



Convention on the Rights of the Child

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Committee on the Rights of the Child

Combined fifth and sixth periodic reports submitted by Armenia under article 44 of the Convention, due in 2019^{*}, ^{}**

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* The present document is being issued without formal editing.

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



Introduction

1. The Republic of Armenia (hereinafter referred to as “Armenia”) submits its 5th–6th joint periodic national report (hereinafter referred to as “the Report”) on the implementation of the United Nations Convention on the Rights of the Child (hereinafter referred to as “the Convention”), which covers the period from 2013 to 2019. The Report covers the responses to the recommendations submitted by the UN Committee on the Rights of the Child (hereinafter referred to as “the Committee”) as a result of the discussion of the 3rd and 4th Joint Reports of Armenia, as well as information on implementation of the Optional Protocols to the Convention “On the sale of children, child prostitution and child pornography” and “On the involvement of children in armed conflict.”
2. The Report has been elaborated by the interagency working group established upon Decision No 442-A of the Prime Minister of Armenia (22 April 2019).
3. The working group engaged in elaboration of the Report has been composed of representatives from all the interested ministries and agencies of Armenia.
4. On 2 October 2019, the Report was discussed with NGOs representatives active in the field whose considerations were reflected in the report.
5. It should be also noted that the preparation of the 5th and 6th periodic national report of Armenia has coincided with the pre-planned large scale military offensive unleashed by Azerbaijan on September 27 against Nagorno Karabakh (Republic of Artsakh) and later on, Armenia. The brutal aggression of Azerbaijan with direct military support of Turkey and involvement of the Turkish-backed foreign terrorist fighters and mercenaries is accompanied with flagrant violations of the international humanitarian law, using of banned weapons, such as cluster munitions, targeting hospitals, schools, religious sites. Launched amidst the outbreak of an unprecedented global pandemic, the military aggression has inflicted heavy human losses and massive damage to civilian settlements and infrastructure. Dozens of civilians including children have been killed and many have found their homes destroyed and were forced to flee. Tens of thousands of children are deprived of their fundamental human rights, including the right to life and right to education. All these acts are documented by the Ombudsman of the Republic of Artsakh.¹ Azerbaijani armed forces also attacked the civilian infrastructure in the Gegharkunik region of Armenia resulting in killing of two civilians and heavily injuring of a child. In contempt of the continuing calls of the international community to immediately cease the hostilities Azerbaijan is continuing large-caliber artillery and missile attacks and air bombardments causing rapidly escalating multidimensional humanitarian crisis in the conflict zone.

I. General measures ensuring exercise of the rights of the child (Articles 4, 42 and 44 paragraph 6)

Legal reforms

6. As a result of the reforms to the Constitution (22 December 2015) Article 36 of the Constitution has been re-worded thus including the vital interest of the child, namely: “Deprivation or restriction of parental rights may be exercised only by law, upon court decision, for the purpose of protecting the vital interests of the child,” based on which amendments have been made to the Family Code (Article 59 edited, supplemented by Law Ho-10-N of 21 December 2017); Article 59 of the Family Code has been reworded as follows: “In order to ensure the vital interests of the child (including if they are regularly subjected to physical violence that does not contain elements of crime provided for by the Criminal Code, to mental violence, namely, intentionally inflicting severe mental suffering, including the threat of physical, sexual violence, periodic humiliation of dignity), the parents or one of

¹ https://artsakhombuds.am/sites/default/files/2020-10/new-Artsakh-Ombudsman-updated-second-interim-report-on-the-Azerbaijani-atrocities-in-September-October-2020-18.10.2020_3.pdf.

them may be deprived of parental rights as well as the parent is deprived of parental rights if he / she is convicted for a crime against his/her child.”

Article 37

Rights of the child

7. Article 37 of the Constitution gave rise to the need for making amendments to the Family Code, according to which the child has the right to be present at the examination of any issue that concerns his / her rights and interests, and to express his / her opinion in the family, in judicial and other bodies. This provision localizes the Committee General Comment No 12, which directly states that the child has the right to express his/her opinion in the family, at school, in care institutions, and in the courts. Simultaneously, as a result of the amendments and supplements made to the Family Code in 2017, the words “having attained 10” have been removed from the relevant articles, due to which the bodies deciding on the child, including the courts, as well as guardianship and curatorship bodies are obliged to hear the opinion of the child irrespective of his/her age.

Article 86

Main objectives of state policy

8. Article 86 of the Constitution envisages “creating favourable conditions for the full and comprehensive development of individuality in children” as one of the main objectives of the state policy in the economic, social and cultural spheres.

9. Thus, relevant measures have been envisaged by the 2017–2021 Strategic Programme for Protection of the Rights of the Child in Armenia (hereinafter referred to as “Strategic Programme”).

10. Since December 2018, the Ministry of Justice with the CoE has launched “End Child Sexual Exploitation and Abuse” programme which envisages capacity building of state bodies aimed at prevention, protection from, as well as establishment of response mechanisms for child sexual abuse and sexual exploitation.

11. As for point 8 of the Concluding Observations adopted as a result of observing the 3th–4th Joint Report in 2013 by the Committee, the following reforms have been made regarding the legislation regulating the sphere of protection of the rights of the child:

(a) Activities aimed at bringing the national legislation on the rights of the child in line with the Convention, as well as efficient implementation of the necessary legal mechanisms and legislation are underway. The draft Law “On the protection of the rights of the child” is being discussed with international and partner organisations.

(b) On 13 December 2017, the Law “On prevention of domestic violence, protection of victims of domestic violence and restoration of peace in the family” was adopted, which enshrines legal mechanisms for the prevention of and protection from domestic violence against a person, including children.

12. The Family Code has been amended (Article 53 edited, supplemented by Law HO-10-N of 21 December 2017) to enshrine that “manners of upbringing of children must exclude use of physical or mental violence as a means of upbringing, as well as negligent, cruel, rude, degrading treatment, insult or exploitation.

National programme for protection of child rights

13. As for point 11 of the Concluding Observations, the Strategic Programme has a pivotal role in the sphere of protection of the rights of the child. The latter having followed the Programmes for 2003 and 2006² was approved by the Government on 27 December 2012 for

² One of the most important achievements of the first programme adopted in 2003 and 2006 was the creation of a three-tier system for the protection of the rights of the child, which provides a systematic approach at the community, marz and republican levels. The second strategic programme adopted in 2006, was an interim one and was the 2006-2010 strategy for the social protection reforms regarding

2013–2016. The main objective of this Programme is to ensure the well-being of the child in the family and society by reducing the number of children in orphanages, children's care and protection boarding institutions and preventing flow of children to these institutions.

14. The following main measures have been carried out within this strategy: the relations concerning provision of care to children in general type and specialised institutions for social protection of population, boarding institutions and social day-care centres have been regulated.

15. The Government Protocol Decision No 18 (12 May 2016) "On approving the concept paper for development of a system for alternative care services to children in difficult life situations in Armenia and the Action Plan" stipulates the main principles and directions of development of a system for alternative care services to children in difficult life situations in Armenia.

16. The Government Protocol Decision No 30 "On approving the 2017–2021 Strategic Programme and the schedule for implementation of the Action Plan" (13 July 2017) stipulates priorities and principles that are in line with the main principles of the European and the UN Guidelines for the Alternative Care of Children "On the transition from institutional care to community-based services."

17. The main priorities of the Strategy are the system improvement for the protection of the rights of the child, the inclusion of children with disabilities in society, the provision of equally accessible, inclusive and quality education, as well as comprehensive security for students of educational institutions, early detection of juvenile offenders and juveniles having been subjected to violence and having shown antisocial behaviour, the prevention of cases of violence and ensuring the right of the child to live in the family. In 2021 a final assessment of the progress of the Strategy will be made.

18. During the implementation of the strategy, priority will be given to the implementation of continuous monitoring.

19. The budget for the measures of the Strategic Programmes consists of the state budget of Armenia, in separate cases there are measures that are carried out jointly with international and donor organisations.

State bodies performing the function of protecting the rights of the child

20. Regarding point 13 of Concluding Observations, the improvement of the system for the protection of the rights of the child has been defined as a strategic priority in 2017–2021 Strategic Programmes and its equivalent measure is the assessment of the activities of the National Commission for the Protection of the Rights of the Child, and the presentation of changes. As a result of discussions with the relevant agencies and international organisations within this event, the issue of expediency of further activity of the National Commission for the Protection of the Rights of the Child was outlined. The proposal on the further activity of the Commission was included in the draft law "On protection of the rights of the child" aimed to endow the Commission with new functions that will significantly increase its role.

21. Local self-government bodies, as well as guardianship and curatorship bodies play an important role in protecting the rights of the child. The latter are responsible at the local level for solving problems related to children, as well as for helping children and their families in difficult life situations. According to the Family Code the guardianship and curatorship commissions are established.

22. The system for the community social worker has been introduced to engage professionals with relevant qualification in child protection at the local level. According to the provisions of the Law "On local self-government," the position of a community social worker is created in communities with a population of 5,000.

children in difficult life situations, which was aimed at ensuring the well-being of the child in the family and society.

Independent monitoring

23. Following constitutional amendments of 2015, the mandate of the Human Rights Defender (HRD) strengthened. Everyone has a constitutional right to receive assistance from the HRD, in case of violation of his / her rights and freedoms, enshrined by the Constitution and laws (Article 52 of the Constitution).

24. In 2019, the Sub-Committee on Accreditation of the Global Alliance of National Human Rights Institutions re-granted the HRD the status “A,” which confirms the HRDO’s full independence, reliability and effective operation.

25. It should also be noted that the HRD carries out prevention and protection from violations of the rights of the child. To implement this important mission, Child Rights Protection Unit has been established within the staff of the HRDO.

Budget allocations for children

26. As requested under point 15 of Concluding Observations, indicators on the shares of allocations made in 2013–2018 and allocations made from the state budget of Armenia in the GDP in the spheres of healthcare and education with the budgets approved for 2019 are given below by percentages.

<i>Spheres</i>	<i>2013 actual</i>	<i>2014 actual</i>	<i>2015 actual</i>	<i>2016 actual</i>	<i>2017 actual</i>	<i>2018 actual</i>	<i>2019 approved budget</i>
Education	2.26	2.40	2.42	2.42	2.23	2.02	2.09
Healthcare	1.41	1.59	1.71	1.70	1.49	1.32	1.36

27. The amount allocated to children’s medical care programmes within the scope of state order in 2018 amounted to AMD 8.7 billion. In 2019, the allocations increased by over AMD 1 billion. The 2020 draft budget envisages increasing these allocations by AMD 2 billion. Annex 1 presents the allocations from the State Budget of the Republic of Armenia for the social programmes on children from 2013 to present, except for the five programmes, which were added in 2019. Annex 2 presents age and gender composition of the permanent population of the Republic of Armenia by groups and city/village.

Establishment of data analysis system

28. Taking into consideration the fact that according to point 7 (a) and point 15 (c) of the Concluding Observations, the Committee recommended to introduce a collected data analysis system, which will allow to assess the progress made in implementing the provisions of the Convention, the following steps have been taken:

(a) “Manuk” Information-Analytical System for data of children in difficult life situations, operates at “Nork” Social Services Technology and Awareness Centre. It includes “Orphanage” and “Adoption” subsystems with separate databases. “Monitoring and Evaluation sub-system” has been introduced since 2014, which allows making analyses on the basis of which a policy in line with the Convention is developed.

(b) A new technical task is currently underway to enhance new opportunities for the information system and improve further activity. Particularly, within the USAID-funded “MEASURE Evaluation” project, 21 monitoring indicators and a new sub-system for foster care will be introduced in the system soon.

Dissemination of information on the convention and its implementation

29. According to the requirement of point 7 (b) of the Concluding Observations, the National Institute of Labour and Social Research of the Ministry of Labour and Social Affairs conducts trainings for specialists in the field annually.

30. Pursuant to the Government Decision No 751-N13 of June 2019, the draft order of the Minister of Labour and Social Affairs “On the course programme for persons wishing to become a foster parent and on approving the schedule” was developed.

II. Definition of the “child”

31. A child means every human being under 18 unless under the law applicable to the child, majority is attained earlier. In addition to the changes reflected in paragraph 5 the following amendments to the national legislation have been done:

(a) Article 53 of the Family Code has been amended to enshrine that “manners of upbringing of children must exclude use of physical or mental violence as a means of upbringing, as well as negligent, cruel, rude, degrading treatment, insult or exploitation.”

(b) According to Article 10 amended in 2013, “Voluntary mutual consent of the man and the woman getting married, as well as their attainment of the age of eighteen is required for entering into marriage, except for cases prescribed by law. A person may also get married at the age of seventeen, given the consent of his or her parents, adopters or curator. A person may also get married at the age of sixteen, where the consent of his or her parents, adopters or curator exists, and the other person getting married is at least eighteen years of age.”

(c) The Criminal Code was supplemented by Article 167.1 which provides for liability for preventing the visit of a parent or other close relative with the child. As a result of the above-mentioned amendments, abuse of the rights of the foster parent has been criminalised (before that the abuse of the rights of the guardian or curator was criminally punishable).

