



**International Covenant on
Civil and Political Rights**

Distr.: General
14 October 2015
English
Original: Russian
English, French, Russian and
Spanish only

Human Rights Committee

**Consideration of reports submitted by States
parties under Article 40 of the Covenant**

Second periodic report of States parties due in 2015

Turkmenistan*

[Date received: 27 July 2015]

* The present document is being issued without formal editing.

GE.15-15555 (E) 070316 080316



* 1 5 1 5 5 5 5 *

Please recycle 



Contents

	<i>Page</i>
I. Introduction	2
II. Information on the implementation of articles 1 to 27 of the Covenant and the Human Rights Committee's concluding observations on its consideration of the initial report of Turkmenistan (CCPR/C/TKM/CO/1)	4
Article 1	4
Article 2	6
Article 3	9
Article 4	15
Article 5	16
Article 6	16
Article 7	17
Article 8	20
Article 9	21
Article 10	22
Article 11	22
Article 12	22
Article 13	23
Article 14	24
Article 15	25
Article 16	26
Article 17	26
Article 18	27
Article 19	29
Article 20	30
Article 21	30
Article 22	30
Article 23	33
Article 24	34
Article 25	37
Article 26	38
Article 27	39

I. Introduction

1. This report is submitted pursuant to article 40 (1) of the International Covenant on Civil and Political Rights. It has been prepared in accordance with the harmonized guidelines on the form and content of reports to be submitted by States parties to the Human Rights Committee (HRI/GEN/2/Rev.6) and the guidelines for submitting State party reports under article 40 of the Covenant.

2. The concluding observations issued by the Human Rights Committee at its 104th session, held in New York 12-30 March 2012, as reflected in CCPR/C/SR.2887, have been taken into account in preparing the report.

3. Turkmenistan ratified the International Covenant on Civil and Political Rights and its first Optional Protocol on 20 December 1996. On 27 December 1999 it became a party to the second Optional Protocol to the Covenant, which aims at the abolition of the death penalty.

4. This is the second periodic report of Turkmenistan on key legislative, judicial, administrative, operational and other measures taken during the reporting period to implement the provisions of the Covenant and its two protocols. Turkmenistan is reporting on the steps the Government has taken and is now taking to give effect to the rights recognized in the Covenant, and on the progress made in the enjoyment of those rights.

5. National legislation was used as a source for the preparation of the report, along with information provided by State bodies and public associations. During the report's preparation, steps were also taken to promote public awareness of its content. The Interdepartmental Commission on Compliance with the International Obligations Undertaken by Turkmenistan in the Field of Human Rights and International Humanitarian Law held a number of interdepartmental meetings and consultations with international experts and with United Nations agencies. The draft was sent to ministries, State committees and government departments and public organizations, whose comments and suggestions were taken into account in preparing the final version.

6. The draft report was discussed and agreed at a round-table event held with representatives of the Interdepartmental Commission. Comments and suggestions were taken into account in finalizing the report.

7. A precursor to the Interdepartmental Commission was established by presidential decree on 24 August 2007 to ensure the implementation of the country's international commitments in the field of human rights, as well as to coordinate the activities of ministries, State committees, local agencies and executive bodies, enterprises, institutions and organizations to implement those commitments.

8. In August 2012 that body became the Interdepartmental Commission in its current form.

9. The Interdepartmental Commission includes representatives of the legislature (the Mejlis, the national parliament of Turkmenistan), the Ministry of Foreign Affairs, the Ministry of Justice, the Supreme Court, the Office of the Procurator General, the Ministry of Internal Affairs, the Ministry of Defence, the Ministry of Economic Affairs and Development, the Ministry of Education, the Ministry of Health and the Medical Industry, the Ministry of Labour and Social Protection, the Ministry of Culture, the State Statistics Committee, the National Institute for Democracy and Human Rights in the Office of the President, the Institute for State and Law in the Office of the President, the National Trade Union Centre, the Women's Union of Turkmenistan, the Magtymguly Youth Organization and the Red Crescent Society of Turkmenistan.

10. During the period under review, the Interdepartmental Commission implemented a variety of measures aimed at further strengthening the legal foundations of Turkmen society and at ensuring the realization of the political, economic, social and cultural rights of the country's citizens.

11. The Commission's main task is to help the Head of State exercise his constitutional powers as guarantor of human rights and freedoms. The Commission makes proposals for improving the Government's human rights policy and enhancing the effectiveness of human rights mechanisms.

12. One of the Commission's most important activities is monitoring human rights legislation and preparing proposals, on an ongoing basis, for the implementation of international human rights law in the framework of the legal reforms spearheaded in Turkmenistan by the Head of State, Gurbanguly Berdymuhamedov. In accordance with its basic goals, the Commission continually prepares proposals and recommendations to improve the national legislation in accordance with the fundamental principles of international human rights standards.

13. The Commission prepares national reports on the implementation of international human rights treaties for submission to the United Nations treaty bodies.

14. The Commission is permanently engaged in an active dialogue on human rights issues with the regional representatives of the Office of the United Nations High Commissioner for Human Rights, the United Nations Development Programme, the United Nations Children's Fund, the United Nations Population Fund, the Office of the United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees and other United Nations agencies, as well as other international organizations.

II. Information on the implementation of articles 1 to 27 of the Covenant and the Human Rights Committee's concluding observations on its consideration of the initial report of Turkmenistan (CCPR/C/TKM/CO/1)

Article 1

15. The right to self-determination has been implemented on the basis of the Declaration of State Sovereignty of the Turkmen Soviet Socialist Republic of 22 August 1990. The Declaration was the basis of the Constitution of 18 May 1992. A new version of the Constitution was adopted on 26 September 2008.

16. According to article 1 of the Constitution, Turkmenistan is a democratic, secular State based on the rule of law and governed as a presidential republic. Turkmenistan exercises full control and authority over its territory and conducts its domestic and foreign policies independently. The sovereignty of the State and the territory of Turkmenistan are unified and indivisible. The State protects the independence, territorial integrity and constitutional order of Turkmenistan and ensures that law and order prevail.

17. Given the place and importance of the Constitution in the national legal system, and to further democratize the functioning of the State and the country's public life, as well as to fully safeguard human rights and freedoms, improve the system of government and strengthen the State's independence, a Constitutional Commission has been established to improve the Constitution. The discussion of the new text will involve broad participation by the public through the media, with participation by international experts to bring the main provisions of the new Constitution into line with international standards. The Constitutional

Commission set its goals and priorities at its first meeting, held on 6 August 2014, with the participation of the President of Turkmenistan.

18. On 28 May 2015 the Commission, chaired by the President, held a regular meeting on improving the Constitution, where it assessed efforts to date, heard reports by Commission members and outlined the challenges ahead.

19. As the President noted, the ongoing constitutional reform should take into account experience gained from worldwide best practices and experience gained in the context of the national development model. In formulating the country's laws, priority should be given to universally recognized norms of international law. It was deemed necessary to once again systematically consider proposals to safeguard human and civil rights in the Constitution and to continue to work in that direction.

20. The permanent neutrality of Turkmenistan, recognized by the international community, is the basis of the country's domestic and foreign policies.

21. By establishing an essentially unique international legal status of neutrality, Turkmenistan as a sovereign State has over the years undertaken a commitment to speak as an initiator of and active participant in a global process to strengthen peace and security throughout the world. As the political and legal foundation for coherent and sustained implementation of all large-scale reforms relating to national, social and economic development in today's Turkmenistan, neutrality has helped to significantly strengthen the country's political, economic and cultural and humanitarian ties with all interested States on a bilateral and multilateral basis, especially in the framework of prominent international organizations.

22. Over the years, as it secured its neutrality, Turkmenistan has through successive large-scale reforms made impressive progress, above all in shaping and strengthening the State, ensuring sustained economic growth, improving living standards and strengthening the country's importance in the international arena.

23. The Council of Elders, meeting in Turkmenabat on 20 October 2014, declared 2015 the year of neutrality and peace.

24. On 9 January 2015, at an expanded meeting of the Cabinet of Ministers, President Gurbanguly Berdymuhamedov approved the programme for the celebrations to be held in Turkmenistan and abroad to mark the twentieth anniversary of the country's neutrality. All the events planned for this year aim at broadening and deepening international partnership in tackling current global challenges and will embody the triumph of peace, friendship and good relations and the lofty principles of humanism.

25. By implementing its foreign policy in a consistent manner, Turkmenistan has significantly increased and strengthened cooperation with such leading international organizations as the United Nations, the Organization for Security and Cooperation in Europe (OSCE), the Commonwealth of Independent States and the Economic Cooperation Organization, as well as with countries of Central Asia, the European Union, the Asia-Pacific region and the Americas, including the United States of America.

26. Particularly noteworthy are the international initiatives by President Gurbanguly Berdymuhamedov to solve our era's pressing problems and protect and strengthen international peace and security by bringing nations together. Taking a proactive approach to cooperation in these areas, including through the United Nations and other international organizations, Turkmenistan has, over the years, initiated and, in cooperation with foreign partners, successfully implemented major infrastructure projects, thus making a significant contribution to strengthening and expanding effective international cooperation.

Article 2

27. In issuing the Declaration on the International Human Rights Commitments of Neutral Turkmenistan on 25 May 1995, Turkmenistan recognized that respect for rights and freedoms serves as the basis of justice and peace.

28. Turkmenistan provides the political, economic, legal and other conditions necessary for the full enjoyment of human rights and freedoms. According to the Constitution, the State is to provide the necessary conditions for the free development of the individual and protects the life, honour, dignity and freedom, personal security and natural and inalienable rights of citizens (art. 3).

29. The Constitution guarantees equal human and civil rights and freedoms, as well as the equality of all people and citizens before the law, irrespective of their ethnic background, race, sex, origin, property and employment status, place of residence, language, views on religion, political convictions or party affiliation or lack thereof (art. 19).

30. The State ensures the realization of the rights recognized in the Covenant and the further attainment of the Covenant's objectives and fulfilment of its provisions through the adoption of legislation. The initial report of Turkmenistan listed the laws providing for the enjoyment by everyone of their civil and political rights. The following legislation has recently been adopted to implement these rights:

- Political Parties Act (10 January 2012);
- Copyright and Related Rights Act (10 January 2012);
- Family Code (10 January 2012);
- Refugees Act (4 September 2012);
- Social Protection Act (19 October 2012);
- Media Act (22 December 2012);
- Insurance Act (22 December 2012);
- Housing Code (2 March 2013);
- Education Act (4 May 2013);
- Electoral Code (4 May 2013);
- Citizenship Act (22 June 2013);
- Act on the Privatization of Public Housing (22 June 2013);
- Code of Administrative Offences (29 August 2013);
- National Youth Policy Act (29 September 2013);
- Human Organ and/or Tissue Transplantation Act (29 September 2013);
- Act on Trade Unions, Their Rights and Guarantees relating to Their Activities (9 November 2013);
- Act on the Protection of Citizens' Health from the Effects of Tobacco Smoke and Tobacco Consumption (18 December 2013);
- Anti-Corruption Act (1 March 2014);
- Voluntary Associations Act (3 May 2014);
- Information Protection Act (3 May 2014);

- Children's Rights Act (3 May 2014);
- Foodstuffs Safety and Quality Act (16 September 2014);
- Innovative Activities Act (16 September 2014);
- Courts Act (8 November 2014);
- Act on Enforcement Proceedings and the Status of Court Appointed Officers (8 November 2014);
- Consumer Protection Act (8 November 2014);
- Publishing Act (8 November 2014);
- Theatre and Theatrical Activity Act (8 November 2014);
- Subsoil Act (20 December 2014);
- Act on the Protection of the Nation's Intangible Cultural Heritage (28 February 2015);
- Chamber of Commerce and Industry Act (28 February 2015);
- Act on Organizing and Holding Meetings, Rallies, Demonstrations and Other Public Events (28 February 2015).

31. Everyone whose constitutional and legal rights have been violated has the right to redress by the competent State authorities and enjoys equal access to effective legal protection.

32. The administration of justice in Turkmenistan is based on the equality of rights and freedoms in an adversarial system. The function of the judiciary is to uphold citizens' rights and freedoms and the State and public interests protected by law (Constitution, arts. 99 and 107).

33. According to the Act of 6 February 1998 on Court Challenges against Actions by State Bodies, Public Associations, Local Authorities and Officials that Violate Constitutional Civil Rights and Freedoms, every citizen whose constitutional rights and freedoms have been violated or infringed by the actions or decisions of such parties is entitled to file a complaint before the courts.

