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Committee on Economic, Social and Cultural Rights

Third periodic report submitted by Georgia under articles 16 and 17 of the Covenant, due in 2007 ***

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** The annexes to the present report may be accessed from the web page of the Committee.



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I. Introduction

1. The third periodic report of Georgia on the implementation of the International Covenant on Economic, Social and Cultural Rights (hereinafter, the “Report”) is prepared based on Article 16 of the Covenant.
2. This report aims to provide information to the Committee on Economic, Social and Cultural Rights (hereinafter, the “Committee”) about the measures implemented by the State for the realisation of the rights enshrined in the Covenant.
3. During the preparation of the report, Georgia has been guided by the Guidelines of the Committee¹, the harmonised guidelines² and the Committee’s Concluding Observation on the 2nd periodical report of Georgia.³
4. All competent agencies of the executive branch as well as judicial and legislative authorities participated in the preparation of the Report. The process has been coordinated by the Ministry of Foreign Affairs. In particular, the following agencies were involved in the Report preparation process: Human Rights Secretariat of the Administration of Government, Ministry of Internally Displaced Persons from the Occupied Territories, Labour, Health and Social Affairs, Ministry of Economy and Sustainable Development, Ministry of Education and Science, Ministry of Culture, Sport and Youth, Ministry of Justice, Office of the Minister of State for Reconciliation and Civic Equality, Ministry of Environment and Agriculture, Ministry of Finance, Ministry of Internal Affairs, Ministry of Regional Development and Infrastructure, Parliament, High Council of Justice, High School of Justice, National Statistics Office, Legal Aid Service, General Prosecutor’s Office. The Office of the United Nations High Commissioner for Human Rights in the South Caucasus supported the preparation of the report.
5. The draft report was submitted to the Public Defender’s Office, international and non-governmental organisations for their feedback. Under the 2016 amendments to the Parliament’s Rules of Procedures, the Parliament reviewed the draft Report. The Report has been revised as a result of this process.

II. Replies to the Concluding Observations of the Committee (E/C.12/1/Add.83)

Reply to paragraph 28

Legislative and institutional framework

6. Since the submission of the last report, important measures were undertaken for the enhancement of the protection of social, economic and cultural rights in the country.
7. Georgia is a member of all major international human rights treaties. Recently, Georgia acceded to the important international human rights protection instruments, including the European Social Charter (revised), Convention on the Rights of Persons with Disabilities and its Optional Protocol, Optional Protocol to the Convention on the Rights of the Child on a Communications Procedure; the Council of Europe Convention on Preventing and Combating Violence against Women and Domestic Violence (Istanbul Convention). According to the Constitution of Georgia, an international treaty of Georgia shall take precedence over domestic normative acts unless it conflicts with the Constitution or the Constitutional Agreement of Georgia (Article 4.5).
8. The constitutional reform of 2017–2018 strengthened the constitutional-legal significance of the social State principle. The constitutional amendments placed particular

¹ E/C.12/2008/2, 24.03.2009.

² HRI/GEN/2/Rev.6

³ E/C.12/1/Add.83

emphasis on social rights, rights of persons with disabilities, child rights, gender equality and the right to access the public information.

9. According to the 2017 constitutional amendments, Georgia is a social State (Article 5.1). The State shall take care of strengthening the principles of social justice, social equality and social solidarity within society (5.2) The State shall take care of the equitable socio-economic and demographic development in the entire territory of the country (5.3). The State shall take care of human health care and social protection, ensuring the subsistence minimum and decent housing and protecting the welfare of the family. The State shall promote the employment of citizens (5.4).

10. Strengthening of the principle of a social State, resulted in increased financing of social programmes:

Table I
Budget for social issues

<i>Million GEL</i>	<i>2015</i>	<i>2016</i>	<i>2017</i>	<i>2018</i>	<i>2019</i>	<i>2020</i>
Healthcare	905.9	1 046.0	1 136.3	1 218.0	1 327.8	1 872.7
Education	1 074.0	1 287.9	1 457.0	1 570.4	1 904.4	1 896.7
Social protection	2 467.3	2 654.3	2 761.8	2 917.0	3 333.2	4 703.7
Total	9 659.4	10 522.1	11 474.6	12 351.2	14 465.9	17 189.1
<i>% of budget payables</i>						
Healthcare	9%	10%	10%	10%	9%	11%
Education	11%	12%	13%	13%	13%	11%
Social protection	26%	25%	24%	24%	23%	27%
Total	100%	100%	100%	100%	100%	100%

11. The Constitution recognises that all persons are equal before the law (Article 11) and prohibits discrimination. The right to equality requires not only equality before the law but the creation of laws based on the equality principle. Furthermore, the State must create special conditions for persons with disabilities to exercise their rights and interests.

12. In 2014, the Parliament adopted the Law of Georgia on Elimination of All Forms of Discrimination, prohibiting discrimination in both the public and private sector.

13. In 2014, Georgia adopted the comprehensive Human Rights Strategy for 2014–2020 and subsequent Action Plans for 2014–2015, 2016–2017 and 2018–2020. The drafting of the next National Strategy for the years 2022–2030 has been completed. Following its adoption, the relevant action plans will be developed.

14. Effective implementation and monitoring of the National Plans is ensured by the Human Rights Secretariat and the Human Rights Inter-Agency Council under the Prime Minister. Council consists of the ministers as well as civil society representatives and international organizations with the permission of vote. The Council is accountable to the Parliament by annual reporting.

15. In 2019, the National Sustainable Development Goals (SDG) document was approved, according to which Georgia declared and nationalised 17 SDGs and 93 tasks as the country's priority. Baselines and targets for 200 indicators were determined.

16. The National SDG document equally refers to the three dimensions of sustainable development – economic, social and environmental and represents the national definition of the goals, objectives and indicators, according to which Georgia ensures national and sectoral policy planning until 2030.

17. The Ministry of Internally Displaced Persons from the Occupied Territories, Labour, Health and Social Affairs is responsible for the development and implementation of the state policy in the field of labour, health and social protection of the population. It is also

responsible for the development and implementation of the state policy on social security and resettlement of IDPs and eco-migrants.

18. The State Strategy for Civic Equality and Integration and the respective Action Plan is one of the key instruments of civic equality and integration state policy with respect to the ethnic minorities. It aims at supporting ethnic minorities, promoting their equal and full participation in all spheres of public life, supporting cultural diversity and strengthening the tolerant environment. After the expiration of the 2015–2020 Strategy, the Government of Georgia approved the State Strategy for Civic Equality and Integration for 2021–2030 and the Action Plan. The Strategy defines five inter-related priorities: 1. State language to support integration; 2. Access to quality education; 3. Equality, civic and political participation; 4. Social and economic integration; 5. Intercultural dialogue with a special focus on further empowerment of women and youth.

19. The Office of the State Minister for Reconciliation and Civic Equality coordinates the development, implementation and monitoring of the Strategy and the action plans in close cooperation with the Government Commission. Thematic working groups function under the Commission.

20. In 2021, the Government established an Inter-Agency Coordination Committee to implement the Convention on the Rights of Persons with Disabilities (CRPD). The Committee is a national mechanism responsible for coordinating the implementation of the CRPD and the Law on the Rights of Persons with Disabilities and is accountable to the Government.

21. Since 2016, the Parliament's oversight mandate has been increased, including in relation to human rights and implementation of recommendations of UN human rights treaty monitoring bodies. The Parliament is authorised to monitor the country's human rights situation and socio-economic development using various supervisory mechanisms. The Parliament has the mandate to review Public Defender's reports and periodic reports on the implementation of government action plans and international treaties in order to assess and supervise the human rights situation in the country.

Human rights situation in the occupied territories

22. The human rights situation in the occupied regions is deteriorating daily. As a result of the illegal occupation of Abkhazia and Tskhinvali regions by the Russian Federation, the steps towards factual annexation, increasing militarisation, the installation of barbed wires and other artificial barriers along the occupation line and other illegal steps, human rights are grossly violated.

23. Hundreds of thousands of internally displaced persons (IDP) and refugees forced to leave their homes due to several waves of ethnic cleansing are still deprived of the right to return in safety and in dignity to their homes.

24. The violation of the right to life of Georgian citizens continues in the occupied territories, as evidenced by the deprivation of life of Davit Basharuli in 2014, Giga Otkhazia in 2016 and Archil Tatunashvili in 2018. Representatives of the occupation regimes directly participated in all these murders. In 2019, Georgian citizen Irakli Kvaratskhelia, illegally detained by the Russian occupation forces, died at the Russian military base illegally located in the Abkhazia region. It is alarming that despite numerous calls from the international community and constructive cooperation from the Georgian government, it is still impossible to execute justice and punish the perpetrators of these crimes.

25. Russian occupation forces continue strengthening the occupation line in Abkhazia and Tskhinvali regions by erecting barbed wire fences and various artificial barriers. As a result, locals living near the occupation line cannot visit their families and do not have access to their property, agricultural lands, religious monuments, or cemeteries. They cannot receive healthcare and education services in the Georgian government-controlled territory.

26. The occupation regimes constantly close the so-called crossing points to restrict the freedom of movement. In 2016–17, four so-called crossing points out of six were closed. The occupation regime periodically closes the remaining so-called crossing points for an extended period under various artificial pretexts. Starting from September 4, 2019, the so-called

crossing points in the Tskhinvali region were closed indefinitely, leading to the complete isolation of the region and bringing the local population to the brink of a humanitarian crisis, especially in Akhgori district, mainly populated by ethnic Georgians. Food and medicine shortages have developed throughout the region. The closure of the so-called crossing points particularly negatively impacted vulnerable groups of the population, who cannot visit the Georgian government-controlled territory to receive medical treatment or pension. Several citizens who needed urgent medical assistance lost their lives due to these restrictions as they faced obstacles or were not allowed to cross the occupation line.

27. Illegal arrests and kidnappings at the occupation line are systematically executed. Since 2016, 324 people have been detained by the Russian occupation regime in Sokhumi and 573 in Tskhinvali region, including women, elderly, children, doctors and clergy.

28. Georgians living in the occupied territories are discriminated on ethnic grounds. Since 2016, Sokhumi occupation regime forces local Georgians to register as “foreigners”. Through this illegal process, the Georgian population is still restricted in their rights to residence, work and own property. Teaching in the Georgian language has been banned in the Abkhazia region since 2015 and in the Tskhinvali region – since 2017. The educational process gradually transformed into the Russian language in Georgian kindergartens and schools.

29. Property rights of ethnic Georgians are grossly violated in the occupied territories. During Russia’s military aggression against Georgia in 2008, tens of thousands of houses belonging to ethnic Georgians were deliberately burned and destroyed.

30. The grave human rights situation in the occupied territories is particularly worrying because the Russian Federation does not allow international human rights mechanisms to access the occupied territories. Even the European Union Monitoring Mission (EUMM) is deprived of the possibility to enter Abkhazia and Tskhinvali regions, despite its mandate covers the entire territory of Georgia. Moreover, on October 24, 2019, the occupation forces arrested EUMM observers patrolling near the occupation line in the Georgia government-controlled territory.

31. Full responsibility for human rights violations in the occupied regions rests with the Russian Federation, as it exercises effective control over Abkhazia and Tskhinvali regions. The European Court of Human Rights (ECHR) in its judgement of January 21, 2021, confirmed Russia’s occupation and effective control over Abkhazia and Tskhinvali regions as well as Russia’s responsibility for the mass violations of human rights in these areas and for deprivation of right of IDPs and refugees to return to their homes.

32. The Government consistently implements the peaceful conflict resolution policy and takes all possible diplomatic, political, legal and other measures to protect human rights in the occupied territories. In this regard, the Government is actively using negotiation formats such as the Geneva International Discussions and the Incident Prevention and Response Mechanisms under the GID. The mentioned issues are actively discussed in all relevant bilateral and multilateral platforms and are reflected in numerous documents adopted by different countries and international organisations.

33. Within the reconciliation and engagement policy, the Government continues to improve the humanitarian and socio-economic conditions of the population living in the occupied regions and adjacent territories, as well as the restoration of contacts, dialogue and trust between the population divided by occupation lines.