III. General principles (articles 2, 3, 6 and 12)

32. Regarding points 18-19 of the Concluding Observations, the multi-level programme measures have been carried out with international and local NGOs to prevent sex-selective artificial termination of pregnancy. Particularly:

(a) In 2016, amendments have been made to Article 10 (Artificial termination of pregnancy (abortion) of the Law “On human reproductive health and reproductive rights,” under which the ban for sex-selective artificial termination of pregnancy has been legally enshrined.

(b) Additional legislative mechanisms have been prescribed to reduce artificial termination of pregnancy. Namely:

(i) Providing the woman with a mandatory 3-day period for making a final decision;

(ii) Requirement for the written submission of application and consent on abortion to ensure compliance with the national legislation.

(c) The Code of Administrative Offences has been supplemented and provides for administrative liability to medical professionals in the process of artificial termination of pregnancy.

(d) To ensure the implementation of the law, the Government Decision “On approving the procedure and conditions of artificial termination of pregnancy” was adopted in 2017, which clarifies the medical and social indications, the procedure and conditions of implementation of artificial termination of pregnancy.

(e) In line with the Law and the Government Decision (2018) “The procedure for organisation of artificial termination of pregnancy, the abortion certificate and its filling procedure, as well as the advisory sheet on the prevention of selective abortions” was adopted.

(f) The mentioned documents were sent by the Ministry of Health to all medical institutions rendering maternity services. The provisions of the mentioned legal acts have been included in various training programmes and have been submitted to specialists.

(g) Over 15 seminar meetings with about 170 medical specialists and nurses from marzes have been organised on mentioned issues.

(h) Implementation of the measures of 2015–2017 Programme on Prevention of Sex-Selective Artificial Termination of Pregnancy, developed with the UNFPA, is underway, within which large-scale public awareness campaigns have been carried out in cooperation with state bodies, international organisations (UNFPA, ICHD, “Save the Children,” “World Vision,” etc.) and local non-governmental and community organisations.

33. Some positive trends have been viewed in the process of overcoming the issue of selective abortions. Thus, if prior to the measures taken to combat selective abortion, the average birth rate for girls and boys from 2008 to 2012 was 100:115, in 2014 it was 100:113.4, in 2015 – 100:112.7, in 2016 – 100:112, and in 2017 – 100:109.8.

34. The actions for the prevention of selective abortions are:

(a) Monitoring of the gender ratio of new-borns;

(b) Development of draft legal acts on amendments regulating legal acts on prevention of sex-selective artificial termination of pregnancy in public healthcare, reproductive rights of a person and reproductive health;

(c) Monitoring the implementation of the state policy on prevention of sex-selective artificial termination of pregnancy.

35. In 2019, the programmes on “Improvement of the lump-sum maternity and child care allowances system,” “Additional support for housing of young families having a child” and “State support to income-generating activities of young families living in rural areas” were developed. Thus, it is expected:

(a) To reach the total fertility rate of 1,8 in 2025 and of 2,2 in 2035 (the total fertility rate in 2018 was 1,572, out of which 1,627 – in urban settlements and 1,465 – in rural);

(b) To increase the absolute number of births by 2025 (about 37500 in 2025) and to reduce the expected decline rates in the number of births during 2025–2030;

(c) To ensure a progressive increase in the fertility rate in rural settlements.

36. Based on point 21 of the Concluding Observations, we inform that Article 37 of the Constitution prescribes that in matters concerning the child, primary attention must be given to the interests of the child.

37. The principle of “the best interest of the child” has been introduced to all domestic legal acts:

(a) The Family Code has been amended and supplemented and the concept of lawful interest of the child has been replaced with the concept of the best interest of the child, and it prescribes that any action taken in relation to the child must derive from his/her best interests.

(b) It has been included in Article 5 of the Law “On probation.”

(c) It is also used in the case law of the Court of Cassation. Thus, for example, the Court of Cassation mentions in one of its decisions that if any legislative norm can be applied differently, the best interests of the child are taken as priority while applying it /see Decision of the Court of Cassation No yemd/0124/02/12 Decision of 2015/.

(d) It is included in 2017–2021 Strategic Programme of Armenia.

38. Article 5 of the Law On the Rights of the Child enshrines the child's right to life and Article 106 of the Criminal Code criminalises the murder of a new-born by its mother.

Infant mortality rate: according to the official data, until 2012 Armenia was characterised as having average level of infant mortality rate (IMR per 1,000 live births) (according to the WHO classification: 10%–20%), and after 2013 the level recorded was below 10% (in 2012 – 10.8 % in 2013 – 9.7 % in 2014–2017 – 8.8–8.2 %) which, according to the same classification, ranks Armenia among the countries with a low level of IM ($\leq 10\%$).

39. A more inclusive indicator characterising the early childhood problems is the mortality rate of children under 5, which after 2010, has shown a steady downward trend (13.4% in 2010 and 9.6% in 2017). According to the Statistical Committee data of 2018, the mortality rate of children under 5 has a decrease of 0,9 per mille points by constituting 8,7%.

Infant Mortality Rate by Gender per 1,000 Live Births, %

Year	Infant (0–1 years) mortality			Under-5 mortality		
	Total	girl	boy	Total	girl	boy
2010	11.4	9.6	13.0	13.4	11.3	15.2
2016	8.6	7.3	9.9	10.1	8.5	11.5
2017	8.2	7.6	8.8	9.6	8.5	10.6
2018	7.1	6.8	7.4	8.7	8.1	9.1

International assessments of the trends in child mortality rates

40. According to the UN calculation index, between 1990 and 2010 the early childhood mortality rates in all age groups manifested higher rates of decline than the official rates, particularly, under-5 mortality rate decreased from 49,7% to 18,1%, IMR – from 42,4% to 16,2%, NMR – from 22,8% to 10%. During the years following 2010, the decrease in rates continued at slower trends, but more consistent with the official data, by constituting in 2017 12.8 %, 11.4 % and 6.7 %, respectively.

41. According to the UNICEF report for 2017, Armenia ranks the 4th place based on infant mortality rates among 52 countries with comparable incomes (UNICEF, EVERY CHILD ALIVE, 2017). The comparative analysis of healthcare costs, neonatal and infant mortality rates based on the WB and UNICEF database once more proves successful experience of Armenia with minimum healthcare costs

Achieving millennium development goals

42. The analysis conducted in the context of achievement of the MDGs for 2015 shows that according to the official data, the infant mortality rate in Armenia decreased by 53% during the year, and the mortality rate for children under 5 decreased by 56% constituting 8.8% and 10.4%, respectively.

43. Being very close to the MD national goals (IMR: $\leq 8\%$; < 5 MR: $\leq 10\%$), Armenia, has not managed to overcome them. Simultaneously, according to the UN calculation index trends, Armenia has achieved the IM target for the MDGs (≤ 16.6 for 2015), as the death rate for children under 5 years old has been reduced 3.6 times by decreasing from 49,7% (1990) to 14 % (2015).

44. Pointing out the steady decline in infant and under-5 mortality rates recorded in Armenia, however, it should be noted that it is becoming difficult to further reduce infant mortality. The latter proves that additional financial and human resources are needed to maintain the success achieved and to ensure continuous development in achieving the UN SDGs.

45. Regarding point 23 (a) of the Concluding Observations, to engage children in the protection of their rights, in 2016 the Ministry of Justice established Children's Council. An event entitled "Protection of the Rights Through the Eyes of Children" was held with participation of children together with members of the Juvenile Justice Council, the

organisation of discussions with the participation of children has become continuous and has a regular nature. Children are also involved in the development of guidelines prepared by the Ministry of Justice on the protection of their rights, acting as co-authors.

46. As for Article 23 (c) of the Concluding Observations, a new point has been proposed in the draft Law “On making an amendment to the law on medical care and services to population” according to which, children having attained 16, have a right to give a voluntary informed consent to receive or refuse a medical intervention, except for cases provided by law. Additionally, the law provides a provision based on which the information on the child (patient), on his/her health condition, diagnosis of the disease, medical care provided, medical care and service as well as the risks associated with them may be provided to him if the following conditions exist:

(a) If, in the opinion of the medical professional, the child is able to accurately assess his/her health condition;

(b) This information will not harm the child or will facilitate the provision of medical care and service;

(c) Legal representatives do not object to the provision of this information, except for the children having attained 16.

47. The same draft also includes a provision on reporting of information to law enforcement bodies by medical professionals in case of suspicion of violence.

IV. Violence against children (articles 19, 37(a) and 39)

48. Concerning the Committee’s recommendations on the elimination of all forms of violence against children, particularly, on paragraph 26, the following amendments to the legal framework were made:

(a) The Government Protocol Decision No 51 (4 December 2014) “On the concept of combating the phenomenon of violence against children and approving the schedule of measures” was adopted. To prevent domestic violence, on 17 December 2014 the Law “On social assistance”³ was adopted.

(b) On 13 December 2017, the National Assembly adopted the Law “On prevention of domestic violence, protection of victims of domestic violence and restoration of peace in the family” (entered into force on 31 January 2018).

(c) Decisions of the Government “On approving the procedure for management of the temporary financial assistance account of victims of domestic violence,” “On setting out the requirements for the shelters of victims of domestic violence and their staff,” as well as the exemplary form of the financing agreement for the shelters of victims of domestic violence and making amendments and supplements to the Government Decision of No 1078-N (10 September 2015) and the amendment to the Decision No 1069-N of 10 September 2015 “On establishing a domestic violence prevention council, approving the establishment procedure and functions of the domestic violence prevention council” were adopted.

(d) Decision of the Prime Minister “On approving the individual composition of the Domestic Violence Prevention Council” was adopted. In fact, the Council is a policy coordinating body on the prevention of domestic violence.

(e) The draft decision of the Government “On approving the procedure for record-registration of persons subjected to domestic violence” has been developed. It is currently in circulation.

49. In 2019, with the EU support, a national conference was organised on “Domestic Violence in Armenia: Challenges and Opportunities.” About 40 people were trained under

³ The Law regulates the relations pertaining to the provision of social assistance to persons subjected to violence within the family, in particular the provision of shelter to these persons, finding solutions to their social problems, as well as prescribes the powers of bodies carrying out identification, guidance and social services for persons subjected to domestic violence.

this programme, including 911 service and hotline specialists of the Ministry. In 2016–2018, the Government of the Republic of Armenia adopted other legal acts and regulations in the field of protection of the rights of the child, which to some extent highlight the guarantees for keeping the child away from violence, as well as developed and implemented other projects (see Annex 3).

50. Within the preventive activities carried out among minors, as well as to raise their awareness and keeping them away from violence, meetings and talks on various legal topics were held in public schools and other educational institutions operating in the administrative territories served by the employees of the Police.

51. Cases of violence against minors are detected and appropriate actions are carried out by the school senior inspector servicing the high school where the minors study (the institute of a school senior inspector was introduced in the Police in 2013).

52. Regarding the Committee's recommendation on cooperation with the special representative of the Secretary General on violence against children and other relevant UN mechanisms, it should be noted that Armenia has established cooperation with all human rights monitoring mechanisms, Armenia has accepted the proposals on the protection of the rights of the child and the improvement of the situation within the Universal Periodic Review. Thus, we are working on the establishment of a follow up mechanism ensuring implementation of international obligations related to the whole spectrum of human rights and the coordination of reports on them, which will allow all the interested state agencies to keep their responsibilities and promote their implementation.

53. Regarding the concerns of points 24 and 25 of the Concluding Observations, it should be noted that pursuant to point 7 of the Government Decision No 1324-N "On approving the minimum state social criteria necessary for the care and upbringing of children in child care and protection facilities" (5 August 2004), the child care and protection facilities register suspected or confirmed cases of violence against children or among them and report such cases to the competent authorities.

54. In 2017, by the joint order of the Minister of Education and Science and the Minister of Labour and Social Affairs, the procedure for detecting suspected cases of violence against children and among them being cared and (or) studying in child care and protection facilities and the forms of registers for the suspected and confirmed cases of violence have been approved.

55. Nowadays, child care and protection facilities are guided by this procedure.

56. It should also be emphasised that child care and protection facilities within the Ministry system cannot be considered as closed facilities, as all the children cared here attend different educational institutions and courses. Children from child care boarding facilities return to their biological families on Saturdays, Sundays, holidays and vacations.

57. The Police investigate every case of crime or violence against minors in orphanages and care facilities differently. Interviews with juveniles are conducted in separate rooms, and police officers have the utmost respect and protect their honour and dignity, by cooperating with local self-governments and NGOs to provide psychological, social and other kind of assistance.

58. In 2013–2018, 4 cases of crime committed in orphanages and juvenile care facilities were registered in the Police, the perpetrator and the victim of three cases were minors, and in one case the perpetrator of the crime was an adult, namely an employee of a care facility.

59. As for No 1 Child Care and Protection Centre of Vanadzor and Vanadzor Children's Home, there are no on-going criminal proceedings against children for misconduct or violence by administration, as there has been no legal reason to initiate criminal proceedings and to launch appropriate investigative activities.

60. Regarding points 27-28 of the Concluding Observations, it is noteworthy that based on 2017–2021 Strategic Programme, the "Legal Education and Rehabilitation Programmes Implementation Centre" of the Ministry of Justice, within the measures envisaged for each year during 2017–2019, organised capacity building and awareness-raising meetings among

representatives of relevant authorised bodies on the protection of the rights of the child, by putting the issue of early marriages on the agenda.