34. According to the data collected since January 2012, a total of 21 civil cases against ministries and departments have been heard. Of these, 10 cases were heard in 2012, 5 in 2013, 2 in 2014 and 4 in 2015. Six claims were upheld, 13 were dismissed and in 2 cases the proceedings were terminated.

35. To ensure the protection of individual rights and freedoms, a presidential decree of 19 February 2007 established the State Commission for the consideration of citizens' complaints concerning activities of law-enforcement agencies.

36. During the period January 2012-May 2015, 33 cases concerning such agencies were considered. Of these, 5 cases were heard in 2012, 6 in 2013, 14 in 2014 and 8 in 2015. In 3 cases the claims were upheld, in 18 cases the claims were dismissed, and proceedings for 12 cases have been terminated.

37. Since acceding to the International Covenant on Civil and Political Rights, Turkmenistan has demonstrated a legal and political commitment to aligning its national human rights legislation as closely as possible with generally accepted international standards. To that end, the key provisions of the Covenant have been incorporated into the country's corresponding legislation. This allows the courts to apply relevant provisions of

national legislation that are analogous with the norms of the Covenant, without referring to the latter's provisions.

38. Updated versions of the Courts Act and the Act on Enforcement Proceedings and the Status of Court Appointed Officers were adopted in 2014.

39. The updated Courts Act of 8 November 2014 establishes, in accordance with the Constitution, the legal and administrative framework for the exercise of judicial power by the courts, the procedure for appointing and dismissing judges and the powers of judges.

40. The Act regulates the work of the courts and the establishment of adequate conditions for the administration of justice. The genuine independence of the courts is ensured through procedures for codifying laws and for summarizing the application of laws and for finding legal settlements for complaints and grievances, along with various provisions addressing questions related to human resources and financial, logistical and other aspects of the functioning of the courts.

41. To implement these provisions, there are plans to set up a new centre within the structure of the Supreme Court: the Information Centre of the Supreme Court of Turkmenistan. The Centre will enable the general population to learn about judicial practice. Its work will also include explaining laws and liaising with the media. In addition, it will include creating a database of laws and the jurisprudence relating to their application, which are the legal basis for enhancing the protection of the human rights and freedoms and the State and public interests protected by the law.

42. The Act of 8 November 2014 on Enforcement Proceedings and the Status of Court Appointed Officers regulates the activities of court officers. The law is designed to ensure the timely and effective enforcement of court decisions. It defines the legal framework for conducting enforcement proceedings as well as the status of the officers responsible for such action.

43. With the adoption of this legislation, the country's legal framework was bolstered with instruments designed to strengthen law and order and thereby ensure compliance with and full implementation of the rights and freedoms of citizens.

44. On 15 January 2015 the President called upon the country's legislative branch to reconsider the length of terms of appointment of judges, the procedures for submitting candidatures and the rights and duties of the courts. The recommendations made by the Head of State will certainly be implemented. Currently, the Mejlis and the relevant departments are analysing international experience and existing national legislation with a view to making changes and additions.

45. In accordance with article 44 of the Bar and Advocacy Act of 10 May 2010, the Ministry of Justice assists bar associations providing professional training to lawyers and it provides access to information about legislation and other topics.

46. According to article 80 of the Procurator's Office Act 15 August 2009, the Office of the Procurator General has the right to establish institutions to improve the skills of procuratorial staff and to issue special publications. The standards for raising the public's awareness of human rights are derived from this overview of the law. In recent years, steps have increasingly been taken to bring those standards into practice.

47. Turkmenistan has taken appropriate steps to increase awareness of the Covenant among judges, lawyers and procurators. For example, international organizations in Turkmenistan hold annual workshops on human rights topics. In addition, the courts hold weekly workshops, which always include, among other topics, a study and analysis of any new legislation adopted by the Mejlis. The attention of participants is also drawn to the provisions of international human rights agreements to which Turkmenistan is a party.

48. Work is under way in Turkmenistan to strengthen the protection of human rights by independent institutions. A constitutional and legislative framework is being established for an office of human rights commissioner (ombudsman) mandated to consider complaints regarding violations of human rights.

49. A bill is now being drafted in the Mejlis to establish such an office, drawing on international experience and with a view to meeting the standards and giving effect to the recommendations contained in the annex to General Assembly resolution 48/134 of 20 December 1993, the resolution adopting the principles relating to the status of national institutions for the promotion and protection of human rights (the Paris Principles).

50. In particular, the bill provides for the independent investigation of complaints of human rights violations and the publication of an annual report on the work done. The guiding principles of the ombudsman's office, including transparency, objectivity and impartiality, will be enshrined in the corresponding national legislation.

Article 3

51. The national legal framework guarantees equality for women and protects them from discrimination in all areas of activity, both in society and in the life of the State. The law establishes criminal and administrative liability for any infringement of the rights and freedoms of women, including in the area of employment.

52. Turkmenistan ensures the equal right of men and women to the enjoyment of all the civil and political rights set forth in the Covenant.

53. Men and women in Turkmenistan have equal civil rights. Violation of the principle of gender equality is a punishable offence (Constitution, art. 20).

54. Turkmenistan has acceded to the main international treaties governing women's rights:

- The Convention on the Elimination of All Forms of Discrimination against Women;
- The Optional Protocol to the Convention on the Elimination of All Forms of Discrimination against Women;
- The International Labour Organization (ILO) Equal Remuneration Convention, 1951 (No. 100);
- The Convention on the Political Rights of Women;
- The United Nations Convention against Transnational Organized Crime;
- The Protocol to Prevent, Suppress and Punish Trafficking in Persons, Especially Women and Children, and the Protocol against the Smuggling of Migrants by Land, Sea and Air supplementing the United Nations Convention against Transnational Organized Crime.

55. In acceding to the fundamental international human rights treaties, including the Convention on the Elimination of All Forms of Discrimination against Women, Turkmenistan was fully aware of its obligation to condemn, prevent, prohibit and eradicate all forms of discrimination against women, and it steadfastly adheres to this obligation. Turkmenistan consistently implements the Convention's provisions, ensuring that women can exercise and enjoy their human rights and fundamental freedoms on the basis of gender equality.

56. The conceptual basis of international norms in the area of human rights and freedoms and the priority to be given to women's rights are embodied in both the Constitution and the legislation of Turkmenistan.

57. The State Guarantees of Women's Equality Act of 14 December 2007 seeks to implement the basic principles of the human rights policy of Turkmenistan and ensure women's comprehensive development and advancement. It establishes State guarantees for women to be able to exercise their human rights and freedoms in the political, economic, social, cultural and other spheres on an equal footing with men.

58. The State guarantees the exercise of equal rights by women in the political, socioeconomic, cultural and other spheres through legal, economic, administrative, social, informational and other measures in accordance with the Constitution, the above-mentioned Act, other national legislation, and relevant principles and norms of international law.

59. Through the Act, the State guarantees the following:

- Women's enjoyment of equal rights with respect to life, identity, freedom of opinion, religious freedom and protection against violations of their honour, dignity and reputation (art. 7);
- The right to found a family and to have equal rights in relations within the family (art. 8);
- Equality in participation in government and public service (art. 9);
- Equal participation in the electoral process (art. 10).

60. The Act provides a number of guarantees also found in other national legislation, both substantive and procedural, such as:

- The Family Code, which guarantees that men and women have equal rights in relations within the family;
- Articles 7, 13 and 14 of the Labour Code, which prohibit discrimination in employment, including the restriction of employment rights or the acquisition of any favourable treatment related to such rights, on the basis of gender. The Code also provides for equal pay for work of equal value, without discrimination of any kind;
- The State Guarantees of Women's Equality Act, which provides and guarantees that women enjoy, on an equal footing with men, the rights to equal pay for work of equal value, all job-related benefits, equal conditions for work of equal value and equal treatment in the assessment of the quality of work;
- The Trafficking in Persons Act, which aims to provide State guarantees of individual freedom and the protection of the individual and society against trafficking in human beings, including women;
- The Civil Service Act, article 5 of which establishes that citizens of Turkmenistan who are at least 18 years old, irrespective of their gender, have the right to serve in public administration;
- The Military Service and Military Duty Act of 25 September 2010, which states that, since the founding of the national armed forces, both male and female citizens of Turkmenistan may perform compulsory military service (art. 28) and join the reserve officers training programme (art. 15);
- Presidential Decree No. 4253 of 30 June 1999 on the training of female officers at the Military Institute of the Ministry of Defence, according to which the Military Institute has, since 1 September 1999, included women in its special officer training programme for the country's military services;

- The Internal Affairs Authorities Act, article 28 of which establishes that female and male citizens who have performed compulsory military service and whose personal and professional capacities, level of physical fitness, health status and educational level qualify them for work in the internal affairs bodies are accepted on a voluntary basis into the service of those bodies.

61. A recommendation was adopted to revise the Labour Code with a view to eliminating prevailing negative stereotypes concerning women. Thus, under article 7 (2) of the Labour Code, distinctions established by law in the employment sphere are not discriminatory if they are based on requirements inherent to the job or are prompted by the State's special concern for persons in need of greater social and legal protection (including women, minors and persons with disabilities, etc.).

62. Protecting motherhood, preserving family values and the role of women in raising the new generation are inherent parts of the national traditions of Turkmen society. Therefore, provisions restricting the employment of women in arduous work, work in harmful conditions and work underground (with the exception, in accordance with article 243 of the Labour Code, of certain tasks such as non-physical work and the provision of health and household services) are not considered to perpetuate negative stereotypes regarding women's role in society. The law also stipulates that women with children under the age of 3 (or children with disabilities under the age of 16) may not be assigned to night work, overtime work or work during rest days, public holidays or commemorative days, or sent on business trips without their written consent (Labour Code, art. 243 (2)).

63. The Ministry of Labour and Social Protection, jointly with the Ministry of Health and the Medical Industry and the Turkmenstandartlary national standards service, is drawing up a standard legal document listing occupations with special working conditions in which the employment of women and persons under the age of 18 is prohibited or restricted, as well as weight limits for loads carried by specific categories of workers.

64. Under article 249 of the Labour Code, the guarantees and benefits granted to women in connection with motherhood apply also to fathers raising children without a mother (in the event of the mother's death, deprivation of parental rights, extended hospitalization and other cases where the mother cannot care for her children) and to guardians of minors.

65. In conformity with article 16 of the Act on the Status and Social Protection of Armed Forces Personnel and Members of Their Families, both female and male military personnel raising children without a father or a mother enjoy the rights and benefits provided by law to protect the family, motherhood and childhood.

66. Article 5 of the Culture Act guarantees citizens, irrespective of ethnic background, race, sex, origin, property and employment status, place of residence, language, views on religion, political convictions, or party affiliation or lack thereof the right to participate in cultural activities, take part in cultural organizations and have access to cultural treasures held by State cultural organizations.

67. Direct or indirect violation or restriction of human and civil rights and freedoms on gender-related grounds is a criminal offence under article 145 of the Criminal Code. When discriminatory acts against women have had serious consequences, a person found guilty by a court may be sentenced to a prison term. Unjustified refusal to employ a woman because she is pregnant and unjustified dismissal of a woman on those grounds are criminal offences under article 152 of the Criminal Code.

68. In accordance with article 5 of the Courts Act, the administration of justice in Turkmenistan is founded on the principle of equality of rights and freedoms and on the adversarial principle, as well as on the principle of equality of all before the law, irrespective of ethnic background, race, sex, origin, property and employment status, place

of residence, language, views on religion, political convictions, or party affiliation or lack thereof, as well as other circumstances not covered by the laws of Turkmenistan.

69. As can be seen from the above-mentioned examples of laws guaranteeing human rights and freedoms, the principles of gender equality enshrined in the Constitution have been further developed in national legislation.

70. In recent years, efforts have been made to increase women's participation in public and political life, and this is reflected in the numbers of female parliamentarians, managers, administrative staff and professional and technical workers. In Turkmenistan these figures are quite high and indicate that women enjoy ample opportunities in the sociopolitical and economic life of the country.

71. Of the 125 deputies of the fifth Mejlis, 33, or 26.4 per cent, are women. The Chair and Vice-Chair of the Mejlis are women.

72. In 2013 more than 26 per cent of Government workers were women.

73. These and other indicators show that Turkmenistan is making steady progress in developing gender policies.

74. Achieving gender equality is an integral part of the nation's policy. National legislation is continually being enhanced and programmes are being drawn up and implemented to involve women in the work of public bodies and government and improve their level of education and training.

75. To create the necessary conditions for enhancing women's participation on equal terms with men in all spheres of public, political, economic, social and cultural life, the National Action Plan for Gender Equality for the period 2015-2020 was approved by presidential decree on 22 January 2015.

