religious denominations in the country, protection and development of spiritual values, as well as strengthens state support in this area.

a) Allocation of funds by the Government of Azerbaijan to support the activities of religious institutions belonging to national minorities

The tradition of financial assistance to religious organizations by the President of the Republic of Azerbaijan continues every year. Relevant decrees of the President of the Republic of Azerbaijan have repeatedly provided financial assistance to religious organizations in order to support the existing religious denominations in the country and ensure the harmony of their activities in 2017-2021:

- 250 (two hundred and fifty) thousand Azerbaijani manats to the Baku and Azerbaijan Diocese of the Russian Orthodox Church, 250 (two hundred and fifty) thousand manats to the Mountain Jews Religious Community of Baku, 100 (one hundred) thousand manats to the Baku religious community of European Jews, 100 (one hundred thousand) manats to the religious body of the Apostolic Prefecture of the Catholic Church in the Republic of Azerbaijan and 100 (one hundred) thousand manats to the Albanian-Udi Christian religious community of the Republic of Azerbaijan are allocated annually from the reserve fund of the President of the Republic of Azerbaijan envisaged in the 2017 and 2018 state budgets of the Republic of Azerbaijan.

- 350 (three hundred and fifty) thousand manats to the religious organization of the Russian Orthodox Church in Baku and Azerbaijan Diocese according to the relevant Presidential Decree 350 (three hundred fifty) thousand manats to the Mountain Jews religious community, 150 (one hundred fifty) thousand manats to the Baku religious community of European Jews, 150 (one hundred fifty) thousand manats to the religious

body of the Apostolic Prefecture of the Catholic Church in the Republic of Azerbaijan, 150 (one hundred and fifty) thousand manats to the Albanian-Udi Christian religious community is allocated from the reserve fund of the President of the Republic of Azerbaijan envisaged in the state budget of the Republic of Azerbaijan for 2019, 2020 and 2021.

- At the same time in order to provide financial support to other non-Islamic religious communities, especially the Christian community of Azerbaijan "Azerbaijan Bible Society", the Christian community "Vineyard Azerbaijan", the religious community of Krishna Consciousness, the religious community of Evangelical Messiah Baptists "Agape", Baku "Alov" Christian religious community, Religious Community of Molokan Spiritual Christian of Baku ord of Life" Christian religious community, Baku religious community of Savior Evangelical-Lutherans, New Life Christian Bible community of the Republic of Azerbaijan, Narimanov district of Baku "Seventh-day Adventists" religious community, Baku "Star in the East" Christian religious community, Baku "Evangelical Christian Baptist Church" religious community, Baku Jehovah's Witnesses religious community, Baku Baha'i religious community, Baku New Apostol Christian religious community, Baku Nasimi "Life-giving grace" Christian religious community, Sumgayit city "Molokan Ruhani-Christian" religious community, Sumgayit city Baha'i religious community, "Word of Life-2" Sumgayit Christian religious community, Sumgayit city "Alov" Christian religious community, Gakh region Alibeyli village "Holy Nino" church Georgian Orthodox Christian community, Gakh region Gakhingiloy village "Holy Giorgi" church Georgian Orthodox Christian community, Ismayilli region Ivanovka village "Molokan- Spiritual-Christian" religious community, "Seventh-day Adventists of Ganja city" Christian religious community, Khilmilli village of Gobustan region "Molokan Spiritual-Christian" religious community 100 (one hundred) thousand manats were allocated annually in 2019-2021 to the Foundation for Propagation of Moral Values operating under the auspices of the SCWRA.

b) Construction and renovation of houses of worship belonging to national minorities

Over the past period, the government of Azerbaijan has focused on the construction and renovation of not only mosques and shrines but also churches and synagogues, as well as other places of worship in the country. A number of measures are being taken in Azerbaijan to repair and restore historical and religious monuments and churches belonging to the Albanian-Udi Christian religious community. The Church of the Blessed Virgin Mary in the Nij settlement of the Gabala region where the Udis live compactly was inaugurated on November 7, 2020, after full restoration works initiated by the Heydar Aliyev Foundation in 2019.

At the same time, taking into account the importance of promoting Azerbaijan as an example of tolerance in the world, as well as the importance of analysis and promotion of philosophical, social, political and other aspects of different multicultural models in different countries, funds were allocated for the Baku International Center for

Multiculturalism (BISM) by the Order dated February 4, 2006, in order to ensure the wider promotion of the traditions of multiculturalism in Azerbaijan.

During the reporting period, Baku International Center for Multiculturalism held a number of events related to Azerbaijan's model of multiculturalism, ethnic minorities and minority nations. As an example, the round table on "The Holocaust and Khojaly - through the eyes of moderns" (together with the Jewish communities in Azerbaijan), the international round table on "Increasing ethnic and cultural diversity in the modern world and the importance of multiculturalism in its regulation" within the V World Forum on Intercultural Dialogue, exhibition "Azerbaijan: Address of Tolerance" at the Museum of Independence of Azerbaijan, lectures on "German settlement in the South Caucasus" at the Universities of Pirna and Dresden in Germany, the meeting of leaders of evangelical Protestant religious communities and ethnic communities in Azerbaijan with Johnny Moore, the US Commissioner for International Religious Freedom and President of the Interfaith Congress of Christian Leaders. As part of the fight against the COVID-19 pandemic, a campaign to provide financial assistance to senior members of ethnic communities in Azerbaijan, a video conference on "Heritage of Caucasian Albania", an expert meeting on combating antisemitism organized by the Swedish chairmanship of the OSCE in 2021 with the support of the OSCE Office for Democratic Institutions and Human Rights, an online conference on Regional Consultations on Eastern Europe and Central Asia and other events organized by UNESCO to prepare a Global Action Plan for the International Decade for Indigenous Languages (2022-2032), participated in the European Regional Forum on "Propaganda of Hate, Social Media and Minorities".

Baku International Center for Multiculturalism together with the Agency for State Support to Non-Governmental Organizations of the Republic of Azerbaijan studies the history and culture of ethnic minorities and minority nations in the country, projects of non-governmental organizations specializing in the promotion of native languages and cultures (cultural events, historical and ethnographic research, documentaries, publishing books, etc.). So far, the Center has supported dozens of projects. The involvement of professionals in the implementation of these projects, as well as the examination of their results are among the functions of the Baku International Center for Multiculturalism. In addition, four documentaries about the peoples living in Azerbaijan were made in 2020-2021 with the financial support of the Baku International Center for Multiculturalism, and 6 more documentaries are being shot. In addition, during the reporting period, hundreds of articles were published in local and foreign media on the model of multiculturalism of the Republic of Azerbaijan, the protection and development of the cultural rights of the peoples living in the country.