34. The Government provided significant assistance to the occupied regions of Georgia during the Covid-19 pandemic. The Government accelerated the opening of the Rukhi hospital near the occupation line to treat patients from the region of Abkhazia. In addition, various measures were immediately implemented, including: preparation and dissemination of information and recommendations/protocols for protection against coronavirus in Abkhazian and Ossetian languages; launching official website www.StopCov.ge in Abkhazian and Ossetian languages; supplying regularly medical equipment, medicines and hygiene products to the region; providing regular online consultations for doctors. In Georgian government-controlled territory, about 1,000 infected patients from the regions of Abkhazia and Tskhinvali were treated. The anti-covid immunisation program was extended to the population living in the occupied territories.

35. The effective operation of the state referral service program continues, providing free healthcare services to people living in the occupied territories in medical institutions in Georgia. Since 2014, 13,549 persons have benefited from this program.

36. To alleviate the consequences of the Covid-19 pandemic, social assistance was provided to 3,353 vulnerable families living in all 116 villages affected by the conflict located along the occupation lines.

37. To improve the socio-economic situation of the population affected by the conflict, the Peace Fund envisaged by the peace initiative “Step for a better future” was launched, which aims to support joint trade projects on both sides of the occupation lines, using status-neutral mechanisms. Through two grant competitions of the Fund, a total of 111 business applications were received from the occupied territories of Georgia and 49 applications were selected for financing.

38. To facilitate access to quality education for young people living in the occupied territories, special, needs-based programs were launched within the reconciliation and engagement policy, which ensures quality education at all levels in the Georgian government-controlled territory and abroad.

Reply to paragraph 29 – Human rights education

39. Training civil servants and judges is an integral part of ongoing reforms on human rights. Human Rights Action Plans, as well as sectoral/institutional development action plans, pay particular attention to raising the qualifications of civil servants in the area of human rights.

40. Various human rights education programs are systematically implemented in cooperation with various international/non-governmental organisations in order to promote human rights protection. Special attention is paid to education on international standards under the UN human rights treaties. In addition to training, education resources (revised training modules, guidelines, instructions) are constantly prepared for government officials.

41. Information on participation of civil servants in education programs in 2015–2020 see in Annex I. During 2015–2020, the High School of Justice conducted 139 training courses on human rights with participation of 2,354 judge and 47 training courses with total number of 553 participants (see – Annex II).

42. Special attention is paid to the training and retraining of law enforcement officers. The training of prosecutors and law enforcement officers covers issues such as the prohibition of discrimination, core international instruments and national legislation on human rights, direct and indirect discrimination, positive obligations of a state, prohibition of discrimination on different grounds, investigation of facts of committed with discrimination intent and hate crimes and features of hate motive identification.

43. The teaching of human rights is included in the national curriculum at secondary school level. Three subjects “Me and Society” (in grades III and IV), “Our Georgia” (in grades V and VI) and “Citizenship” (in grades X, XI and XII), aim to promote the formation of human values amongst students, the awareness of child rights and duties, tolerance towards people of different cultures and nationalities, peaceful means of dispute resolution in conflicts, elimination of discrimination. In addition, training and retraining of schoolteachers on human rights standards are carried out systematically. Information about the conducted training is available in Annex III.

44. Higher education institutions of Georgia implement training courses on human rights within the framework of education programs of different levels.

Reply to paragraph 30 – Anti-corruption policy

45. In order to establish anti-corruption state policy and to ensure coordinated fight against corruption, in 2008, the President of Georgia established the Interagency Coordination Council for the Fight against Corruption (Anti-Corruption Council). Since 2013,

the Anti-Corruption Council has been accountable to the Government, which determines its composition, mandate and rules of procedure.

46. As of March 2021, the Council is chaired by the Administration of the Government and it includes 57 members of which 23 organisations belong to non-governmental, international and business sectors. The Council has elaborated relevant anti-corruption strategies and action plans, which were approved by the Government. Civil society is actively involved in implementing anti-corruption reforms, including developing and monitoring anti-corruption strategies and action plans.

47. Due to fundamental anti-corruption reforms, Georgia is the most successful among Eastern European countries and has one of the lowest corruption levels among European countries. For example: according to the 2019 Rule of Law Index of the “World Justice Project”, Georgia still maintains its leading position and ranks first in the region of Eastern Europe and Central Asia; According to the 2017 Open Budget Index, Georgia ranks fifth for the transparency of budget development. According to public participation in budget planning, Georgia ranks thirteenth among 117 evaluated countries. According to the 2020 Index of Corruption Perceptions prepared by Transparency International, Georgia still ranked first in Eastern Europe and Central Asia and is ranked forty-fifth in the world with 56 points. According to the 2020 Business Corruption Risk Index prepared by TRACE International, Georgia ranks twenty-eighth worldwide. As a result of the implementation of systematic reforms, corruption has been eliminated in the administrative sector, where citizens receive services daily.

48. To prevent corruption, institutional and legislative regulation has been strengthened. Notably, the electronic state procurement system and the mechanism for submitting and monitoring property declarations by public officials were created. Also, electronic treasury and budget programs have been launched, which allow any corruption crime to be investigated efficiently. An innovative analytical web platform, Budget Monitor, was introduced, allowing interested parties and ordinary citizens to monitor public finances.

49. The Georgian legislation was changed to improve the financing of political parties, increase the whistle-blower protection institute. Judicial independence and accountability have been strengthened. Transparency of the activities of the High Council of Justice has been increased. The selection procedure of judges has been improved.

50. At the end of 2019, the Anti-Corruption Council approved the corruption risk assessment methodology which was developed based on international standards and best practices.

51. According to the Budget Code of Georgia, transparency is a fundamental principle of the budget system. The draft budget should be publicly discussed in representative bodies with the participation of the public and mass media; approved budgets and reports on their implementation should be published and information on the budget should be accessible to any individual and legal entity.

Reply to paragraph 31 – IDPs

52. The State has created a comprehensive statutory framework, policy documents and state programmes to ensure regulation of the legal status of IDPs and protection of their economic, social and cultural rights. There are currently 289,925 IDPs and 91,627 displaced families in Georgia.

53. Law of Georgia on Internally Displaced Persons from the Occupied Territories of Georgia and other legal acts regulate the legal status of IDPs. They determine the legal status of an IDP, the grounds and procedure for granting, terminating, withdrawing and restoring the IDP status, legal, economic and social guarantees of IDPS as well as their rights and obligations.

54. According to the Georgian legislation, IDP is a citizen of Georgia, or a stateless person having a status in Georgia who was forced to leave their permanent place of residence because of the occupation of the territory by a foreign country, aggression, an armed conflict,

global violence and/or massive violation of human rights posed a threat to his/her or his/her family member's life, health or freedom and/or, in the view of these factors, he/she cannot return to his/her permanent place of residence.

55. Acquiring an IDP status is voluntary. IDP enjoys all the rights of a citizen of Georgia, including the right to choose housing, benefit from state and other programmes of social protection, healthcare and education, freedom of economic activity and access to financial resources, right to participate in elections, etc. The legislation prohibits discrimination against IDPs in exercising their rights and freedoms.

56. The 2007 State Strategy for IDPs defines two main goals: creating conditions for the dignified and safe return of IDPs, supporting decent living conditions for the displaced population and their involvement in public life. Seven action plans were developed to implement the strategy.

57. Within the framework of the universal health care program, families of IDPs who have been resettled in residential areas purchased, rehabilitated or newly built by the state or other legal entities, enjoy the following services without co-financing: scheduled outpatient services, diagnostic and laboratory tests, medications for chronic diseases, emergency outpatient and inpatient services, planned surgery, chemotherapy, hormone and radiation therapy, childbirth and caesarean section, treatment of infectious.

58. Other IDP families benefit from the above-mentioned services within the framework of the universal healthcare program, with appropriate co-financing according to the category of beneficiaries.

59. IDPs are integrated into targeted social assistance and vocational education state programmes. The state finances the travel of IDPs involved in the programmes. Vocational education is equally accessible to all social groups; therefore, IDPs are provided with the opportunity to receive vocational education.

60. To promote small business and entrepreneurship among IDPs, since 2014, livelihood programmes have been implemented, such as financing small businesses and promoting entrepreneurship. Within the framework of various livelihood programmes for IDPs (small business grants programme, professional education promotion program, agro-insurance program and others), IDPs received up to 6 million GEL in 2015–2021. Since 2016, the IDPs and Eco-Migrants Livelihood Agency financed about 2,300 IDP families.

61. Within the framework of the micro and small entrepreneurship component of the state program Produce in Georgia, 846,295 GEL were allocated for 44 proposals of IDPs through the competitive selection process.

62. In 2015–2021, the state resources allocated to create dignified living conditions for IDPs are:

Table II
Funding for dignified living conditions for IDPs

<i>Year</i>	<i>2015</i>	<i>2016</i>	<i>2017</i>	<i>2018</i>	<i>2019</i>	<i>2020</i>	<i>2021</i>
State Resources (Mln GEL)	61.9	73.4	87.2	121.2	63.8	68.8	61.8

63. IDPs' resettlement process is carried out according to detailed procedures and criteria. IDPs can choose a specific residence or region of resettlement. They are protected from forced eviction. Georgia is one of the few countries where there is a practice of transferring housing to private ownership for IDPs. In total, residential property was transferred to private ownership for more than 34,000 displaced families.

64. In 2015–2021, the state budget for resettlement of IDPs amounted to 538 million GEL. As of 2021, approximately 91,627 displaced families (49%) are given long-term housing.

65. Since 2015, the programme of providing displaced families with temporary housing has started – providing monetary assistance for renting accommodation. About 8,700 displaced families benefited from this programme. Various rehabilitation works were carried out at more than 20 IDP settlement facilities.

66. The areas transferred to the ownership of IDPs have living conditions necessary for a dignified life and safety and sanitary norms are observed. New residences have individual meters for water and other utilities. Repair and rehabilitation works are also carried out in the compact accommodation facilities of the IDPs on the needs based assessment. Repair and rehabilitation of water supply/drainage systems are constantly being carried out in the facilities of compact resettlement of IDPs.

67. Starting from 2015, one-time cash assistance is provided to displaced families who have purchased housing with a mortgage loan if it is their only property. A new programme, Transfer of Residential premises to Displaced War Veteran Families, was launched in 2019.

68. Up to 70,000 immovable properties in the occupied territories were registered to protect the property rights of the IDPs and provide IDPs with a document proving their rights.

69. The IDP-related decisions are carried out in cooperation of international and local organisations working on IDP issues. Consultations with international/non-governmental organisations and regional IDP initiative groups precede the adoption of the important decisions or the start of a new project. Surveys of IDPs are conducted regularly and the interests of IDPs are considered in the decision-making process.

70. The right of IDPs to make an informed decision in the process of long-term resettlement is protected and during the development of programmes for IDPs, emphasis is placed on programs involving IDPs. For example, within the housing purchase project, IDPs choose their own houses and the Agency helps them to buy the selected accommodation.

Reply to paragraph 32 – Office of the Public Defender

71. The Public Defender of Georgia (PDO) is a constitutional body that supervises the protection of human rights and freedoms within the territory and its jurisdiction of Georgia (Constitution, Art. 35).

72. The PDO is independent in their activities. The legislation provides financial and legal guarantees to facilitate the implementation of the PDO mandate.

73. According to the Antidiscrimination legislation adopted in 2014, the mandate of the PDO was extended to issues related to eliminating discrimination and ensuring equality.

74. To fulfil the function assigned by the law, the PDO created the Department of Equality. With the legislative changes adopted in 2019, the mandate of the PDO was further increased and it was granted the authority to apply to the court if a legal entity or other subject of private law failed to respond or accept its recommendation.

75. In order to ensure effective fulfilment of the new tasks assigned by the law, the financing of PDO has increased significantly in recent years: in particular, in 2014, the approved budget of PDO amounted to 2.380 million GEL; in 2015 - 4 million GEL; in 2016 – 4.5 million GEL; in 2017 – 4.8 million GEL; in 2018 – 5.5 million GEL; In 2019 – 6.4 million GEL, in 2020 – 7 million GEL, in 2021 – 8.5 million GEL and 2022 – 8.869 million GEL.