61. In 2019, the Ministry of Labour and Social Affairs, jointly with NGOs, held regional discussions on gender issues in all mazes of Armenia, including Aragatsotn and Armavir, where the issue of the exercise of the rights of Yazidi girls is up-to-date. Based on the results of the discussions, a closing conference was organised in Yerevan in July 2019.

62. A draft action plan to combat violence against children has been developed, which is envisaged under the Human Rights Protection Strategy. The draft includes the action of “reviewing Articles 10–11 of the Family Code by changing the age of marriage and informing the general public, including national minorities, about this amendment.”

63. The problem of early marriages was also included on the agenda of the sitting of the Juvenile Justice Council held on 6 August 2019.

V. Family environment and alternative care (articles 5, 18 (paragraphs 1–2), 9–11, 19–21, 25, 27 (paragraphs 4 and 39))

64. According to the 30th point of the Concluding Observations, the issue of protection of children’s rights at the community level raised by the Committee was included in the 2017–2021 Strategic Plan on the Protection of the Rights of the Child, which was entitled “Evaluation of the Activities of the Guardianship and Trusteeship Commissions and Submission of Changes where Necessary.” In 2018, in cooperation with the Ministry of Justice and the UNICEF, the activities of the guardianship and trusteeship commissions were evaluated.

65. Being concerned about the entry of children into social institutions for social reasons, the following measures have been taken in this direction:

(a) The Government Protocol Decision No 18 “On approving the concept of development of the alternative care service system for children in difficult life situations in Armenia” was approved on May 12, 2016.

(b) The Government Decision No 551-N “On establishing referral procedures and standards on providing alternative care for children in difficult life situations in Armenia” was approved on 26 May, 2016.

66. This procedure defines the principles and standards for the provision of alternative care for children in difficult life situations, including children with disabilities and regulates the relations related to the referral with the aim of provision of alternative care. This procedure is in full compliance with the main provisions of the European guidelines on Transition from Institutional to Community-Based Care and the UN Guidelines for Alternative Care of Children.

67. To support vulnerable families, especially those living in extreme poverty, the benefits of raising a family’s livelihood are the largest social assistance program to raise the living standards of vulnerable families or lower its deterioration. Benefits are set based on the system of assessing the vulnerability of families. The program covers about 12% of the population and about 23% of children.

68. To create opportunities for self-sustainable income generation for socially vulnerable families and to maximally discourage the existing aspirations for state benefits, the procedure for assessing the vulnerability of a family has been radically revised. The new procedure includes assessments of behaviour of economically active individuals in the labour market, thereby boosting their willingness to work, as well as the importance of the fact of existence of a child in the assessment of vulnerability of families having a child has increased, considering such families riskier in terms of poverty.

69. Regarding concerns of Point 31 of the Concluding Observations and the recommendations of Point 32, it should be noted that the system of the Ministry of Labour and Social Affairs has general-type and 6 specialized institutions (orphanages) of population social protection conducting 24/7 care for children, where care for 600 children is provided.

Recently, the actual number of children under orphanage care has deduced as a result of unloading of institutions due to the process of providing children with the right to live in a family. In 2016, instead of 660 planned, 633 children were taken care of, and at the end of 2018, 600 children were taken care of instead of 649. Due to the difficult socio-economic conditions, the number of children with health issues in specialised orphanages has increased.

70. The number of children in boarding schools is currently 260, and as of 2013, there were about 700 children.

71. Children are being referred to a day and night care centre, simultaneously considering the orphanage and the small house as the last option.

(a) Since 2018, the number of foster families in the State budget has been envisaged 94 instead of the previous 25.

(b) According to 2016, 2017 and 2018 Plan for Priority Issues and Measures of the Government, it was planned to “reorganise the institutions for social protection of the population within the system of the Ministry of Labour and Social Affairs (Vanadzor orphanage and five boarding schools for child care) into child and family support centres.” In September 2019, drafts for the liquidation of 4 state boarding schools of child care and Vanadzor orphanage were submitted to the Prime Minister’s Office.

72. The roadmap for reorganization of the institutions of child care and protection under subordination of the Ministry of Labour and Social Affairs was approved by Order No 45 A/1 of 15 March 2017 of the Minister of Labour and Social Affairs.

73. In 2016, 2017 and 2018, 3 boarding schools were reorganised into child and family support centres in Yerevan, Kapan and Vanadzor. As a result of the reorganisation, the children returned to their biological families, and with the available resources, larger number of days services are provided to children and their families in difficult life situations.

74. The following programs – included in the State budget aimed at the provision of services to children in difficult life situations, including those with disabilities, which are implemented annually under the procedure defined by law – are directed to the development of alternative care:

(a) The “Services of returning the children being taken care of in child care and protection institutions of Armenia to families (unloading)” is carried out according to the agreement signed with the Ministry of Labour and Social Affairs and “Aravot” NGO in Lori and Shirak marzes of Armenia since 2014. The measure aims to return children from child care and protection institutions to biological families. Since 2014, 100 children have been involved in the measure carried out in above-mentioned marzes.

(b) The measure “Providing a package of in-kind support to the families of children transferred to biological families” is an integral part of the above-mentioned measure.

(c) Within this measure, which is held in Lori and Shirak marzes of Armenia, support was provided to the families of 100 children annually.

75. Child and family support centres provide services to the child and his/her family members based on their needs. Services are also provided to families in difficult life situations by teaching parenting skills.

(a) The measure “Provision of social services for children in social care day centres” is conducted in 3 centres of the system of the Ministry, whose activities are aimed at providing day care services at daytime to children aged 6–18 who are in difficult life situations or who have a disability.

(b) Within the measure “Social care services for children in difficult life situations by child care day centres,” the services are provided to children in difficult life situations and those with disabilities in four-day care centres – Dilijan, Ijevan, Noyemberyan, Berd of “Bridge of Hope” NGO.

(c) Within the measure “Providing day care services for children with disabilities in inclusive kindergarten No. 92 in Malatia-Sebastia Administrative District of Yerevan” with an average number of 24 children under the age of 6, who were in difficult life situations,

including those with severe mental and physical developmental disorders were provided with multidisciplinary services in 2017 in the kindergarten.

(d) Measure “Providing child care and parenting support in a foster family” provides care for 42 children in foster families.

(e) Over the next three years, it is planned to increase the number of foster families due to the reforms in child protection, by reorganising day and night care centres for children and by developing an alternative care system.

(f) Measure “Child and family support services” within which the Child and Family Support Centre provides day care services to children aged 3–18 in difficult life situations, including 150 children with disabilities and their families.

(g) Measure “Social and rehabilitation services for adolescents and young people with mental problems,” which is implemented by the “Prkutyun” NGO – a day care centre for social rehabilitation of children and young people with disabilities and those with mental problems.

(h) The measure “Social and psychological support for children and young people with disabilities at the day care centre” is organised by “Stepanavan and Tashir Regional Community Centre for the Education and Development of Persons with Disabilities” of the “Full Life” NGO.

(i) The measure “Providing employment and social-psychological services to adolescents and young people with autism” at “My Way” Social-Rehabilitation Day Care Centre has been implemented since 2017. “My Way” Training and Rehabilitation Centre for Children with Autism provides social-rehabilitation services to people with autism in Yerevan.

76. Five new initiatives have been included in the 2019 expenditure program “Support to Families, Women and Children.”

77. Regarding the Points 33-34 of the Concluding Observations, the Law “On making amendments and supplements to the Family Code of Armenia” has entered into force since 2018, the amendments made thereby refer to the scope of child adoption, which also derives from the goal to adjust the legislation of Armenia with the requirements of “The Hague Convention.” As a result of the amendments, the Family Code defines the process of matching the persons wishing to adopt and the child to be adopted.⁴

78. In order to exclude the sales, the pre-agreement for adoption of children, the Family Code also provides the submission of an application by each of the child’s biological parents to renounce the parental rights to the child. Previously, parental rights for a child could be waived by one parent, which allowed the adoption of the child by the person chosen by the biological parent, while protecting the parental rights of another parent.

79. New provisions have been set up in the current Family Code to the issue of control over the care of children adopted. Particularly, according to Article 128.1, the supervision over the child care in the adoptive family shall be carried out jointly by the guardianship and trusteeship body and the regional administration (in Yerevan – by Yerevan Municipality) and in case of adoption by foreign nationals and stateless persons, as well as the citizens of Armenia living outside Armenia this action should be taken by the Ministry of Justice.

80. During 2018 the Ministry has developed the following draft by-laws deriving from the Family Code, and regulating the adoption process:

(a) Draft decisions of the Government on registration of citizens of Armenia residing in Armenia, children subject to adoption, provision of information to persons wishing to adopt children subject to adoption, matching of persons wishing to adopt and

⁴ The professional matching will be carried out by a professional group, taking into account the needs and requirements of the child to be adopted. As a result, the child’s data is provided to the candidates, maintaining the order of registration of both the child and the persons wishing to adopt. The maintaining the queue is aimed to reduce the risk of corruption, the prior agreement of those involved in the adoption process.

children to be adopted, adoption of children by persons wishing to adopt, maintaining the confidentiality of data about persons wishing to adopt and children subject to adoption;

(b) The Government draft decision “On defining the content of the program of preparatory courses for persons wishing to adopt, the requirements for it, the competent body defining the content of the programme, the procedure for organising and conducting the programme.”

81. According to the registered data of the Ministry of Labour and Social Affairs:

(a) In 2017, 56 children, who were citizens of Armenia, were adopted, including 27 children adopted by citizens of Armenia (including 13 children adopted from orphanages, 2 with health problems and 29 children adopted by foreign citizens). 28 of the adopted children were adopted from orphanages, with health problems.

(b) In 2018, 45 children, who were citizens of Armenia, were adopted, including 20 children adopted by citizens of Armenia (11 from orphanages) and 25 children by foreign citizens (23 from orphanages). 22 of the children adopted by foreigners had health problems. Annex 4 presents statistic data on children subject to adoption taken under centralised registration.

82. According to the Prime Minister Decision No. 1197-A (26 August 2012), a working group was set up for introducing reforms to the system of children adoption who are citizens of Armenia, as well as to provide necessary legal grounds for carrying out fact-finding activities.

VI. Disabilities, basic medical care and social security (articles 6, 18 (paragraph 3) 23, 24, 26, 27 (paragraphs 1–3))

83. Regarding the concerns of point 35 of the Concluding Observations and the recommendations of point 36, it should be noted that the increase in the number of children with disabilities in orphanages and the insufficient number of alternative, community-based services for children with disabilities are really problematic. Because of difficult socio-economic conditions, the number of children with health problems in specialised orphanages has increased.

84. Within the reforms implemented in 2013, the Marie Izmirlian Children’s Home was reorganised into a specialised orphanage.

85. Some children of those who are taken care in specialised orphanages need palliative medical care.

86. The problem of Kharberd orphanage had a partial solution. By the decision of the Government, 80 out of 180 adult students of “Kharberd Specialised Orphanage” state non-commercial organisations were transferred to “Dzorak” Centre for Care of Persons with Mental Health Problems,” where their further care was provided.

87. Presently, the process of reforming day and night care facilities requires new approaches (review of the use of existing resources and a wide range of new mechanisms for service provision). Thus, the establishment of three Child and Family Support Centres in Armenia is important.

88. One of the main priorities of the Strategic Plan for 2017–2021 on the Protection of the Rights of the Child in Armenia is to include children with disabilities into society, to provide them with equally accessible, inclusive and high-quality education.

89. By the Law “On making amendments and supplements to the Family Code” (21 December, 2017), specialised foster family was defined as a special type of foster care. It is intended for children with disabilities, severe health problems, upbringing problems, mental or behavioural disorders, children undergoing deep stress, as well as for the care of teenage mothers and their children. A specialised foster family can also provide therapeutic foster care which is considered as a transitional stage during which the type, terms and conditions of child care will be determined. Specialised care includes special aftercare support provided by the state after the age of 18.

90. In 2017, 476 children with special needs were provided with services within the state-funded and co-financed programmes in the social protection system, 249 of which were disabled.

91. Children, taken care in institutions (orphanages) implementing social protection of population under the Ministry of Labour and Social Affairs, received education in nearby secondary schools or in inclusive or special schools.

92. Of approximately 450 children (116 minors) in orphanages, 161 are enrolled in general education, including 64 out of 224 pupils (101 minors) of “Kharberd Specialised Orphanage” SNCO study in special education institutions, for 37 pupils a letter has been submitted to the marz administration for organising home education; out of 102 children (87 minors) of “Marie Izmirlian’s Children Home” SNCO, 18 attend a special educational institution, and 41 receive home education. From “Gyumri Children’s Home” SNCO, which takes care of children up to eight years old, eight children with special needs are included in general education.

93. The reorganisation of three specialised orphanages operating in the state system is planned after the creation of a sufficient number of alternative services in the sector.

94. In addition to providing care for children with disabilities in the family, promoting their social inclusion, as well as state-sponsored programs to provide them with positive perceptions of society, five other programs have been included in the 2019 state budget.

95. In order to expand the network of day care centres and provide day care activities in all regions in 2019, by the request of the 2020–2022 Medium Term Expenditure Framework and the 2020 budget, a new initiative has been submitted to the Ministry of Finance. A new initiative called “Providing Day Care Services for Children” has been presented in the “State Support for Families, Women and Children” expenditure programme of the State Budget, within which social-psychological services shall be provided by day care centres in all regions of the country to 3277 children with disabilities and to their families.