Fulfillment of state religious policy on protection and development of centuries-old traditions of tolerance, ethnoreligious diversity, as well as, reinforcement of mutual understanding and dialogue between religious confessions within the country has been one of the priorities of the religious policy of the Azerbaijani government for years. Over the past period, various measures have been taken to promote a spirit of tolerance, intercultural dialogue, mutual respect, understanding and cooperation between religious

organizations of different faiths, as well as religious institutions belonging to national minorities.

Ahiska Turkic families settled in Poylu, Boyuk Kesik, Soyugbulag villages of Agstafa region, Ashagi Salahli and Orta Salahli villages of Gazakh region. During the period, mobile library service was organized for Ahiska Turks living in those villages. Lezgins live in Galajik, Gurbanafendi, Topchu, Chamenli villages of Ismayilli region. There is a carpet-weaving association in the Galajik village club of the Heydar Aliyev Cultural Center, which promotes the traditions of the Lezgi people, and a Lezgi folklore group in the Gurbanafandi club.

Representatives of various minorities also live in the Shamakhi region. The most populated areas of minorities are Shamakhi city, Madrasa settlement, Chukhuryurd, Nagarahana, Gizmeydan, Birinci and Ikinci Cabani villages. There are ancient religious monuments belonging to minorities in the territory of the Shamakhi region. Molokan folklore groups took part in the 1st International Grape Wine Festival held in 2019, also culinary culture was demonstrated there. On the basis of the project of the Ministry of Culture, a performance of a Russian folklore group was organized at the "From Regions to Regions" creative festival in Shamakhi, and handicrafts were demonstrated. In 2019, the "Adigun" Turkish Folklore Collective of the Nasimikend village Folklore House branch, where Ahiska Turks live more compactly in the Saatli region, was included in the state register of Azerbaijan's intangible cultural heritage. On July 3-7, 2019, the first Republican Art Festival was held in our country. The festival was organized within the framework of the 43rd session of the UNESCO World Heritage Committee. Representatives of national minorities were also invited in order to ensure the participation of artists from the capital and regions of the Republic in the festival, along with masters engaged in various fields of art at a professional level.

Article 6

1 The Parties shall encourage a spirit of tolerance and intercultural dialogue and take effective measures to promote mutual respect and understanding and co-operation among all persons living on their territory, irrespective of those persons' ethnic, cultural, linguistic or religious identity, in particular in the fields of education, culture and the media.

2 The Parties undertake to take appropriate measures to protect persons who may be subject to threats or acts of discrimination, hostility or violence as a result of their ethnic, cultural, linguistic or religious identity.

In December 2008, at a conference of the Ministers of Culture of the Council of Europe member states in Baku on the theme of "Intercultural dialogue as a basis for peace and sustainable development in Europe and its neighboring regions" the President of Azerbaijan initiated the "Baku Process" for the promotion of dialogue and cooperation between Islamic and Western civilizations, as well as nations and cultures. On November 17, 2017, the Presidential Decree "On the celebration of the 10th anniversary

of the Baku Process" was adopted. Azerbaijan also hosts the World Forum on Intercultural Dialogue and the Baku International Humanitarian Forum every two years.

In accordance with Article 5.9 of the "Law on Youth Policy" and paragraph 2.9 of the Presidential Decree of 6 May 2002 on the application of this Law, the Ministry of Youth and Sports, the Ministry of Defense, the Ministry of Culture, the Ministry of Education, the State Committee for Work with Religious Organizations and local executive authorities prepare scientific-popular programs and implement educational projects and programs on state symbols, national and world history, culture, historical figures and National Heroes in order to promote the sense of patriotism, respect for national and universal values, commitments to the statehood principles and tolerance and multiculturalism in youth through mass media, television and radio broadcasters and social media.

Article 13-2 of the Law "On Information, Informatization and Protection of Information" as amended by the Law of the Republic of Azerbaijan dated March 17, 2020, stipulates that in addition to Internet information resources, information and telecommunication networks should not contain information on the promotion of violence and religious extremism, as well as open calls to incite national, racial or religious hatred and enmity. In this regard, the amendments made to the Code of Administrative Offenses on the same date also set out responsibility for the placement or failure to prevent publication of information the dissemination of which is prohibited in it the information-telecommunications network.

According to the "State Program on the Implementation of the National Strategy for the Development of the Information Society in the Republic of Azerbaijan for 2016-2020" approved by the Presidential Order dated September 20, 2016, relevant state bodies have been instructed to create various electronic information resources on the protection of the traditions of indigenous peoples and persons belonging to national minorities.

The State Committee for Work with Religious Organizations always operates in a spirit of mutual understanding with national and religious minorities living in the country. In order to protect human rights, organized by the State Committee, during the relevant period (October 2016 - October 2021), awareness-raising seminars were held in religious communities as part of "Children's Rights Month" (October 20 - November 20), "Human Rights Month" (May 18-June 18), and "Peace Month" (August 21 - September 21).

Various events were held in different cities and regions of the country within the framework of the International Day of Tolerance on November, 16 in order to promote peace and human rights and strengthen tolerance in the field of religion, inter-religious dialogue, and the existing traditions of tolerance in Azerbaijan. These include events on topics "Tolerance as a national wealth of the Azerbaijani people", "International Day for Tolerance", "Tolerance - the guarantor of interreligious and interethnic dialogue",

"Azerbaijan is a country of tolerance", "Azerbaijan is a land of tolerance", "Tolerance is a way of life in Azerbaijan", "Tolerance as an integral part of Azerbaijan's national identity". The active participation of persons belonging to religious and national minorities, representatives of non-governmental organizations operating in this field, as well as religious organizations was ensured at the events.

The President of the Republic of Azerbaijan signed an order declaring 2016 the "Year of Multiculturalism" in the Republic of Azerbaijan, and also approved the "Action Plan to declare 2016 the "Year of Multiculturalism" in the Republic of Azerbaijan". In accordance with this "Action Plan", in 2016 alone, the State Committee for Work with Religious Organizations held more than 150 events to combat religious radicalism and extremism, promote our national and spiritual values, tolerant and multicultural traditions, and promote multiculturalism as an alternative to radicalism and fanaticism.

On June 28-30, 2016, Baku hosted the V Republican Festival of National Minorities under the motto "Azerbaijan - Homeland", as well as a gala concert with the participation of more than 30 music and folklore groups representing 14 regions of the country. Also, as part of the event on June 30, The Carpet Museum featured a photo exhibition entitled "In a Single Family" reflecting the life and ethnography of national minorities, a CD and photo catalog entitled "Samples of folklore and dance folklore of persons belonging to national minorities living in Azerbaijan" was presented in Azerbaijani, English, Russian, French and German languages, and a round table on "Azerbaijani model of multiculturalism" was organized.

On October 10, 2016 a two-day workshop on "Inter-faith Dialogue on Promotion of Tolerance and Non-Discrimination" was organized in cooperation with OSCE Office for Democratic Institutions and Human Rights.