76. The Action Plan defines the overall strategy and sets priorities of State policy with regard to gender equality and provides for the implementation of a comprehensive body of measures, taking into account the new realities — the market economy and social partnership. The Action Plan contains a number of strategies and measures for mainstreaming gender equality in all spheres of life and in various domains.

77. The recommendations made by the Committee on the Elimination of All Forms of Discrimination against Women in October 2012, at its fifty-third session, in its concluding observations on its consideration of the combined third and fourth periodic reports of Turkmenistan, were taken into account in drawing up the Action Plan. The Action Plan is a comprehensive document that sets out objectives and strategies for the implementation of measures to promote gender equality in various aspects of women's lives, as well as assigning responsibility for the development and implementation of the necessary framework.

78. The Women's Union of Turkmenistan plays an important role in implementing policy on gender equality. It carries out a range of measures to increase women's awareness of their rights and the opportunities available to them and strengthen the public image of contemporary women as active, engaged and responsible people. Projects initiated by the Women's Union include the establishment of a centre for female entrepreneurs and a female scientists' club, the holding of "healthy family" sports events and "woman of the year" and "family of the year" contests, among others.

79. On 10 April 2015 Turkmenistan was elected to the executive board of the United Nations Entity for Gender Equality and the Empowerment of Women (UN-Women) for the period 2016-2018. The election was further confirmation of the country's determination to promote gender equality and close cooperation with the United Nations in this regard. Membership in this United Nations body paves the way for our country's participation in

the preparation and development of appropriate policies, standards and norms at the global level.

80. The national policy of Turkmenistan aims to promote equal opportunities and treatment in the world of work and employment, with a view to eliminating any discrimination in this area.

81. The legal, economic and administrative conditions for ensuring employment and guaranteeing the realization of the right to work are set out by the relevant legislation.

82. Article 1 of the Employment Act prohibits all forms of administrative imposition of compulsory labour, except in cases provided for by law. The fact that citizens are voluntarily unemployed may not serve as grounds for administrative, criminal or other action against them.

83. Article 4 of the Act sets out the basic principles of State policy regarding employment: providing equal opportunities for all citizens of Turkmenistan, regardless of race, sex, views on religion, age, political opinion, ethnic origin or social status, to enjoy the right to work and the free choice of their employment, and ensuring that work is performed voluntarily, which means that employment is based on the free will of the employee.

84. Upholding the principle of equality among citizens, article 7 of the Act establishes the right to obtain employment counselling and vocational training and retraining free of charge so that they can choose their type of employment, occupation and place of work.

85. Article 11 of the Act guarantees citizens living in Turkmenistan protection against all forms of discrimination and guarantees equal opportunities for all citizens to have access to an occupation and work and to choose their conditions of work and employment.

86. The development of a market economy in Turkmenistan was accompanied by changes in the employment sector.

87. The country's favourable demographic situation (high birth rate, low death rate) is conducive to absolute growth in the economically active population, which is a particularity of the country; Turkmenistan, like the region, has a high level of natural population growth.

88. The percentage of economically active members of the labour force increased from 79.0 per cent in 2010 to 80.3 per cent in 2013.

89. Notwithstanding a relative decline in 2013 of the female portion of the economically active population, that rate has still increased from 48.5 per cent in 2010 to 50.2 per cent.

90. The transfer of women to the status of homemakers performing household tasks is attributable not only to their performance of traditional roles such as child-rearing and caring for sick family members; it is also related to the fact that high income among other family members (through annual wage increases, stipends, pensions and State benefits, income from private part-time farming, etc.) makes it possible to maintain a high level of well-being.

91. The ongoing economic reforms in Turkmenistan are aimed at increasing demand for labour by businesses and other organizations, especially in the private sector. Because of this, since attaining independence, Turkmenistan has successfully developed both the infrastructure needed for a market economy and many of the practices associated with the market. People now have some different perceptions and their economic behaviour has changed.

92. Changes stemming from the use of equity-based, jointly held and foreign capital have led to positive trends in employment, including the end of the public sector's monopoly on employment, employment opportunities offered by other sectors, including

small- and medium-sized businesses and entrepreneurial undertakings. The development of farming has been facilitated by the allocation of land for private use and entrepreneurial activity in unincorporated undertakings has boosted employment.

93. As a result, the number of employed persons increased by 1.1 times between 2010 and 2013. The number of persons employed in the public sector in 2013 was 107.7 per cent of the total for 2010, while their share of employed persons fell from 25.5 per cent in 2010 to 24.8 per cent in 2013.

94. The fast growth in the private sector accounts for an increasing proportion of the work force. Private sector employment has increased by 12 per cent since 2010.

95. People conducting business activities in unincorporated undertakings are an important group among those who are employed. Their share rose from 21.9 per cent of employed persons in 2010 to 24.3 per cent in 2013.

96. The percentage of the economically active population seeking work through employment agencies fell from 4 per cent in 2010 to 2.8 per cent in 2013.

97. In 2013 such agencies registered 84,000 applicants, 24 per cent fewer than in 2010. The percentage of registered individuals placed by such agencies in a job increased from 67 per cent in 2010 to 85 per cent in 2013.

98. There has been a positive trend in the placement of women. For example, in 2013, 76 per cent of the total number of registered women were placed in a job, compared to 63 per cent of the total in 2010.

99. To improve the employment situation and increase the number of job placements, new jobs are being created, employment is being maintained at enterprises with good prospects and the system of vocational training and retraining, both for new workers and for those who lose their jobs, is being upgraded.

Level of economic activity of women (%)

Year	2007	2008	2009	2010	2011	2012	2013
Percentage of women in the economically active population	43.6	43.8	43.9	43.6	44.1	44.5	42.3
Percentage of women in the economically active population	45.3	45.2	45.3	48.5	48.7	48.9	50.2

Structure of the country's employed workforce, by sex (%)

	2011			2013		
	Total	Men	Women	Total	Men	Women
Total	100	100	100	100	100	100
Including:						
• Agriculture, hunting, forestry	47.0	44.2	50.4	42.3	39.2	46.2
• Fishing and fish farming	0.2	0.3	0.1	0.3	0.4	0.1
• Mining	1.4	2.3	0.4	1.4	2.3	0.4
• Manufacturing	9.3	9.4	9.1	9.5	9.1	10.0
• Electricity, gas and water production and distribution	1.2	1.8	0.6	1.2	1.8	0.5
• Construction	7.3	11.1	2.8	9.2	14.1	3.0

	2011			2013		
	<i>Total</i>	<i>Men</i>	<i>Women</i>	<i>Total</i>	<i>Men</i>	<i>Women</i>
• Wholesale and retail trade, transport, repair services	6.8	7.1	6.4	7.5	7.5	7.5
• Hotel and restaurant industry	0.6	0.4	0.7	0.9	0.8	1.0
• Transport and communications	5.7	7.4	3.8	6.4	8.3	4.0
• Financial services	0.4	0.3	0.5	0.4	0.4	0.4
• Real estate sales and rentals, services to enterprises	2.1	2.3	2.0	2.5	2.6	2.3
• Public administration	1.6	2.2	0.9	1.5	2.1	0.8
• Education	7.2	4.3	10.7	7.3	4.8	10.6
• Health and social services	3.3	1.6	5.3	3.3	1.8	5.2
• Other communal, social and personal services	3.5	3.1	3.9	3.6	3.0	4.4
• Household services	2.3	2.2	2.5	2.6	1.8	3.6

Number of women registered and placed in jobs by employment agencies (thousands)

<i>Year</i>	<i>2007</i>	<i>2008</i>	<i>2009</i>	<i>2010</i>	<i>2011</i>	<i>2012</i>	<i>2013</i>
Total number registered	91.8	97.6	107.1	110.7	103.6	86.5	84.0
Of which, women	32.8	31.5	31.0	28.2	27.4	24.8	23.3
Percentage of women among the total number registered	35.7	32.3	28.9	25.5	26.4	28.7	27.7
Total placed in employment	56.9	68.1	76.2	74.2	60.3	61.1	71.7
Of which, women	16.0	17.4	17.8	17.7	13.7	14.5	17.7
Percentage of women among the total number placed in employment	28.1	25.5	23.4	23.8	22.8	23.8	24.7

Article 4

100. In accordance with article 47 of the Constitution, citizens' enjoyment of their constitutional rights and freedoms may be suspended only during the imposition of a state of emergency or martial law, in the manner and within the limits established by the Constitution and the law.

101. The State of Emergency Act was adopted on 22 June 2013. According to article 1 of the Act, the state of emergency rule involves the application of a special legal framework for national administrative and government bodies and for local government and legal entities (regardless of their organizational and legal form and type of ownership or their officials), introduced in accordance with the Constitution and the Act either throughout the national territory or in particular regions of the country. This framework permits restrictions on the rights and freedoms of citizens of Turkmenistan, foreign citizens, stateless persons and legal entities, as well as the imposition of additional responsibilities on them. The declaration of a state of emergency is a temporary measure to be used only to ensure the safety of the population, prevent the destruction of the country's historical and cultural heritage or protect the constitutional order.

102. According to the second part of article 19 of the State of Emergency Act, the measures taken and temporary restrictions imposed during a state of emergency must be in compliance with the Constitution, the universally recognized norms of international law and the provisions of international agreements to which Turkmenistan is a party.

103. Since Turkmenistan became independent, no state of emergency has been declared, which reflects the stability and harmony of the society and the absence of any factors that would trigger the introduction of such measures.

Article 5

104. Turkmenistan recognizes the primacy of universally accepted norms of international law. If an international treaty sets out other rules than those stipulated by the law of Turkmenistan, then the rules of the international treaty are applicable (Constitution, art. 6).

105. Article 18 of the Constitution states that human rights and freedoms are inviolable and inalienable. No one may deprive a person of any rights or freedoms or restrict a person's rights or freedoms in any way other than in accordance with the Constitution and the law.

106. No one may have his or her rights restricted or taken away, or be convicted or punished, except in strict accordance with the law (Constitution, art. 23).

Article 6

107. Under article 22 of the Constitution, everyone is guaranteed the right to life and the freedom to lead it in a fulfilling manner. No one may be deprived of the right to life. The right of all persons to live in freedom is protected by the State, based on the law. The death penalty has been repealed in Turkmenistan.

108. Article 35 of the Constitution states that citizens have the right to health. The main health policy issues include the promotion of healthy lifestyles and conditions conducive to raising a healthy new generation, as well as ensuring a healthy environment and access to high-quality health care.

109. In recent years much attention has been devoted to preventing and controlling both infectious and non-communicable diseases and to combating risk factors. To that end, a number of laws have been adopted:

- (a) Breastfeeding Protection and Promotion and Infants' Food Requirements Act (18 April 2009) with modifications and amendments dated 4 May 2013;
- (b) Radiation Safety Act (15 August 2009);
- (c) A new version of the Health Code (21 November 2009);
- (d) Drinking Water Act (25 September 2010);
- (e) Act on Measures to Treat Persons Suffering from Alcoholism, Drug Addition or Dependence on Psychoactive Substances (31 March 2012);
- (f) Sanatoriums and Spas Act (4 September 2012);
- (g) Act on Protecting Citizens' Health from the Effects of Tobacco Smoke and Tobacco Consumption (18 December 2013);
- (h) Foodstuffs Safety and Quality Act (16 Sept. 2014);

110. Improvements are currently being made to the Health Protection Act and the Pharmaceuticals and Medical Supplies Act.

111. Turkmenistan has successfully implemented the following national programmes:

- National Programme to Promote Physical Education, Sports and Athlete Training for the period 2012-2016;
- General Programme to Provide Clean Drinking Water for the period up to 2020;
- National Strategy on Climate Change;
- State Programme for Developing Health Services for the period 2012-2016;
- State Programme for Developing the Medical Industry for the period 2011-2015;
- National Programme for Developing Sanatorium and Spa Services;
- Immunization Programme for the period up to 2020;
- National Healthy Eating Programme for the period 2013-2017;
- National Early Child Development and School Readiness Programme for the period 2011-2015;
- National HIV Infection Prevention Programme for the period 2012-2016;
- National Reproductive Health Strategy for the period 2011-2015;
- National Strategy and Action Plan for Protecting the Health of Mothers, Newborns, Children and Adolescents for the period 2014-2018;
- National Programme to Improve Perinatal Care for the period 2014-2018;
- Strategy to Combat Breast and Cervical Cancer;
- National Strategy to Prevent and Control Tuberculosis for the period 2008-2015;
- National Programme to Protect and Support Breastfeeding;
- National Anti-Tobacco Action Plan for the period 2012-2016;
- National Strategy for Implementing the Ashgabat Declaration on the Prevention and Control of Noncommunicable Diseases for the period 2014-2020;

Article 7

112. With regard to paragraph 9 of the concluding observations of the Human Rights Committee on its consideration of the initial report of Turkmenistan (CCPR/C/TKM/CO/1), we would like to inform you that, in accordance with article 23 of the Constitution, no one may be subjected to torture or to cruel, inhuman or degrading treatment or punishment. The Criminal Code clearly delineates criminal responsibility for such crimes against a person's life or health.