96. Within the new initiative “Children’s Day and Night Care and Protection Institutions for Children Returning to Families, Preventing Entering the Institutions and Support Services,” 389 children will be returned to families and will be prevented from entering those institutions. Simultaneously, support packages will be provided to the families of beneficiary children.

97. In connection with the issue of providing education for children with disabilities, in 2014 the National Assembly adopted the Law “On making amendments and supplements to the Law on “General Education,” which will help in the process of the transition to universal inclusive education in the general education system, using a three-level system of responding to the educational needs of the child. As a result of the implementation of the law, children with special educational needs (SEN) will receive pedagogical and psychological support at 3 levels in the general education school, as well as in the regional and national pedagogical-psychological support centres.

98. According to the established schedule, the process of reorganisation of special schools started in 2016 in Syunik Marz and will end in 2021, covering all the marzes. In 2017, the system was introduced in Lori and Tavush marzes, in 2018 in Armavir marz, in 2019 it will be introduced in Yerevan, Shirak and Aragatsotn marzes.

99. Thus, Syunik, Lori, Tavush and Armavir marzes have already moved to the universal inclusive education system:

- (a) A position of a teacher assistant has been introduced;
- (b) As a result of the reorganisation, the pupils of the former special secondary schools were transferred to general education schools;
- (c) The scale of increased funding for sen children has been introduced, depending on the intensiveness of the child’s needs;
- (d) New criteria for assessing a child’s sen conditions have been introduced.

100. Territorial pedagogical-psychological support centres have already been established in the mentioned 4 marzes, which provide pedagogical-psychological support services to school-age and pre-school-age children. By the end of 2019, the number of marzes will reach 7.

101. The assessment of the need for special conditions for children's education by the centres provides for early identification of the child's problems with regard to the organisation of education and delivery of the required support.

102. In Aragatsotn, Ararat, Kotayk, Gegharkunik, Shirak, Vayots Dzor marzes and in Yerevan, the inclusive education continues to be implemented in 150 secondary schools. By 2022 all public schools of general education will be implementing universal inclusive education. The Government has established a common state standard for all pupils of general education. According to this document, in order to effectively organise the content of the general education programme, the education of SEN children is adapted to their perceptions and mental abilities.

103. Amendment of the Law "On preschool education," which aims to introduce the principle of universal inclusion in pre-school education, has been initiated.

104. In relation to the health of children and the provision of health services to them, it should be noted that in recent decades there has been a growing trend of chronic diseases among the paediatric population. According to the official data of the National Institute of Health of the Ministry of Health, in 2018 298,673 cases of primary disease were registered among children aged 0–15 years (293,468 cases in 2015), about 1/3 of which were diseases of the nervous, musculoskeletal and digestive systems, mental disorders and pathologies related to the perinatal period.

105. According to official data (January 1, 2018), 8233 children with disabilities under 18 are registered in Armenia (8003 children in 2015) of which 2569 girls (31%) and 5664 boys (69%), 5102 urban dwellers (62%), including 29% living in Yerevan and 3131 (38%) living in villages. According to the causes of disability, 4 groups of the most common diseases are the following: diseases of the nervous system - 27% (29% in 2015), mental and behavioural disorders - 25% (17% in 2015), congenital defects and developmental disorders - 17% (17% in 2015), eye diseases - 6% (8% in 2015). The official rate of child disability is 1.2%.

106. Child disabilities have been a key issue in healthcare policy and have been enshrined in strategic documents. Rehabilitation services to children with disabilities are provided within the state funding through the organisation of rehabilitation in-patient, outpatient and resort healthcare.

107. The achievements are the development of services for children with disabilities and developmental disabilities (11 centres were established in Yerevan and 7 in marzes), the introduction of the concept paper of early detection and intervention of development disorders, the expansion of neonatal screening programs geographically and the increase of financing, the introduction of rehabilitation model for integrated community services, which is the best example of inter-sectorial and inter-agency cooperation.

108. Within the state target programmes, according to the Government Decision No 1035-N (10 September 2015), the persons with disabilities are provided with prosthetic and orthopaedic and rehabilitation equipment, prostheses, orthoses, clamps, prosthetic and orthotic shoes, wheelchairs, hearing aids, which promote free movement, communication, contact.

109. The Government Decision No 1516-N (20 December 2018) envisages the supportive measures for persons with disabilities and people having other social status via certificates.

110. Despite these achievements, there are many problems, including:

(a) Tendency to development disorders, chronic diseases, leading to disability growth and insufficient level of early detection of diseases, comprehensive diagnosis and early intervention;

(b) Inadequate capacities to the needs of free rehabilitation care. About 60% of officially registered 8000 disabled children have mobility or mental health problems, almost all of whom require rehabilitation treatment;

(c) Lack of development assessment and access to rehabilitation regional and community services in terms of extent and deployment;

(d) Almost no opportunities to organise paediatric palliative care;

(e) Yet insufficient level of awareness, knowledge and skills on the rights and services of children with disabilities among parents and healthcare professionals.

111. Article 16 of the Constitution considers the protection of the family, motherhood and childhood as a priority among the main tasks of the state. [Article 85](#) of the Constitution envisages: “Everyone shall have the right to healthcare.”

112. The implementation of the mentioned constitutional norm is ensured by many legal acts, such as the Law “On medical aid and population services,” where many articles are dedicated to the organisation of free medical aid and services, Article 10 stipulates the right of a child to receive free medical aid within the state target programmes. The Government Decision No 318-N (2004) regulates the procedure for organizing and financing free medical aid and service guaranteed by the state. From 4 July 2019, children under 18 have the right to free hospital care.

113. Child healthcare services in Armenia are organised through primary healthcare (PHC) and hospital facilities. The PHC circle includes 501 medical facilities rendering out-patient polyclinic services and 625 rural obstetric services operating in Armenia. A district doctor performing medical functions performs general surveillance of a healthy child through evaluation of child growth and development; examination of pre-conscription age children, organisation of laboratory and instrumental diagnostic examinations and treatment; evaluation of physical development and puberty of children aged 15–18; arrangement of referral of a child to other specialised institutions. Medical aid and services for adolescents are also provided by a district paediatrician serving the child or a family doctor.

114. Outpatient specialised services are provided by the specialists of the existing polyclinics/specialists of medical associations. From 2006 PHC is completely free for the population, regardless of age and social status. As a result, the average annual number of visits to outpatient clinics per capita has increased significantly – 2.0 in 2003, 3.2 in 2007 and 4.1 visits in 2017.

115. Children’s in-patient care is provided by 3 child services hospitals in the capital and about 10 multi-profile or specialised medical centres. There are 3 mother and child centres (in Shirak marz) and departments or beds in 49 marz medical units.

116. The network of dispensary services for patients with chronic diseases is developed recently. These are centralised in specialized children’s hospitals of Yerevan and include diseases such as recurrent disease, endocrine, neurological, and renal diseases, etc.

117. During 2000–2018 the children’s healthcare system has undergone a number of systemic changes (PHC reforms, introduction of family medicine system, integration of children’s polyclinics with adults, changes in paediatric hospital services, inclusion of the part thereof in associations).

118. The concerns mentioned in Point 37 of the Concluding Observations are due to the fact that due to the requirement of introducing international norms in the higher education system, the Paediatric Faculty of Yerevan State Medical University was closed in 1999, and in 2004 the last course of paediatricians graduated from the University. Additionally, a large number of graduates of the Faculty of Paediatrics, following the changes in the healthcare system, left the field of children healthcare. Paediatricians now are trained from among general medical faculty graduates through clinical residency for 3 years.

119. Thus, the number of paediatricians in the system decreased. If in 2007 the total number of paediatricians was 1,236, then in 2017 – 579, of which 449 work in the PHC. Over the past decade, a few graduates are admitted to clinical residency in Paediatrics annually. There is a continuous aging of the staff and a lack of young staff both in marzes and in Yerevan.

120. As for the recommendations set forth in point 38 of the Concluding Observations, it should be noted that during 2012–2015 a programme was implemented to strengthen the capacity of child intensive care services in marzes, to create 3 inter-marz paediatric intensive care units and improve skills of specialists in terms of emergency medical care for children in mixed resuscitation. About 130 paediatric specialists from the capital and marzes have undergone trainings abroad. However, this programme was not fully implemented due to the lack of motivation to work in marzes and limited human resources.

121. In 2015, in collaboration with professional associations, more than 150 new guidelines for neonatal care, child nutrition and childcare were developed, the procedure for transporting sick children from marzes was regulated and the system of home visits was strengthened. Within the abovementioned programmes, most PHC physicians have undergone education courses.

Maternal and child healthcare policy, the impact of reforms and financing services

122. The issue of maternal and child healthcare has been on the agenda of the Government. Particularly, the Government programme states: “Special attention will be paid to maternal and child health, reproductive health, early childhood and adolescence health issues.”

123. However, Armenia differs from other countries in economic development by the low level of state health allocations from GDP (1.54% in 2007, 1.5% in 2017), the rates of share of healthcare in the state budget (7.4% in 2007, 5.7% in 2017), and healthcare expenditures per capita, low per capita (22 USD in 2007, 69 USD in 2017), and very high level of “Pocket expenses.”

124. Though, globally, healthcare allocations have been scarce, the Ministry of Health highlighted the programme directions related to mothers and children, due to which it was able to implement the State maternity certificate programme introduced on July 1 2008 (budget – AMD 2.33 billion in 2007, 6.95 billion in 2019), as well as its logical continuation – the Programme of the State Certificate of Child Health introduced on January 1 2011 (budget – AMD 1.64 billion in 2007, 3.13 billion in 2010, 9.87 billion in 2019). These positive developments in budget allocations in maternal and child healthcare will continue.

125. The quality and affordability of maternal and child healthcare services have significantly been improved through policy measures aimed at child birth benefit and children’s medical aid. According to research data of Armenian Demographic and Health Survey Issues of Armenia (ADHSI) in 2015:

(a) About 100% of Armenian women receive professional care and assistance during the prenatal period. These services are more affordable in cities (97.8%) than in rural areas (93.6%). 96% of women made four or more prenatal visits. 60% of women had their first prenatal visit in the first trimester of pregnancy (48.2% in 2005 and 80% during the first 4 months of pregnancy);

(b) In Armenia, 99.7% of women give birth in medical institutions, 93% under the supervision of a doctor, and 4% under the supervision of a nurse or midwife. Only 0.2% of women give birth at home compared to 2000 (9%), the number of home births has dropped by 9% points;

(c) After the introduction of the state maternity certificate in 2008, informal payments in obstetrics were reduced. According to 2015–2016 data by ADHSI about 14% of women reported these payments, while before the introduction of the certificate it was 89%.

126. In 2019 budget allocations for maternal and child healthcare increased by one billion AMD (including maternity care – an increase in the budget of AMD 700 million, overcoming infertility – 210 million, etc.). These allocations will be increased by AMD 1.4 billion in the draft budget 2020.

127. The free medical care guaranteed by the state is within the maternal and child healthcare targeted programme.

(a) Hospital care for children aged 0–18.

(b) Maternity care.

- (c) Prenatal care.
- (d) Medical care for socially vulnerable ones and included in special groups.
- (e) Emergency treatment for women and children.
- (f) Outpatient-polyclinic care for children aged 0–18.
- (g) Implementation of preventive and screening programmes.
- (h) Vaccinations.

128. In 2018, about 63 000 prenatal and postpartum examinations, 36 532 births and 15 793 hospital care for perinatal pathologies were organised within state funding. About 114 500 new-born screenings were performed, 334 sick children were detected and development of the detected disease and risk of disability were prevented. 70 883 children received hospital treatment and 682 000 children received outpatient care and medical supervision.

129. Programs and measures to improve neonatal services were developed by the state in recent years and observed as a reserve for reducing child mortality and improving the situation. Emphasis on these issues made it possible to attract resources from the state and international organisations. The UNICEF, the USAID, and the Armenian Association of Neonatal Medicine have played a major role in enhancing professional skills and equipping neonatal services with modern equipment.

130. The “Procedure for organising medical care for new-borns” was developed and is upon approval.

131. The accessibility of prenatal care for pregnant women is evidenced by the “State of World Population 2017” Report of UNFPA. The [report](#) presents Armenia’s successful experience.

132. Particularly, if in 2005 Pregnancy control rates varied according to the level of family well-being (about 2 times in the poorest and richest households), then in 2015–2016 this difference disappeared (*Source: Armenian Demographic and Health Issues, 2005 and 2015–2016 Researches, RA NSS, 2017*).

133. The situation improved in gender imbalance of new-borns and in selective abortions. If during 2008–2012 the average birth rate for girls and boys was 100:115, in 2014 – 100:113.4, 2015 – 100:112.7, 2016 – 100:112, 2017 – 100:109.8.

134. During 2010–2017 positive trends in healthcare among children aged 0–5 were registered; infant mortality has decreased by 1/3, the breastfeeding rate has increased by more than three times, the situation is favourable in terms of paediatric infections. The WHO declared Armenia as a “Polio-free zone.” Significant efforts have been made to prevent mother-to-child HIV transmission. Thus, Armenia has been certified as a country having overcome mother-to-child transmission.