76. The PDO performs its functions through the head office and ten regional offices. 13 departments and 8 divisions operate in the head office. Number of employees are as follows:

Table III
PDO employees

Year	2015	2016	2017	2018	2019	2020	2021
Positions	123	123	125	123	123	123	123
Vacancies	35	18	10	7	15	11	16
Employed	88	105	113	116	108	112	107

Reply to paragraph 33 – Right to work

77. Unemployment rate in 2015–2020 was as follows:

Table IV
Unemployment rates

%	2015	2016	2017	2018	2019	2020
Total	21.9	21.7	21.6	19.2	17.6	18.5
Women	20.0	17.6	20.4	17.6	16.0	16.2
Men	23.5	24.9	22.6	20.6	18.9	20.2
City	25.5	24.8	25.1	20.4	18.2	20.3
Village	16.3	16.9	16.4	17.6	16.7	15.8

78. The data on the workforce for 2020 is as follows:

Table V
Workforce in Georgia

<i>Thousand Persons</i>	<i>Total</i>	<i>Women</i>	<i>Men</i>	<i>City</i>	<i>Village</i>
Total 15+ population	3 018.5	1 613.9	1 404.6	1 706.2	1 312.3
Labour Force	1 523.7	652.7	871.0	920.4	603.3
Employed	1 241.8	546.9	695.0	733.7	508.2
Hired	845.3	416.1	429.1	599.7	245.5
Self-employed	395.9	130.7	265.2	133.4	262.5
Not-identified worker	0.7	0.0	0.7	0.5	0.2
Unemployed	281.9	105.8	176.1	186.7	95.2
The population outside the labour force	1 494.8	961.3	533.5	785.9	708.9
The unemployment rate, percentage	18.5	16.2	20.2	20.3	15.8
Labour force participation rate, %	50.5	40.4	62.0	53.9	46.0
Employment rate, %	41.1	33.9	49.5	43.0	38.7

79. In 2020, the average salary in Georgia was 1191.0 GEL. The calculation of subsistence minimum is based on the country's market price system in force and the composition and size of the subsistence basket and changes monthly.

80. According to the Constitution, the State shall promote the employment of citizens (Art. 5.4); Freedom of labour, freedom of professional associations, right to strike and freedom of entrepreneurship are protected (Art. 26). The right to equality enshrined in Article 11 of the Constitution also applies to the realisation of the right to work. Everyone has the right to choose a job freely. The organic law protects the right to safe working conditions and other labour rights.

81. In 2020, within the framework of the Labour Law Reform, legislative/institutional reforms were implemented aimed at protection of labour rights, ensuring decent conditions for decent work and monitoring the enforcement of labour legislation, prohibition of discrimination in labour relations, promotion of the employment of vulnerable and disadvantaged persons, guaranteeing safe work conditions.

Table VI
Work standards

<i>Standard working time</i>	
For All	40 hours per week
16–18 Years Old Juveniles	36 hours per week
	6 hours per day
14–16 Years Old Juveniles	24 hours per week
	4 hours per day
<i>Leave</i>	
Paid	24 workdays annually
Unpaid	15 calendar days annually
Employees performing arduous, harmful, or hazardous work	+10 calendar days annually

82. An employer is under duty to ensure a minimum of 24 hours uninterrupted rest for every employee during each seven-day period. By the agreement between the parties, the employee may enjoy a rest period of 24 hours twice in a row within not more than 14 days.

83. Discrimination based on gender in labour relations is prohibited. The Labour Code provides the principle of equal pay for equal work for women and men and maternity leave.

84. Along with the general prohibition of discrimination, specific areas and relationships where discrimination is prohibited have been identified, namely, employment, healthcare, education and social services. An employer must observe the principle of equality of persons in labour contractual and pre-contractual relations. Discrimination on any grounds is inadmissible during the publication of the vacancy notice and the interview stage.

85. Since 2013, labour market management information system [www.worknet.gov.ge] registers vacancies and job seekers. As of 2021, 395,877 job seekers are registered in the database, of which 350,009 are active and 111,204 people have been employed.

86. Since 2015, the Government has been implementing an active labour market policy through state employment promotion programmes aimed at increasing the competitiveness (vocational education, professional retraining, development of key competencies and internships) of job seekers, including vulnerable groups (youth, disabled people, etc.) in the labour market thus promoting the employment. The programs also aim at the development of active labour market policies and facilitation of employment in the country. In 2015–2021, the budget of the employment programmes was 18,295,000 million GEL.

87. In order to fulfil the requirements of the international conventions ratified by Georgia in the field of labour and employment, to promote the effective functioning of employment and the labour market, the National Strategy of the Labour and Employment Policy of Georgia for 2019–2023 was approved by the Government of Georgia in 2019, which presents the Government vision on systematic and strategic reforms and measures to be implemented in the field of labour and employment within five years.

88. In 2019, the State Employment Support Agency (Employment Agency) was established and has been operating since January 1, 2020 with the aim to support labour and employment, implement employment and active labour market policy, including creating opportunities for legal employment abroad. The 2020, the Law of Georgia on Facilitation of Employment regulates state activities related to facilitating employment and designates institutions responsible for promoting a policy of active labour market and employment.

89. Persons with disabilities have access to the following services within the framework of employment facilitation programmes: (i) supportive employment services which provide intermediary services for their employment; (ii) remuneration subsidies: the state provides

50% co-financing of remuneration, not more than three months, within 560 GEL. After the end of the subsidy, the employer shall extend the employment contract to the beneficiary for a period of at least nine months, in accordance with the legislation; (iii) creation of protected workplaces; (iv) raising the qualifications through professional training-retraining courses.

90. In 2021, 8,994 job seekers registered at the labour market management information system, including 5,154 women and 278 persons with disabilities (PWD). As of January 1, 2022, 350,009 job seekers are registered in the system. A total of 3,812 job seekers are employed in 2021, including 115 PWDs.

91. In 2020, the Government announced public employment program, offering employment for socially vulnerable individuals eligible to work. If a member of the family receiving the living allowance participates in this program and applies for job, the payment of the social benefits shall be maintained.

92. The reform of vocational education programs started in order to ensure that vocational education programs meets the requirements of the labour market. State provides financing of vocational education. By 2021, vocational education was available in Tbilisi and 37 municipalities.

93. An alternative approach to vocational testing was developed to increase access to vocational education for persons with special educational needs (SEN) and PWDs. Furthermore, the services of an inclusive vocational education specialist, a learning process assistant, an individual assistant, a sign language interpreter, an orientation and a mobility specialist were defined. Furthermore, specialised educational resources were created. All vocational education institutions are adapted to the needs of PWDs /SEN. Notably, four institutions are adapted according to universal design principles (Norwegian standard).

94. Since 2017, the state quarterly allocates additional 1,000 GEL vouchers for PWDs/PSEN studying at vocational education institutions for services tailored to their individual needs. Special training for teachers was carried out. In 2017–2020, 20,985 students were enrolled in state vocational programmes, including 941 PWDs /PSEN (in 2017 – 244 PWDs/PSEN, in 2018 – 273 PWDs /PSEN, in 2019 – 262 PWDs /PSEN; in 2020 – 162 PWDs/PSEN; in 2021 – 199 PWDs /PSEN).

95. Representatives of ethnic minorities can take tests for vocational education in their native language. In 2018–2020, 353 persons passed professional tests in Armenian, Russian and Azerbaijani languages and 326 were enrolled. Measures are undertaken to develop vocational education institutions in municipalities densely populated by ethnic minorities. In 2021, 250 persons who passed tests in other languages were enrolled in vocational education programmes.

96. Proactive large-scale door-to-door information/awareness-raising campaigns on state programs and services (in the areas of education, healthcare, agriculture, legal aid, employment opportunities, etc.) are regularly conducted, also in minority languages, in the municipalities densely populated by ethnic minorities.

97. To promote the development of social partnership in the country and the conduct of social dialogue between employees, employers and the government in 2013, a Tripartite Social Partnership Commission was created, which replaced the temporary commission on labour relations and social dialogue issues. The parties of the Tripartite Commission are the Government representatives, employers' unions operating in various sectors across the country and employees' unions.

Reply to paragraph 34 – Labour inspection

98. The Department of Labour Conditions of Inspection of Labour Conditions established in 2015 under the MOH carries out state oversight over the protection of labour conditions. In 2015–2017, the mandate of the Department was limited to issuing recommendations. As of 2016, the Labour Inspection was conducting recommendatory inspections regarding labour rights protection.

99. The Government's Resolution N112 of 2016 approved the rules for implementing state supervision to prevent forced labour and labour exploitation and to respond to them. According to the rules, the Labour Inspectorate was defined as a supervisory body conducting planned and unplanned inspections to detect and respond to forced labour and labour exploitation.

100. In 2018, the Law on Labour Safety was adopted, which initially extended to heavy, harmful, or hazardous work. Since August 2018, the Labour Inspectorate has begun mandatory labour safety inspections in these sectors.

101. On February 19, 2019, the Law on Labour Safety became an organic law and as of September 1, 2019, its scope was extended to all spheres of economic activity. Also, the supervisory body was given the right to inspect safety norms at any time of the day or night without the court's permission or prior notification. The Law tightened responsibilities for obstructing activities and stopping the work process of the Labour Inspectorate. The rights and duties, obligations and scope of responsibility of the employer and the employee were specified.

102. After the adoption of the Organic Law on Labour Safety, the number of deaths as a result of the accidents at the workplace decreased: in 2021, the number of deaths from industrial accidents decreased by 31% compared to 2018; compared to 2019, it is reduced by 18% and compared to 2020 – by 5%.

103. On September 29, 2020, the Parliament of Georgia, within the framework of the labour legislation reform, approved amendments to the Labour Code of Georgia and adopted the Law on Labour Inspection Service aimed at creating and defining the main principles, mandate and duties of the supervisory body – Legal Entity of Public Law (LEPL) Labour Inspection Service and providing effective enforcement of labour regulations. From January 1, 2021, the Labour Inspection Service was transformed into an independent body subordinated to the MOH. Its mandate extends to and ensures the supervision of labour rights defined by the Organic Law on Labour Safety, the Labour Code and the Law of Georgia on Public Service, including timely detection and prevention of direct and indirect discrimination, sexual harassment, gender sensitivity, forced labour and labour exploitation, implementation of agreements of labour mediation and enforcement of other critical issues defined by labour legislation.

104. The mandate and authority of the Labour Inspection Service gradually increases. Its capacity building continues and its annual budget increased in response to the growth of employed labour inspectors:

Table VII
Labour Inspector Office's budget

	2015	2016	2017	2018	2019	2020	2021
Employees	25	25	25	40	40	100	109
Budget in GEL	500 000	550 000	570 000	910 000	3 210 000	3 210 000	5 976 600

105. In 2015–2020, labour inspectors represented were contractors of the Department of Inspection of Labour Conditions of the MOH. By 2021, the number of staff of the Labour Inspection Service was 167, including 109 labour inspectors. In addition, the legal status of labour inspectors was upgraded – they became civil servants and their guarantees of legal and social protection were improved.

Table VIII
Labour Inspections

#	2015	2016	2017	2018	2019	2020	2021
Inspections	120	287	392	465	1 575	359	1 540
Inspected employment places/objects	120	287	392	1 465	835	304	834

#	2015	2016	2017	2018	2019	2020	2021
Written Recommendations				465	4 806	1 617	6 304
Objects that addressed all findings of the initial inspections			n/a	6	127	14	126
Objects fined for administrative violations				5	202	155	323
Objects that had to suspend activity due to grave violations				0	92	103	85

106. According to Government Resolution N322 of May 23, 2020, on Approval of Isolation and Quarantine Rules, the Labour Inspection was defined as the principal supervisory agency of the resolution. During 2020–2021, the Labour Inspection Service and relevant state agencies implemented monitoring and supervision of measures designed to prevent the spread of coronavirus, as well as awareness-raising activities.

Reply to paragraph 35 – Social security

107. According to the Constitution, Georgia is a social state and takes care of strengthening the principles of social justice, social equality and social solidarity within society.

108. The social protection system includes two main components – targeted social assistance for families below the poverty line and the pension system.

109. In Georgia, the social security network was created in 2004. In 2006, a targeted social assistance program was introduced, focused on financial assistance for the population below the poverty line and vulnerable families. This system replaced the existing assistance scheme to different target groups.

110. The social assistance system includes direct financial assistance (direct financial assistance provided by local or central authorities to beneficiaries on a regular or one-time basis), indirect financial assistance in the form of subsidies (an amount allocated by local or central bodies that allow beneficiaries and their families to benefit from various assistance. It includes utility, transport or other benefits) and services (additional aid provided by local and central bodies).