On October 8-10, 2016 a conference entitled "Contribution of Inter-Religious Dialogue to Peace and Multicultural Life" was held in Madrid.

On October 7, 2017 an international conference entitled "Azerbaijani Model of Multiculturalism as a Tool to Prevent Conflicts" was held at the United Nations Office at Geneva.

The Traditional Folklore Festival was organized in September-November 2019. The representatives of minorities living in our country participated in the festival. Representatives of the national minority band participated in the "Khari Bulbul" festival in Shusha in May 2021.

In addition, the 2nd international conference entitled "Contribution to Peace and Multicultural Life" was held with the cooperation of the State Committee on Religious Associations of the Republic of Azerbaijan, the Ministry of Justice of Spain, and the Embassy of the Republic of Azerbaijan to the Kingdom of Spain and with the support of Evsen Foundation in Madrid on November 6, 2017.

On April 27, 2017 a conference entitled "Multicultural and Inter-religious Tolerance: The Experience of Azerbaijan and its Significance for Europe" was held in Helsinki.

On March 5, 2019 an international conference entitled “From Inter-religious and Inter-civilization Dialogue to Cooperation” was held in Baku. The prominent state, religious figures and scholars, the leaders of the religious confessions, the representatives of the government, parliamentarians, as well as public figures attended the conference.

On April 25-26, 2019 the 2nd conference entitled “Inter-religious Dialogue and Fight with Radicalism” was held with the cooperation of the State Committee on Religious Associations of the Republic of Azerbaijan, the Delegation of the European Union to Azerbaijan and ADA University.

In November 2019 the 2nd Summit of the World Leaders was held in Baku. The representatives of more than 70 states, the 25 leaders of the religious branches as well as around 500 high-ranking representatives of the leading organizations and religious leaders attended the event.

On March 8-12, 2020 with the cooperation of the Stirling Foundation an international conference entitled “the Azerbaijani Mode of Multiculturalism and Inter-religious Dialogue” was held in the State of Utah, USA.

Various articles on the protection of human rights and minorities, elimination of racial discrimination, the promotion of peace and tolerance are being published in printed editions of the Ministry of Justice. Events on the legal education for the citizens including minorities residing in the regions are being held through the regional departments of the Ministry of Justice holds. In addition, the Ministry uploads the relevant information on its social networks and website.

According to Article 283 of the Criminal Code of the Republic of Azerbaijan (Incitement of national, racial or religious hatred and hostility), any actions aimed at the incitement of national, racial, social and religious hatred and hostility, the humiliation of national dignity as well as discrimination on the basis of race, religion or national origin or establishing superiority over a certain group of people on the grounds of their ethnic or racial background including through mass media are subject to criminal liability.

Moreover, Articles 103 (Genocide), 109 (Persecution), 154 (Violation of equality of rights), 167 (obstruction of persons in the exercise of religious beliefs), 168 (Encroachment on citizens’ rights on the pretext of performance of religious rites) of the Criminal Code include provisions ensuring the protection of rights of national minorities.

In addition, the rights of ethnic minorities are stipulated by the following Articles of the Criminal Code: Article 103 (Genocide), Article 109 (Persecution), Article 154 (Violation the rights to Equality), Article 167 (Obstruction of performance of any religious practices), 168 (Infringement of civil rights under the pretext of religious practices).

One person was convicted under Article 168 (Infringement of civil rights under the pretext of religious practices) and also another one was convicted under Article 283 (to stir up ethical, racial, social and religious hatred and hostility) of the Criminal Code during 2016-2020. Article 120.2.12 of the Criminal Code imposes a harsher penalty for a murder motivated by hatred or hostility based on a person’s nation, race or religion.

It should be mentioned that according to the Convention on the Elimination of All Forms of Racial Discrimination, the International Court of Justice released two orders within the framework of the proceeding lawsuits filed by both Azerbaijan and Armenia against each other on December 7, 2021.

The court rejected the vast majority of Armenia's appeals for the special measures.

Additionally, in light of Azerbaijan's request for provisional measures, the Court ordered Armenia to take all necessary measures to prevent the incitement and promotion of racial hatred, including by organizations and private persons in its territory, targeted at persons of Azerbaijani national or ethnic origin.

Article 7

The Parties shall ensure respect for the right of every person belonging to a national minority to freedom of peaceful assembly, freedom of association, freedom of expression, and freedom of thought, conscience and religion.

The Council of State Support to Non-Governmental Organizations under the President of the Republic of Azerbaijan was established by the Decree of the President of the Republic of Azerbaijan dated December 13, 2007. The Agency for State Support to Non-Governmental Organizations of the Republic of Azerbaijan was established on April 19, 2021 and replaced the Council of State Support to Non-Governmental Organizations.

NGOs operating in the country, as well as ethnic and cultural organizations of the people living in Azerbaijan, have the opportunity to receive financial assistance by applying to the Agency with the relevant grant projects.

According to the legislation of the Republic of Azerbaijan, non-governmental organizations can operate freely without state registration. In the context of freedom of association, there is no separate legislation regulating the right of national minorities to unite. The registration procedure is the same for all non-profit legal entities. Creating favorable conditions for the activities of non-governmental organizations is constantly at the center of attention. If the submitted documents contradict the existing legislation, written explanations shall be provided on the provisions that caused the contradiction in accordance with Article 11.3.1 of the "Laws on State Registration and State Register of Legal Entities". Once the grounds for refusal are removed, the documents may be re-submitted for state registration.

As a result of the favorable conditions created for NGOs within the framework of ongoing measures to support civil society, the number of NGOs in our country is growing year by year and is expanding their activities. According to the information provided by the State Registration of Non-Profit Organizations, 54 of the registered non-governmental organizations are related to ethnic minorities. In addition, non-governmental organizations working in the field of human rights, legal education, and other areas may

also promote the rights of persons belonging to national minorities in accordance with their charters.

Changes to legislation regulating the activities of NGOs are primarily aimed at increasing transparency, funding, accountability and strengthening the national donor institution. Amendments were made to the Laws on "State Registration and State Register of Legal Entities" and "Non-governmental organizations (public associations and foundations)" on December 17, 2013 in order to eliminate gaps in the legislation governing the activities of NGOs, to improve the rules of state registration and register of legal entities. In the process of adopting these laws, international standards, the experience of European countries, as well as the opinions of the Venice Commission of the Council of Europe in 2011, and the relevant judgments of the European Court of Human Rights were taken into account. Within the framework of these amendments, the provisions of the legislation on the liquidation of NGOs were revised and the legal basis for measures such as administrative liability and termination of activities as an alternative to this institution was established. It should be highlighted that in the last 10 years, no relevant institution has applied to the courts for the liquidation of NGOs.

Subsequent amendments to the "Law on Non-Governmental Organizations (Public Associations and Foundations)" and the "Law on Grants" dated October 17, 2014 cannot be considered as restrictions on the activities of NGOs. Thus, statistical analysis in this area demonstrates the dynamics of sustainable and significant growth in the funding of NGOs, reaffirming the state support for the activities of such organizations.