135. The Ministry of Health, with the UNICEF and the Arabkir Medical Complex, has developed an early detection and intervention concept paper among children with developmental disabilities, which is applied in 2 centres in Yerevan (one of which with child inclusion and integration services) and in marzes.

136. The maternal mortality rate is estimated at 100000 live births, and the trend analysis is based on the average three-year rate. The trends after 2000 show that the latter has decreased by about 50%, but Armenia has not managed to overcome the Millennium Development Goals ($\leq 12.5/100000$). Moreover, after 2010 a certain negative trend of the three-year average was registered (for 2016–2018 it was 20/100000). The WHO calculation index shows that the maternal mortality rate in 2017 in Armenia amounted to 25/100 000.

137. According to the Ministry of Health 12 cases of maternal mortality were registered in 2015, 3 in 2016 and 8 in 2018. Most of the deaths were due to extra genital pathologies.

Strategic and key programme developments in maternal and child healthcare in recent years

138. Armenia has implemented strategic targeted programmes aimed at overcoming health problems in early childhood and implemented them within the cooperation with the government, international organisations and civil society. Within the inter-sectorial cooperation, actions⁵ aimed to introduce more than a dozen targeted programmes have been implemented during 2010–2017. Annex 5 presents some of the measures taken to detect and prevent childhood diseases and their effects.

139. Regarding concerns of points 37–38, as well as concerns and recommendations presented in points 41–42 of the Concluding Observations the following priorities have been highlighted and steps have been undertaken:

(a) The Concept Paper on Improving Child Nutrition and the 2015–2020 Action Plan was approved by Government Protocol Decision N40 (25 September 2014). The Action Plan defines goals aimed at improving the situation with child nutrition (reducing malnutrition), a number of measures and actions have been taken to address it.

(b) In 2015 the Law “On promotion of breastfeeding of the child and circulation of baby food” entered into force, which regulated the circulation, stamping, sale, advertising of baby food, the responsibilities of the authorised body, healthcare organisations and medical workers in breastfeeding promotion. However, it lacks a system for monitoring and supervising the implementation of the Law. The result is that companies importing artificial

⁵ In 2014 the Government approved the concept paper of improving child nutrition and the action plan for 2015-2020.

In 2014 the National Assembly has adopted a law “On promotion of breastfeeding and the sale of baby food”, after which the Government approved the 2016-2020 National Action Plan.

The Strategy for Reproductive Health Improvement and the Action Plan for 2016-2020 was approved by Protocol decision N24 of 23 June 2016 of the Government.

The Strategy for Improving the Health of Children and Adolescents and the Action Plan for 2016-2020 was approved by Protocol decision N34 of 2 September 2016 by the Government.

Article 10 of the Law “On human reproductive health and reproductive rights” has been amended and approved in 2016; Article 10 enshrines prohibition of sex-selective abortions.

“The procedure and terms of artificial abortion” was approved by Decision No. 180-N of 23 February 2012 of the Government; the Procedure enshrines provisions raising from law and aimed at the prevention of abortions.

In 2019 by the orders of the Minister of Health, the staffing and equipment of all medical organisations providing obstetrics and gynaecology in the country, as well as the operations were assessed with a specially developed and approved tools, as a result of which all obstetric medical institutions were classified according to 3 levels of medical care. The procedure and mechanisms for referral of obstetric pathologies have also been approved.

The characteristics and the assessment tools of the level of organisation of the parasitic hospital service have been developed and approved by the order of the Ministry of Health.

The rules of organising children’s hospital and outpatient polyclinic medical care within the state financing were approved by the orders of the Minister of Health.

The Government Decision “On the procedure for diagnosis and treatment of infertility and treatment free of charge or under preferential conditions, medical assistance and servicing using assisted reproductive technologies, and the requirements to beneficiaries” was developed and approved.

The draft order of the Ministry of Health “On approving the procedure for organising first aid free of charge for persons subjected to domestic violence, registering and reporting the data on the persons having applied for medical assistance in the result of domestic violence and the medical history sheet in case of domestic violence and approving the register on persons subjected to domestic violence and those who have received physical, mental and reproductive disorders/injuries in the result thereof” was developed and put into circulation.

Programme measures were taken to combat selective abortion and to improve neonatal services within the effective inter-sectoral and international cooperation.

The Strategic Programme for the Prevention of Child Traumatism and the Action Plan for three years was developed and approved by Order N2999-A of 21 November 2018 of the Minister of Health.

baby milk food continue to implement the marketing of the artificial baby milk food and the requirements of national legislation and international law aren't implemented sufficiently.

(c) With the support of UNICEF and USAID, 101 Parent Educator Resource Centres have been established in the PHC institutions in marzes within the implementation of the Programme "It's the First 1000 Days of Life," where parenting courses are organised to cover child care and nutrition issues.

(d) By the order of the Minister of Health, manuals "On nutrition practice for nursing new-borns and tender-age infants" for medical workers have been approved; almost all doctors and nurses of PHC institutions in marzes were trained.

(e) Based on the WHO Revised Handbook entitled "Child-Friendly Initiative" (CFI), the Ministry of Health has translated CFI 10 new steps. The document will be discussed and approved and with the UNICEF, the process of introducing the initiative in maternity hospitals and other paediatric healthcare organisations will be resumed.

(f) Large-scale awareness-raising campaigns have been organised within which many informational materials in various formats were developed, published and provided to pregnant women and mothers. Numerous social advertisements promoting the proper functioning of nutrition of tender-age infants have been developed and broadcasted on TV. Video tutorials, programmes and films on proper child nutrition practices have been shot with the support of World Vision.

(g) The system for assessment and supervision of child nutrition aged 0–2 was developed with the UNICEF and introduced since 2016 through the Information-Analytical Centre of the NIH of the Ministry of Health.

(h) In 2015 10 million AMD was allocated to carry out awareness-raising activities aimed at improving the nutrition of tender-age infants, within which brochures were published and provided to mothers through PHC medical organisations, programmes and films about the practice of child nutrition were shot, then this budget allocation was reduced and was completely removed. It will be restored in 2020.

140. The official data on women and children nutrition are quite limited and do not always reflect the current situation, as they rely on the application and are summarised at the end of the year during the reporting.

141. According to the data of the NIH of the Ministry of Health, 12.5% of women having completed their pregnancy had anaemia in 2017. This rate has been remained at the same level recently (12.8% in 2010, 12.9% in 2015, 12.2% in 2016), but the rate decreased by 20% as compared to 2000 (15.7%).

142. An alternative source of data for assessing the nutritional status of children and women is the Demographic and Health Survey (DHS), which has been conducted in Armenia since 2000, every 5 years. According to the last data of DHS during 2015–2016, almost all key indicators describing the state of nutrition of tender-age infants have been improved.

143. The backwardness among children aged 0–5, which characterises chronic malnutrition of children, rated 9% in 2015 as compared to 2010 (19%). However, the problem of backwardness of children because of unbalanced food and food with protein deficiency continues to be on the agenda, as the rate exceeds the average level of the standard population rate ($\leq 8\%$). The level of underweight among children has decreased (4% in 2005, 5% in 2010, 3% in 2015–2016). However, the high level of overweight among children (11% in 2005, 15% in 2010, 14% in 2015–2016) and the tendency to grow is worrying. Overweight combined with underweight is repeated in poor marzes.

144. During the period of 2005–2015 the index of exclusive breastfeeding was improved by reaching 45% in 2015 instead of 35% in 2010. The prevalence of anaemia among children aged 0–5 has halved by reaching 16% in 2015 instead of 37% in 2005, the prevalence of anaemia among women of reproductive age has decreased by the same amount, reaching 13%, against 25% in 2005.

145. Regarding concerns and recommendations presented in points 39–40 of the Concluding Observations, below are the steps taken in the fight against HIV/AIDS:

(a) From 1988 up to 31 December 2018, 3337 cases of HIV infection were registered among the citizens of Armenia. The overall structure of registered HIV cases is dominated by males – 2313 people (69%), females – 1024 cases (31%). 58 cases of HIV infection (1.7%) were reported among children. Almost all children are infected from their HIV-infected mothers. Since 2007, no cases of HIV infection have been reported in Armenia among children born from mothers who have been prevented from mother to child HIV transmission. Since the beginning of the epidemic, 770 deaths have been reported in HIV-infected patients. Among the dead 145 were women and 11 children.

(b) More than 95% of pregnant women are tested for HIV as a result of effective HIV/AIDS and prenatal care services, as well as the integration of mother-to-child HIV transmission into prevention system. This gives them the opportunity to learn about their HIV status and to prevent the mothers from transmitting HIV to children, including antiretroviral treatment, which has allowed the birth of 263 children free of infection from HIV-infected mothers.

(c) Recently, the efforts and steps to create HIV/AIDS and prenatal care services, such as the mother-to-child integration prevention system, have yielded results. In 2016, the WHO declared the country as one of the top four countries in the world and one of the first countries in Europe, where the elimination of mother-to-child HIV transmission has been ratified. In 2018 WHO officially confirmed the continuity of HIV-positive indicators for mother-to-child transmission in Armenia of 2016-17.

(d) At the UN Public Service Awards held annually by the UN Department of Economic and Social Affairs, the National Centre for AIDS Prevention of the Ministry of Health was recognised as the winner and took the first place in the Innovation and Excellence in Public Services in 2017 for the implementation of the initiative “Elimination of mother-to-child HIV transmission.”

(e) In 2017 the Government approved the next targeted programme for “Prevention of HIV/AIDS,” aimed at ensuring effective response to HIV/AIDS during 2017–2021 and creating preconditions for the elimination of the AIDS epidemic by 2030. New-borns of HIV-infected mothers are provided with free formula milk. Since 2017, the WHO’s strategy “reach, treat and cure everyone” has been introduced in the country according to which all HIV-infected patients, including children, are offered antiretroviral treatment regardless of CD4 + lymphocytes count and the clinical stage of the disease.

(f) The official statistics of the healthcare system doesn’t separate the school-age and adolescent children as 6–10 and 10–18 years old. Their health statistics does not have a complete nature and is based on a number of studies, of which the most comprehensive is “Arabkir medical centre” – carried out once in 4 years by the Institute of Child and Adolescent Health, by the methodology recommended by WHO “The health behaviour in school-aged children” (2005, 2009/2010, 2013/2014, 2017/2018), showing that adolescents have a lack of information on health issues. They don’t have a clear idea on the changes happening in their bodies during the transition period, are unaware of the risk of getting pregnant, HIV/AIDS and sexually transmitted infections, the ways to prevent them and their symptoms. They are unaware where to go for appropriate medical care.

146. The course “Healthy Lifestyle” is taught in grades 8–9 and 10–11 of all schools. The course covers separate sections on HIV/AIDS problems, puberty and reproductive health, and harmful habits.

147. In 2011 Armenia joined the WHO concept-based “Schools for Health in Europe Network Foundation” (SHE Network) initiative, which includes about 33 countries in the European region and Central Asia. The process was launched by the joint order of the Minister of Health and the Minister of Education and Science, approving the Programme “Healthy Schools.” In 2012 the COAF joined the initiative, and the programme was implemented in 17 rural schools. The “Exemplary policy promoting health with the inclusion of principles of healthy nutrition and physical activity of children at schools” was approved by Order N3791-A of 2016 of the Minister of Health, which aims at promoting physical activity and healthy nutrition for pupils through school means. The Ministry of Education and Science was assigned to introduce it at schools.

148. In 2017 the Ministry of Education and Science created and approved the [website](#) for teenagers.

149. Within the Point 44 of the Concluding Observations, the results of a comprehensive survey of household living conditions of the Statistical Committee show that in 2017 2.1% of children under 18 live in extreme poverty, and 30.8% live in poverty. In 2017, 22.7% of households with children under 18 received family benefits. 38.1% of poor households and 55.3% of extremely poor households received family benefits.

150. In 2018 the average amount of families having received a family benefit was 71224, with an average number of 166567 members under 18.

151. Simultaneously, the activities for implementing the programme “Benefits for raising the living standards of families” continued in 2019, and the family benefits are provided with supplements for each family member over 18, the amount of which varies depending on social insecurity level of the family, the number of family members under 18 and the place of residence of the family.

VII. Education, entertainment and cultural activities (articles 28, 29, 31)

152. Promoting children’s right to education is the most important issue on the Government agenda. Necessary legislative and institutional reforms and targeted programmes are being initiated. They refer to the issues raised and recommendations 45-46 of the Concluding Observations.

153. The Government adopted the policy of comprehensive education for senior pre-school age children through increasing access to pre-school education and expanding the system. The 2019 Government programme aimed to increase the degree of accessibility of pre-school education in all communities, by increasing the enrolment of children over 3 to 70% by 2023.

154. Pre-school institutions operate under subordination of communities, and no services have been provided by State Budget until 2011. They were carried out through community allocations, payments made by parents and through assistance provided by international organisations.

155. To support the sector and ensure the accessibility of pre-school educational services and children’s right to education, funds were allocated for the implementation of pilot programmes via cost-effective models. Within the first and second loan programmes entitled “Education Quality and Compliance,” micro-programmes for establishment of preschools were implemented during 2008–2014, as a result of which 302 preschools were established in marzes of Armenia and in Yerevan. 220 preschools out of those envisaged were established on the basis of schools, and the 82 – on the basis of kindergartens. About 20,000 senior age children were included in the newly established preschools.