111. Within the framework of the social assistance programme, those households receive financial assistance whose rating score obtained as a result of the family assessment is lower than the threshold score established by the legislation. Any family can apply for assistance if they consider themselves in a socially vulnerable situation based on their socioeconomic conditions, need help and are willing to receive it. Beneficiaries receive assistance without interruption until the grounds for suspension/termination arise.

112. Social benefits (pension, compensation, social package, subsistence allowance, etc.) are disbursed monthly, timely and efficiently through the relevant banking institution. Social benefit is deposited on a special account opened for each beneficiary in a bank free of charge. The bank has a delivery service if someone cannot visit the banking institution. The service of delivering social benefits to high mountain settlements with special vehicles is provided. This service is also free to the beneficiaries.

113. The grounds for the origination of entitlement to a pension is the attainment of the retirement age – for women – 60 years, for men – 65 years. Law on the State Pension applies to citizens of Georgia, stateless persons with status in Georgia and aliens who have legally resided in the territory of Georgia for the last ten years by the moment of applying for a pension.

114. In 2018, the Law on Funded Pension was approved, substantially changing the pension system. The funded pension applies to citizens of Georgia, citizens of foreign countries permanently residing in Georgia and stateless persons (except non-resident natural persons) independently of the state pension and state compensation. Joining the funded pension scheme shall be mandatory for all employees, except for employees who have attained the age of 60 (in the case of female employees, the age of 55) before the entry into

force of this Law. An employer, employee and the state pay pension contributions. As of February 15, 2022, the number of participants registered in the pension scheme is about 1,250,000 participants, about 1,500 people benefited from the funded pension and the amount of pension assets invested in assets defined by law has increased to 2.10 billion GEL, out of which accrued profit is about 300,000,000.

115. As of 2021, the pension increases annually according to the introduced indexation rule. All pensioners will have their pensions increased by not less than the inflation rate. In the case of beneficiaries aged 70 and over, 80% of real economic growth will be added to inflation. Furthermore, the pension increase will not be less than 20 GEL and for beneficiaries aged 70 and older – not less than 25 GEL irrespective of inflation and economic growth.

116. The aged-based pension increased gradually; by 2022, it amounted to 260 GEL and for the population aged 70 and over, it amounted to 300 GEL.

117. From January 2022, the social package for children with disabilities (CWD) and persons with severe disabilities increased by 25 GEL and amounted to 275 GEL. The social package for persons with significant disabilities amounts to 140 GEL. Along with the increase in the state pension/social package, the state compensation is automatically recalculated. The pensioners/recipients of the social package permanently living in the highland settlements receive an increased benefit of 20% of the pension/social package.

118. The needs of the family and the special status of family members (PWD, a person with chronic disease, minor, pensioner, etc.) are considered when assessing the socioeconomic status of families. All families registered in the database of socially vulnerable families were verified based on this methodology. The child benefit has been introduced. Coverage of children with subsistence allowances has increased and 33.58% (as of December 2021) of recipients are children. The need index for a pensioner has been improved so that more single pensioners can receive Living Allowance.

119. According to the first paragraph of Article 46 of the Civil Procedure Code of Georgia, the parties registered in the Unified Database of Socially Vulnerable Families and receiving a subsistence allowance are exempted from court fees paid to the state budget.

120. According to the Labour Code of Georgia, maternity/parental leave and new-born adoption leave, shall be paid from the State Budget of Georgia. The cash allowance shall be a maximum of 1,000 GEL. Furthermore, employers and employees may agree on extra pay for maternity/paternity leave (article 39). Notably, there are still challenges in this direction and certain differences between the remuneration of maternity/paternity leave in the public and private sectors. The Government has started work to address the existing gaps.

121. The information on the beneficiaries of social assistance programs is provided in Annex IV.

122. The information on social programs of 2021 is provided in Annex V.

Reply to paragraph 36 – Gender equality, Fight against domestic violence

123. The Constitution provides equal rights and opportunities for men and women. The State shall take special measures to ensure the substantive equality of men and women and to eliminate inequality (Constitution, article 11.3).

124. Significant reforms have been undertaken aimed at the protection of women's rights and prevention of the domestic violence.

125. The Permanent Parliamentary Gender Equality Council, chaired by the Speaker of the Parliament, was created in the Parliament to ensure systematic and coordinated work on gender issues.

126. Since 2017, Inter-Agency Commission on Gender Equality, Violence against Women and Domestic Violence has been functioning chaired by the Advisor to the Prime Minister on Human Rights Issues. The Commission performs the function of the coordinating body defined by the Council of Europe Convention on Preventing and Combating Violence against

Women and Domestic Violence (Istanbul Convention), facilitates effective implementation of functions assigned to the state agencies in the field of prevention and elimination of violence against women and coordinates relevant agencies.

127. Since 2013, the Department of Gender Equality has been operating in PDO, aimed at supervising the protection of human rights and freedoms in terms of gender equality.

128. National Human Rights Action Plans, the National Action Plan on Combating Violence Against Women and Domestic Violence and Measures to be Implemented for the protection of Victims (Survivors) and the National Action Plan of Georgia for Implementation of the UN Security Council Resolutions on Women, Peace and Security foster advancement of women and strengthen the principles of combating violence and its implementation through the realisation of specific measures, including prevention, detection, suppression of violence, protection and rehabilitation of victims and strengthening of coordination between agencies.

129. In 2006, the Parliament of Georgia adopted the Law on the Elimination of Domestic Violence and the Protection and Support of Victims of Domestic Violence. After the 2017 amendments, it became the Law on the Elimination of Violence against Women and/or Domestic Violence and the Protection and Support of Victims of such Violence. The law to create efficient legislative mechanisms for the elimination of violence, as well as creating guarantees for social and legal protection and support for victims of violence.

130. In 2010, the Law of Georgia on Gender Equality was adopted.

131. In 2017, Georgia ratified Istanbul Convention. In order to bring the national legislation with the standards established the Convention, important legislative changes were adopted in up to 25 different legislative acts. New crimes such as forced marriage, female genital mutilation, stalking and forced sterilisation were added to the Criminal Code.

132. As of 2019, sexual harassment is punishable by the Code of Administrative Offenses and prohibited by the Labour Code and the antidiscrimination law.

133. As 2020, the Interagency Commission, in close cooperation with the UN Women, started to coordinate the process of creation of mechanisms for detecting sexual harassment in public services. Currently, this mechanism operates in 10 public agencies.

134. In addition to criminal liability, administrative-legal mechanisms – issuance of restraining/protective orders – are used to combat gender based violence/domestic violence. Restraining orders issued by the police is effective without presenting them to the court.

Table IX

Restraining orders of gender-based violence/domestic violence

	2015	2016	2017	2018	2019	2020
Restraining Orders	2 722	3 089	4 370	7 646	10 266	10 321
Investigations under article 381 ¹ of the Criminal Code	36	28	29	60	516	467

135. According to the 2018 amendment to the Criminal Code, violation of a restraining/protective order is a crime.

136. Legislation provides for strict punishment for the perpetrators of sexual violence, including deprivation of certain rights (including the right to work in education institutions). To monitor persons convicted of sexual violence and prevent this crime, Ministry of Internal Affairs (MIA) created a database of perpetrators.

137. Legal Aid Service provides free legal aid to victims of domestic violence, irrespective of their social status. The legal aid services include legal consultations, drafting of legal documents and legal representation for protection order procedures in civil and administrative proceedings.

138. The fight against gender based violence/domestic violence is a priority of the MIA and the General Prosecutor's Office (GPO). The relevant units of the GPO constantly monitor

and annually analyse the cases of domestic crime and violence against women. The GPO conducts a strict criminal law policy against violence against women and domestic crimes. The initiation of criminal prosecutions for domestic crimes has almost doubled, as shown in the table below.

Table X
Statistics of criminal prosecution of domestic crimes

<i>Year</i>	<i>2014</i>	<i>2015</i>	<i>2016</i>	<i>2017</i>	<i>2018</i>	<i>2019</i>	<i>2020</i>
#	550	1 066	1 356	1 986	3 955	4 579	4 633

139. In 2016–2020, criminal prosecution on the grounds of gender intolerance was initiated against 467 persons.

140. In 2018, MIA created the Human Rights Protection Department within the framework of the investigation reform. Its mandate increased in 2019 and was renamed the Human Rights Protection and Monitoring Department. The Department's primary function is to respond promptly to the facts of domestic crime, violence against women, discrimination based on intolerance, trafficking and crimes committed by/against minors and to ensure the effectiveness of ongoing investigations.

141. The MIA website provides information about the existing legal mechanisms as well as the MIA hotline – 112, which operates 24/7. MIA immediately responds to each violence case.

142. In 2018–2020, a total of 20 persons were prosecuted for inciting women to suicide and attempted suicide by a family member.

143. According to the 2020 amendments, electronic monitoring was introduced to monitor the execution of restraining orders.

144. The Agency for State Care and Assistance for the Victims of Human Trafficking (Care Agency) is responsible for assistance and rehabilitation of victims of trafficking in human beings. The Care Agency has five shelters and five crisis centres and a 24/7 hotline – 116 006 for counselling. In addition to the Georgian language, the hotline is available in 7 additional languages (English, Russian, Turkish, Azerbaijani, Armenian, Arabic and Persian) and calls are free. For example, in 2021, 1,864 people (female – 1,556, male – 308) used the hotline (116,006) service.

145. Service shelters for violence victims provide beneficiaries with the following services: accommodation, psychological-social rehabilitation; organising/providing medical services; legal aid and, if necessary, translation services.

146. Crisis centres provide the following services: psychological-social rehabilitation/assistance; organisation/provision of medical services; referral to the relevant institution in case of the need for shelter; legal aid (legal advice and advocacy) and, if necessary, translation services.

147. See the number of shelters/crisis centres beneficiaries in 2015–2021 in Annex VI.

148. The Care Agency developed guidelines on detection, treatment principles of physical, psychological and sexual violence against women and referral (standard operating procedures for an inter-sectoral response of healthcare services), which will help health workers to identify and provide appropriate assistance to women who are victims of violence. A relevant training module was also developed.

149. Training and retraining of relevant state officials are an integral part of reforms related to the fight against gender-based violence/domestic violence. Since 2018, up to 12,500 MIA employees and more than 600 health system employees have been trained on the violence related issues.

150. To mitigate the increased risks of domestic violence against women during the pandemic, the Inter-Agency Commission on Gender Equality has approved a communication

strategy on domestic violence during COVID-19 and conducted awareness campaigns across the country.

151. In 2020, amendments were made to the Election Code of Georgia, which approved the gender quota mechanism.

152. In 2021, Georgia joined the Equal Pay International Coalition thus emphasising the need for equal pay for equal work in Georgia. By signing the document, the country will fulfil the relevant obligations to eliminate the gender wage gap.

Reply to paragraph 37 – Combating trafficking

153. The State policy on combating trafficking in human beings is based on the so-called 4P principle and is aimed at strengthening crime prevention, victim protection, proactive investigation and effective criminal prosecution and cooperation measures.

154. Since 2006, the Interagency Coordinating Council for the Implementation of Measures against Trafficking in Human Beings, chaired by the Minister of Justice, coordinates the State policy. Its members are representatives of government, local and international organizations. The Council is policymaking and coordinating body that has developed eight biannual National Action Plans.

155. Georgia has ratified all major international treaties against trafficking in human beings.

156. According to the 2016 Trafficking in Persons Report of the US State Department, Georgia was placed in the first basket. This position was retained in 2017, 2018, 2019, 2020, 2021 and 2022.

157. According to the 2018 Global Slavery Index report, Georgia ranks 15th out of 167 countries in the overall ranking and ranks 1st in the region.

158. In the 2019 report of the international organization Walk Free Foundation, which annually measures the Global Slavery Index – Measurement, Action, Freedom, Georgia was ranked 18th among 183 countries.

159. The trafficking was criminalized in 2003. The legislation fully complies with the standards established by international treaties.

160. MIA operates six special mobile groups to fight trafficking in human beings. In 2014, the Task Force of specially trained investigators and prosecutors was created in the Adjara region. Its primary function is to identify places with a risk of trafficking throughout the country (bars, clubs, saunas, etc.) and investigate the crime.