113. A law amending the Criminal Code was adopted on 4 August 2012. In particular, a new article 182 established a separate criminal offence for torture. The definition of torture in the article corresponds exactly with the definition used in the Convention against Torture and Other Cruel, Inhuman or Degrading Treatment or Punishment, adopted by the General Assembly on 10 December 1984.

114. Under article 224 of the Code of Criminal Procedure, preliminary investigations of crimes covered by this article are conducted by investigators of the Office of the Procurator General.

115. Articles 8, 88 and 125 of the Penal Enforcement Code of 2011 prohibit the use of torture against prisoners.

116. Under article 12 of the Code of Criminal Procedure, harm inflicted on a person as a result of illegal actions by authorities conducting criminal proceedings is to be compensated in accordance with a procedure established by law. Article 13 of the Code states that harm inflicted on a person as a result of unlawful deprivation of liberty, detention conditions imperilling life or health, or ill-treatment is to be compensated in accordance with the procedure stipulated in the Code.

117. Thus, at the national level, all measures necessary to prevent torture have been taken.

118. In the period 2012-2014 no cases were confirmed of illegal or arbitrary arrest or detention of individuals or of torture or other cruel treatment by investigators trying to extract confessions from detainees, including minors, either at the time of arrest or during pretrial detention.

119. With respect to paragraph 9 (b) of the Committee's concluding observations, in which it recommends the establishment of an independent oversight body to carry out independent inspections and investigations in all places of detention of allegations of misconduct by law enforcement officials, we would like to inform you that the Penal Enforcement Code places special emphasis on the inspection of places of deprivation of liberty. In accordance with the Code, the central executive authorities monitor the activities in their territories by the bodies responsible for enforcing penalties. At the provincial level, oversight commissions observing the work of the criminal enforcement bodies, correctional activities and work with persons released on parole verify the legality of correctional activities and monitor the activities of the penal enforcement bodies and other crime-control and legal activities. District and city commissions for minors' affairs also monitor the treatment of juvenile offenders.

120. In accordance with a presidential decision of 31 March 2010 approving the Regulations on oversight commissions to improve supervision of respect for the rule of law in prisons and work with persons released on parole, such commissions have been set up by the Cabinet of Ministers in Ashgabat, the provinces, the districts and districts with city status to work with convicted persons and persons released on parole after serving a sentence.

121. With respect to subparagraph 9 (c) of the Committee's concluding observations, about training law enforcement officials in the prevention of torture and ill-treatment, we would like to report that training sessions are held regularly to improve prison staff's knowledge of human rights issues. These sessions include study of the provisions of international legal instruments such as the Standard Minimum Rules for the Treatment of Prisoners; the Basic Principles for the Treatment of Prisoners; the Body of Principles for the Protection of All Persons under Any Form of Detention or Imprisonment; the United Nations Rules for the Protection of Juveniles Deprived of Their Liberty; the Code of Conduct for Law Enforcement Officials; the Principles of Medical Ethics relevant to the Role of Health Personnel, particularly Physicians, in the Protection of Prisoners and Detainees against Torture and Other Cruel, Inhuman or Degrading Treatment or Punishment; the Universal Declaration of Human Rights; the International Covenant on Civil and Political Rights; the Convention on the Prohibition of Torture and Other Cruel, Inhuman or Degrading Treatment or Punishment; and others.

122. During the period January 2012-May 2015 the correctional service of the Ministry of Internal Affairs held 40 training sessions to enhance the professional skills of the country's penitentiary staff and to improve their knowledge of human rights. The training was attended by 1,887 people.

123. Seminars, courses and other training in the enforcement of sentences in accordance with the above-mentioned international legal standards for the treatment of prisoners are held regularly in cooperation with international organizations, including the OSCE Centre in Ashgabat. In addition, visits to study other countries' correctional systems are organized. These activities also involve teachers at educational institutions, including training institutes affiliated with law enforcement agencies, which use information gleaned from such activities to supplement their teaching.

124. During the period January 2012-May 2015 international organizations, including OSCE, the International Committee of the Red Cross (ICRC), the United Nations Office on Drugs and Crime (UNODC), the United Nations Children's Fund (UNICEF), the Central Asia Drug Action Programme (CADAP) and the World Health Organization (WHO) country office in Turkmenistan conducted 11 seminars, round-table discussions and workshops and 5 study visits abroad to train Ministry of Internal Affairs correctional system staff in international legal standards for the treatment of prisoners and familiarize them with other countries' prison systems. Such events were attended by 171 people.

125. To ensure that allegations of torture are investigated in a more professional manner, the Manual on the Effective Investigation and Documentation of Torture and Other Cruel, Inhuman or Degrading Treatment or Punishment (the Istanbul Protocol) of 1999 has been introduced into all curricula for training and retraining legal supervisory personnel, with class time specifically set aside for this topic.

126. With respect to paragraph 9 (d) of the Committee's concluding observations, in which the Committee recommends allowing visits by recognized international humanitarian organizations to all places of detention, we would like to inform the Committee that the Ministry of Internal Affairs, which is responsible for all prisons in the country, is working closely with ICRC and OSCE on questions related to the granting to international organizations of access to all the country's prisons and other detention facilities. The Government of Turkmenistan and the ICRC regional delegation for Central Asia have, in the framework of multilateral cooperation, developed a prison system action plan that is updated annually. Under the plan, ICRC representatives have, since 2011, been conducting humanitarian visits to selected prisons.

127. During the period 2011-2014 ICRC delegates visited four establishments:

- On 16 July 2011 they visited the AN-R/4 occupational therapy centre of the Ahal Province police service to check on inmates' living conditions;
- On 7 April 2012 they visited the MR-K/18 boys' reformatory of the Mary Province police service;
- On 10 December 2012 they visited the AK-K/16 maximum-security men's prison of the Ahal Province police service, in the city of Tejen;
- On 17 July 2014 they visited a new women's prison (DZ-K/8) of the Daşoguz Province police service.

128. On 19 August 2014 the head of the OSCE Centre in Ashgabat, Ivo Petrov, also visited the DZ-K/8 women's prison.

129. During the visits, the international experts and guests were allowed to inspect all parts of the facilities. They were shown sleeping and eating areas, bathing and laundry facilities, meeting areas, rooms for making telephone calls, secondary schools, libraries, infirmaries, sports facilities, industrial areas, workshops, hairdressing areas, clubs and the administrative buildings, and they were shown the construction activities taking place on the premises.

130. In 2015 the Government of Turkmenistan and ICRC began work to review and finalize the draft of an agreement between Turkmenistan and ICRC on humanitarian visits to prisons.

Article 8

131. According to article 33 of the Constitution, citizens have the right to work; to freely choose their profession, occupation and place of work; and to enjoy healthy and safe working conditions.

132. Turkmenistan is a party to the 1956 United Nations Supplementary Convention on the Abolition of Slavery, the Slave Trade, and Institutions and Practices Similar to Slavery and adheres to the basic provisions of the Convention. Forced or compulsory labour is prohibited in Turkmenistan.

133. According to article 8 of the Labour Code, all work or service extracted from a person under the threat of punishment, and which the person has not voluntarily offered to perform is considered forced or compulsory labour. The list of types of work that the Labour Code does not consider forced or compulsory labour is in conformity with the provisions of the Covenant.

134. The Mejlis ratified the International Labour Organization (ILO) Abolition of Forced Labour Convention, 1957 (No. 105) and the ILO Forced Labour Convention, 1930 (No. 29) in an order dated 20 December 1996. The provisions of those conventions are reflected in the country's labour and employment legislation.

135. When the Criminal Code was amended in 2000, article 69, under which a court of law could hand down a suspended sentence with a labour obligation, was deleted. The article was repealed by legislation enacted on 19 December 2000.

136. Under article 79 of the Penal Enforcement Code, convicts can be made to work without pay to upgrade correctional facilities and the surrounding areas, as well as to improve the cultural and living conditions and the food supply at such facilities.

137. On 14 December 2007 Turkmenistan adopted the Trafficking in Persons Act. The Act defines the legal and organizational framework for combating trafficking in persons in Turkmenistan and is aimed at ensuring that the State safeguards individual freedom and protects society against trafficking.

138. The new Code of Criminal Procedure was adopted and entered into force on 18 April 2009. Amendments and additions to the Criminal Code that make trafficking in persons a crime (art. 129) were adopted on 10 May 2010 and entered into force on 1 July 2010.

139. In accordance with the norms and principles of international law, Turkmenistan cooperates with other States and their competent authorities in combating trafficking in human beings, as well as with international organizations involved in combating trafficking and promoting the protection of the rights and legitimate interests of victims of trafficking.

140. A national action plan to combat human trafficking, covering the period 2016-2018, is being developed jointly with the International Organization for Migration. A working group has been established for that purpose, and it includes representatives of the relevant State bodies and civil-society organizations. A number of seminars, workshops and meetings have been organized for the working group's members. Work on the action plan is continuing. The Office of the Procurator General has been appointed the national coordinating body for the issue of trafficking.

141. On 13 and 14 May 2015 the local office of the International Organization for Migration, in cooperation with the Government and with the support of the Bureau of International Narcotics and Law Enforcement Affairs of the State Department of the United States of America, organized a regional workshop on the identification of trafficking victims by law enforcement agencies and referral mechanisms.

142. The workshop was attended by representatives of law enforcement agencies and other governmental bodies, experts, and representatives of NGOs and international organizations from Turkmenistan, Austria, Azerbaijan, Kazakhstan, the Russian Federation and Turkey.

143. Participants were briefed on challenges involved in the implementation of legal instruments to identify and refer trafficking victims and to provide them with support and assistance, including rehabilitation, legal assistance, compensation and reintegration, and on ways of tackling those challenges. There were also opportunities to share experiences of coordination between government agencies and civil-society organizations in the framework of instruments such as the Standard Operating Procedures for the identification and referral of trafficking victims.

144. During the period January 2012-May 2015, a total of 34 events, including seminars, workshops and other training events, were held jointly with the local office of the International Organization for Migration. During that period, two international conferences and two study tours were held to enable law enforcement officials and representatives of civil-society organizations to share their experiences in combating trafficking.

145. A regional forum on international cooperation on migration and emergency preparedness is planned to take place in Ashgabat on 17 and 18 June 2015.

Article 9

146. According to article 23 of the Constitution, citizens may be arrested only for reasons clearly stated in the law and by decision of a court or with the approval of a procurator. In urgent cases specified in the law, authorized State bodies are entitled to temporarily detain them.

147. According to article 13 of the Code of Criminal Procedure, everyone has the right to liberty and security of person. No one may be arrested on suspicion of committing a crime, detained or otherwise deprived of liberty except on grounds and in accordance with the procedure established by the Code of Criminal Procedure. Every detainee is to be immediately notified of the reason for the detention, as well as the nature of the offence of which he or she is suspected or accused. The court or the procurator must immediately release any person who has been illegally detained, imprisoned or placed in a medical institution or held in custody for a period exceeding that provided by law or a sentence.

148. Under article 146 of the Code, if there are sufficient grounds to believe that a suspect, accused person or defendant would, if free, flee during the investigation or trial or obstruct the establishment of the truth in a criminal case, or would engage in criminal activity, then the detective, investigator, procurator, judge or court is entitled to apply one of the preventive measures provided for in article 147 of the Code, taking into account the severity and gravity of the offence. They may also do so to ensure that a sentence is executed.

149. According to article 141 of the Code, when a person suspected of committing a crime is detained, the criminal prosecution authorities must notify the person's family or close relatives immediately, and within 24 hours at the latest, of the arrest and the person's whereabouts.

150. Citizens have the right to demand compensation in court for material and non-material damage caused by illegal actions of State bodies, other organizations, employees of such bodies and organizations and private persons (Constitution, art. 44).

Article 10

151. The Penal Enforcement Code of Turkmenistan was adopted on 25 March 2011. The purposes of domestic legislation on the enforcement of criminal penalties are to rehabilitate criminals, avoid recidivism and prevent the commission of crimes by others. The legislation sets out the procedures and conditions under which criminal sentences are enforced and served, defines how the purpose of the sentence will be fulfilled through its enforcement, ensures the protection of the rights, freedoms and legitimate interests of convicted persons and assists in their social reintegration. The principal means of correcting convicted persons are prescribed arrangements (i.e., a regime) for enforcing and serving sentences, community service, re-education work, the completion of secondary education, vocational training, psychological and psychosocial support and community-based rehabilitation.