156. To ensure the continuity of pre-school educational programmes established on the basis of schools, relevant funds were earmarked in the State Budget since 2011 in respect of current expenses aimed at organising one-year education for senior pre-school age children, as of the annual amount per learner.

157. In 2015, within the new loan programme entitled “Improvement of Education,” grants are provided for establishment of preschools. The programme is aimed at promoting the enrolment of children in pre-school education, preparing children for primary school and developing the abilities and skills of pre-school age children through introducing alternative and low-cost educational services. The pre-school programmes include children aged 4–6. The grants cover the investment costs of respective programme of the institution, envisaged to strengthen capacities of the institution and include expenses related to partial renovation, improvement, furnishing of the area, to acquire educational materials, property, equipment, and other expenses. In 2015–2016, programmes were implemented in Gegharkunik, Kotayk and Shirak Marzes, in 2016–2017 – in Tavush, Lori and Armavir Marzes, in 2017–2018 – in Syunik, Ararat and Aragatsotn Marzes, and in 2018–2019 – in Yerevan, in Vayots Dzor and other marzes.

158. Within the new loan programme entitled “Improvement of Education”.

(a) In 2015, 33 preschools were established in Kotayk, Shirak and Gegharkunik Marzes, wherein 1170 children were enrolled;

(b) During the 2016–2017, 24 new preschools were established in Tavush (6), Lori (6) and Armavir Marzes (12), wherein 700 children were enrolled;

(c) During the 2017–2018, 20 micro-programmes were implemented in Syunik (3), Ararat (9) and Aragatsotn Marzes (8), as well as 3 additional preschools were established in Gegharkunik Marz, wherein 560 children were enrolled;

(d) By the end of the programme (September 2019), it was envisaged to establish additional 45–50 preschools in marzes of Armenia and in Yerevan, wherein 1000 pre-school age children would be enrolled.

159. In 2017, there were 868 communities, state agency and non-state pre-school institutions (PSIs) operating in Armenia, 666 out of which were kindergartens, 67 were nurseries and 135 were school kindergartens. 808 of the PSIs fall under subordination of the community, 10 are state agency and 50 are non-state pre-school institutions.

160. As compared to 2013, growth and development rates were registered, according to the indicators of pre-school education. In 2017, as compared to 2013, the number of children enrolled in pre-school education increased from 68.911 to 76.412. Nowadays, the growth rates of access to pre-school education system and expansion of children enrolment are obvious.

161. Simultaneously, according to the Decision of the Mayor of Yerevan, a free of charge pre-school education was prescribed for children at pre-school educational institutions of Yerevan from 1 April 2011.

162. Additionally, the micro-programmes of pre-school education launched on the basis of general education institutions in the rural and urban communities with alternative models are free of charge and accessible for children (SEN children, national minorities).

163. The 2015–2030 Programme for Improving School Seismic Safety was approved, as well as the list of 425 educational facilities in need of high-priority major renovation, reconstruction, strengthening and modernisation was defined by the Government. The construction and strengthening of 60 schools through funds from the ADB and the WB are underway.

164. Within the programme entitled “Strengthening Inclusive Education System in Armenia” implemented with the USAID, support will be provided to Syunik Marz, which has shifted to inclusive education system since 2016. Particularly, renovation works will be conducted in 11 general education schools operating under subordination of Syunik regional governor’s office and in Goris Territorial Pedagogical-Psychological Support Centre and the institutions will be replenished with properties and supplies.

165. The Ministry of Health carries out monitoring of drinking water, which includes the organisations implementing pre-school and general education programmes. In 2018, the HRDO monitored 201 educational and pre-school educational institutions in Yerevan and in marzes (121 schools and 80 kindergartens), regarding accessibility of water and sanitation. As a result of monitoring, many shortcomings were registered in water supply, drainage, sanitation, the amount of water per child, provision of water for children, provision of hygienic items, etc.

166. In 2017, upon the Order of the Minister of Health, the “Requirements to educational institutions implementing general education programmes” were approved in 2018, which define the sanitary rules and norms, and the Ministry of Health has taken the initiative to modernise the requirements of construction norms for pre-school organisations.

167. The NGOs specialized in the education stated that the trainings of teachers were insufficiently organized because of the Government Decision No 817-A (27 June 2019), that liquidated the “National Institute of Education” CJSC, which was responsible for the training of teachers. Currently, the Government takes measures to improve the process and available tools for training of teachers.

168. In order to improve training for teachers in terms of human, technical and financial resources, it's worth emphasizing that pursuant to Article 26 of the Law "On general education," a person may be deemed to a teacher of an educational institution if he / she has obtained corresponding pedagogical qualification or has higher education and five years of service of pedagogical/teaching activities for the last ten years.

169. The State conducts competence evaluation of teachers, every five years for each teacher aimed to determine the compliance between teacher and the job description of the position.

170. Teachers subject to competence evaluation undergo training at the expense of the educational institution, in compliance with the training standards established by the public administration body for education. With the ADB, it is envisaged to introduce new systems of training of teachers and pedagogical education, to implement reforms for development of new curricula, standards and textbooks.

171. Within the Financial Agreement between the Government and "The EU Innovation in Armenia Initiative: Enhanced Education Focusing on Science, Technology, Engineering and Mathematics", it is envisaged to promote pedagogical innovation and develop modernised teaching methods. The programme will be piloted in a few marzes, and they will be equipped with IT classrooms.

172. To ensure the right to education for the left-out children in 2017 the Ministry of Education and Science developed and submitted to the Government the Draft Government Decision "On approving the procedure for identification, record-registration and guidance of children left out of mandatory education." It is expected to exercise the right to education of each child, to regulate the record-registration process of school-age children, to ensure the fulfilment of obligations of territorial administration bodies and local self-government bodies, all responsible structures and interested bodies in the process of enrolment of children in general education.

173. In 2016, the National Centre of Educational Technologies of the Ministry of Education and Science introduced the "Subsystem for Record-Registration of Children Left out of Mandatory Education" in the Information System of School Management. Collection of information on children admitted to the first year of general education institutions in 2017–2018 academic years was also carried out through Information System of School Management.

174. According to data of Information System of School Management, the distribution of the number of learners having quitted school in 2017–2018 academic year is presented below:

Reasons for quitting school

<i>Poor social and economic conditions</i>		<i>Parents do not allow</i>		<i>Inability auricular</i>		<i>Inability visual</i>		<i>Inability locomotor</i>		<i>Inability mental retardation</i>		<i>Multiple disabilities</i>		<i>He/She was transferred to a penitentiary institution</i>		<i>Overall</i>	
<i>Total</i>	<i>girls</i>	<i>Total</i>	<i>girls</i>	<i>Total</i>	<i>girls</i>	<i>Total</i>	<i>girls</i>	<i>Total</i>	<i>girls</i>	<i>Total</i>	<i>girls</i>	<i>Total</i>	<i>girls</i>	<i>Total</i>	<i>girls</i>	<i>Total</i>	<i>girls</i>
179	68	66	30	1	1	1	1	4	1	9	4	0	0	4	0	274	109

175. As for "the number of learners left out of school after elementary education," it should be noted that these indicators are small (the number 274 is a general indicator including learners excluded from 1-12 forms, and only 52 of them are learners left out of elementary forms). Simultaneously, the indicators listed in the table do not prove the fact that these children are left out of education. The indicators refer to one academic year and establish the fact that a child is left out of school within one academic year. Some of these children may be enrolled in schools the next academic year. The school's admission system is flexible, it enables learners to return again to general education system and continue their studies.

176. Procedure "On enrolling a learner in an educational institution implementing the main general education programmes, transferring a learner from one institution to another and on dismissing him/her, as well as on organising the education of children enrolled in general

education later than the time period prescribed” was approved by Order No 1640-N of the Minister of Education and Science (24 November 2010), envisaging an enrolment of learner in general education:

- (a) In the 1st form on general basis, if he/she is under 8;
- (b) One form lower than his/her age group, if he/she is 9–13 years old.

177. The highest ratio of gross enrolment in general education is in the elementary school, however, there are cases registered regarding left outs of elementary school. Particularly, in 2017–2018 academic year, the gross enrolment ratio in the elementary school constituted 91.3%, in basic school – 90.1%, in high school – 65.5%. Mechanisms are developed to identify learners left out of any circle of general education, as well as children not attending schools of general education, and to enrol them in general education. The procedure “On identification, record-registration and guidance of children left out of mandatory education” and the launch of mechanisms will be aimed at solving these problems.

178. NGOs report that there is a problem related to frequent absences of children among socially vulnerable groups, which must be definitely taken into account. This phenomenon has its negative impact on implementation of a child’s right to education. Thus, social workers in the communities must assess and identify children left out because of the social problems and it is necessary to increase the resources envisaged for community social services.

179. Regarding the review of school curricula, to ensure children’s freedom of religion, the Law “On general education,” Armenia ensures the democratic and secular nature of education. The curriculum of the subject entitled “History of the Armenian Church” taught at schools of general education includes the history of traditional religions, including Christianity, comprising the Bible’s common and basic stories, which are exclusively presented as historical events rather than directed by religion. The standard and syllabus of the subject includes topics aimed to develop tolerance towards different religions.

180. Teachers during the training courses of this subject are given methodical instructions to preserve the secular nature of teaching and refrain from religious propaganda.

181. With the EU and the WB, the content of 12-year education is being revised, within which the requirements of the subject will be also revised. The next step will be the publication of revised textbooks corresponding to the new syllabuses. The table of Annex 6 presents the list of some programmes and measures being implemented for children in the field of education and culture.

VIII. Special protection measures (articles 22, 30, 38, 39, 40, 37(b)-(d), 32–36)

Unaccompanied children, those seeking asylum and child refugees

182. Regarding paragraphs 47–48 of the Concluding Observations the Law “On making supplements and amendments to the Law “On refugees and asylum” (16 December 2015) prescribes provisions for unaccompanied children, those seeking asylum and separated from the family and child refugees, particularly, the concepts of “unaccompanied child” and “child separated from the family,” the procedures applied to such persons, their rights and guarantees for the exercise of those rights are clarified. The Law stipulates that the Migration Service appoints a representative for unaccompanied children, those seeking asylum and separated from the family, to represent their interests in the procedure for provision of asylum. The children with special needs are provided with accommodation by priority order.

183. Since the adoption of the Law “On refugees and asylum” in 2008, 3 minors (Afghan nationals) unaccompanied and separated from their families have sought asylum. They were provided with accommodation and care as prescribed by the legislation. Two of them were recognised as refugees and received asylum, and one of them voluntarily left the territory of Armenia.

184. To ensure access to education for children of the mentioned groups, learners from other countries without relevant documents on education are enrolled in general education in accordance with the requirements of the Procedure “On enrolling a learner in an educational institution implementing the main general education programmes, transferring a learner from one institution to another and on dismissing him or her, as well as on organising the education of children enrolled in general education later than the time period prescribed.” The mentioned legal act regulates the education degree/form and the age group wherein the learner from other countries may be enrolled. In case of high school, a learner must present a certificate of basic education/a document certifying basic education to continue his/her studies.

Economic exploitation, including child labour

185. Regarding concerns of paragraphs 49–50 of the Concluding Observations, state guarantees for employment rights of a child are regulated by the Constitution, the Labour Code, laws, other legal acts and the international treaties ratified by Armenia.

186. The Labour Code prescribes that labour passive legal capacity of citizens, their capacity to obtain and exercise employment rights through their respective actions arises from the age of 16 except for the cases provided by laws.

187. Employment relations issues of employees under 18 are regulated by labour legislation. Particularly, the Code prescribes that persons aged 14–16 may be involved in temporary works not damaging health, safety, education and morals, be subject to the restrictions prescribed by the Code.

188. Persons under 14 maybe involved in the creative work and (or) performance in cinematography, sports, theatre and concert organisations, circuses, television and radio upon written consent of parent or the adoptive parent or guardian or guardianship and curatorship authorities, not damaging their health, morals, education and safety.

189. Persons under 18 are not allowed to be engaged in night work, overtime work, shift work at home or at an organisation.

190. Employees under 18 are obliged to undergo medical examination when recruited for employment, whereas until reaching 18 with prescribed periodicity at the expense of the employer.

191. Engaging persons under 18 in heavy, harmful, especially heavy, especially harmful works established by the legislation, the list whereof is approved by the Government Decision No 2308-N “On approving the list of works deemed as heavy and harmful for persons under 18, pregnant women and women taking care of a child under the age of 1,” as well as in other cases prescribed by law, is prohibited.

192. The Constitution and legislation prescribe many substantive grounds for the worst forms of child labour, which are in line with the requirements of Article 32 of the Convention. Prohibition of compulsory and forced labour is defined by Article 57 of the Constitution and Article 3 of the Labour Code.

193. Social insecurity is one of the main reasons for child labour.

194. Within the fulfilment of the commitments undertaken by Armenia under the CRC, ILO Convention No 138 on the Minimum Age and the Convention No 182 on the Worst Forms of Child Labour, in 2015, the Statistical Committee of Armenia conducted a national survey of child labour, which included children aged 5–17 and living in 6,520 households selected throughout the country.