A local non-governmental organization does not need a state registration. The law prohibits the refusal of NGOs to register as legal entities due to inexpediency.

At the same time, in the context of freedom of association, there is no separate legislation regulating the right of association of persons belonging to national minorities. NGOs wishing to obtain the status of a legal entity must apply to the registration authority in accordance with the regulations established by the law, inform the public about these procedures and required documents, as well as their standard forms through the media, and the official website of the registration authority.

On October 21, 2016, the President of the Republic of Azerbaijan signed a Decree "On the application of the 'single window' principle in the procedure of allocating grants by foreign donors at the territory of the Republic of Azerbaijan" Since January 1, 2017, this principle is applied in the procedure for grants by foreign donors on the territory of the Republic of Azerbaijan. An important result of the application of the "single window" principle was a twofold reduction in the number of documents required for submission to the relevant state body, as well as the time required to obtain a grant.

Taking into account the recommendations contained in the "Opinion on the compatibility with human rights standards of the legislation on non-governmental organisations of the Republic of Azerbaijan" adopted by the Venice Commission of the Council of Europe

“Individual Electronic Window” system aimed at providing e-services to NGOs was created by the Decree of the President of the Republic of Azerbaijan dated November 20, 2013. By the Decree of the Head of State dated January 27, 2021, the range of e-services provided to NGOs through this information system was expanded and new services such as registration, as well as the inclusion of funds allocated for funding in the register, were added.

Also, the cases on the state registration of NGOs considered by the European Court of Human Rights were concluded on the basis of appeals from the founders of the organization. “The Southern Regional Development and Gender Issues” Public Union, which is among these organizations, was also registered in 2019.

Within the framework of cooperation with the Council of Europe, the “Civil Society Dialogue” project was implemented in Azerbaijan. The main directions of the project were the development of legislation in the field of civil society and its implementation in accordance with European standards. In accordance with the “National Action Plan for 2016-2018 on the promotion of open government” adopted with the Presidential Decree of April 27, 2016, to further deepen relations with civil society institutions, increase support for projects and initiatives of non-governmental organizations. “The Open Government Initiative Government – Civil Society Dialogue Platform”, established to provide and establish a new format of communication with civil society institutions, have been successful, through which a wide range of issues covering various areas of public life have been discussed and important decisions have been made.

The National Action Plan on the Promotion of Open Government for 2020-2022, approved by the Decree of the President of the Republic of Azerbaijan dated February 27, 2020, is another result of the discussions held on this platform. "Individual electronic window" electronic information system was created by the Presidential Decree on November 20, 2013 in order to increase the level of legal services provided to non-profit organizations, ensure citizen satisfaction, create favorable conditions for the activities of non-profit organizations. Within the implementation of aforementioned Plan by making relevant changes in the system, the software was developed for implementation of state registration of amendments made to the constituent documents of non-governmental organizations, as well as state registration of each subsequent changes made to the registered facts, registration of received and issued financial recourses by non-governmental organizations through "individual electronic window" electronic Information System on the basis of application and provision of corresponding reports in electronic form.

Amendments were made to the Laws of the Republic of Azerbaijan “On State Registration and State Register of Legal Entities”, “On Non-Governmental Organizations (Public Associations and Foundations)” and “On Grants” defining the legal basis of registration procedures for the provision of these electronic services, on June 30, 2020.

In order to finance its activities, non-profit organizations were allocated 804 million manats in 2017-2020 and the first 9 months of 2021, including funds from foreign sources.

Article 8

The Parties undertake to recognise that every person belonging to a national minority has the right to manifest his or her religion or belief and to establish religious institutions, organisations and associations.

Amendments made to the Law of the Republic of Azerbaijan "On Freedom of Religious Belief" on May 4, 2021, resulted in a number of changes to the mentioned Law, and established new norms on religious education, mass worship rituals and ceremonies, and other issues.

Thus, in accordance with Article 1 of this Law, parents or other legal representatives may, by mutual consent, bring up children in accordance with their religious beliefs and attitudes. It is forbidden to force children to believe in religion. The religious upbringing of children shall not adversely affect their physical and mental health.

At the same time, except for the cases provided for in the fourth part of Article 21 of the Law (religious worship, rites and ceremonies are allowed to be carried out by a foreign or stateless religious figure invited by a religious center (department) operating in the Republic of Azerbaijan or on an official visit to the Republic of Azerbaijan) coverage of the basics of religious teaching during mass religious worship, rites and ceremonies may be carried out only by religious figures appointed in accordance with the procedure established by this Law.

Activities aimed at promoting religious extremism, as well as the use of intra-religious and inter-religious differences for political purposes, are also prohibited.

According to Article 6 of the amended law, citizens can study religion and receive religious education individually and (or) together with others.

Students of religious educational institutions can enjoy the rights and privileges established for the students of state educational institutions.

National and religious minorities in Azerbaijan

Among the traditional religious denominations, the members of various Christian and Jewish communities that have historically lived in Azerbaijan have a special place in the country. Every year, the President of the Republic of Azerbaijan officially congratulates the people on the days and holidays considered sacred in Islam, as well as the holidays of citizens of other religions. In general, all the rights of religious minorities in the country are protected and all conditions are created for their activities. The state's attitude to religion in Azerbaijan is based on the principle of interreligious equality.

There is no discrimination or restriction on the ground of religion in state policy. There is equality of all religions before the law and members of religious denominations have the same rights as Islamic communities. National minorities are treated equally in receiving financial aid, including the building of their places of worship and also other areas.

a) Christianity in Azerbaijan

As for the number of Christians in our republic, Christianity is the second largest religion in Azerbaijan after Islam in terms of the number of its followers. About 2 percent of the country's population are Christians. This religion is practiced mainly by Russians, Belarusians, Greeks, Georgians, Udi, Ukrainians and some other national minorities.

In the country, both Orthodox and Catholics, as well as Udis, representatives of the ancient Eastern Church - the Albanian Church, as well as various Protestant denominations (sects), followers of new religions live freely in the faith, perform their religious rites in a free environment.

Orthodoxy in Azerbaijan is represented by two main churches - *the Russian Orthodox Church and the Georgian Orthodox Church*.

There are 7 churches under the Baku and Azerbaijan Eparchy of the Russian Orthodox Church.

Other members of the Orthodox branch - Georgian Orthodox - settled in the Gakh region. There are 4 Georgian Orthodox churches in the Gakh region: Saint George's Church in Gakhingiloy village, Church of Saint Sameba in Kotuklu village, Saint Michael's Church in Meshabash village and Saint Nino's Church in Alibeyli village.