152. Article 76 of the Code states that the aim of assigning minors to work details is to teach them vocational skills likely to prepare them for future activity in the world of work.

Article 11

153. Under the Civil Code, a failure to fulfil contractual obligations is punishable as a civil offence. Disputes related to violations of contractual responsibilities are thus settled through the civil channel.

154. Persons who are unable to fulfil contractual obligations cannot be charged with criminal offences and deprived of their liberty. Criminal responsibility must be based on the commission of an act that includes elements of a crime covered by the criminal law (Criminal Code, art. 4).

Article 12

155. Under article 12 of the Constitution, every citizen has the right to move freely and to choose a place of residence within the country. Entry into and movement through specific areas can only be restricted on the basis of the law.

156. Under article 37 of the Migration Act of 31 March 2012, every citizen of Turkmenistan has the right, in accordance with the Constitution and other national laws, to freedom of movement and to choose a place of residence or stay within the country. Restrictions on such rights are allowed based on the grounds set out by the Act. When the decisions, actions or omissions of State and administrative bodies, officials or other legal or physical persons restrict such rights, citizens are entitled to appeal against them to higher authorities, officials or the courts.

157. From 2011 to 2014 inclusive, Turkmenistan gave citizenship to over 4,000 migrants who were living in the country. The State ensures that all the conditions are met for a decent life for new citizens. The granting of citizenship improves the social situation of these migrants and makes it possible for them to enjoy basic human rights and freedoms on an equal footing with other citizens; it paves the way for obtaining an education, work and medical and other assistance. The granting of citizenship to such a large number of people in such a short time is unprecedented in Central Asia and in the Commonwealth of Independent States, a fact that is no doubt of interest to the international community.

158. An international conference held at the President's initiative in 2012 under the title "Refugees in the Muslim World" helped share the country's experience in granting citizenship to refugees and stateless persons. This event attests to the importance attached to this question by Turkmenistan. Government representatives from the 57 member States of the Organization of Islamic Cooperation (OIC), leaders and representatives from some 40 major international and intergovernmental organizations and 27 observer States attended.

159. In 2014 another international conference was held, on migration and statelessness, with the theme of defining challenges and finding a way forward. Official delegations from 32 countries took part, along with 16 authoritative international organizations and non-governmental bodies.

160. The policy pursued by President Gurbanguly Berdymuhamedov in relation to humanitarian law is based on adherence to the international conventions ratified by the country. Turkmenistan is a party to the 1951 Convention relating to the Status of Refugees and its Protocol of 1967, the 1954 Convention relating to the Status of Stateless Persons and the 1961 Convention on the Reduction of Statelessness. It was the first country in Central Asia to become a party to those conventions, which are important human rights instruments that establish the tools required for effective work to prevent and reduce statelessness.

161. Consistently meeting its obligations, Turkmenistan gives effect in its national law to the corresponding international standards and recommendations. In 2012, the Migration Act and the Refugees Act were adopted, and the Citizenship Act was adopted in 2013.

162. In order to give effect to the Convention relating to the Status of Refugees and the Convention relating to the Status of Stateless Persons, a presidential decision was issued calling for new models to be drawn up and approved for identity and travel documents for stateless persons and refugees and for residence permits meeting the standards of the International Civil Aviation Organization (ICAO). Laws have been enacted regulating the legal procedures for issuing such documents. Turkmenistan has thus established a unitary system for the provision of personal identity documents.

163. To facilitate the entry into Turkmenistan of foreigners and ensure proper services for them, new models of specially protected visa stickers were introduced in 2012. In accordance with international law and the principle of family unity, some foreign citizens have been given privileged access to residence in Turkmenistan on the basis of residence permits or visas issued on preferential terms. This is one more example where equal conditions have been established for citizens, foreigners and stateless persons, in accordance with the generally recognized requirements of international law.

164. Turkmenistan, as a member of the Executive Committee of the Programme of the United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees, actively facilitates the practical implementation of measures aimed at protecting and ensuring the rights of refugees and stateless persons. Faithfully fulfilling its international obligations and complying with the universally recognized standards of international law, it has carried out major actions to protect refugees, significantly helping to resolve this global problem. The country's experience in this field has earned the respect and interest of the international community and places it in good stead in the international arena.

Article 13

165. Article 8 of the Constitution states that, in accordance with the law and international treaties of Turkmenistan, foreigners and stateless persons enjoy the same rights and freedoms and bear the same responsibilities as the country's citizens.

166. Article 6 of the Migration Act of 31 March 2012 specifies that foreign citizens and stateless persons may freely enter and move within the territory of Turkmenistan that is open to access by such categories of persons.

167. Under article 19 of the Migration Act, the migration services may order foreigners and stateless persons to leave the country in the following circumstances:

- Expiration of a visa or residence permit;
- Denial of an application for renewal of a visa or residence permit;
- Reduction of the period of stay in the country;
- Cancellation of a visa or residence permit;
- Lapsing of the period of stay for other reasons.

168. The foreign citizen or stateless person is obliged to leave the country within the time frame set by the expulsion order.

169. Persons who do not comply are subject to administrative removal from the country.

170. Under article 20 of the Act, foreigners and stateless persons may enter and visit places off limits to them if they have an authorization received in accordance with the country's laws.

171. This procedure is also applicable to foreigners and stateless persons whose foreign passports or other types of documentation replacing a passport have been registered with the Ministry of Foreign Affairs of Turkmenistan.

Article 14

172. Article 101 of the Constitution establishes that judges are independent; they are subject only to the law and are governed only by their own conviction. Interference in the work of judges from any quarter is prohibited and punishable by law. The inviolability of judges is guaranteed by law.

173. Justice is administered on the basis of equality of the parties and the principle of adversarial proceedings (Constitution, art. 107).

174. Judicial proceedings are conducted in public. They may be conducted in camera only in situations established by law and with observance of all the rules of the administration of justice (Constitution, art. 105).

175. The Courts Act set up the court system and established the procedure for granting authority to judges. It further developed the constitutional provisions on the judiciary, its autonomy and independence from the legislative and executive branches, the inviolability of judges, the equality of all persons before the law and in court and the transparency of judicial proceedings. Its provisions also address citizens' participation as lay judges in the administration of justice. The same law established the universal enforceability of judicial decisions for everyone, without exception: State and non-State bodies, officials, organizations and physical and legal persons.

176. The State's concept of human values is founded on equality of civil and human rights; the inviolability of the person and the person's life, home and property; the fact that it is impossible to restrict personal rights and freedoms in any way other than in accordance with the law; and other standards set out in section II of the Constitution. These principles underpin the country's criminal procedure law. They have become basic elements in the criminal procedure and ensure that the procedure is carried out scrupulously, without the criminal conviction of persons who are not guilty and with just penalties imposed on those

who commit crimes. The principles underpinning the criminal proceedings correspond with the concept behind a proper administration of justice, applied in accordance with the criminal procedure law.

177. The human rights of persons involved in criminal proceedings are guaranteed by the Constitution and the Code of Criminal Procedure, which also clearly set out how the rights recognized by international instruments to which Turkmenistan is a party are protected. There are a number of guarantees that ensure that procedural actions are taken in accordance with the law and that the decisions that result from them are legal; they also serve to ensure that human rights and freedoms are protected. These guarantees include the inviolability of the individual, reflected in the fact that no one may be arrested on suspicion of committing a crime, held in custody or otherwise deprived of his or her liberty in any way other than on the basis of the law and in accordance with the procedure set out therein; the inviolability of private life, of the home and of property; respect for the honour and dignity of the person; the impossibility of a defendant being subjected to prosecution and conviction twice for the same criminal offence; the conduct of proceedings on the basis of the adversarial principle, with the parties on an equal footing; the public nature of judicial proceedings; the presumption of innocence; and others.

178. Under article 27 of the Code, all court hearings are open to the public, except in cases where such open hearings are incompatible with the protection of State secrets. By reasoned ruling of the judge or court hearing a case involving an offence by a minor, a sexual crime or other matters, the public may be excluded in order to preserve the privacy of information on intimate aspects of the life of the parties. Cases heard in private comply with all rules of due process. In all cases, the sentence and all related court decisions are announced publicly.

179. The Courts Act of 8 November 2014, which entered into force on 1 July 2015, includes provisions to defend the independence of the judicial system. Under the law, judicial power in the country is the sole competence of the courts. Article 2 of the Act establishes that the judicial power is autonomous and functions independently from the legislative and executive branches.

Article 15

180. Under article 46 of the Constitution, a law which aggravates the situation of a citizen may not have retroactive effect. No one may be held responsible for actions which, at the time of their commission, were not recognized by law as an offence.

181. Article 6 of the Criminal Code states that a law revoking criminal responsibility for an act, reducing a penalty or otherwise improving the situation of a person who has committed an offence has retroactive effect. It thus applies to persons who committed the act in questions before the law took effect, including persons currently serving sentences and those who have completed their sentences but whose criminal records have not been expunged. A law which criminalizes an act, imposes a more severe penalty or otherwise worsens the situation of an offender does not have retroactive effect.

182. If the new criminal law imposes a less severe penalty for an offence for which a sentence is currently being served, the penalty is reduced so that it does not exceed the limits established under the new law.

183. Under article 45 of the Constitution, evidence obtained by psychological or physical coercion or other unlawful methods has no legal force.

184. Article 23 of the Code of Criminal Procedure prohibits obtaining depositions from suspects, accused persons, defendants or other participants in legal proceedings by force, threat or other illegal means.

185. The Mejlis adopted the Anti-Corruption Act on 1 March 2014. The Act sets out the basic principles and the legal and organizational basis to be used to combat and prevent corruption, to eradicate its underlying causes and the conditions conducive to the commission of such crimes and to eliminate their consequences. The Act is aimed at defending citizens' rights and freedoms against the threats stemming from this phenomenon and at ensuring the national security of Turkmenistan and the effective functioning of State bodies and also of persons working in State service and others in comparable positions.

186. The new version of the Courts Act, of 8 November 2014, contains an article entitled "Independence of judges", which sets out the following:

(a) Judges are independent, are subject only to the law, and are governed by their own conviction;

(b) Judges are accountable to no one when performing their functions in the administration of justice;

(c) Judges are not under any obligation to provide explanations for cases under review or cases currently under way;

(d) To ensure the independence of judges, the privacy of their chambers must be ensured in all circumstances;

(e) Contempt of court, disrespect of judges and interference in their work are inadmissible and are punishable, as established by law;

(f) The independence and inviolability of judges is guaranteed by law.

187. The Code of Criminal Procedure adopted on 18 April 2009 incorporates the standards contained in articles 14 and 15 of the Covenant.

188. The domestic policy of Turkmenistan is founded on the principles of democracy, the primacy of law, humanism and justice.

Article 16

189. Physical persons cannot be deprived of legal capacity. Article 24 of the Civil Code establishes that the full or partial waiver of an individual's legal capacity or legal competence and any other acts aimed at restricting such capacity or competence are null and void.

Article 17

190. Every Turkmen citizen has a right to a home. No one may enter or otherwise infringe the inviolability of a home against the will of the inhabitants or without a legal basis to do so (Constitution, art. 24).

191. Under article 25 of the Constitution, all persons are entitled to protection against arbitrary interference in their private lives, against violations of the confidentiality of correspondence, telephone conversations and other forms of communication, and against attacks on their honour and reputation.

192. Persons who violate these rights may be held criminally liable under articles 146, 147 and 148 of the Criminal Code.

193. Protection of the home against illegal encroachment is a human and civil right. No one may be deprived of his or her home otherwise than on grounds established by law.

194. Articles 132, 133, 145-148, 157 and 177 of the Criminal Code provide criminal penalties for the infringement of equal civil rights and of the inviolability of private life and the home; the illegal collection and transmission of information on a person's private life; the violation of the confidentiality of correspondence, of telephone conversations, of mailed, cabled or other information and disclosure of a secret of adoption; and attacks on the honour or dignity of persons through the spreading of false information that is humiliating or tarnishes their reputation.

Article 18

195. Under article 28 of the Constitution, Turkmen citizens have the right to freedom of opinion and expression and to receive information, except for State or other secrets protected by law.

196. The State guarantees freedom of religion and faith and the equality of religions and faiths before the law. Religious organizations are separate from the State and may not interfere in State affairs or perform Government functions. The State system of education is separate from religious organizations and is secular in nature.

197. Everyone has the right independently to determine a religious preference. Article 28 of the Constitution establishes that everyone is guaranteed the right to practice a religion alone, in community with others, or not at all, to manifest and disseminate their beliefs in connection with their attitude to religion and to take part in religious worship, rituals and ceremonies.