195. Accordingly, any economic activity carried out in any institution, economy or private house on a paid basis – in monetary or in-kind form, or in profit-making family business without remuneration, is deemed to be work or employment. The number of working (employed) children was 52,000, 34,900 out of which were boys and 17,100 were girls. 39,300 of them were involved in prohibited works.

196. The concept of combating violence against children in Armenia is aimed at fulfilling the obligations prescribed by the CRC, the ILO Convention on the Worst Forms of Child Labour, the Revised European Social Charter and other international instruments of Armenia.

197. According to the respective document, child labour exploitation is common in socially vulnerable families, most often in rural areas, which has negative impact on their physical, mental and psychological development.

198. The Decision No 755-L of the Prime Minister (11 June 2018) approved the new Statute of the Health and Labour Inspection Body, which is a body subordinate to the Government, which exercises supervision and performs other functions prescribed by law and, acting on behalf of Armenia, applies sanctions in healthcare, ensuring health and safety of employees.

199. Health and Labour Inspection Body (HLIB) also exercises supervision over guarantees prescribed by the labour legislation for persons under 18, pregnant or breast-feeding women and employees taking care of a child. However, there is no toolkit to implement it.

200. The ILO makes great efforts to combat child labour. The Country Level Engagement and Assistance to Reduce Child Labour (CLEAR) Project assists in taking actions in many countries, including Armenia to eliminate the child labour.

201. During 2018, 26 minors (7 females) were kept on preventive record-registration of the Police for maliciously avoiding studies or work; 1 of them was in Yerevan, 4 in Aragatsotn, 7 in Ararat, 2 in Armavir, 3 in Lori, 2 in Kotayk and 7 in Shirak Marzes.

202. For the purpose of identifying the children left out of school by the Police, co-operation is carried out with supported schools of general education, guardianship and curatorship commissions, departments for protection of rights of families, women and children, preventive conversations are held with minors left out of general education and with their parents and legal representatives.

203. Regarding prevention of cases of being engaged by minors in begging and vagrancy, the Police take appropriate measures annually.

204. To exclude cases of begging and vagrancy among minors, and those involved in the labour exploitation, during regular meetings and conversations held by police officers on different legal issues at schools operating in the supported areas, the phenomenon of begging, labour exploitation, their negative impact and danger are introduced. In places favourable for being engaged in begging and vagrancy, places for entertainment of minors, in churchyards and shopping centres, spot checks and tours are regularly organised and conducted, which include also officers of the Police.

205. Regarding the subjecting persons to liability for child exploitation, the criminal liability is prescribed by Article 132.2 of the Criminal Code (trafficking or exploitation of a child or a person either deprived of the opportunity to realise the nature and significance of the act committed thereby or the opportunity to manage it as a result of mental disorder).

206. The following information is available on the criminal cases examined in 2013–2018:

(a) During 2013, 3 criminal cases were initiated with regard to cases of trafficking or exploitation of minors. 3 minors were exposed to sexual exploitation by 1 person in 1 of the mentioned cases, 3 minors were exposed to labour exploitation by 1 person in 1 case and 2 minors were exposed to labour exploitation by 2 persons in 1 case. The mentioned criminal cases were forwarded to court with a letter of accusation and criminal judgments of conviction were rendered, whereby relevant persons were sentenced to imprisonment.

(b) During 2014, no criminal case was initiated with regard to case of minor.

(c) During 2015, two criminal cases were initiated with regard to cases of minor's exploitation. 3 minors were exposed to labour exploitation by 2 persons. In one of the cases, the proceedings on two minor's exploitation by one person was dismissed because of the absence of *corpus delicti* in the act of the person. The second criminal case was forwarded to court with a letter of accusation, whereby a criminal judgment of acquittal was rendered. The

appeal lodged by the prosecutor was granted, the criminal judgment was overturned, and the case was returned for new court examination which is pending.

(d) During 2016, no criminal case was initiated with regard to case of minor's exploitation.

(e) During 2017, three criminal cases were initiated with regard to cases of minor's exploitation. 2 criminal cases were dismissed because of the absence of *corpus delicti* in the acts of persons, 1 case was forwarded to court with a letter of accusation which is pending.

(f) During 2018, 1 criminal case was initiated with regard to case of minor's exploitation. 2 minors were exposed to labour exploitation by one person. The criminal case was forwarded to court with a letter of accusation which is pending.

Administration of juvenile justice

207. Regarding paragraphs 51–52 of the Concluding Observations, the relevant section in the current Draft Criminal Procedure Code has been brought in line with the requirements of international legal acts. Particularly, “The UN Standard Minimum Rules on Administration of Juvenile Justice” (the Beijing Rules) approved by UN GA Resolution 40/33, the “Guidelines for Action on Children in the Criminal Justice System” recommended by UN ECOSOC Resolution 1997/30, as well as the ECHR case-law.

208. For the first time since 2013, measures aimed at juvenile justice have been envisaged by “The 2013–2016 Strategic Plan Armenia.”

209. The problem must receive a complex solution; specific issues were raised by the 2017–2021 Strategic Plan in Armenia⁶ and the following was implemented:

(a) Juvenile Justice Council

210. Within the co-operation with the UNICEF in Armenia, the Juvenile Justice Council (hereinafter referred to as “the Council”) was established by the No 633-A Order of the Minister of Justice (30 December 2016) and currently operates.⁷ The activities of the Council are aimed at establishing and improving the institutional (legal, psychological, social, ethical, etc.) system for minors (children) as well as ensuring the protection of the rights and legitimate interests of children. It contributes to the formation of inter-agency relations, accessibility of services, improvement of the legislation and development of mechanisms, introduction and ensuring of child-oriented approaches in the sector of juvenile justice.

211. The Council includes interested state bodies, representatives of NGOs and international organisations. During 2016–2019, at least 3 sittings of the Council were regularly held annually. “Centre for the Implementation of Legal Education and Rehabilitation Programmes” SNCO of the Ministry of Justice (“the Centre”) carries out organisational and technical activities of the Council and administration.

⁶ Necessity to reveal the causes and conditions of juvenile offences and improve the mechanisms for prevention of administrative offences and criminal offences, absence of co-operation conditions between the minor offender and the victim, non-sufficient state of specialised child-oriented approaches in dealing with children in relation to laws, non-effective mechanisms for applying the provisions of rehabilitative justice, the necessity of developing sensitive approaches to juvenile victims in the criminal justice system, non-effective use of mechanisms for restoration of their rights, non-sufficient accessibility of services appropriate to the needs of children (victims, witnesses, offenders) in relation to laws, incomplete compliance of the sphere of protection of the rights of minors deprived of liberty with international standards, absence of re-socialisation programmes for juvenile beneficiaries of the Probation Service.

⁷ The Juvenile Justice Council has been established since 2016 and operates with co-ordination of the Ministry of Justice, which was included also in 2013–2016 three-year programme for the protection of children's rights. However, the result of the programmes implemented, as well as the international practice indicate the necessity for having a co-ordinating body in the sector; To make programmes more unified, complex and goal-oriented there is a need to involve interested state entities, as well as international and NGOs of the sector.

(b) *Education*

212. To ensure the basic education of minors serving sentences in penitentiary institutions, the Centre initiated the process of providing general education to imprisoned persons and (or) to detainees. To provide general education at penitentiary institutions, the Centre was issued, by the Orders of the Minister of Education and Science of 2018, licences to carry out educational activities through general education programmes. By the Order of the Minister of Education and Science, the curricula of the special institution of general education for imprisoned and (or) for detainees, developed by the Centre were also approved. The Centre applied to the Ministry of Education and Science for receiving the necessary funding and since 2019 has been providing general education to imprisoned persons and (or) to detainees.

213. The Centre has developed programmes for re-socialisation of minor offenders. Courses aimed at aesthetic upbringing and education were conducted among the minors in “Abovyan” Penitentiary Institution.

(c) *Training courses and development of methodical manuals*

214. The guideline entitled “Proceedings with participation of children” for judges and prosecutors were developed and published, and two professional discussions on the protection of the rights of child (acting as offender, victim, witness) of the proceedings were organised.

215. Training of penitentiary staff was carried out, and a manual entitled “How to contribute to personal growth” was developed for specialists dealing with minors sentenced to imprisonment aimed at organisation of social reintegration of minors.

216. Training of probation officers on the peculiarities of dealing with minors was conducted, and guideline entitled “The Probation Service for dealing with minors” was published.

217. Awareness-raising measures on the accessible and restorative justice for children were implemented at the higher educational institutions.

218. In “Abovyan” Penitentiary Institution, the educational programmes are implemented through the Centre by taking into account the peculiarities of the penitentiary institution and by assessing the educational needs of convicts. The minors are enrolled in the courses of life skills, decorative applied arts, basic literacy (Armenian language, literature and mathematics) and are granted relevant certificates.

219. Before 2015–2016 academic year, Vocational School No 2 after Khachatur Abovyan of the Ministry of Education and Science operated at “Abovyan” Penitentiary Institution.

Juvenile victims and witnesses

220. Regarding concerns of paragraph 54 of the Concluding Observations, the examination of the needs of child offenders, victims and witnesses, accessibility of the services necessary for the provision thereof, raising of accessibility threshold of services (at least 20% growth) are, *inter alia*, among the expected results of the 2017–2021 Strategic Plan of Armenia.

221. During this period, the legislation and the law enforcement practice have improved. Particularly, in 2017, 21 investigators of the Investigative Committee got specialised in examination of children’s cases, psychologists holding the status of a specialist got involved in the interrogation of children during investigation of sexual crimes or other complicated cases, though no such requirement was provided by law, the interrogation rooms for children were furnished, trainings were organised for police officers, investigators, judges, psychologists and social workers.

222. Studies were carried out both by NGOs and state bodies. Studies entitled “The main needs of child victims of crime” were conducted.

223. Since 2016, the procedure for maintaining statistics on criminal cases regarding crimes against children has been introduced in the Investigative Committee, which is available semi-annually and annually.

224. A draft legal act on making amendments to the Government Decision No 1225-N “On approving the unified forms of statistical reports of the indicators characterising the pre-trial proceedings and the procedures for completion and submission thereof” (23 October 2008) was developed, which defines the unified forms of statistical reports of the indicators characterising minor offenders, victims and witnesses, as well as the procedures for completion and submission of these forms.

225. A model for institutional introduction of public psychologists in justice has been developed and the costs have been assessed.

226. The Draft Criminal Procedure Code envisages the conduct of interrogation of child witnesses or victims in procedural processes involving participation of a psychologist.

227. Structural changes were made within Investigative Committee, as a result of which the preliminary investigation of many criminal cases in crimes against sexual immunity of minors will be conducted by the investigators of the Department, who have obtained specialisation in investigation of such crimes.

IX. Ratification of international instruments on human rights

228. Regarding accession to the international legal instruments referred to in paragraph 55 of the Concluding Observations, during the event dedicated to covenants of the UNGA 74th session of 26 September 2019, the Minister of Foreign Affairs signed the CRC-OP on a communication procedure.

229. The UN Convention on the Protection of the Rights of All Migrant Workers and Members of Their Families is under ratification process.

X. Co-operation with the regional and international structures

230. Regarding co-operation with other international structures to implement the provisions of the Convention, Armenia is collaborating with the UNICEF, EU and CoE in protection and promotion of children’s rights.

231. To protect the safety of children in the Internet domain, the CoE Secretariat has initiated the EndOCSEA@Europe programme for 2018–2020 period (until 31 December, 2020).

232. The programme budget constitutes 849,041 Euros and is aimed at strengthening the capacities of the judicial and law enforcement bodies at the national level, expanding regional co-operation thus protecting children and preventing sexual exploitation and harassment against them in the cyber domain. It assists the CoE Member States in implementing the European and international standards in this sphere, particularly provisions of the CoE Lanzarote Convention. Simultaneously, the Programme is aimed at supporting the worldwide efforts for elimination of all forms of child exploitation and violence against them until 2030 within the UN SDGs, particularly 16.2 SDG.

233. The Programme is designed for CoE Member States, however, Armenia, Georgia, Ukraine, Moldova, Azerbaijan, Turkey, Montenegro, Serbia, Albania, Bosnia and Herzegovina have been selected as target countries.

234. On 17–19 September 2019, the CoE expert delegation paid a working visit to Armenia. During the visit, bilateral meetings were held with the representatives of different beneficiary structures of Armenia, as well as the initial meeting of the Programme and a round-table discussion were held at the Ministry of Justice.

235. To ensure sexual immunity of children, the domestic procedures for ratification of the CoE Lanzarote Convention have been initiated within the Action Plan of the Government.

236. On 20 September 2019, the UNICEF, the “Save the Children” NGO and the Human Rights Defender of Armenia together with the EU introduced an assessment toolkit to promote children’s participation in decision-making processes. This initiative was based on Article 12 of the Convention and the Second Recommendation on child and youth

participation adopted by the CoE Committee of Ministers in 2012. The assessment toolkit was developed by the CoE to assess the degree of children's participation in decision-making processes, with focus on children in vulnerable situations.

237. In March 2017, Armenia acceded to the Safe Schools Declaration, reaffirming its commitment to strengthen the protection of children's right to education and other rights during hostilities. In May 2019, Armenia participated in the third conference of the "Safe Schools." Armenia is making efforts to raise awareness among interested agencies about the provisions of the Declaration and the Guidelines for Protecting Schools and Universities from Military Use During Armed Conflict.