Currently, there are five Albanian-Udi temples in the country - Albanian Autocephalous Church "Chotari" in Nij settlement of Gabala region, Albanian Church of Blessed Virgin Mary, Sanctuary "Kiski. Qerqes" in Oguz, "Khudavang" temple in Kalbajar region and "Agoghlan" temple in Lachin region.

One of the characteristic Christian trends in Azerbaijan is spiritual Christianity which has two branches in Azerbaijan: Molokanism and Dukhoborism. Molokans are mostly settled in Baku, Shamakhi, Sumgayit, Ivanovka village of Ismayilli region, Hilmilli village of Gobustan region, Novoivanovka and Novosaratovka villages of Gadabay region, as well as Dukhobors in Slavyanka village of Gadabay region.

At present, Catholics live mainly in Baku. Their number is approximately 400-450 people. About half of them are foreigners.

Relations between the Azerbaijani state and the Holy See are developing at a high level, and the religious needs of local Catholics are always in the focus of the state. The "Virgin Mary" Catholic Church was built in the center of Baku. The Board of Muslims of the Caucasus and representatives of other denominations of Azerbaijan also contributed to the construction of this church. In addition, there is a small Catholic church "Jesus Christ" Intercessor in Azerbaijan.

In 2021, a delegation of the Heydar Aliyev Foundation and religious communities in Azerbaijan paid a visit to the Vatican. During the visit, a new cooperation agreement was signed between the Heydar Aliyev Foundation and the Pontifical Commission of Sacred Archaeology on the restoration of the Catacombs of the Holy Commodilla. For more than a decade, religious monuments of historical significance have been reconstructed in the Vatican with the support of the Foundation. At the initiative of the First Vice-President of Azerbaijan, the President of the Heydar Aliyev Foundation, the next stage of cooperation in this direction has started in the Vatican.

Also, there are various Protestant denominations in the Republic. The history of Protestantism dates back to the XIX century. Basle missionaries and German pietists are considered 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. In addition, in 2016, a religious Christian community (a society uniting Albanian-Udi, Catholic and various Protestant religious communities) named "Azerbaijan Bible Society" was established. The main purpose of the society is to unite different Protestant religious communities and celebrate all religious holidays and other significant days together. Today, an approximate number of existing Protestant denominations and their members is almost 7000.

Religious communities which belong to the Protestant denomination and are registered in the Republic of Azerbaijan are as follows:

1. "New Life" Christian Bible religious community;
2. Baku religious community of Savior Evangelical Lutherans;
3. "Word of Life" Christian religious community;
4. "Word of Life-2" Sumgayit Christian religious community;
5. "Agape" religious community of Evangelical Christian Baptists in Baku;
6. Nehemiah Christian community of Christians who believe in the Bible;
7. Christian-Baptist religious community of Baku;
8. "Star in the East" Christian Bible religious community;
9. "Seventh-day Adventists" religious community;
10. Christian-Baptist religious community of Ganja city;
11. "Seventh-day Adventists" religious community of Ganja city;
12. Christian-Baptist religious community of Sumgayit city;
13. Religious community of Christian believers in Baku;
14. "Azerbaijan Bible Society";
15. "Life-giving grace" Christian religious community;
16. "Alov"- Christian religious community of Baku city;

17. "Alov"- Christian religious community of Sumgayit city.

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

"New Apostolic Church" is one of the new Christian denominations in Azerbaijan. Members of this community live mainly in Baku (70 people) and in Ganja (10-15 people).

Also, there is a sect of "Jehovah's Witnesses" in the Republic. According to statistics for 2020, the number of active members reached 1592 people, and the total number has reached 3286 people. In 2018, the religious community of Jehovah's Witnesses in Baku was re-registered. There are two places of worship in Baku, Garadagh district and Yasamal district. Full conditions are created for their activity in accordance with the law. For example, the celebration of the Memorial of Jesus Christ, an important religious holiday for Jehovah's Witnesses, provided the religious community with the opportunity to hold regular regional meetings, and law enforcement provided security.

b) Judaism in Azerbaijan

The Azerbaijanis have always had friendly relations with the Jews, who lived there for centuries, mixed with local people even established ties of kindred. The majority of the Jews of Azerbaijan live in Baku, Sumgait, Ganja, and both in Guba and Oghuz regions. Today, the Jews of Azerbaijan are represented by 3 communities, which are the Mountain Jews, the Georgian Jews and the European Jews (the Ashkenazi Jews).

There are 7 synagogues in Guba and Oguz, as well as Baku; 6 of them belong to the Mountain Jews and 1 to the European and Georgian Jews. After the restoration of state independence, the Jewish communities living in the country, in addition to enjoying religious freedom, established relations with international Jewish organizations and had all the opportunities to establish their own educational, cultural and religious institutions, and non-governmental organizations, including the media. Jews with a long history in Azerbaijan have not been subjected to any discrimination or intolerance among the people. There have never been anti-Semitic tendencies in Azerbaijan.

Jews celebrate their national 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. Every year, the President of the Republic congratulates all the Jewish communities of Azerbaijan on the occasion of the Jewish New Year "Rosh ha-Shana" holiday.

Azerbaijan also commemorates Holocaust Day, when millions of Jews were killed by the German Nazis during the Second World War.

The majority of Jews are active in the political, economic, social and cultural life of the Republic.

On November 15, 2019, a monument to the National Hero of Azerbaijan Albert Agarunov was erected in Baku. State and government officials, parliamentarians, representatives of foreign embassies accredited in Azerbaijan and public representatives attended the opening ceremony of the statue erected on the street named after the National Hero. At the same time, the world's first museum of Mountain Jews was established in 2019 in the "Girmizi Gesebe" town of the Guba region.

Jewish religious communities registered in the Republic of Azerbaijan are as follows:

- Baku Religious Community of European Jews
- Baku Religious Community of Mountain Jews
- Baku Religious Community of Georgian Jews
- Sumgayit Jewish Religious Community
- Mountain Jews Religious Community, Red settlement, Guba region
- Religious community of Azerbaijani Jews
- Jewish Religious Community of Oguz city
- Ganja Jewish Religious Community

Since the beginning of the process of re-registration of religious organizations in Azerbaijan (September 1, 2009), 970 religious organizations have been registered. From the confessional point of view, 933 of them are Islamic and 37 are non-Islamic (Christian - 26; Jewish - 8; Krishna - 1; Baha'i - 2).

At the same time, 11 religious educational institutions (colleges) have been registered.

Islamic religious communities of Azerbaijan are united under their historic Islamic religious Centre, the Caucasus Board of Muslims, whereas non-Islamic religious communities have the right to be subordinated to religious centers operating abroad. They also have the right to choose another religious authority. Moreover, the Republic of Azerbaijan allows non-Islamic religious communities with organizational centers abroad to be guided by the regulations of these centers if these regulations do not contradict the legislation of the Republic of Azerbaijan.