198. Article 3 of the Freedom of Religion and Religious Organizations Act of 21 October 2003 establishes that freedom of faith is a constitutional right of citizens to profess any religion or none, to express and disseminate beliefs connected with their attitude to religion and to participate in the performance of religious worship, rituals and ceremonies.

Paragraph 16 of the concluding observations of the Human Rights Committee

199. Article 41 of the Constitution sets out that defending the country is the sacred duty of every citizen. Military service is compulsory for all male citizens. Article 5 of the Freedom of Religion and Religious Organizations Act establishes that it is an offence under the country's law to directly or indirectly restrict rights or confer privileges on the basis of religious or atheistic beliefs, to incite hatred or enmity in connection with such beliefs or to offend people on such grounds. No one is permitted to avoid the performance of obligations under the law on the grounds of that person's religion.

200. In accordance with Presidential Decision No. 2482 of 2 February 1996, which established technical medical units in the country's armed forces, citizens who invoke their religious beliefs to refuse to perform military service may serve in medical institutions as junior staff or service personnel. The decision instructed the Ministry of Defence to set up technical medical units to serve curative medical institutions, to select servicemen for such units from the persons subject to compulsory military service and to assign them to positions as junior staff or service personnel at the institutions of this kind listed by the Ministry of Health and the Medical Industry and the Ministry of Defence. The same decision establishes that citizens who have performed their military service in the technical medical units are entitled to enter the Turkmen State Medical University.

201. Article 18 of the Military Service and Military Duty Act states that the following persons are not subject to compulsory military service:

- (a) Persons recognized as unfit for military service for health reasons;
- (b) Persons who have already performed military service;
- (c) Persons who have performed military or other types of service in the armed forces of another country;
- (d) Persons convicted twice for minor offences or convicted at least once for ordinary, serious or especially serious offences;
- (e) Persons holding a scientific rank duly recognized under Turkmen law;
- (f) Sons or brothers of persons who have died while performing compulsory military service during a time of war or in military training;
- (g) Sons or brothers of persons who have died within one year after performing their military service (after the end of military training) from illnesses contracted or wounds, injuries or contusions sustained during their service, or who have become disabled as a result of their service during a time of war or in military training.

202. Article 19 of the Military Service and Military Duty Act states that a deferment of compulsory military service is granted to the following persons:

- (a) Persons recognized as temporarily unfit for military service for up to one year, for health reasons. Persons receiving such deferments for three years are transferred to the reserves of the armed forces or other military units or bodies;
- (b) Persons caring full time for a father, mother, wife, sibling, grandparent, or an adoptive parent or guardian if there is no other person obliged by law to provide maintenance and care for such persons (with the exception of married sisters living separately from them), or also, when such persons do not receive full State assistance and, owing to their health status and as certified by a medical and social board of experts, require constant external care, assistance or supervision, are disabled persons of categories I or II, have reached the general pension age of 62 for men and 57 for women, or have not yet reached the age of 18;
- (c) Persons taking day courses at institutes of higher education (apart from internships, postgraduate and doctoral study courses) or at vocational secondary schools in Turkmenistan or in other countries if they have not previously studied at such schools, but only until they reach the age of 26;
- (d) Persons with two or more children or with a disabled child;
- (e) Persons with a child being raised without the mother;
- (f) Persons who are the subject of a criminal case (until a final ruling is issued in the case);
- (g) Other persons, in exceptional circumstances, on the basis of a decision issued by the Minister of Defence on the recommendation of the draft board.

203. In addition to the persons listed above, the same article states that the following persons may receive deferments:

- (a) Citizens elected as representatives in the Mejlis (for the duration of their mandates);
- (b) Persons with teacher training who are assigned by a State body to work as teachers at general education schools in rural areas (during their assignments there);
- (c) Persons whose dependents include a single parent (mother or father) capable of working and who has two or more children under the age of 16 or disabled from birth, or

a disabled child of category I or II, if no other able-bodied persons are by law responsible for providing them with maintenance and care.

204. Persons registered as reserve officers may receive deferments on the basis of paragraphs 1, 2, 5 and 6 of the first part and paragraphs 1 and 2 of the second part of the article.

205. Other persons too may be given the right to receive deferments from compulsory military service, by means of a ruling by the President.

Paragraph 17 of the concluding observations of the Human Rights Committee

206. In respect of paragraph 17 of the concluding observations, in accordance with article 12 of the Constitution, everyone has the right independently to determine a religious preference. Everyone is guaranteed the right to practice any religion alone, in community with others, or not at all, to manifest and disseminate beliefs in connection with attitudes to religion and to take part in religious worship, rituals and ceremonies. The State guarantees freedom of religion and faith, and also their equality before the law.

207. Article 3 of the Freedom of Religion and Religious Organizations Act prohibits any coercion of citizens to determine their views on religion, the profession of faith or lack thereof, participation or non-participation in religious services, rites and ceremonies and religious education.

208. Citizens are equal before the law in all fields of civil, political, economic, social and cultural life, irrespective of their religious beliefs.

Article 19

209. Under article 28 of the Constitution, Turkmen citizens have the right to freedom of opinion and expression and to receive information, except for State or other secrets protected by law.

210. On 3 May 2014 the Mejlis adopted the Information Protection Act, which regulates matters related to the realization of the right to search for, collect, receive, send, produce, conserve, present, disseminate and use information, and also the application of information technologies and the protection of information. The underlying principles are the freedom to search for, receive, transmit, produce, collect, conserve and disseminate information by any legal means; the establishment of limitations on access to information solely on the basis of the law; the reliability of information and its timely delivery; and a prohibition against the establishment by the country's domestic law of any preferential treatment of certain information technologies to the detriment of others. Article 7 of the Act stipulates that physical persons have the right to receive information directly related to their rights and freedoms from State bodies, local executive and government bodies and their officials, in accordance with a procedure established by law.

211. Article 4 (1) of the Media Act of 22 December 2012 sets out that citizens of Turkmenistan have the right to use any type of media to express their opinions and beliefs and to search for, receive and disseminate information.

212. The new Internet Development and Internet Service Legal Regulations Act adopted on 20 December 2014 ensures observance of citizens' rights and freedoms for the use of the Internet and their access to information on the Internet.

213. Article 3 (4) of the Publishing Act of 8 November 2014 provides for opportunities for self-expression by authors, irrespective of their ethnic background, race, sex, origin,

property and employment status, place of residence, language, views on religion, political convictions or party affiliation or lack thereof.

214. The distribution of any kind of information prejudicial to the rights or reputation of others or to the maintenance of State security and public order, health and morals is a crime under articles 132 and 179 of the Criminal Code.

Article 20

215. Article 30 of the Constitution prohibits activities by political parties or public paramilitary associations aimed at altering the constitutional order by violent means, engaging in violent acts, opposing the constitutional rights and freedoms of citizens, advocating war or racial, ethnic or religious hatred, or acting in a manner detrimental to the health or morals of the people. It also prohibits political parties with ethnic or religious attributes.

216. Article 167 of the Criminal Code establishes penalties of correctional labour for up to 2 years or imprisonment of up to 5 years for propaganda in favour of war or the use of the media or other means to call for the waging of a war of aggression.

Article 21

217. Article 29 of the Constitution guarantees the rights to gather and to hold meetings and demonstrations in accordance with the procedures established by law.

218. On 28 February 2015 the Mejlis adopted the Organization and Conduct of Gatherings, Meetings, Demonstrations and Other Mass Events Act. The Act is intended to ensure that the constitutional right of citizens to gather peacefully and hold gatherings, meetings, demonstrations and other mass events is respected and that security is maintained during such events.

219. In accordance with article 3 of the Act, the following principles apply to such mass events:

- (a) Legality, in particular observance of the provisions of the Constitution, the Act itself and the rest of the country's laws;
- (b) Voluntary participation in the mass event;
- (c) Respect for and observance of human and civil rights and freedoms.

Article 22

220. Under article 30 of the Constitution, citizens are entitled to set up political parties and other voluntary associations that function within the framework of the Constitution and the law. There is no law in Turkmenistan that restricts the activities of religious organizations or allows the criminalization of religious activities solely on the basis of a lack of legal registration.

221. Article 8 of the Freedom of Religion and Religious Organizations Act establishes that religious organizations are voluntary associations of citizens registered in accordance with the legally established procedure and founded for the purpose of joint worship and spreading a faith, performing prayer services and other ceremonies and rituals, and providing religious education.

222. Article 11 of the Act sets out the procedure for the registration of religious organizations. If all the requirements set by the law are met, then there are no obstacles to registration. If the charter documents or other documentation submitted for the registration contains any flaws, they are returned for correction with an indication of the problems to be addressed.

223. The denial of a registration application presents no obstacle to the subsequent submission of documentation with the removal of the flaws that gave rise to the denial.

224. To give effect to the Freedom of Religion and Religious Organizations Act, the President on 14 January 2004 issued a decision approving rules for the registration of religious organizations. The rules clearly define the procedure for submitting documentation for the State registration of such organizations and set out the requirements for such documentation.

225. As part of the country's democratic reform, on 10 January 2012 the Mejlis adopted the Political Parties Act. The Act was drawn up in accordance with the Constitution and the generally recognized standards of international law. It governs relations when citizens exercise their constitutional right to form political parties and regulates details relating to the founding, operating, reorganizing and dissolving of political parties.

226. The Act confirms the right of citizens to associate in political parties. It ensures equal rights and equal opportunities to form political parties and participate freely in their activities. If they so wish, and in line with their political beliefs, Turkmen citizens have the right to form political parties and, in accordance with the established procedure, to freely join or refrain from joining a party, to take part in its activities and to leave it without hindrance.

227. The aim of the new law is to consolidate the basis of the rule of law in society, to strengthen genuine democratic traditions and ensure the political, economic, social and cultural rights of the individual. It has become a concrete expression for the implementation of international standards in the field of human rights.

228. The Act defines the legal basis for establishing political parties, their rights and duties and provides guarantees for their activities. It regulates regulations between political parties and State bodies and other organizations.

229. The State guarantees the protection of the rights and legitimate interests of political parties and creates equal opportunities in the law for them. Interference by State bodies or local governments or their officials in the activities of political parties is not permitted, and by the same token, interference by political parties in the functions of such bodies and officials is prohibited.

230. The right of citizens to establish political parties and other public associations functioning within the framework of the Constitution and the law is enshrined in article 30 of the country's Constitution.

231. The new law includes a clear, regulated procedure for the establishment of political parties. Parties that have been registered by the State have the right to disseminate information on their activities and on their views, aims and objectives. They may make proposals to State and local government bodies for the drafting of decisions, take part in elections in accordance with the country's legislation, establish media outlets and engage in publishing, make use of State media resources, defend the rights and legitimate interests of their members as part of their political activities and represent their interests in State and local government bodies.

232. As a result of the law's adoption, important steps have been taken on the path to multiparty democracy. With the law as a basis, new parties have been established and the

pluralization process in society has thus continued. Their establishment is an additional guarantee of freedom of expression.

233. For example, on 21 August 2012 the Industrialists and Entrepreneurs Party was established, and on 28 September 2014 the Agrarian Party was set up, a number of members of which were elected to the fifth Mejlis. Turkmenistan has thus become a country with a multiparty political system.

234. In accordance with the new version of the Voluntary Associations Act adopted on 3 May 2014:

(a) The right of citizens to create voluntary associations is exercised both directly, through the association of physical persons, and through legal entities (voluntary associations);

(b) In the circumstances covered by the Act, the founders of such associations may include foreigners and stateless persons living in Turkmenistan, along with citizens of the country;

(c) The right of association includes the right of citizens to establish associations to defend their common interests and achieve their common objectives, the right to join existing voluntary associations or to abstain from joining them and the right to withdraw from such associations without hindrance;

(d) Citizens have the right to establish voluntary associations of their choosing without any prior authorization from State and local government bodies and to join such associations, provided they observe their statutes (Act, art. 4).

235. The State ensures observance of the rights and legitimate interests of voluntary associations and supports their activities. They benefit from tax and other advantages and privileges, as specified by law.

236. It is prohibited for the State to interfere in the activities of voluntary associations and for voluntary associations to interfere in State affairs, and for voluntary associations to be assigned the functions of State bodies, except in cases specified in the Act.

237. Voluntary associations may cooperate and interact with State bodies, concluding agreements with them, and may, by contract, carry out certain work for them.

238. In cases specified by the law, questions related to the interests of voluntary associations are handled by State bodies with the participation of the associations and with their consent.

239. The employees of voluntary associations' secretariats are covered by the labour and social protection laws of the country (Act, art. 5).

