

**Permanent Mission  
of the Republic of Azerbaijan  
to the United Nations**



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*Check against delivery*

*New York, 2 March 2009*

**Statement by Mrs. Hijran Huseynova  
Chairperson of the State Committee for Family, Women and Children's Issues  
of the Republic of Azerbaijan  
at the 53<sup>rd</sup> session  
of the Commission on the Status of Women**

Mr. Chairman,  
Excellencies,  
Distinguished participants,  
Ladies and gentlemen,

At the outset I would like to convey my thanks for the opportunity to present at this very important event the achievements attained and challenges faced by Azerbaijan in ensuring gender equality and the improvement of the status of women in all spheres.

With a firm belief that the advancement of women is a critical factor for development, the Government of Azerbaijan has spared nothing in its efforts to implement the Beijing Platform for Action and the outcome document from its very adoption until today by mainstreaming gender aspect in all areas.

During this period Azerbaijanis have lived through a very difficult transition which has been conditioned by the armed conflict, economic and social burdens of the post-ceasefire period and other reforms in all sectors of the society. As in most countries, these transitions have had the most fundamental effect on women and their social status. Many have been driven to reconsider women's roles in the society, particularly regarding the increase in their political and economic activity, as well as changes in the attitude of the whole society. Still, women have continued to be a mainstay in both family and professional life.

In a country where women gained political rights in 1918, earlier than in many developed countries, we have always endeavored to be at the forefront of all developments in the advancement of women. Thus our legislative bodies have adopted a number of policies in order to ease the implementation of international obligations in this sphere. Among them, the Law on State Guarantees of Gender Equality, which was adopted in 2006, has had the most outstanding effect on increase in the number of women in decision-making positions.

For the Government of Azerbaijan, providing a favorable environment for the empowerment of women and securing balanced participation of women and men in key spheres, as well as in household responsibilities, have always been of a prime concern. Today we have identified major problems in ensuring gender equality on which we are currently focusing our activity. These include: the integration of refugee and IDP women in the society, working against violence against women, fostering women's empowerment, problem of early marriages, and promoting the education of girls, reproductive health, and women entrepreneurship etc.

We realize how substantive these tasks are and we understand that we need a considerable contribution and the active participation of all segments of the society to attain tangible results. We therefore have been closely cooperating with women NGOs, international organizations and media in working out and implementing policy decisions. Together with other governmental bodies, the Committee that I represent has been working to increase awareness of gender equality in all areas. As a result of this cooperation we have gender focal points within each ministry and governmental body. We continually organise trainings, conferences or round table meetings with them on different gender-related topics.

We have also involved women in leading positions with our activities as their example encourages other women not to evade responsibility as well as demonstrates their enormous contribution to the development of Azerbaijani society.

One of the most outstanding examples of such women is the First Lady of Azerbaijan, Good Will Ambassador of UNESCO and ISESCO - Mehriban Aliyeva. We are currently implementing a project together with the Heydar Aliyev Foundation that she leads and the United Nations Population Fund the "XXI century without violence against women" within which *inter alia* it is intended to address the problem of violence against women in all sectors throughout Azerbaijan.

For this year we have adopted a comprehensive plan of action for the "Year of the Child" as designated by the President of Azerbaijan. The range of activities is focused on supporting working women with children. In spite of the current economic crisis, we hope to realize our aims to improve the situation in childcare and to secure the protection of children's rights.

Allied with this, the Government of Azerbaijan has also adopted the State Program on the Eradication of Poverty and Sustainable Development. According to this Program, the number of women in decision-making positions should considerably increase by 2015. To foster its implementation, we have held town hall meetings in all regions of Azerbaijan that were followed by a Third Congress of Azerbaijani Women last year. During that Congress we held an interactive dialogue with women from remote zones.

We also held thematic conferences for women professionals in the spheres of justice, arts and third sector. This was a good opportunity for discussions, interaction, networking and the exchanging of ideas between women of different ages, ethnicities and regions. There was the special address made by the President of Azerbaijan to the members of the Congress in which he expressed his support for women's activities and women's invaluable input in the development of our country.

Using this opportunity I would like to express my sincere gratitude to the Executive Director of UNFPA, Mrs. Thoraya Ahmed Obaid, and Deputy of the Secretary General of the Council of Europe, Mrs. Maud de Boer-Buquicchio, for their addresses during the Congress. For our Committee, these are important signs of cooperation and support.

These and other factors have provided regional women with the necessary impetus to become more active in their communities. The following presidential elections have demonstrated a considerable rise in women's participation and we expect even greater activity during the forthcoming parliamentary elections that should result in a greater number of women in parliament.

We can now also talk about a major breakthrough in our endeavor to increase the number of women in decision-making positions; we can clearly see a new wave of young women striving to acquire and succeeding in managerial positions both in private and state sectors. The numbers of women have increased in regional executive bodies, as well as in deputy minister positions. Recent research figures demonstrate an unprecedented number of women entering the labour force, thus increasing the potential for their ability to participate in economic decision-making. Still there is much to be done in the future and we have no intention to slow down our efforts in tackling problems that hinder women's empowerment and the protection of their rights in Azerbaijan.

In conclusion, I would like to call upon the distinguished audience to join efforts in fulfilling the commitment to develop opportunities for women and men worldwide.

Thank you very much for your attention!