At present, religious centers of most non-Islamic religious associations including Russian Orthodox, Catholic, Lutheran and Georgian Orthodox Churches are located abroad. Religious leaders in these churches, as well as Protestant and Jewish communities, are appointed from religious centers abroad.

In addition, religious centers and institutions in Azerbaijan cooperate with relevant centers abroad and closely participate in international religious events.

The stable religious situation in the country and the high level of tolerance, the absence of discrimination among citizens on the basis of religious beliefs create favorable conditions for these religious organizations to operate freely as legal entities in their places of worship, to perform religious rites, religious holidays and ceremonies. They are guaranteed the freedom to worship.

Equal conditions have been created for all religious communities during registration, and all necessary measures have been taken for carrying out the preparation and receipt of their documents, verification of compliance with the legislation and registration properly.

Registration of religious communities is currently being continued.

There are Christian and Jewish educational institutions, Sunday schools under Orthodox Churches, Bible courses of Protestant communities, Jewish courses in Hebrew, the Jewish religion and culture, together with religious communities and prayer houses in Azerbaijan. Furthermore, there also are followers of Krishnaism and Baha'i Faith, whose prayer houses function in the country.

In addition to religious communities and houses of worship, there are Christian and Jewish religious educational institutions operating in the country, including Sunday schools at Orthodox churches, Bible courses for Protestant communities, courses on the Hebrew language, Jewish religion and culture, etc.

There are also religious communities of Krishna consciousness and Baha'i faith, and houses of worship belonging to them in Azerbaijan.

Both our Muslim and non-Muslim citizens, as well as all other religious denominations in Azerbaijan always demonstrate an act of solidarity. A clear example of this is the unity of all religions and nations during the pandemic and the 44-day war. Thus, the representative of each nation living in Azerbaijan enlisted in the army voluntarily in order to ensure the territorial integrity of the country. Among them were those who died heroically during military operations.

One of the highlights of the military operation was Armenia's attempt to cover up its aggressive policy and actions in a religious guise, turning it into a Muslim-Christian conflict. However, such a provocative policy of Armenia has failed. Leaders of non-Islamic religious communities (mainly Christian and Jewish) in Azerbaijan addressed appeals in foreign languages to various foreign officials and organizations, foreign and international organizations engaged in the field of religion, as well as religious centers abroad about the realities of Azerbaijan related to the 44-day Patriotic War.

At the invitation of "Alov", a Christian community in Baku, one of the Protestant communities in Azerbaijan, heads of the US humanitarian organization Samaritan's Purse came to Azerbaijan, visited Ganja, the city located far from the war zone and

targeted by ballistic missiles of the Armenian armed forces. They visited areas of the city destroyed by the rocket attack and provided assistance to the affected residents.

At the same time, at the request of the Azerbaijan Bible Society, one of the Protestant communities in Azerbaijan, the film "Moral Debt" was made to remind Azerbaijani citizens of their moral duty in the fight against the coronavirus pandemic. Also, the "Agape" religious community of Baku Evangelical Christian Baptists implemented a project entitled "Azerbaijani religious monuments destroyed in Karabakh. Within the framework of this project, religious monuments destroyed by Armenians in the territories of Azerbaijan occupied by Armenia were investigated, articles and videos in Russian and English were prepared and covered abroad through social media.

Article 9

1 The Parties undertake to recognise that the right to freedom of expression of every person belonging to a national minority includes freedom to hold opinions and to receive and impart information and ideas in the minority language, without interference by public authorities and regardless of frontiers. The Parties shall ensure, within the framework of their legal systems, that persons belonging to a national minority are not discriminated against in their access to the media.

2 Paragraph 1 shall not prevent Parties from requiring the licensing, without discrimination and based on objective criteria, of sound radio and television broadcasting, or cinema enterprises.

3 The Parties shall not hinder the creation and the use of printed media by persons belonging to national minorities. In the legal framework of sound radio and television broadcasting, they shall ensure, as far as possible, and taking into account the provisions of paragraph 1, that persons belonging to national minorities are granted the possibility of creating and using their own media.

4 In the framework of their legal systems, the Parties shall adopt adequate measures in order to facilitate access to the media for persons belonging to national minorities and in order to promote tolerance and permit cultural pluralism.

Favorable conditions have been created for the development of cultures of ethnic minorities and minority nations, especially education in the native language, watching programs in their own language on radio and television, regular publication of books, magazines, textbooks and dictionaries in the native language, activities of amateur groups, activities of ethnic museums, and the development of folk arts.

Pursuant to Part 1 of Article 14 of the Law "On Mass Media", permission from state bodies is not required for the establishment of print media. Simplified procedures have so far resulted in the registration of 5,375 publications. Eleven publications of persons belonging to national minorities are registered by the Ministry of Justice and operate without any hindrance.

A program called "Multiculturalism" has been broadcasting since October 2018 on the official TV channel of the Republic of Azerbaijan, AzTV with the initiative and participation of the Baku International Center for Multiculturalism (about 40 episodes have been broadcasted already). The program discusses the multicultural environment in the country, ways to develop and strengthen ethnocultural and ethnoreligious ties, as well as prospects with ethnic minorities and minority nations living in Azerbaijan, representatives of various faiths, and makes relevant proposals and recommendations for operational solutions.

In addition, Azerbaijan Radio regularly broadcasts government-funded radio programs in Kurdish, Lezgi, Talysh, Georgian, Russian, and Armenian languages. At present, Azerbaijani radio broadcasts 1 hour and 20 minutes in Talysh, Kurdish and Lezgi languages, 2 hours and 40 minutes in Georgian, 1 hour and 30 minutes in Armenian and 15 hours in Russian. More than 15 newspapers and magazines are published in the languages of the ethnic communities living in Azerbaijan, and 5 local TV and radio channels operate in areas where national minorities live compactly. Poetry and prose collections, folklore samples, and dictionaries are regularly published and distributed in the languages of national minorities, and this work continues successfully. Today, there are more than 50 NGOs, national cultural centers, public associations and societies working on the issues of persons belonging to national minorities in the country.

During the reporting period, large funds were allocated from the annual budget of the Baku International Center for Multiculturalism for the writing and publication of books in the native languages of the people living in Azerbaijan. Thus, with the financial support of the Baku International Center for Multiculturalism, about 10 books in the native languages of ethnic minorities and minority nations living in Azerbaijan, including "Ethno-cultural heritage of Caucasian Albania" (in Azerbaijani, Russian and English), "Azerbaijani multiculturalism: Ethnic diversity Treasure "(in English), " Albanian monuments of Karabakh ", " Anthology of Talysh poetry of XX-XI centuries "(in Talysh), Gurban Said's novel " Ali and Nino "(in Talysh, Lezgi and Udi languages), " Khwezila "(I wish) story (in Kurdish) and so on were published.