240. The State registration of voluntary associations is administered by the Ministry of Justice, in accordance with a procedure established by law.

241. Voluntary associations must be included in the unified national register of legal entities, in accordance with a procedure established by law (Act, art. 20).

242. A voluntary association may be denied State registration if:

(a) Its statutes are in violation of the Constitution, the provisions of the Act or other laws;

(b) A voluntary association with the same name has previously been registered in the same area where the association operates;

(c) The founding documents have not been submitted in their entirety or in the proper manner;

(d) It has been established that the founding documents submitted for the registration have been deliberately submitted containing false information;

(e) Its name is offensive either morally or on ethnic or religious grounds;

(f) One of its founders has been recognized by a court to be without legal capacity or has been convicted of a serious or especially serious offence, and if the conviction has not been cleared or expunged in accordance with the procedure established by law.

243. In the event of denial of registration, the applicant is informed in writing, with an indication of the reason for the denial.

244. A denial of registration is not an obstacle to the subsequent submission of registration documents once the issues justifying the denial have been resolved.

245. The consideration of the subsequent application and delivery of a decision takes place in accordance with a procedure established in the Act (Act, art. 22).

246. Decisions denying registration can be appealed in court (Act, art. 23).

247. There are currently 118 voluntary associations and 128 religious organizations in the unified national register.

Article 23

248. Article 27 of the Constitution stipulates that a woman and a man who have reached marriageable age are entitled, by mutual consent, to marry and found a family. Spouses enjoy equal rights in family relations. It is the right and duty of parents or persons acting in loco parentis to raise their children, to attend to their health, development and education, to prepare them for the world of work and to instil in them respect for the law and for historical and national traditions. It is also the duty of sons and daughters, once they become adults, to care for and assist their parents.

249. On 10 January 2012 the Mejlis adopted the Family Code. The main aim of the Code is to build family relations on the basis of the voluntary marital union of men and women and equality of rights of the spouses in the family. Under the Code, marriages in Turkmenistan are recognized only if they are registered by a civil registry office. Religious marriage ceremonies have no legal effect. Men and women have the right to enter into marriage in order to found a family irrespective of their race, ethnicity or religion. They have equal rights upon entering into marriage, during the marriage and during the dissolution thereof.

250. In accordance with the recommendations of the Committee on the Elimination of Discrimination against Women and the Committee on the Rights of the Child, the legal age for marriage has been changed. It is now 18 years.

251. In exceptional circumstances, when there are valid reasons, guardianship and tutelage agencies may lower the legal age of marriage at the request of the persons wishing to marry, but by no more than one year.

252. The new Family Code fully gives effect to the constitutionally guaranteed right to found a family with the spouses' mutual consent and equality of rights and obligations in family relations, including in respect of the raising of children, property, personal and family names, the ethnicity of the child, material support of children and mutual material support.

253. The Civil Code establishes equal rights of men and women in respect of inheritance. Spouses, along with parents and children, are included in the list of heirs with first-priority inheritance rights, without any restrictions or distinctions based on their sex.

254. Citizens have a right to social security coverage for old age, sickness, disability, inability to work, loss of a breadwinner and unemployment. Families with numerous children, children without parents, veterans and persons whose health has suffered while they defended State or public interests are granted additional support and privileges from State and public resources (Constitution, art. 37).

Article 24

255. Childcare is a major priority of State policy in Turkmenistan. Comprehensive care for the young has been incorporated in all the progressive reforms currently being implemented.

256. The Convention on the Rights of the Child was ratified by decision of the Mejlis on 23 September 1994, and the International Labour Organization (ILO) Discrimination (Employment and Occupation) Convention, 1958 (No. 111) and Minimum Age Convention, 1973 (No. 138) were ratified on 20 December 1996.

257. On 25 September 2010 Turkmenistan became a party to the Worst Forms of Child Labour Convention, 1999 (No. 182).

258. The provisions of these conventions are reflected in the country's Constitution and laws regulating labour and employment, including for children, and namely in the Employment Act of 1991, the Guarantee of Young People's Right to Work Act of 2005, the Children's Rights Act of 2014 and the Labour Code of 2009, as well as in other enactments.

259. The State ensures the protection of children against all forms of exploitation and against arduous, harmful and hazardous work. Such provisions are enshrined in article 38 of the new version of the Children's Rights Act, which stipulates that:

(a) The State shall protect children against all forms of exploitation in the workplace through a range of legal, economic, social, medical and educational measures;

(b) The use of labour performed by children under the age of 18 in work involving special working conditions or work that can be harmful to their health and moral development (gambling, the production, transport or trade of alcoholic beverages, tobacco products, narcotics or toxic or other substances) is prohibited. It is also prohibited for children to manually carry, move, raise or displace loads exceeding standard limits established by law.

(c) Children under the age of 18 shall not be used in night work, overtime work, or work on days off or holidays and memorial days, and shall not be sent to travel on work-related assignments;

(d) Children shall not be assigned during the school year to agricultural and other work that excludes them from their studies.

260. Similar restrictions are contained as well in the Guarantee of Young People's Right to Work Act of 1 February 2005. The Act stipulates that employers, regardless of their form of ownership, are not permitted to engage employees who have not yet reached the age of majority in arduous, harmful or hazardous work or in underground work. Violations of the labour rights of children are punishable by law.

261. The Guarantee of Young People's Right to Work Act is aimed at ensuring the strict and scrupulous implementation of the Convention on the Rights of the Child, Turkmen

legislation regulating the labour rights of the child and the provisions of United Nations conventions protecting children against forcible economic exploitation. It is intended to prevent situations that would jeopardize their health, that would present an obstacle to their education or undermine their healthy physical, intellectual or spiritual development, or that would interfere with their enjoyment of freedom of conscience.

262. Article 18 of the National Youth Policy Act prohibits the employment of students during their studies, with the exception of cases where such work corresponds with their chosen specialities or occupations and is a form of practical work-study, or cases of voluntary collective or individual work by students during their free time. Such work is organized and carried out in accordance with the labour and other laws of the country.

263. Violations of the labour legislation are punishable under article 304 of the Code of Administrative Offences. Such violations specifically include failure to comply with prohibitions on the use of forced or compulsory labour performed by persons under the age of 18.

264. The Labour Code contains a separate chapter specifically devoted to regulating work done by persons under the age of 18. It includes guarantees for such persons when they are hired, and it lists the kinds of jobs in which their work is prohibited. It establishes the prohibition against their performance of night work and overtime work; sets work standards for young employees; establishes special remuneration for their work and conditions for their working time, breaks and rest periods; and addresses other questions.

265. The violation of the labour rights of children is punishable under the national law.

266. Article 27 of the Constitution specifies that parents or persons acting in loco parentis have the right and obligation to raise the children, to care for their health, development and education and prepare them for the world of work and to instil in them a culture of respect for the law and for historical and national traditions.

267. In accordance with article 33, citizens have the right to work and to freely choose their occupations, type of studies and place of work, and to enjoy healthy and safe working conditions.

268. Under article 6 of the Labour Code, every citizen has the exclusive right to use his or her capabilities for productive and creative work and to engage in any activity not prohibited by law.

269. Article 7 of the Code prohibits discrimination in labour relations. Labour rights cannot be subject to any restrictions or preferential treatment on the basis of ethnic background, race, sex, origin, property or employment status, place of residence, language, age, views on religion, political convictions, party affiliation or lack thereof, or other circumstances unrelated to the professional qualities of employees or the results of their work.

270. Forced and compulsory labour is prohibited under article 8 of the Code.

271. Article 24 of the Children's Rights Act of 3 May 2014 also guarantees the right of children to work, taking into account their age, health, education and vocational training. The right becomes effective when children reach the age of 16.

272. At that age, children have the right to begin working on the basis of labour contracts concluded between them and their employers.

273. The conclusion of contracts with children who are 15 years old is allowed, but only with the consent of the children themselves and of one of their parents.

274. Children under the age of 15 may conclude labour contracts with movie studios, theatres, theatrical and concert production organizations and circuses with the written

consent of one of their parents and the authorization of a tutorship or guardianship agency allowing the child to take part in the creation and/or performance of works, provided such participation is not at variance with the best interests of the child.

275. Children under the age of 18 have the same legal rights as adults in labour relations. They also enjoy privileges in respect of occupational safety and health, working times, leave and several other conditions of employment, as established by the country's labour legislation.

276. In accordance with the Children's Rights Act, the State encourages enterprises, organizations and institutions that assign or create posts for people under the age of 18 who have the right to work.

277. Article 38 of the Act stipulates that the State, using legal, economic, social, medical and educational means, protects children against all forms of exploitation at work.

278. Children may not be employed in agricultural and other work that excludes them from their studies during the school year.

279. In accordance with article 38 of the Act and article 253 of the Labour Code, the use of labour performed by children under the age of 18 in work involving special working conditions or in work that can be harmful to their health and moral development (gambling, the production, transport or trade of alcoholic beverages, tobacco products, narcotics or toxic or other substances) is prohibited. It is also prohibited for children to manually carry, move, raise or displace loads exceeding standard limits established by law.

280. Children may not be employed in night work, overtime work, or work on days off or holidays and memorial days, and may not be sent to travel on work-related assignments.

281. Article 40 of the Education Act of 4 May 2013 prohibits the employment of students in tasks unrelated to the educational programme unless the students themselves and their parents or persons in loco parentis have given their consent. By the same token, students cannot be forced to join voluntary or political associations, movements or parties or to take part in the activities of such organizations or in political campaigns and actions.

282. Under articles 23 and 60 of the Labour Code, hiring is allowed through the conclusion of a labour contract, with a shortened work schedule, as follows:

- For employees between the ages of 16 and 18, not to exceed 36 hours a week;
- For employees under the age of 16, not to exceed 24 hours a week.

283. The provisions of the conventions ratified by Turkmenistan and the laws it has adopted relating to the rights of the child are reflected in the national social and economic development programmes that the country has adopted.

284. The National Programme on Early Childhood Development and Preparation of Children for Schooling for 2011-2015 is aimed at ensuring mother and child health, physical and intellectual development during early childhood and children's assimilation of national and universal values.

285. Work is now under way to draw up a national plan of action for children, with the aim of giving effect to the principles and provisions of the Convention on the Rights of the Child and other international treaties benefiting children, taking into account the outcome document entitled "A World Fit for Children" produced by the special session of the General Assembly of the United Nations.

286. The national plan of action for children consists of basic themes for the relevant State social policy in the context of the Social Development Strategy of Turkmenistan up until 2030. The priorities for State policy in respect of children are: protecting children's

health and encouraging healthy living; ensuring quality education; improving living conditions; and making the State system of support for children from vulnerable groups more effective.

Article 25

287. Article 31 of the Constitution establishes that each citizen has the right to participate in the administration of the affairs of State and society, both directly and through elected representatives.

288. In accordance with article 32 of the Constitution, citizens have the right to elect representatives and to be elected to government bodies. Citizens enjoy equal rights to enter public service in accordance with their skills and occupational training.

289. The country's Constitution and electoral law provide citizens with a genuine possibility to elect representatives and to be elected to all government bodies and guarantee universal, equal and direct voting rights, with a secret ballot. They thus offer still more possibilities for direct participation in the formulation of development strategies and tactics in all aspects of the life of the State and society.

290. The Electoral Code was adopted by the Mejlis on 4 May 2013. It was drawn up taking into consideration experience in other countries and the experience gained in Turkmenistan in recent election campaigns, and it is in line with international standards in this field. The Code regulates relations during the preparation and conduct of elections for the country's presidency, for the Mejlis and for membership of the people's councils and local councils, as well as referendums. It establishes guarantees for the free expression of the will of the country's citizens.

291. The Electoral Code incorporates the democratic principles, forms and procedures that have been universally accepted in international practice for electoral systems. Specifically, these include universal and equal access to representative government bodies; direct and free expression by voters of their will; alternatives among candidates put forward for election; transparency and openness; freedom to campaign; equal opportunities for all candidates in carrying out election campaigns; and broad participation in the electoral process by representatives of voluntary organizations, voters' associations, candidates' accredited proxies, observers and the media. A genuine mechanism for the realization of voting rights and the legal defence of such rights has thus been set up.

292. Elections were held on 15 December 2013 for representatives to the fifth Mejlis. Two parties took part: the Democratic Party and the Industrialists and Entrepreneurs Party. It thus became possible for voters to send more worthy representatives to the country's legislature.

293. In all 125 election districts, two or more candidates vied for a single mandate. For the 125 seats, 283 candidates registered within the time frame established by the Electoral Code, as follows: 99 from the Democratic Party; 21 from the Industrialists and Entrepreneurs Party; 89 from the Trade Unions Confederation; 37 from the Women's Union; 8 from the Makhtumkuli Youth Organization; and 7 from citizens' groups.