161. The MIA Department of Human Rights Protection and Monitoring monitors the quality of proceedings related to investigating human trafficking crimes.

162. Georgia signed an agreement with EUROPOL in 2017 and with EUROJUST in 2019 to strengthen international cooperation in the fight against the trafficking in human beings. Georgia has signed cooperation agreements/memorandums on combatting crime and police cooperation with 30 countries, including cooperation in combating trafficking.

163. International Cooperation Centre for law enforcement was established to increase the effectiveness of international police cooperation. It exchanges operational information through secure networks with allied countries to facilitate combating cross-border crime.

164. In 2015–2020, the investigation started in 116 criminal cases and criminal prosecution was initiated against 48 traffickers and 47 traffickers were convicted in 18 cases.

165. State Labour Inspection Service is responsible for state supervision to prevent and respond to forced labour and labour exploitation.

166. Labour Inspection Department has signed a memorandum with MIA Central Criminal Police to refer facts of alleged labour exploitation to MIA.

167. In 2016–2020, the Labour Inspection Department conducted inspections to identify forced labour and labour exploitation in 616 companies (582 planned, 34 unplanned

inspections). As a result, possible signs of forced labour and labour exploitation were revealed in three companies and the case was referred to competent agencies for further proceedings.

168. Special attention is paid to the protection and assistance of victims of trafficking. A person with the status of a victim of trafficking in human beings can benefit from various state services (psychological and medical assistance, legal aid, compensation in the amount of 1000 GEL, shelter (in Tbilisi and Batumi) and assistance in social reintegration). Crisis centres are also available for alleged victims of trafficking (before granting a status). See additional information in Annex VII.

169. Special attention is paid to raising the qualifications of state officials in combatting the trafficking in human beings. In 2015–2020, more than 200 activities were conducted with about 5,000 with participants from different state authorities (including representatives of the GPO, MIA, the Office of Labour Inspector, the Care Agency, judiciary, the consular service, Ministry of Justice and Legal Aid Service).

170. In 2014, the Interagency Coordinating Council for the Implementation of Measures against Trafficking in Human Beings developed a unified awareness-raising strategy to inform specific target groups of society about human trafficking. Awareness-raising activities include informational meetings with various target groups (schoolchildren, students, teachers, employers and employees, homeless children, IDPs, residents in regions, etc.), discussions, public lectures, conferences, production and distribution of information brochures.

171. Trafficking in human beings is incorporated into education at schools (IX–X grades) and HEIs (undergraduate and graduate programmes).

Reply to paragraph 38 – Rights of the child

172. In 2016, an Interagency Commission on the Implementation of the UN Convention on the Rights of the Child was created to coordinate and monitor the unified policy for the protection of child rights. The commission members are high-ranking officials of state agencies. Representatives of local civil society organizations and international organizations participate in its work with deliberative voting rights.

173. The goals and objectives outlined in the 2014–2020 National Human Rights Strategy and Action Plans are in line with the principles of the Convention on the Rights of the Child.

174. Georgia ratified important conventions on child rights such as: Convention Concerning the Prohibition and Immediate Action for the Elimination of the Worst Forms of Child Labour (in 2003); Optional Protocol to the Convention on the Rights of the Child on the sale of children, child prostitution and child pornography (in 2005); Protocol to Prevent, Suppress and Punish Trafficking in Persons Especially Women and Children, supplementing the United Nations Convention against Transnational Organized Crime (in 2006); Optional Protocol to the Convention on the Rights of the Child on the involvement of children in armed conflict (in 2010); Convention of October 19, 1996 on Jurisdiction, Applicable Law, Recognition, Enforcement and Co-operation in Respect of Parental Responsibility and Measures for the Protection of Children (in 2014); Council of Europe Convention on the Protection of Children against Sexual Exploitation and Sexual Abuse (in 2014); Optional Protocol to the Convention on the Rights of the Child on a communications procedure (in 2016).

175. In 2019, the Parliament adopted the Code on the Right of the Child. It defines the basic rights and freedoms of a child and creates a state system for their protection and support. The main provisions of the Code entered into force in September 2020. The Code ensures strengthening the basic rights of all children, including street children/minors and realizing these rights without discrimination, stigma and social exclusion. The Code also creates state child protection and support systems and imposes a state obligation to develop and provide children with education, health care and social protection state programs. The Code defined the “best interest of the child” and the criteria for its determination.

176. In 2020, the Rights of the Child Standing Parliamentary Council was established. Its primary goal is to ensure systematic and coordinated work for the protection of child rights in the Parliament and to supervise the implementation of relevant decisions.

177. As of January 1, 2017, all exceptional provisions allowing the marriage of a person under 18 were cancelled; now, marriage is permitted only for a person above 18. In addition, awareness-raising activities are systematically carried out to prevent early marriage.

178. In 2015, the Juvenile Justice Code was approved. The purpose of this Code is to protect the best interests of minors, to re-socialize and rehabilitate minors who are in conflict with the law, to protect the rights of minor victims and witnesses, to prevent the secondary victimization of minor victims and minor witnesses and to avoid the re-victimization of minor victims and to prevent new crimes and to protect public order in the process of administration of justice.

179. In 2017–2018, the United Nations Children’s Fund (UNICEF) developed a concept of a child-friendly environment in common courts. The Rustavi City Court was organized as a model based on the concept and Georgia continues to develop child-friendly environment in other courts as well.

180. Since 2020, every minor has a right to benefit from services provided by the Legal Aid Service in respect to all categories of crimes and civil and administrative cases.

181. In 2020, MIA established the Juvenile Affairs Main Division in Tbilisi Police Department, which was staffed with certified investigators and personnel.

182. The 2016, the amendments introduced the concept of “street child” – a child under age of 18 living and/or working in the street and who has been identified as such by an authorized social worker under the referral procedures of child protection. In 2014–2021, 2,292 children living and/or working in the street were identified in Georgia.

183. This definition allowed the State to issue identification documentation to street children who can benefit from various state programmes, including healthcare, education and social programmes.

184. In 2016–2021, 49 temporary identification document were issued to 38 homeless children; 17 temporary identification document were issued to 13 children who were victims of violence. Also, 13 electronic identity document and 13 biometric passports were issued to 14 homeless/victims of violence. Also, 1 electronic residence certificate was issued for one street child and/or victim of violence.

185. Adopting the Law on Social Assistance in 2018, was also a significant step forward in creating regulatory mechanisms to protect street children.

186. In 2016, a new law on Adoption and Foster Care was approved, focusing more on protecting the child’s rights. Children separated from their family environment are placed in alternative services, considering the best interest of the child.

187. To protect children from all types of violence, the Government approved child protection referral procedures in 2016, expanding the list of agencies involved in child protection procedures (including all institutions that have contact with children). Administrative responsibility was established for entities participating in the procedures for non-fulfilment of obligation to provide information on child abuse to the relevant authority. The LEPL Office of Resource Officers of Education Institutions developed the model of social work in schools and started its implementation in schools in 2021. The Psychosocial Service Centre provides free psychosocial services to pupils, their parents and representatives of the education institutions throughout Georgia. A 24-hour hotline is operating and from October 2021, a new webpage – [befriend.mes.gov.ge] was launched, allowing customers to receive qualified psychological consultation via online chat with complete confidentiality.

188. The special sub-programme Second Chance for Education with Social Inclusion is implemented to integrate street children into formal education. Within this programme, Ministry of Education and Science works to ensure opportunity for education for children left out of school.

189. Since 2015, special educational service – the “Transit Education Programme”, has been implemented, the beneficiaries of which are street children left out of school or at high risk of being left out. The goal of the programme is to integrate beneficiaries at the elementary/basic level of general education considering their age, to support them to continue their studies in vocational programmes and to support the beneficiaries at risk of dropping out of school, to improve their social inclusion and academic results (see statistics in Annex VIII).

190. Since 2007, Social Rehabilitation and Child Care State Programme has been approved annually, the goal of which is to improve the physical/social condition of vulnerable children, including the homeless and at risk of abandonment and their integration into society, as well as help families with children in crisis. The programme and its sub-programmes are implemented considering the best interests of a child. When engaging beneficiaries in services provided by the programme, persons who do not have Georgian citizenship but have relevant identification documents have the same rights as the citizens of Georgia.

191. The State carries out the Sub-programme for the Provision of Shelters to Street Children, which aims to provide shelter for street children, including psychosocial rehabilitation and integration of children living and working on the street. Within the framework of this sub-programme, six 24-hour shelters, seven day centres and seven mobile groups operate in Georgia. The shelters provide various services, including mobile group services, responding to incoming reports on children and visits, identifying child needs, counselling, social work and searching and arranging child identification documentation. The day centres provide services such as two-meal daily services, crisis management, development/implementation of individual plans of beneficiary services etc. Since 2011, the role of guardianship/care social workers in family strengthening has increased within the framework of this programme.

192. Special attention is given to the identification of child begging and exploitation. Begging is not prohibited in Georgia. However, engaging minors in beggary or other anti-social activities (improper use of drugs, prostitution) is prohibited and punishable under the Criminal Code of Georgia (art. 171); child exploitation with engagement in anti-social activities (e.g., beggary) shall also be punished under the trafficking article (1432).

193. To prevent the children from going out in the streets and to reduce the number of children living and working in the street through their integration into society, the unified Strategy and its implementation Action Plan were developed. These documents aim to protect children living or working in the street from all types of violence, including trafficking in human beings.

194. According to the Criminal Code, committing a crime by a family member against a minor or in his/her presence shall be an aggravating factor for liability for all respective crimes.

195. In 2020, Juvenile Referral Centre was established. Its purpose is socialisation, re-socialisation, rehabilitation and crime prevention of juveniles with complex behaviour through an institutional and complex approach.

196. In 2020, the Government of Georgia confirmed the concept of the Centre for Psychological and Social Services for Children Victims of Violence, which aims to create a child-friendly, multi-disciplinary and multi-sectoral approach to ensuring psychological-social rehabilitation of victims under a “one window principle”. The centre fully complies with the so-called Barnahus model, considered the best service for children victims of sexual violence. In 2022, the psychosocial service centre was established in Tbilisi. During the investigation of sexual violence, a child goes through long and stressful processes in various institutions, which may cause re-traumatisation; therefore, the minor needs to receive the services in a calm environment, adjusted to him/her, through the “one window principle”. The mentioned centre will prevent repeated trauma and ensure stabilisation of the child’s psycho-emotional condition, psychological and social rehabilitation and case monitoring.

197. By strengthening the family, the State also cares about preventing push factors for the child from ending up on the streets.

198. Care Agency carries out the Strengthening Child Protection and Welfare Systems project to develop child protection and welfare systems, identify vulnerable families, improve alternative care services, support deinstitutionalisation and enhance protection mechanisms.

199. The deinstitutionalisation process is actively implemented in the country; in 2021, the Kojori Orphanage was closed and the children were placed in specialised family-type small-group homes for children with severe and significant disabilities. In 2022, children living in infant homes will be placed in alternative services.

Reply to paragraph 39

Poverty reduction

200. Share of the population under the absolute poverty line (%):

Table XI

Share of the population under the absolute poverty line (%)

Year	City	Village	Age			Sex		Georgia
			0–17	18–64	65 +	Women	Men	
2004	34.4	34.1	37.7	33.3	32.9	34.2	34.4	34.3
2015	18.0	26.4	24.2	22.0	16.4	21.3	22.0	21.6
2016	18.0	27.4	26.4	21.9	16.1	21.2	22.9	22.0
2017	18.6	26.6	26.0	21.7	16.5	21.6	22.4	21.9
2018	18.0	23.1	25.5	19.5	14.4	20.2	20.0	20.1
2019	16.4	23.7	24.4	19.2	13.8	19.4	19.6	19.5

201. Relative poverty rates (%):

Table XII

Relative poverty rates (%)

	2004	2015	2016	2017	2018	2019
<i>Share of the population under 60 % of the median consumption</i>						
City	20.7	15.4	15.5	17.0	17.2	16.2
Village	23.2	26.8	28.5	29.6	25.4	25.5
Total	21.8	20.2	21.0	22.3	20.5	20.1
<i>Share of the population under 40 % of the median consumption</i>						
City	7.6	4.8	4.9	6.5	6.6	6.0
Village	10.8	10.4	10.5	11.3	9.1	9.4
Total	9.0	7.2	7.2	8.5	7.6	7.4

202. According to the SDG national document, Georgia has set a goal that by 2030 the proportion of the population living below the international poverty line (1.9 USD per day) will be less than 1%. By 2015, the figure was 3.7%.