The "Kultura Plus" (www.kulturaplus.az) internet television has started operating aimed at promoting the state policy in the field of multiculturalism in Azerbaijan, protecting the language, culture and traditions of national and religious minorities, educating the population, as well as conveying the truth about Azerbaijan in several foreign languages, In addition to the current problems of multiculturalism in the modern world, the magazine "Multiculturalism", published in Baku since 2016, covers a wide range of materials on the language and culture, customs and traditions of national minorities living in Azerbaijan, poetry, and prose are published in their languages.

Article 10

1 The Parties undertake to recognise that every person belonging to a national minority has the right to use freely and without interference his or her minority language, in private and in public, orally and in writing.

2 In areas inhabited by persons belonging to national minorities traditionally or in substantial numbers, if those persons so request and where such a request corresponds to a real need, the Parties shall endeavour to ensure, as far as possible, the conditions which would make it possible to use the minority language in relations between those persons and the administrative authorities.

3 The Parties undertake to guarantee the right of every person belonging to a national minority to be informed promptly, in a language which he or she understands, of the reasons for his or her arrest, and of the nature and cause of any accusation against him or her, and to defend himself or herself in this language, if necessary with the free assistance of an interpreter.

98.8% of persons belonging to national minorities in Azerbaijan speak their native language fluently and are active representatives of ethnic cultures. The rights and freedoms of ethnic minorities and minority nations are protected by the state. Thus, according to Article 21 of the Constitution of the Republic of Azerbaijan, the Republic of Azerbaijan guarantees all citizens, regardless of ethnic, religious or racial affiliation free use and development of their mother tongues, protection of ethnic cultures and beliefs. Favorable conditions have been created for the development of cultures of ethnic minorities and minority nations in the country, especially education in the mother tongue, watching programs in their own language on radio and television, regular publication of books, magazines, textbooks and dictionaries in the mother tongue, activities of amateur groups, activities of ethnic museums, folk arts.

Article 11

1 The Parties undertake to recognise that every person belonging to a national minority has the right to use his or her surname (patronym) and first names in the minority language and the right to official recognition of them, according to modalities provided for in their legal system.

2 The Parties undertake to recognise that every person belonging to a national minority has the right to display in his or her minority language signs, inscriptions and other information of a private nature visible to the public.

3 In areas traditionally inhabited by substantial numbers of persons belonging to a national minority, the Parties shall endeavour, in the framework of their legal system, including, where appropriate, agreements with other States, and taking into account their specific conditions, to display traditional local names, street names and other topographical indications intended for the public also in the minority language when there is a sufficient demand for such indications.

National legislation does not contain provisions that provide the names of administrative-territorial units, as well as geographical objects to be written also in the language of national minorities.

Thus, Article 9 of the Law “On the State Language in the Republic of Azerbaijan” stipulates that in accordance with the Law “On Territorial Structure and Administrative Territorial Division”, the administrative-territorial units of the Republic of Azerbaijan – the names of cities, districts, administrative districts, settlements, and villages must be written in the state language.

Also, according to Articles 7.3 and 7.4 of the Law "On Names of Geographical Objects", the names of geographical objects are written in the state language on road signs, advertisements, billboards, and other indicators in the territory of the Republic of Azerbaijan.

Article 12

1 The Parties shall, where appropriate, take measures in the fields of education and research to foster knowledge of the culture, history, language and religion of their national minorities and of the majority.

2 In this context the Parties shall inter alia provide adequate opportunities for teacher training and access to textbooks, and facilitate contacts among students and teachers of different communities.

3 The Parties undertake to promote equal opportunities for access to education at all levels for persons belonging to national minorities.

According to Article 5.2 of the Law “On General Education”, the State guarantees non-discrimination and the creation of equal educational opportunities for each citizen regardless of the individual’s gender, race, language, religion, political views, nationality, social status, background, and state of health.

Also, paragraph 1.2 of the “Rules for Social Protection of Students in Public Preschool Education Institutions” approved by the Cabinet of Ministers on December 29, 2017 states that there shall be no discrimination on the basis of race, ethnicity, religion, language, gender or origin of children. In addition, paragraph 2.1 of the “State Standards for the Education of Preschool Children with Disabilities”, approved by the Cabinet of Ministers on February 26, 2018, reflects the didactic principles (result orientation, personality orientation, individualism, secularism, acceptance of diversity, etc.) that determine the content of special preschool education. The principle of acceptance of diversity implies the equal participation of all children in the education system, regardless of their physical, mental, intellectual, cultural-ethnic, linguistic, and other characteristics.

At present, Azerbaijani universities offer subjects such as "Introduction to Multiculturalism" at the bachelor's level and "Azerbaijani Model of Multiculturalism" at the master's level. The Baku International Center for Multiculturalism has paid special attention to the training of instructors teaching "Introduction to Multiculturalism" and "Azerbaijani Multiculturalism" in universities and provided them with the necessary

materials and information. At the same time, the subject of "Azerbaijani Multiculturalism" started being taught in the first vocational schools.

Textbooks in Russian (both as a foreign language and as a language of instruction), Lezgi and Avar used in public secondary schools in Azerbaijan are traditionally prepared on a regular basis in the Republic of Azerbaijan. For Georgian-language schools in Azerbaijan, only textbooks in Georgian and Georgian literature are provided by Georgia in accordance with the Protocol of the Intergovernmental Commission. The preparation and independent examination of all textbook sets in the languages of persons belonging to other national minorities shall be carried out by representatives of persons belonging to national minorities. At the same time, all textbooks are submitted for public discussion before publication, and representatives of all national minorities living in Azerbaijan have the opportunity to comment on these textbooks. In addition, textbooks in Georgian are reviewed by the relevant state body of Georgia. History and geography textbooks contain information on the culture, history, and language of all peoples living in Azerbaijan, as well as persons belonging to national minorities.

Excursions of about 2,000 pedagogical staff and pupils of Children and Youth Development Centers to leading museums, historical monuments, and house museums, state historical and architectural reserves were organized to promote the historical and cultural values of persons belonging to national minorities. In 2017-2019, the members of the association visited Albanian temples, the Museum of History and Ethnography of Ancient Gabala, Chukhur Gabala Museum, "Azerbaijan Udi Hearth" Ethnographic Park and Museum, "Chotari" Albanian-Udi Church, Mound Gazma village in Balakan region, the ruins of the Mamrukh Albanian Temple and "Chingoz" tower in Zagatala region.

Article 13

1 Within the framework of their education systems, the Parties shall recognise that persons belonging to a national minority have the right to set up and to manage their own private educational and training establishments.

2 The exercise of this right shall not entail any financial obligation for the Parties.

In recent years, the number of private preschools and general education institutions for persons belonging to national minorities has also increased. The Chabad Ohr Avner educational center for persons belonging to national minorities (Jewish community) was built by the Heydar Aliyev Foundation and the Or-Avner International Foundation as part of the "Address of Tolerance - Azerbaijan" project. Based on the request of Chabad Ohr Avner Jewish educational center, the Ministry of Education provided the school with school supplies and resources related to infrastructure assistance. The school also has a kindergarten for Jewish children.