294. During the run-up to the elections, the candidates were given equal opportunities to campaign, including equal access to the media.

295. The representatives elected to the Mejlis included 47 from the Democratic Party, 14 from the Industrialists and Entrepreneurs Party, 33 from trade union organizations, 16 from the Women's Union, 8 from the Makhtumkuli Youth Organization and 7 from citizens' groups.

296. Some 2,500 national and voluntary organizations and associations monitored all phases of the campaign. Among them were representatives of the political parties.

297. All phases of the election process were also monitored by 99 foreign observers and experts from observer missions sent by the Commonwealth of Independent States, the United Nations Department of Political Affairs and members of a delegation from the Office for Democratic Institutions and Human Rights (ODIHR) of the Organization for Security and Cooperation in Europe (OSCE) and the OSCE Parliamentary Assembly.

298. Under article 33 of the Constitution, the right to work is guaranteed for all citizens; this includes guarantees of freedom of choice of occupation, of type of studies and of place of work and also the right to healthy and safe conditions of work.

299. Under article 11 of the Employment Act, citizens living in the country are guaranteed protection against any form of discrimination, and all citizens have equal opportunities to have access to a profession and work and to choose conditions of employment and work. Article 37 of the Act states that the country's legislation is to provide disciplinary, administrative and criminal sanctions for violations of this principle.

300. Article 7 of the Labour Code prohibits limitations on labour rights and privileged treatment for the realization of such rights based on ethnic background, race, sex, origin, property and employment status, place of residence, language, age, views on religion, political convictions or party affiliation or lack thereof, or other circumstances unrelated to the professional qualities of employees or the results of their work.

301. Article 4 of the State Guarantees of Women's Equality Act establishes that the State policy for women is aimed in particular at ensuring equality through legislation; preventing discrimination; and restoring women's rights when they are violated, in accordance with the country's legislation.

302. In the labour statistics, including employment statistics, no provision is made for disaggregation by ethnicity, as all citizens, including those who belong to ethnic minorities, have the right to equal access to work.

303. Citizens living in Turkmenistan, including those belonging to ethnic minorities, are provided with protection against any form of discrimination and are ensured equality of opportunity in their professional lives and work and in their choice of conditions of employment and work.

304. All the provisions of the relevant legislative enactments take up the corresponding provisions of international conventions, including the International Convention on the Elimination of All Forms of Racial Discrimination, the Discrimination (Employment and Occupation) Convention, 1958 (No. 111) and the Equal Remuneration Convention, 1951 (No. 100) of the International Labour Organization.

305. Employment information disaggregated by ethnic group can be obtained by looking at the results of the census. However, social protection, including the payment of pensions and State benefits, is provided irrespective of beneficiaries' ethnicity; no statistics are kept on the ethnic characteristics or membership in ethnic minorities of persons receiving such payments.

Article 26

306. Article 19 of the Constitution guarantees equal human and civil rights and freedoms, irrespective of ethnic background, race, sex, origin, property or employment status, place of residence, language, views on religion, political convictions or party affiliation or lack thereof.

307. The national legislation provides a broad range of rights for foreign nationals and stateless persons.

308. Foreign nationals and stateless persons enjoy the rights and freedoms and have the obligations of citizens of Turkmenistan, in accordance with the law and the international agreements to which Turkmenistan is a party (Constitution, arts. 8 and 18).

309. Under article 1 of the State Guarantees of Women's Equality Act, which governs women's rights, women who are nationals of another State or stateless and who reside permanently in Turkmenistan are guaranteed the same rights and freedoms established under the Act for women citizens, unless the law or international agreements to which Turkmenistan is a party provide otherwise.

310. Under the Legal Status of Foreign Nationals in Turkmenistan Act, foreign nationals may move freely in the territory of Turkmenistan and choose their place of residence in accordance with the procedure established by law. Restrictions may be imposed on movement and the choice of the place of residence in cases provided for under the law of Turkmenistan, where this is necessary in order to safeguard national security or to protect public order, the health and morals of the population or the rights, freedoms and legitimate interests of citizens of Turkmenistan or others.

311. These provisions do not run counter to the provisions of the International Covenant on Civil and Political Rights, inasmuch as there are a number of provisions of the Covenant that contain similar provisions, notably article 12, which relates to freedom of movement and freedom to choose a place of residence.

312. Certain restrictions are thus within the legal scope of the basic instruments of international human rights law.

313. As regards the recommendation contained in paragraph 15 of the Committee's concluding observations, under article 8 of the Act on the Prevention of Illnesses Caused by the Human Immunodeficiency Virus (HIV) of 7 July 2001, embassies and consulates of Turkmenistan issue visas for entry into Turkmenistan by foreign nationals and stateless persons in accordance with the procedure laid down in Turkmen law, upon presentation of a medical certificate showing that they are HIV-free. Article 6 of the Act provides that questions of whether to grant foreign nationals and stateless persons permission to stay in Turkmenistan if they are found to have HIV are decided in accordance with the legislation of Turkmenistan and international agreements. A review of the country's legislation is currently under way with a view to harmonizing it with the international agreements to which Turkmenistan is a party.

Article 27

314. The Language Act of 24 May 1990 provides legal guarantees of the free development and use of Turkmen as the country's official language, of Russian as a means of international communication and also of the languages of other peoples living in the national territory.

315. The Constitution of Turkmenistan guarantees the right to artistic freedom, including the freedom to create folk art and other forms of art. It encourages and disseminates the positive results of such creativity and promotes stronger and broader cultural relations at the international level. With a view to developing constitutional standards for implementing the Government's policy on the development of culture, art and literature and ensuring that everyone can enjoy the right to participate in cultural life, Turkmenistan has adopted the following laws: the Museums Act (20 February 1992), the Libraries Act (15 June 2000), the Applied Folk Art of Turkmenistan Act (19 February 2000), the Culture Act (12 March

2010), the Act on the Preservation of Objects Belonging to the Historical and Cultural Heritage of Turkmenistan (12 October 2012), the Theatres Act (8 November 2014) and the Act on the Preservation of the Intangible Cultural Heritage of Turkmenistan (28 February 2015).

316. Participation in the cultural life of the country is not restricted by ethnic origin.

317. Museum entry for all nationals of Turkmenistan costs 2 manats (and 1 manat in provincial museums) for adults and 20 tenge for children, irrespective of sex, race or ethnic background. Entry is free for persons with disabilities and veterans.

318. The price of entry to theatres, cinemas, concert halls and the State Circus of Turkmenistan is 3 manats for adults and 2 manats for children, while for persons with disabilities and veterans, entry is free.

319. The price of entry to the historical and cultural monuments of Turkmenistan is 80 tenge for adults and 40 tenge for children. Entry is free for persons with disabilities, veterans, members of the armed forces and pilgrims.

320. Members of ethnic groups are actively involved in every kind of cultural activity in Turkmenistan.

Organization	All personnel	Other ethnic groups	Ethnic groups							
			Russians	Azerbaijanis	Tatars	Uzbeks	Kurds	Armenians	Ukrainians	Others
State Cultural Centre of Turkmenistan	1 362	83	40	14	3	4	2	9	4	7
Art Museum of Turkmenistan	130	3	1	1	–	–	–	1	–	–
State Circus of Turkmenistan	304	40	24	6	–	–	–	3	–	7
Central Drama Theatre of Turkmenistan	230	5	5	–	–	–	–	–	–	–
Magtymguly National Musical Drama Theatre of Turkmenistan	176	21	12	3	1	–	–	4	–	1
Alp Arslan National Youth Theatre	227	17	11	1	1	–	2	–	–	2
Pushkin State Drama Theatre of the Russian Academy	114	43	31	1	1	1	–	3	2	4
State Puppet Theatre of Turkmenistan	124	8	6	1	1	–	–	–	–	–
Mollanepes Student Theatre	81	2	2	–	–	–	–	–	–	–
Turkmen State Academy of Arts	190	16	5	2	2	3	2	–	–	2
Turkmenistan Cinema and Concert Hall	9	1	1	–	–	–	–	–	–	–
Vatan Cinema and Concert Hall	13	1	–	–	1	–	–	–	–	–
Hyzmat Kinovideo Association	58	6	2	1	1	–	1	–	–	1
Department of Art Exhibitions	26	3	3	–	–	–	–	–	–	–
Department for the Protection, Study and Restoration of Historical and Cultural Monuments	207	25	7	1	–	8	–	–	–	9
Amanov State Children's Library	105	17	9	3	2	–	–	2	1	–
Musical residential school attached to the Turkmen National Conservatory	314	56	28	11	5	2	–	5	–	5
Turkmen National Conservatory	295	47	20	5	–	2	2	9	4	5
Turkmen State Institute of Culture	307	20	2	4	1	2	–	4	–	7
Turkmen State Art School attached to the State Academy of Arts of Turkmenistan	75	2	1	1	–	–	–	–	–	–
Ovezov State College of Music attached to the Turkmen National Conservatory	110	30	7	8	2	–	2	7	2	2
Specialized Training Centre, Ministry of Culture, Turkmenistan	15	4	3	1	–	–	–	–	–	–
Ashgabat Department of Culture	526	97	48	8	3	2	3	14	6	13
Ahal Department of Culture	1 477	38	17	6	2	–	1	2	2	8
Lebap Department of Culture	3 103	278	33	3	20	212	–	3	2	5
Balkan Department of Culture	1 583	78	30	10	7	1	4	12	1	13
Daşoguz Department of Culture	1 895	274	6	1	10	245	–	2	–	10
Mary Department of Culture	3 482	219	67	27	5	12	1	43	5	59
Total	16 538	1 434	421	119	68	494	20	123	29	160

321. The following directors of music and dance groups in Turkmenistan belong to ethnic minorities:

- (a) Elena Dormidontova, director of the Nyazli Dance Ensemble of the Bank for Development and Foreign Economic Affairs of Turkmenistan;
- (b) Harold Neumark, director of the Mukam Violin Ensemble;
- (c) Elena Moskvicheva, choirmistress at the Turkmen National Conservatory;
- (d) Vera Kochieva, director of the Ak pamyk Children's Dance Group of the Palace of Children and Youth in Ashgabat;
- (e) Alvard Airapetovna Mkrtychyan, director of the Lale Reyhan Dance Group in Lebap province;
- (f) Yury Balyan, director of the Shelkovy Put Music and Dance Group of the Transport and Communications Institute of Turkmenistan;
- (g) Sariya Karakhanova, director of the Dehistan Folklore Group.

322. A creative competition instituted by the President of Turkmenistan, entitled "Türkmenň Altyn asyry" (Turkmen Golden Age), is held every year in order to encourage creative activities by workers in the fields of culture, art and literature, young performers and gifted children. The ethnic minorities of Turkmenistan play an active role in this competition. Representatives of ethnic minorities living in Turkmenistan produced 7 winners of the competition out of 143 in 2012, 5 out of 153 in 2013 and 14 out of 212 in 2014.

323. On the occasion of Independence Day, high ranks and awards were bestowed on three members of ethnic minorities in 2012, five in 2013 and six in 2014. Of those, four were awarded the Magtymguly Pyragy medal.

324. The Ministry of Culture celebrates annual days of culture in Turkmenistan of States that are the historic homelands of certain ethnic minorities of Turkmenistan, including:

- Days of culture of the Islamic Republic of Iran from 7 to 10 February 2014;
- Days of culture of Armenia, held in Ashgabat and Mary, from 9 to 11 April 2014;
- Days of culture of the United States of America from 21 to 24 November 2014;
- Days of culture of the Islamic Republic of Iran from 5 to 7 March 2015;
- Days of culture of the United Arab Emirates from 24 to 28 April 2015.

Days of culture of Turkmenistan abroad and days of culture of foreign States in Turkmenistan

	2012	2013	2014	2015 (May)	Total
1. Days of culture of Turkmenistan abroad	3	3	6	3	15
2. Days of culture of foreign States in Turkmenistan	5	4	4	2	15
Total	8	7	10	5	30

326. By a decision of the Thirty-second Meeting of the Permanent Council of Ministers of Culture of the Member Countries of the International Organization of Turkic Culture

(TÜRKSÖY), held in Kazan on 21 November 2014, the city of Mary in Turkmenistan was declared the capital of culture of the Turkic world for 2015.

327. The grand opening of a programme entitled “Mary — capital of culture of the Turkic world for 2015” was held in Mary on 27 January 2015 to launch the cultural events of the year. The opening was attended by 151 leading figures in culture and the arts of the Turkic world.