203. SDG National Document uses national indicators in the direction of poverty reduction. In particular, the Government has set a goal to decrease by 20% the population living under the absolute poverty line by 2030, compared to 2015.

204. In addition, by 2030, the population's access to basic services, including electricity (100%), water supply services and sewerage network services, will increase proportionally. Furthermore, the State has undertaken that the number of resources allocated directly to poverty reduction programs and total government spending on basic services (education, health and social protection) will proportionally increase.

205. Alleviation of poverty is the main priority of the State and the legislative basis has been developed to carry out relevant measures.

206. Gradual increase of age pension and a social package for children with severe disability, provision of additional benefits for pensioners/recipients of social package living in high mountainous regions and continuation of programmes for providing monthly cash transfers for other target groups is essential in the direction of fighting poverty (detailed information is provided in Reply to paragraph 35).

207. The rate of poor household coverage with social assistance increases.

Table XIII

TSA beneficiaries' coverage

	2016	2018
Poorest decile	57.9	70.1
Second decile	16.3	18.9
Third decile	8.3	7.1
Fourth and higher decile	1.9	1.2
Total population	9.6	10.5

208. By 2021, targeted social assistance covered 17,2% of the population. The targeted social assistance assigns scores to families based on their socio-economic appraisal.

209. In 2015, a new methodology was developed and the administration scheme was refined. A differentiated assistance system and child benefits were introduced, which significantly improved the purposefulness of the program. Currently, the works are ongoing with the World Bank to make the program more purposeful and include more vulnerable families, especially bearing in mind the problems caused by the pandemic.

210. For families with up to 65,001 rating scores, the livelihood allowances are issued by a gradation system. The more the needs of the family are, the more allowance they receive, while the families with 65,001–120,000 rating scores only receive the child (under age 16) benefits.

211. From 2021, child benefits have doubled and summed up to 100 GEL; In 2022, Child benefit was increased to GEL 150. Furthermore, the maximum score for vulnerable families to receive livelihood allowances has increased from 100,001 to 120,001; thus, more families with children have become the recipients of child benefits.

212. The Government plans to develop a Social Code, which will cover directions and schemes of social protection, such as social benefits, including IDP allowances, healthcare, pensions, issues regarding PWDs, employment, etc.

213. Within the framework of the Targeted State Programme to Mitigate Damage from Infection (COVID-19) caused by a Novel Coronavirus SARS-COV-2, the right to receive State assistance for six months was granted to “families with 650,001 – 100,000 rating scores registered in the unified database of socially vulnerable families (according to the number of family members). The compensation amount for one-member families was 70 GEL and for two-member families – 90 GEL. In other cases, the compensation was issued based on the number of family members – 35 GEL for each member. Furthermore, the families with 100,001 rating scores, having three and more children under 17, received a 100 GEL allowance; the persons with severe disabilities and children with disabilities under age 18 received an additional 100 GEL together with social allowance packages for six months. The mentioned program was implemented in two stages: in May–October 2020 and January–June 2021. In 2020 the universal benefit of 200 GEL was issued for every child, while socially vulnerable students (up to 150,001 score) of higher education institutions were funded for one semester of study (1,125 GEL).

214. Within the Targeted State Programme to Mitigate Damage from Infection (COVID-19) caused by Novel Coronavirus SARS-COV-2, various target groups received social

allowances. The compensation for hired employees was defined in the amount of 200 GEL within six months of the launch of this program (May–October 2020 and January–June 2021). As a result, at both stages, 321 319 beneficiaries received 280,432,900 GEL. Self-employed persons were given one-time compensation in the amount of 300 GEL. The mentioned compensation was issued in two stages (May–June 2020 and December 2020). As a result, 111,343,700 GEL were distributed to 371,074 beneficiaries.

Right to adequate food

215. In 2021, the Government approved State Programme of Social Rehabilitation and Childcare. Its Sub-programme on Assistance to Families having Children in Crisis ensures the provision of food to families with children with primary needs. The Sub-programme also covers the provision of artificial food products prescribed by the Law on the Protection and Promotion of Breastfeeding and Artificial Food Consumption. The beneficiaries of the Sub-programme are infants under the age 1, who need artificial food products and (i) have weight deficit caused by insufficient feeding; (ii) their families are recipients of the reintegration allowance; (iii) are in foster care; (iv) their families are registered in the unified database of socially vulnerable families with rating score less than 65,001.

216. Within the 2021 State Programme on Childcare and Youth Support, the Sub-programme on providing food to young people aged 18–21 out of the state care system was introduced. As the Code of the Rights of the Child provides, this Sub-programme is a support measure for young people aged 18–21 who have left the state care system. Its goal is to support the youth who has left the state care services and to support their independent living. The food voucher for up to 100 GEL is issued for six months.

217. In accordance with the UNICEF's recommendation, as of 2015, the child benefit has been introduced for children under 16 living in families with a rating score below 120,001.

218. The MOH has developed guidelines on safe and healthy nutrition in schools. In 2017, the Government adopted technical regulations on the Establishment of Catering and Diet Nutritional Standards in Early and Preschool Education Institutions.

219. Furthermore, the food regime of persons in places of imprisonment has been approved.

The right to health

220. In 2013, Universal Healthcare Program was launched, which laid the foundation for universal coverage of state-funded medical healthcare for every citizen of Georgia. The programme covers planned outpatient, urgent outpatient, in-patient, planned surgical services and treatment of oncological diseases and childbirth.

221. The universal healthcare programme and the state programme on village doctors ensure financial and geographic access to primary healthcare services for the urban and rural population.

222. The programme's beneficiaries are citizens of Georgia, persons with neutral ID, neutral travel documents, persons with a status of stateless person in Georgia, persons with refugee or humanitarian status and persons seeking asylum.

223. The beneficiary categories of the programme are:

- The poor, teachers, public artists, children in foster care, compactly settled IDPs;
- Population in retirement age; children 0–5 ages, students, PWDs;
- Veterans without insurance;
- Persons with 70,000–100,000 rating scores and teenagers of 6–18;
- Population whose monthly accrued remuneration is less than average remuneration (1,000 GEL per month) or person with irregular income or self-employed or other;
- Population whose yearly income is less than 40,000 GEL and accrued remuneration is \geq than average remuneration (1,000 GEL per year);
- Population whose yearly income is more than 40,000 GEL (except pension age).

224. Since 2017, new criteria for beneficiaries' differentiation have been developed (according to the beneficiaries' income) to provide more needs-oriented services and further enhance the "social justice" approaches.

225. In 2017, the programme for providing medicines for chronic diseases was launched in Georgia. It was integrated into the universal healthcare programme in 2020. This program defines treatment medicines for chronic cardiovascular diseases (annual limit 200 GEL), chronic lung diseases (annual limit 300 GEL), type two diabetes (annual limit 40 GEL), chronic thyroid gland diseases (annual limit 20 GEL), Parkinson's (annual limit 400 GEL – the State covers 75%) and epilepsy (annual limit 300 GEL – the State covers 75%). The programme beneficiaries are socially vulnerable persons and pensioners, Children with disabilities, persons with severe disabilities, veterans, the population living in villages near the dividing line with occupied territories of Georgia and citizens with Parkinson's disease and epilepsy.

226. The component on medicines provision for children aged 0–5 envisages financing antibacterial measures (annual limit 50 GEL – with 50% co-payment and for Children with disabilities – 100 GEL with 50% co-payment).

227. Since 2020, the programme administration mechanisms have simplified, significantly increasing beneficiaries of the medicines provision component. While the number of program beneficiaries in 2017–2019 was 29,500 persons, in 2020, the number increased to 160,000.

228. To reduce the morbidity and mortality of mothers and newborns and to increase access to reproductive healthcare services, the National Maternal and Newborn Health Strategy 2017–2030 was developed, which defines the country's policy both in the direction of maternal and Newborn health as well as of family planning, sexual and reproductive health.

229. Since 2017, the State has been financing eight antenatal visits of pregnant women instead of four antenatal visits, following the WHO guidelines. The State funds complicated pregnancy, childbirth and caesarean sections under the Universal Healthcare Program. Pregnant mothers are provided with iron and folic acid supplementation.

230. Since 2017, the treatment of mother-to-foetus syphilis has been started under the State Maternal and Child Health Programme. Since 2003, treatment of mother-to-fetus HIV infection has been launched under the State AIDS Program. A draft strategy for eliminating the transmission of sexually transmitted diseases from mother to foetus is under development.

231. The State fully funds HIV/AIDS and tuberculosis prevention, diagnosis and treatment services. Since 2015, the Hepatitis C elimination program has been launched, fully covering screening, diagnosis and medicines.

232. According to the national vaccination calendar, the State ensures the prevention of 13 diseases. Five new vaccines were successfully introduced in the immunization calendar: vaccine against rotavirus infection, the vaccine against pneumococcal infection; inactivated poliomyelitis vaccine in the form of a hexavalent vaccine; oral bivalent poliomyelitis vaccine; vaccine against human papillomavirus infection. Citizens have access to anti-rabies drugs for post-exposure prophylactic anti-rabies treatment.

233. Since 2022, the import of low-price medication has been increased to facilitate access to low-price medicines. More than 50 medications are currently imported and their price has decreased by 60%–80%.

234. See statistical data related to the right to health in Annex IX.

Reply to paragraph 40 – Improvement of living conditions

235. Distribution of the population by type of dwelling ownership (according to the 2014 General Population Census, as of November 5, 2014) is as follows:

Table XIV
Housing data

Total	3 625 408
Property of one or more members of the household	3 170 343
Property of housing-construction cooperative	12 776
State property	26 921
Rented	124 352
Rented in exchange of interest-free loan (with dwelling used as collateral)	21 346
Other types of ownership	92 911
Not stated	176 759

236. The State has committed to developing a housing policy document under the Open Governance 2018–2019 Action Plan. The housing policy will be determined in the course of development the Social Code. Therefore, the housing policy, institutional arrangement, separation of powers at the central and local levels, statistics production/methodology and other issues will be reflected on the level of legislation.

237. To develop the water infrastructure, the Ministry of Regional Development and Infrastructure of Georgia (MRDI), within its competence, continuously implements various projects to provide access to drinking water for the population. 52% of urban settlements are provided with 24-hour water supply in the area of operation of United Water Supply Company of Georgia (which is under the management of the Ministry), meaning that approximately 780,000 people are provided with water supply and sewerage services. In the following years, it is planned to build/reconstruct the water supply and sewerage infrastructure and as a result, in 2025, all cities of Georgia will have continuous access to water supply in compliance with relevant standards. Currently, almost 100% of the population has access to electricity.

238. In 2009, the gasification program of regions of Georgia was launched. During 2015–2021, more than 234,000 families were given the opportunity to connect to the natural gas supply network. As of 2021, around 76% of families living in Georgia are registered as natural gas consumers. The gasification works are ongoing. The 2022–2024 plan is also developed.

239. In 2014, the gasification programme of the villages near the occupation line of occupied territories in the Shida Kartli region started and was finished in 2015 (budget of 19 million GEL). As a result, 13,458 families of 58 settlements were connected to the gas supply network.

240. In 2019–2020 targeted measures were undertaken in the settlements nearby the occupation line (Tkaia, Ganmukhuri, Shamgona, Rukhi, Rike, Natsuluko, Akhalabastumani) to ensure the connection to the natural gas distribution network of those families who were not registered as natural gas consumers. Notably, the families registered as consumers of the natural gas network that have paid the network connection fee received back the paid amount in the form of a deposit (not more than 400 GEL).

241. Around 12,600 families living in the villages of Tsalenjikha, Oni, Dusheti and Sachkhere municipalities near the occupational line receive 200 GEL for heating expenses in winter annually to respond to the needs of the conflict-affected population.

242. During 2020–2021, due to the economic crisis caused by COVID-19, the State subsidized utility bills (see the table below). In 2021, the State also subsidized the difference between the electricity tariff: 12,956,475 consumers, 58,327,363.95 GEL.