Article 14

1 The Parties undertake to recognise that every person belonging to a national minority has the right to learn his or her minority language.

2 In areas inhabited by persons belonging to national minorities traditionally or in substantial numbers, if there is sufficient demand, the Parties shall endeavour to ensure, as far as possible and within the framework of their education systems, that persons belonging to those minorities have adequate opportunities for being taught the minority language or for receiving instruction in this language.

3 Paragraph 2 of this article shall be implemented without prejudice to the learning of the official language or the teaching in this language.

During the period 2017 - 2021 Institute of Philosophy and Sociology of ANAS carried out 119 scientific research works concerning state policies related to national and religious minorities in the Republic of Azerbaijan. Special attention was paid to the policy of multiculturalism and tolerance, research and promotion of their philosophical-theoretical analysis and practice. During this period a number of books and scientific articles were presented in order to research the current state of those minorities and scientific-theoretical-philosophical aspects of public policy related to them. During the reporting period, additionally, two grant projects were implemented at the Institute of Philosophy and Sociology on national and religious minorities.

The grant competition “Development and Innovations in Education” is held annually starting from 2017. The following projects related to persons belonging to national minorities have been successfully implemented:

- Promotion of the Azerbaijani language among minorities in Balakan district;
- Integrative education in schools in Gusar district where the Lezgi language is taught;
- An event entitled "Different cultures and talents under one flag" in the Gabala region.

The education in Azerbaijani secondary schools is conducted in 3 languages – Azerbaijani, Russian and Georgian. Teaching native languages of the minorities - Avar, Kurdish (Kurmanji), Lezgi, Talysh, Tsakhur, Tat, Udi, Khinalig, and Hebrew has been organized in secondary schools (primary grades) in the areas which are densely populated by those minorities (more on Section I, paragraph “d” and Appendix 1). Educational programs, textbooks, and school dictionaries are prepared and regularly updated in Russian, Avar, Talysh, Kurdish, Lezgi, Tsakhur, Tat, Udi, Khinalig language and other languages at the expense of the state. There are currently 16 Russian-language secondary schools, 6 Georgian-language secondary schools, and 345 multilingual secondary schools (Azerbaijani-Russian, Azerbaijani-Georgian, and Azerbaijani-Russian-Georgian). All necessary means are taken to create the conditions for children of respective ethnic minorities who populate 13 regions of the Republic of Azerbaijan to learn their culture, national customs and traditions.

Article 15

The Parties shall create the conditions necessary for the effective participation of persons belonging to national minorities in cultural, social and economic life and in public affairs, in particular those affecting them.

In accordance with the idea of Azerbaijanism, which is widely promoted in Azerbaijan and based on the multicultural traditions of the country, the ethnic and religious identities of citizens are guaranteed at the same level in the country. *The status of the civic identity of minorities, which ensures the protection of their rights is the main factor determining the sustainability and enhancement of the multicultural policies in Azerbaijan. Persons belonging to national minorities are widely represented in the central administrative and executive structures of the Republic of Azerbaijan, in the Parliament, and the law enforcement system. Representatives of national minorities in state structures include first tier and second tier, heads of departments, heads of divisions, heads and deputies of district executive authorities and other multi-faceted official positions. Besides, representatives of national minorities constitute an absolute majority in state structures and local self-government bodies of the regions densely populated by minorities.

At present, there are 99 representatives of national minorities (53 of whom are women, 4 of whom hold senior positions) work in the judiciary.

About 2,000 (6%) representatives of minorities, including Russian, Belarusian, Tatar, Jewish, Georgian, Meskhetian Turks, Tat, Talysh, Kurdish, Lezgi, Avar, Circassian, Tsakhur, Lak, and Udi serve in the internal affairs bodies.

122 Azerbaijanis, 1 Russian, 1 Lezgi, and 1 Jew were elected as deputies on the 5th convocation (2015-2020) of the Milli Majlis of the Republic of Azerbaijan.

Currently, the 125-member Milli Majlis (Parliament), which consists of one chamber, has 120 deputies. 117 of them are Azerbaijanis, 1 is Russian, 1 is Lezgi, and 1 is a mountain Jew.

There are 3 state theaters of national minorities in the Republic of Azerbaijan (Azerbaijan State Academic Russian Drama Theater in Baku, Lezgi State Drama Theater in Gusar region, Gakh State Georgian Drama Theater in Gakh region). Of the 63 employees of the Gusar Theater, 60 are Lezgi, and of the 40 employees of the State Georgian Drama Theater, 38 are Georgian. Plays at the Gusar Theater are staged in Lezgi Language, and in Gakh in the Georgian Language. Talented representatives of national minorities working in both the Azerbaijan State Academic Russian Drama Theater and the Gusar and Gakh State Theaters are appointed to senior positions, and directors and actors have been awarded high honorary titles, Presidential Awards, Presidential Scholarships, Orders and Medals. These theaters regularly prepare performances by state order. Theater groups participate in festivals on national and international levels with the financial support of the Ministry of Culture.

Representatives of national minorities work in the whole structure of ANAS, including the Institute of Philosophy and Sociology, as well as in other Institutions as heads of departments, professors, associate professors and other researchers.

The Ministry of Health has paid special attention to improving the knowledge and professional skills of health workers in regions where national minorities live. About 20% of the specialists sent to improve their skills in advanced training courses in leading foreign clinics are representatives of national minorities.

Representatives of national minorities were awarded the honorary titles of "Honored Doctor", "Honorary Decree", "Honored Scientist", as well as the "Progress" medal for their exceptional services to the development of healthcare in Azerbaijan.

Article 16

The Parties shall refrain from measures which alter the proportions of the population in areas inhabited by persons belonging to national minorities and are aimed at restricting the rights and freedoms flowing from the principles enshrined in the present framework Convention.

It should be noted that with the end of the conflict, Azerbaijan has entered into a new stage covering the post-conflict rehabilitation, reconstruction and reintegration. In the post-conflict period, sustaining peace, rehabilitation and reconstruction activities and the return of IDPs to their places of origin are the absolute priority for Azerbaijan. At the same time, after the end of the Armenia-Azerbaijan conflict the reintegration of all citizens in conflict affected territories into the political, legal, economic and social system of the country on the basis of equal rights representing, as it was declared by Azerbaijan on numerous occasions, one of the main priorities of the post-conflict policy for Azerbaijan, will ensure the implementation of the provisions of the Framework Convention with respect to the persons of the Armenian origin in the conflict affected territories, in line with elimination of the consequences created by the military occupation. The Constitution of the Republic of Azerbaijan, the relevant domestic legislation and the respective international documents, including the present Convention that Azerbaijan joined to, provide a solid legal framework in this filed.