XI. Follow-up and distribution

238. Recommendations submitted to respective country by the UN Committee on the Rights of the Child are forwarded for translation into Armenian and widely circulated among interested agencies and bodies, including the structures represented in the working group set up to develop national reports. The UNICEF has also published the Armenian translation of the Recommendations in the form of a brochure for general distribution.

Information on the implementation of the CRC-OP on the sale of children, child prostitution and child pornography

239. Armenia ratified the CRC-OP on the sale of children, child prostitution and child pornography on 2 February 2005. The mentioned OP entered into force on 30 July 2005. Armenia guarantees the immunity of a child, ensures his/her protection from any kind of exploitation, physical and psychological violence, cruel and inhuman treatment, sexual harassment, as well as other encroachments.

Amendments to the internal legislation

240. Significant amendments were made to the Criminal Code, aimed at ensuring children's criminal law protection: new offences were criminalised, punishments were made stricter, aggravating circumstances were added, etc. The Criminal Code was supplemented by Article 132.2 which provides for liability for trafficking or child exploitation or a person either deprived of the opportunity to realise the nature and significance of the act committed thereby or the opportunity to manage it as a result of mental disorder. Thus, child trafficking was separated from human trafficking, by providing more severe punishment and by revising the elements of the *corpus delicti*.

241. As a result of the above-mentioned amendment, Article 168 of the Criminal Code was edited, which previously provided liability for purchase and sale of a child. *The Law HO-69-N (1 March 2011)* has disaggregated *Articles 166 and 166.1 of the Criminal Code, prescribing liability* for engaging a child in prostitution or in preparation of pornographic material or items, *respectively*, as well as for engaging a child in the use of alcoholic drinks, non-medical use of potent or other narcotic substances, engaging in vagrancy or begging (more severe punishments are provided for the first act committed rather than for the second act).

242. Thus, the punishments for non-violent sexual crimes committed against children were made stricter.

243. Since 2004, Armenia has been implementing a three-year Programme for organising the fight against human exploitation (trafficking). Special attention is paid to the protection of the rights of children exposed to trafficking and exploitation. In the 2019–2021 National Programme, more attention was paid to the cases of minor's exploitation aimed to prevent children from being engaged in forced labour or the worst forms of labour.

244. The National Programme for the Protection of the Rights of the Child (for 2013–2016) was completed in 2016; currently, the strategic plan of the sector is the 2017–2021 Strategy

for the Protection of the Rights of the Child. Three-year anti-trafficking programmes have separate sections for conduct of studies, monitoring and assessment.

245. The Criminal Procedure Code and the Criminal Code are in the stage of elaboration, within which the subject of discussion is the issue of prescribing comprehensive legal regulations related to trafficking in human beings, including minors.

Awareness-raising programmes

246. The awareness-raising programmes are about trafficking and child prostitution and about preventing labour exploitation or assisting children in such situations and returning them to normal life.

247. To increase the awareness among population, especially the youth, on human trafficking and exploitation and the level of their legal consciousness, as well as preventing crimes and other offences committed by or against them and carrying out preventive activities among them, reports and meetings on different legal issues have been organised and held at schools of general education and other educational institutions.

248. During 2018, the Police initiated a one-month seminar on “Minors and Crime” held at schools of general education.

249. The “Healthy Lifestyle” course is taught in 8-11 forms of the schools of general education, which provides learners with knowledge about the two genders and the relations between them, gender-based violence, healthy lifestyle and the basics of preparation for family life.

250. The “Big Rights of Little People” manual has been developed for educators of pre-school institutions.

251. It has been reserved to the Investigative Committee to organise courses on human trafficking and exploitation, especially labour and child trafficking and exploitation, as well as on legislative amendments for relevant employees.

Rehabilitation and inclusion activities

252. Recently, one of the main priorities of social policy of the Government has been considered to be the introduction of an integrated social services system. Social services must be provided by social workers within the maintenance of a social case based on the assessment of social needs of a person (family) and the individual social programme.

253. To ensure the legal ground for introduction of an integrated social services system, the Law “On social assistance” was adopted (17 December 2014).

254. Since 2010, the Ministry of Labour and Social Affairs has been implementing the state programme entitled “Social and Psychological Rehabilitation Services for Persons Exposed to Trafficking and Exploitation.” Since 2017, the programme has been supplemented with one additional component: assistance for minors exposed to sexual violence. The programme provides assistance not only to special category of victims of trafficking, but also to underage girls exposed to sexual violence. The goal is to prevent further exploitation of these children.

International co-operation

255. In December 2017, the Ministry of Justice applied to the “[We Protect Global Alliance](#)” and [EVAC](#) international networks, and the participation of Armenia was confirmed as a Pathfinder Country.

256. Due to co-operation, the Ministry of Justice has been involved in the conferences and trainings, has made use of the information resources on the protection of children’s rights, prevention of violence and response thereto. Conferences have been held in Armenia with the involvement of international experts.

257. The Police participates in the “Nelegal” operation to counter the illegal migration and human trafficking on the territory of the CSTO Member States annually.

258. It has taken part in the events held by the Bureau for Coordination of the Fight against Organised Crime on the territory of the CIS Member States.

259. Co-operation in detection of human trafficking and exploitation cases abroad, as well as in detection of persons on international wanted list under the charge for the committal of the mentioned crimes, is carried out with the National Central Bureau of Interpol with law enforcement agencies of other countries.

Information on the implementation of the CRC-OP on the involvement of children in armed conflict

260. Upon the Government Decision No 1381-N (29 December 2016), “Pokr Mher” educational complex and “Aparan Military and Sports Lyceum” state non-commercial organisations were reorganised through merger, by creating “Nubarashen Specialised Military Training School” SNCO, where the Ministry of Education and Science was designated as the authorised state body implementing the management. It is prescribed that the educational programme of the high school of “Pokr Mher” educational complex state non-commercial organisation would be carried out by the “Military and Sports Lyceum named after Monte Melkonyan Foundation.”

261. Upon the Government Decision No 983-N (10 August 2017), the “Military and Sports Lyceum named after Monte Melkonyan” state institution of the Ministry of Defence underwent an organisational and legal changes, being renamed as “Military and Sports Lyceum named after Monte Melkonyan Foundation,” the charter whereof prescribes that the founder of the Foundation is Armenia on behalf of the Government, and the state authorised body acting on behalf of Armenia is the Ministry of Defence. The Lyceum carries out its activities according to the Constitution, the Civil Code, the Law “On Foundations,” the Law “On education,” the Law “On general education,” other laws, legal acts and its charter. The statutory goal of the Lyceum is the implementation of general education programmes for high school and additional educational programmes defined by the Law “On general education,” the following is implemented:

- (a) Acquisition by learners of the state standard of general education, subject-related standards and the mandatory minimum content of the programmes;
- (b) Comprehensive development of the individual;
- (c) Health maintenance of the learner;
- (d) Creation of conditions for self-education of learners and meeting the additional educational needs;
- (e) Identification of gifted and talented children;
- (f) Formation of a culture of carrying out research and creative work;
- (g) Settlement of the issue of professional orientation.

262. When organising the educational process, the Lyceum is guided by the Procedure “On providing the schools of general education and secondary vocational education institutions with educational weapons and ammunition,” approved by the Joint Order of the Minister of Defence (No 601-N, 29 June 2004), the Minister of Education and Science (No 483-N, 30 June 2004) and the Head of the Police (No 3-N of 30 June 2004); according to this Procedure the weapons and ammunition used in the courses are educational and do not have combat capabilities. On the basis of Licence of the Ministry of Education and Science No 0914 of 27 March 2018, teaching of the subjects guaranteed by the Ministry of Education and Science is organised at the Lyceum through the curricula of high school (10th, 11th, 12th forms) according to the state standards of general education. The subjects entitled “Preliminary military training,” “Physical training” and “Mountain training” are studied at the Lyceum, to which up to 30% of the class hours in the curriculum and the class schedule is allocated. During class hours of the subject entitled “Preliminary Military Training,” fire training is

organised through “Sardarapat-1” computer training device. There are training weapons at the Lyceum, which are used only for training purposes during the exercises envisaged by the subject syllabus of PMT and have no capabilities for firing/tactical use of a weapon.

263. Military training is not conducted at schools of general. The subject entitled “Preliminary military training” is taught at school of general education, 1 hour a week, within which theoretical knowledge of and introduction to the history of the Armed Forces and military art and the international humanitarian law are provided, as well as practical knowledge on the fundamentals of safe living and first medical aid. The 8th form curriculum envisages 2 class hours on rifles, which proves to be provision of theoretical knowledge.

264. The assessment of penalties and incentives, behaviour and discipline of learners of the Lyceum are regulated by application of the provisions of Article 20 (rights and responsibilities of learners) and Article 21 (disciplinary penalties imposed on learners) of the Law “On general education,” point 84 of Chapter 7 of the Charter of Lyceum (rights of learners), point 85 (responsibilities of learners), point 3 of the Agreement on Studies concluded with the parent of learner (the learner shall be obliged to) and point 7 (the learner shall have the right to). Therefore, the provisions of the Internal Service Code of the Armed Forces of Armenia and the Disciplinary Charter of the Armed Forces may not be applied to learners. Discipline at the educational institution is ensured under the Law “On general education,” the charter of the educational institution and internal disciplinary rules thereof. Pursuant to Article 21 of the Law “On general education,” in case of improper observance of internal disciplinary rules of an educational institution, the following disciplinary penalties may be imposed on learners of secondary and high schools:

- (a) reprimand;
- (b) severe reprimand.

265. Moreover, in case of repeated imposition of the disciplinary penalty provided in point 2 on the same learner within one academic year, the educational institution may recommend the parent to transfer the learner to another educational institution. These provisions of the Law also apply to learners of the Military and Sports Lyceum.

266. Awareness of learners of the Lyceum on the provisions of the Optional Protocol on the participation of children in armed conflict is organised during the class hours of IHL envisaged by the PMT syllabus.

267. As for the involvement of children in armed conflicts, who seek asylum in Armenia, the Law “On refugees and asylum” provides for conduct of an interview in question-and-answer format in order to find out the reasons for leaving their country of origin. Foreign nationals, stateless persons and their family members having left the country as a result of hostilities, may, according to the Law “On refugees and asylum,” be recognised as refugees and receive asylum in Armenia. The Government has also defined the mechanisms for their integration into the society (participation in the Armenian language courses, receiving financial assistance in order to rent an apartment for a period of 9 months, etc.). It should be noted that there are no children involved in the armed conflict among the persons seeking asylum in Armenia, who hold the citizenship of Syria and Iraq.

268. As a result of legislative amendments made in Armenia, transition from a 10-year education system to a 12-year education system has taken place since 2006, as a result of which, certain number of high school graduates attain 18 during their studies. Regarding the mentioned persons, Article 22 (3) of the Law “On military service and the status of military servants” (15 November 2017) lays down the grounds for granting deferral for studies: according to the Article 22 (3) (2) in Armenia the learner shall, upon primary (vocational) educational programmes, be granted deferral until the day of completion of his/her studies and the citizen who has not completed the studies under general education or primary (vocational) educational programmes as of the day of expiry of deferral and who is subject to mandatory military service must, by the Government Decision, be granted deferral once before the day of completion of studies. Additionally, pursuant to Article 29 of the Law “On the rights of the child,” involvement of children in hostilities, armed conflicts, as well as war propaganda and violence among children, creation of militarised unions of children is

prohibited. Consequently, citizens under 18 may not be admitted to military institutions and be subject to the army in Armenia.

269. Pursuant to the Law “On the rights of the child,” participation of a child under 15 in hostilities is prohibited. In the event of an armed conflict, the State and its relevant authorities ensure the special protection of the child.

270. Pursuant to Article 12 of the Law “On higher and postgraduate professional education,” military education institutions are considered as higher education institutions. Article 14 of the same Law prescribes that admission to the first level (Bachelor’s Degree) of higher education at educational institutions under the programme of a certified specialist, is carried out upon applications of persons having at least secondary (full) general education, on a competitive basis provided by law or the charter of a higher education institution. Since, according to Article 4 of the Law “On general education,” 12-year secondary education is carried out in Armenia, and Article 16 of the same Law prescribes that the children having reached or expected to reach the age of six on the 31st of December of the given calendar year are admitted to the first year of the educational institution, therefore, only the citizens under 18 who reach 18 on the 31st of December of the given calendar year may participate in the admission to military education institutions. According to Article 5 (6) of the Law “On military service and the status of military servants,” citizens dismissed or expelled from a military-educational institution before 18 are record-registered at military call-up department of the military commissariat of their place of record-registration and are subject to mandatory military service during the military call-up declared after attaining the age of 18. Citizens under 18 studying at MEIs are not subject to military call-up.

271. The implementation of the provision set forth in Article 4 of the Optional Protocol to the effect that “Armed groups that are distinct from the armed forces of a State should not, under any circumstances, recruit or use in hostilities persons under 18,” is also ensured by Armenia, since the Law “On defence” prohibits the establishment of other armed groups on the territory of Armenia, and the establishment of such entities is subject to criminal prosecution.

272. Statistics on the number of cadets under 18, as well as of all age groups studying at MEIs of the Ministry of Defence is maintained, which is forwarded, in the form of a state statistical report, to the Statistical Committee annually. Statistics on the social status is maintained for all cadets, regardless of their age.