Table XV
Covid-19 subsidies

<i>March–May 2020</i>				
<i>Subsidy for</i>	<i>Gas</i>	<i>Electricity</i>	<i>Water</i>	<i>Cleaning</i>
Consumers	2 813 227	3 257 921	1 956 087	1 049 233
Budget in GEL	98 946 980	55 267 946	12 335 690	4 974 518
<i>November–December 2020 and January–February of 2021</i>				
Consumers	3 595 132	4 378 578	2 704 410	1 396 783
Budget in GEL	180 762 377	85 316 430	20 428 270	6 596 107

Reply to paragraph 41 – Agricultural reform

243. According to the Geostat, as of 1 January 2021, 40.6% of the population of Georgia lives in rural areas.

244. The agricultural sector has a significant share in the country's gross domestic product (see – Annex X). For sustainable economic development and inclusive economic growth of the country, the development of agriculture and rural areas is critical.

245. The Government has approved agricultural and rural development strategies to develop the sector systematically. The aims of Agriculture and Rural Development Strategy 2021–2027 are: competitive agricultural and non-agricultural sectors, sustainable use of natural resources, preservation of ecosystems, adaptation to climate changes, effective systems of food and animal feed safety and veterinary and plant protection.

246. The product release in the field of agriculture, forestry and fish farming has increased by 2.1 billion GEL during 2012–2020 (59.3%) and amounted to 5.8 billion GEL. Furthermore, from 2012 to 2020, the total output of products obtained as a result of the processing of agricultural products increased by 2.3 billion GEL (56.3%) and amounted to 6.3 billion GEL.

247. According to 2020 data, the added value created in agriculture, forestry and fish farming, at current prices, amounts to 3.6 billion GEL, which is 1,365 million GEL (61.3%) higher than the similar indicators of 2012. According to 2020 data, the share of added value in the gross domestic product created in agriculture, forestry and fish farming is – 8.3%.

248. From 2012 to 2020, the number of people employed in agricultural, forestry and fish farming has decreased by 60,000 (19.5%), while this share in total number of employed persons in the country was reduced by 5%. However, during the same period, the total number of employed persons increased by 29,600 people. The figure suggest that persons employed in agricultural, forestry and fish farming are gradually moving to other sectors and there is an increase in the number of employed persons in the country as well as the movement of the labour force (see – Annex XI).

249. From 2014 to 2020, the average monthly nominal remuneration of people employed in agricultural, forestry and fish farming increased by 318 GEL (63.5%) and amounted to 819 GEL.

250. Since 2012, the Rural Development Agency has invested almost 4 billion GEL (out of which the state co-financing exceeds 845 million GEL) in agricultural business development through various projects/programmes (Annex XII).

251. The payer of the property tax on land shall be a person for the land in his/her possession by April 1 of the tax year. The annual basic property tax rates on agricultural and forest land are differentiated according to administrative-territorial units and land categories and calculated for one ha in GEL. Property tax rates on non-agricultural land for a specific plot of land depend on its location. Property tax rates on non-agricultural land for a particular parcel shall be calculated based on location.

252. As for the land allocated to the person using natural resources, the land allocated to a person using natural resources under an appropriate licence for the use of natural resources

or in another form as determined by the legislation of Georgia is taxable by a maximum of three GEL per one ha.

Reply to paragraph 42 – Healthcare institutions

Table XVI

Healthcare system statistics

<i>Million GEL</i>	<i>2015</i>	<i>2016</i>	<i>2017</i>	<i>2018</i>	<i>2019</i>
Total expenses on healthcare	1 517	2 865	2 878	3 172	3 228
State expenses on healthcare	914	1 068	1 092	1 252	1 280
Out-of-pocket expenses	1 444	1 591	1 576	1 512	1 608
Private insurance	115	160	163	135	166
State expenditure on GDP	2.9%	3.1%	2.9%	3%	3%
Out-of-pocket expenses on healthcare from total expenses	57.3%	55.5%	54.7%	47.6%	48.4%

Table XVII

Healthcare system statistics 2

<i>Per 1000 inhabitants:</i>	<i>2015</i>	<i>2016</i>	<i>2017</i>	<i>2018</i>	<i>2019</i>	<i>2020</i>
# of hospital beds	3.4	3.7	4.0	4.3	4.7	5.0
# of doctors	5.7	6.6	7.1	8.3	8.5	8.4
# of nurses	5.7	5.2	5.2	4.8	5.3	5.2

253. Average monthly nominal salary of employees in the healthcare and social services:

Table XVIII

Remuneration in healthcare system

<i>Year</i>	<i>2015</i>	<i>2016</i>	<i>2017</i>	<i>2018</i>	<i>2019</i>	<i>2020</i>
Remuneration in GEL	845.7	914.6	953.3	983.6	1 049.5	1 101.4

254. By 2020, the number of outpatient institutions in Georgia amounts to 265, out of which 86% is privately owned. Bed fund in medical institutions amounts to 4.9 per 1,000 inhabitants, bed load – 190.7 days, delay – 5.6 days.

255. State owns only 30% of primary healthcare institutions. There are 320 polyclinics, 11 women counselling clinics and 1,264 village doctors' teams. More than 400 village outpatient institutions were built and equipped in 2020–2021.

256. According to the Law on Healthcare, a medical institution enjoys professional and financial independence as provided for by the legislation of Georgia. A medical institution shall carry out its activities according to its statute under the legislation of Georgia. It shall determine the procedure of labour organisation and the design, form and amount of remuneration within its income limits, as established by the legislation.

257. The budget allocations for the healthcare sector have significantly increased from 2013 (in 2012 – 45,000,000 GEL and 2019 – 1,425,000,000 GEL). The amount of state expenditure in relation to GDP and the state budget is increasing (in 2012 – 1.7% and 2020 – 3%).

258. According to the WHO and the World Bank, the country has improved access to healthcare and ensured better financial security through implementing effective reforms. A solid trend of growth in the utilisation of medical services was observed and the population's satisfaction with medical services increased significantly.

Reply to paragraph 43 – Care for persons with mental illnesses

259. Budget of the mental health state programme over 2015–2020 was as follows:

Table XIX

Budget of the mental health state programme

<i>Year GEL</i>	
2015	16 170 450
2016	16 483 255
2017	15 794 160
2018	20 550 700
2019	23 842 060
2020	27 500 000

260. Institutions providing psychiatric services:

Table XX

Mental health institutions

Adjara	1
Guria	2
Tbilisi	6
Imereti	4
Kakheti	4
Mtskheta-Mtianeti	2
Samegrelo and Zemo Svaneti	3
Kvemo Kartli	1
Shida Kartli	2
Total	25

261. The Law on Psychiatric Care, adopted in 2006, recognises that mental health is a fundamental aspect of human health and is an indispensable condition for the well-being of society and that the protection of the rights of people with mental disorders is an obligation of the State.

262. The Law defines forms of psychiatric care for people with mental disorders, their rights, as well rights and obligations of persons working in the field of psychiatry. The Law applies to Georgian citizens, stateless persons and citizens of foreign countries who are in the territory of Georgia and who need psychiatric care.

263. The primary examination, treatment and, if necessary, observation of a patient shall take place in an outpatient psychiatric institution. A patient or his/her legal representative, with the capacity to make a conscious decision, may choose a psychiatric institution and a doctor and terminate the examination and/or treatment at any stage.

264. Inpatient psychiatric support is voluntary and is provided to patients, when necessary, by medical indication. A patient shall be hospitalised for voluntary treatment on the basis of a request and/or the patient's informed consent.

265. A psychiatrist is authorised to use restriction methods against a hospitalised patient (isolation in a specialised room and/or physical restrain) if there is a real danger that the patient will harm himself/herself or others and it cannot be otherwise avoided. The physician in charge or the physician on duty of a hospital decides on the use of restriction methods; they should include justifications in the medical records.

266. The need for involuntary inpatient psychiatric care shall be defined by a physician of urgent medical aid or a physician holding an appropriate certificate. Appropriate law enforcement bodies are obliged to carry out the hospitalisation of a patient upon request. Within 48 hours from hospitalisation, a commission of psychiatrists shall study the patient's mental condition and decide on the advisability of involuntary inpatient psychiatric care.

267. In case if the commission of doctor-psychiatrists concludes that involuntary inpatient psychiatric assistance is necessary, the administration of a psychiatric institution, within 48 hours of a person's hospitalisation, shall apply to the court with a request to issue an appropriate order on the hospitalisation of the person for involuntary inpatient psychiatric assistance. A court, within 24 hours of the receipt of such request, shall consider and adopt decision on involuntary inpatient psychiatric assistance. A patient's participation in the consideration of the case is necessary. A legal representative or, in the absence of such, the patient's relative and a lawyer shall represent the person's interests in court. If the person does not have a lawyer, the court should appoint a lawyer for him/her. The involuntary psychiatric assistance shall not exceed six months.

268. In 2013, the Parliament of Georgia approved the State Mental Health Concept and the Government approved the Strategic Document for the Development of Mental Health and the 2015–2020 Action Plan. The priority directions of the documents are the decentralisation of services and enhancement of outpatient services, provision of medication and psycho-social interventions, development of community-based services and maintaining a balance between inpatient and community-based, as well as – medication-assisted and non-medication treatment. In 2022, the Government approved the updated strategic plan for 2022–2030 on January 18, 2022.

269. To increase the geographic and financial accessibility of psychiatric services for the population of Georgia, the mental health state programme has been operating since 1995 (see – Annex XIII).

270. Standards/protocols related to treatment are developed by field specialists and are based on the best international practice.

271. In 2020, with the financial and technical support of the French Development Agency, the works started on developing a roster of mental diseases. This will ensure registration of cases of morbidity and death due to mental disorders.

Reply to paragraph 44 – Preventive measures against HIV/AIDS

272. Incidence of HIV/AIDS per 100,000 population, Georgia

Table XXI
HIV/AIDS statistics

Year	1990	2000	2010	2015	2016	2017	2018	2019	2020*
Indicator	0	2	11.6	19.2	19.3	16.9	18	18	14.2

* Counted on the average annual population of 2019.

273. As of December 1, 2020, 8,598 cases (6,422 men, 2,176 women) of HIV incidence were registered in the AIDS Infectious Diseases and AIDS Centre; the majority of patients are between 29 to 40.

274. Since 2003, within the framework of the Global Fund to Fight Aids programme, all HIV/AIDS-positive persons have access to vital free, highly effective antiretroviral treatment and relevant quality laboratory and treatment adherence monitoring. The patients are provided treatment in Tbilisi and four regions.

275. As of December 31, 2020, 5,442 HIV/AIDS patients were undergoing so-called antiretroviral treatment (ARV). The country still maintains the leading position regarding ARV treatment coverage of HIV/AIDS infected persons and treatment adherence indicators;

however, the fact that about 45% of infection cases are diagnosed at a late stage negatively affects the treatment/mortality rate.

276. According to the UN HIV programme and WHO recommendation, from 2016, Georgia has fully moved to a “treatment for all” strategy implementation, which implies offering ARV treatment to all HIV patients regardless of CD4 lymphocyte levels.

277. Under the gradual handover of the measures funded by the Global Fund to fight AIDS, from 2015, the State co-finances the purchase of antiretroviral first-line and second-line ARV medication.

278. The 2019–2022 HIV/AIDS national strategy is prepared to reduce the HIV epidemic in Georgia through sustainable, focused interventions for representatives of high-risk groups and their sexual partners, improving the quality of services and significant improvement of treatment outcomes.

279. The following is carried out within the framework of the state programme on Management of HIV/AIDS: voluntary counselling on HIV infection/AIDS (pre-test and after test) and testing; procurement, reception and transportation of the first-line medication for HIV/AIDS treatment, diagnosis and treatment of sexually transmitted infections in persons at high risk of HIV-infections/AIDS, pilot-HIV-infection/AIDS prevention among injecting drug users (IDU) (from July 1, 2020).

280. Within the framework of this programme, the union “Tanadgoma” was handed over first-line medicines for HIV/AIDS treatment, test systems for ARV monitoring and measuring the amount of HIV-1. This measure was introduced to provide treatment to the population living in the occupied territory of Abkhazia, deliver medical equipment to the occupied territory, ensure treatment continuity and improve patient treatment adherence.

Reply to paragraph 45 – Access to primary education

281. According to the Constitution of Georgia (art. 26), everyone has the right to receive education and the right to choose the form of education they receive. Elementary (6 years) and basic (3 years) education shall be compulsory (art. 27). According to the law, the State fully funds general education (12 years).

282. Studying in public general education institutions is free for every student regardless of their citizenship. From the 2014–2015 academic year, general education is funded for foreign citizens living in Georgia. The State also finances studying in authorised private schools based on the fiscal standards per pupil.

283. Distribution of students according to classes and years:

Table XXII

Data on schoolchildren for the 2020–2021 academic year

Academic year	1–6 classes			7–9 classes			10–12 classes		
	Girls	Boys	Total	Girls	Boys	Total	Girls	Boys	Total
2020/2021	161 857	174 715	336 572	65 590	72 490	138 080	64 504	69 939	134 443

284. Quantity of students who terminated studies:

Table XXIII

School drop-out statistics

Class	2015/2016		2016/2017		2017/2018		2018/2019		2019/2020	
	Girls	Boys	Girls	Boys	Girls	Boys	Girls	Boys	Girls	Boys
	4 835	6 677	4 740	7 056	4 769	7 529	4 908	7 141	3 382	4 865

285. In 2017, the Government approved the Unified Strategy for Education and Science for 2017–2021, which fully complies with the requirements of the Association Agreement (AA) between the European Union and Georgia, recommendations of the Council of Europe and is in compliance with SDG 4. The strategic goals of the Ministry of Education and Science (MoES) serve to provide accessible education at every level and quality education for all.

286. To prevent students from staying out of school, a monitoring mechanism was launched in 2021. Regulations were developed covering several stages: in the event of a student not showing up for ten consecutive school days, the class head teacher should submit a written report to the school administration reflecting the working with the student and his/her lawful representative for the last ten days. After an absence for 20 consecutive days, social workers and the class head teacher should jointly engage in the process. Social workers should visit the family for two working days to work with the student and his/her guardian to return the student to the education process. In case the student does not show up in school for 45 days, the student status shall be terminated; however, the status can be restored at any time based on the application of the student's parent/legal representative to the school.

287. In 2015, the entry into the profession, professional development and career advancement scheme for teachers was approved. Its goal is to improve the quality of teaching and learning in general education institutions through the systematic professional development of teachers to improve students' results.

288. Various programmes are implemented to provide access to and promote education, in particular:

289. The programme for providing students and teachers with textbooks: from 2012, students at all public schools of Georgia (100%), as well as students of private schools, who are from families under the poverty line and children of soldiers who died in 2008 August war have been provided with textbooks. Textbooks were fully renewed at elementary and basic levels and were translated into ethnic minority languages.

290. To increase geographic accessibility to schools, the MoES provides transport services used by 12,000 students annually.

291. The programme "my first computer": portable computers are provided annually for first graders of public school and their class head teachers, as well as excellent students who graduated from the basic level of public schools.

292. Inclusive education has been implemented in Georgia since 2005. The goal of the programme on the promotion of inclusive teaching is to provide an equally accessible educational environment (see – Annex XIV) to students with different abilities (street children, Roma, repatriate and Meskhs without Georgian citizenship status, children/youth with disabilities and special educational needs and children/students of other vulnerable groups).

293. Each level of education (preschool, secondary, vocational, higher, adults) is accessible for representatives of ethnic minorities; they have the opportunity to receive preschool and general education in their native languages. Up to 300 non-Georgian public schools and sectors operate in Georgia. Programs and courses in the Georgian language have expanded and are available for any interested persons depending on the place of residence, including through mobile groups and distance learning.

294. In order to assist asylum seekers in Georgia, refugees and/or persons with humanitarian status (as well as juveniles placed in asylum seekers' Temporary Accommodation Centre within the Migration Department of MIA) to continue learning in general education institutions unimpededly, teaching the Georgian language is provided. Two hundred twenty-four students were enrolled on the course before 31 December 2020, out of which 104 students have successfully graduated.

295. In response to the challenges caused by the pandemic, distance learning was introduced: platforms of distance learning have become available for schools. The MoES and the Public Broadcaster launched TVschool to make education accessible for all. Special subject support groups at the regional level have been actively working with schools to

improve distance learning practices. Students' parents were allowed to choose the distance education format and the MoES provided additional compensation for teachers who had to work with a double workload. All schools were monitored and their readiness was assessed before the start of the education process to improve the hygienic-sanitary conditions; about 800 public school bathrooms were rehabilitated and schools were equipped with necessary hygienic means.

Reply to paragraph 46 – Quality of higher education

296. Higher education in Georgia covers three stages: bachelor's (the education program consists of no less than 240 credits), master's (no less than 120 credits) and Doctoral programmes (length of learning process three years, its educational component comprises of no less than 60 ECTS credits).

297. In 2010 preferential policy tool for obtaining higher education was introduced for the youth of ethnic minorities – the so-called “1+4 education program”, which is very popular, as demonstrated by the dynamics of the increase in the number of interested applicants. Only in 2021, 1207 students were enrolled in this program based on unified national examinations. Since the launch of the program, 8,784 beneficiaries have participated in it.

298. After passing each education level, a relevant diploma and diploma supplement shall be issued and as a result of completing 60-credit education programs, a certificate shall be issued. A higher education institution is authorised to grant a person an associate degree to achieve the study results provided for in the short-cycle education program and accumulate the appropriate number of credits. As a result of completing the short-cycle education program, a professional diploma confirming the associate degree shall be issued.

299. There are three types of higher education institutions in Georgia:

- University – a higher education institution implementing the education programs of all three levels of higher education and scientific research.
- Teaching University – a higher education institution implementing higher education programme(s) (except for Doctoral programmes), necessarily implementing Master's education programme/programmes.
- College – a higher education institution, implementing only the first level of higher education programmes.

300. Georgia joined Bologna Process in 2005, as a result of which significant reforms have been carried out in the education system.

301. Higher education institutions in Georgia must implement internal and external mechanisms for quality assurance. Quality assurance external mechanism implies continuous assessment and development of the quality of teaching, learning and research process, professional development of staff and improvement of the quality of educational and research processes carried out by the institution and resources.

302. Authorisation of a higher education institution is an external mechanism for quality assurance, which is carried out by the National Centre for Educational Quality Enhancement. The authorisation was introduced in 2010. Institutionalisation is an evaluation of the institution, which establishes the institution's compliance with the authorisation standards. The authorisation period is seven years.

303. Since 2011, the Centre also carries out accreditation of the higher education programmes, which is an external mechanism for quality assurance of higher education. Accreditation is an education program evaluation establishing the program's compliance with the accreditation standards. Accreditation is mandatory only for regulated and doctoral programs (except for theological higher education programs). There is no accreditation for other programs. However, accreditation is compulsory for a student to obtain a government grant.

304. Since 2018, the authorisation/accreditation has been carried out in accordance with the Standards and Guidelines for Quality Assurance in the European Higher Education Area (ESG 2015).

305. In addition, the higher education institution is obliged to have a person/unit responsible for quality assurance that will be accountable for the effective implementation of internal quality assurance.

Information on Article 15 – Cultural rights

306. According to the Constitution, citizens of Georgia, regardless of their ethnic and religious affiliation or language, shall have the right to maintain and develop their culture and use their mother tongue in private and in public, without any discrimination; freedom of creativity shall be guaranteed; interference in the creative process and censorship in the field of creative activities shall be inadmissible; Everyone has the right to take care of protecting cultural heritage.

307. Under the Law of Georgia on Culture, the right to participate in the cultural activity shall be an inalienable human right. To improve the culture and art sphere, the Ministry of Culture, Sports and Youth has started drafting the overarching Code of Culture.

308. The budget of the culture sphere increases constantly:

Table XXIV

Budget for the cultural field in 2015–2020

<i>Year</i>	<i>2015</i>	<i>2016</i>	<i>2017</i>	<i>2018</i>	<i>2019</i>	<i>2020</i>
Million GEL	95	97	97	129.3	132.2	139.7

309. In 2016, the Government approved the Culture Strategy 2025, developed with extensive public engagement (about 50 meetings across the country, in which more than 3,000 people participated, including representatives of ethnic minorities). The Strategy envisages ensuring the involvement of every person in cultural life and promoting self-realisation. Access to culture and cultural diversity is one of the priorities of the Strategy, the main goal of which is to make culture accessible to all members of society and, at the same time, promote the diversity of cultural self-expression.

310. In 2019, in accordance with the Culture Strategy 2025, a new model of financing the culture sphere was introduced, which implies promoting cultural-creative activities in thematic and sectoral directions through competitions. The policy document ensures a more transparent process, more opportunities for participation and equal conditions for each participant. Competitions are held in different directions, contributing to the development of various areas of culture and the engagement of different social groups in cultural-creative activities.

311. The Culture Strategy promotes integration and facilitates more active participation and involvement in the cultural life of ethnic minorities, PWDs, youth, women, IDPs, refugees and repatriates as well as Georgian citizens, children and adolescents living in the occupied territories and abroad.

312. Preferential conditions have been introduced – reducing by 50% the price or free admission – in state museums, theatres and various educational and cultural events to ensure access for various social groups to cultural institutions and activities.

313. Increasing the role of ethnic minorities in the country's cultural life, preserving cultural identity and traditions and developing and activating intercultural relations are inseparable parts of the culture policy. The support includes measures to identify, preserve, rehabilitate and protect the cultural heritage of ethnic groups and to promote their cultural and creative activities. Ethnic minorities are supported through cultural/creative organisations of ethnic minorities under the Ministry of Culture, as well as thematic projects supported in different directions.

314. In order to ensure equal participation of PWDs in culture and creative life, with close cooperation with the PWD community, a guide on providing the equal participation of PWDs in cultural and creative life was approved. The document discusses the challenges that PWDs face while accessing culture and appropriate action plan. The Guide envisaged ensuring accessibility of cultural facilities and events for PWDs, retraining staff of various cultural institutions to obtain the necessary skills for communicating with PWDs, promoting the employment of PWDs in cultural organisations, etc.

315. Projects are implemented in the villages along the occupational line, including meetings with Georgian writers, Rustvelologists, directors and linguists to engage the population affected by the conflict/living nearby the occupational line in the cultural processes.

316. Since 2009, informal art education circles have been promoted in compact settlements of IDPs. About 70 IDP teachers are employed in these schools yearly and about 700 students are studying. The following creative circles function in schools: felting, ceramics, drawing, weaving, folk instruments and others.

317. Affordable and quality art education is provided through 4 higher arts education institutions offering professional art programs, eight out-of-school art schools and two art colleges. The Ministry of Culture also supports qualification-raising activities abroad for persons interested in the cultural fields by promoting the participation of pupils and students in international masterclasses, workshops, competitions, festivals and conferences.

318. The development of informal education programs for preschool and school students is a priority. These programs are implemented in cultural institutions (museums, galleries, art schools). Museums also have inclusive education programs for CWDs. All these programs are free for socially vulnerable families and refugees. These programs also aim to promote the participation of students from ethnic minorities.

319. Gender equality is mainstreamed in the implementation of cultural policy.

320. The State also prioritises accessibility of culture for the broad society; to that end, international festivals of traditional books, literature, theatre, children and students are held annually. Furthermore, visual arts activities, such as international forums, symposiums, international folklore festivals, exhibitions of traditional crafts and artists' participation in important events, are facilitated in Georgia and abroad. Theatres, music bands and folk ensembles hold regional concerts annually. The project – Renewing the book stock of 66 main libraries of the country – provides books to the regional libraries annually.

321. The State protects the results of intellectual and industrial property and other scientific and technological activities.

322. The Law on Copyright and Related Rights protects copyright for all works created in the field of literature, science and art, regardless of the way and form of their expression. The work author owns the copyright transferrable to the author's heirs after his/her death. Copyright can be transferred to another successor (any natural or legal person).

323. Registering, legalisation or otherwise formalising a work is not necessary for arising and enforcing copyright. The person duly noted as the author on the original or copy of the work shall be considered the work author unless otherwise established.

324. Copyrights of Georgian citizens are automatically protected in the member states of the Berne Convention for the Protection of Literary and Artistic Works. It is not necessary to register, deposit or comply with any other formalities to obtain copyright for the work. However, like Georgia, the legislation of many countries allows for voluntary registration or deposit of work.