**The information provided by the Office of the Commissioner for Human Rights (Ombudsman) of Azerbaijan for the report of the Office of the United Nations High Commissioner on the issue of the rights of the child and inclusive social protection – Human Rights Council Resolution 49/20**

**1) What social protection systems are in place for children in your country? Please provide examples of specific laws and regulations, measures, policies, and programmes directed at ensuring children’s access to inclusive social protection and how these respect the rights of the child?**

The right to social security is one of the basic constitutional rights applicable to everyone (Constitution of the Republic of Azerbaijan, Article 38).

Principles of children's growth in a healthy and favorable social environment, elimination of cases of neglect, provision of social protection for children deprived of parental care and with disabilities take an important place in the social programs adopted by the State. In general, necessary steps are taken regularly in the direction of increasing the social welfare of the population, including children, strengthening measures in the field of social protection, improving the normative legal framework and institutional structure. The Laws of the Republic of Azerbaijan “On targeted state social assistance” dated 21 October, 2005, "On Social service", dated 30 December, 2011, “On Social allowances” dated
7 February, 2006 and other documents are important normative legal acts in this field.

"The Strategy of the Republic of Azerbaijan on Children for 2020-2030" approved by the relevant Presidental Decree of the Republic of Azerbaijan envisages the implementation of state child policy and ensuring child rights protection thoroughly. The goal of the strategy is to create equal opportunities for all children, defend their rights and interests, ensure contemporary social support sercices for them. In addition, “The State Program for the development of inclusive education for persons with disabilities in the Republic of Azerbaijan in 2018- 2024” has a great importance in this field.

The Ministry of Labor and Social Protection of the Population, which is the central executive body in the field of social security and protection in the Republic of Azerbaijan, provides state support to various groups of population, including low-income families with many children. Low-income families receive targeted state social assistance which is the financial assistance provided by the State. Among the members of families receiving social assistance, children comprise a significant part.

In general, there are more than 10 types of **social allowances** aimed at the social protection of children in our state. According to the Law of the Republic of Azerbaijan dated February 7, 2006 "On Social allowances", social allowances are paid in the form of monthly or one-time payments for the purpose of providing social assistance to individual categories of persons. These are the monthly social allowances such as allowance for children under 18 years of age with disabilities, allowance for guardians of orphans and children deprived of parental care, allowance for women with more than five children, allowance for children of conscripts, allowance for low-income families with children under 1 year old, allowance for the loss of the head of the family, allowance for an adopted child, including a child under 18 years of age with disabilities, childcare allowance for a child under 3 years of age.

Moreover, lump sum social allowances such as birth benefit, lump-sum allowance paid to orphan children and children deprived of parental care upon first employment are provided.

As well as, Presidential Grant was set up for persons caring for children under 18 with disabilities.(<https://dost.gov.az/en/services/labor-pensions-and-social-benefits>)

**Social services.** Graduates of state children's institutions deprived of parental care are provided with housing in the "**Graduate House" social institution**. Graduates of state children's institutions deprived of parental care and without a place of residence are admitted to the institution, taking into account their own wishes.

**Center for Vocational Rehabilitation of Persons with Disabilities** operates under the Agency for Social Services under the Ministry of Labor and Social Protection of the Republic of Azerbaijan. The institution carries out activities related to the organization of vocational training and vocational rehabilitation of persons with disabilities aged 15-29 with physical and mild mental and mental disorders.

Necessary measures are taken in the direction of social rehabilitation and social protection of children in difficult living conditions, victims of human trafficking and domestic violence.

**The Shelter and Social Rehabilitation Institution for vulnerable groups of the population**, subordinated to the Agency for Social Services under the Ministry of Labor and Social Protection of the Republic of Azerbaijan, provides socially important services such as social rehabilitation of homeless persons over 18 years of age, victims of domestic violence, as well as persons with visual impairments. There is separate department on children in the institution. Institution provides them socially legal, medical, advisory assistance, as well as semi-inpatient and inpatient social services for the provision of temporary accommodation, hotline and other services.

There is **Support Center for Victims of Human Trafficking** functioning under the Agency for Social Services (under the Ministry of Labor and Social Protection of the Republic of Azerbaijan). Persons, including children are provided services on their social rehabilitation and integration to the society.

**Sanatorium - a resort voucher (permit)** is a valuable document provided by the state for sanatorium-resort treatment and recreation of privileged persons in sanatoriums and resorts. Children with disabilities, children brought up in the guardian's (guardian's) family, state and non-state institutions, orphans and deprived of parental care are considered to be privileged persons to be provided with sanatorium-resort vouchers (vouchers).

**Specialized social service institutions for children with disabilities** who are not involved in education operate under the Ministry of Labor and Social Protection of the Population. These are stationary social service institutions designed for the provision of social services and their social rehabilitation to disabled children aged 5-18 who are not involved in education, regardless of their race, ethnicity, religion, language, gender, or origin.

**State Rehabilitation centers for children with disabilities** are functioning under the State Medical-Social Expertise and Rehabilitation Agency (under the Ministry of Labor and Social Protection of the Population) that provide relevant services.

Moreover, **day care and community-based rehabilitation centers** for children in difficult living conditions operate in the capital and regions on the basis of the social orders issued by the State.

**A Care Call Center** (116 123) was established by the Social Services Agency operating under the Ministry of Labor and Social Protection of the Population to respond to requests related to cases of domestic violence and children in difficult living conditions, as well as providing online psychological support.

In general, significant measures have been taken to ensure access to services and social integration of children with disabilities, to promote equal opportunities and for them.

**2) What are the main gaps and challenges to children’s enjoyment of social protection in law, policy, and practice in your country and the impacts on children’s rights? Please provide any relevant statistical or disaggregated data based on age, gender, disability, ethnicity, religion, sexual orientation and gender identity, migration status, or other categories. Please consider the specific situation of marginalized children and those in vulnerable situations in your response.**

In order to improve social protection of children, the situation in the country on this regard is regularly analyzed by the Ombudsman Institution and proposals are sent to the relevant bodies. Those proposals are included in the annual reports of the Ombudsman (<https://ombudsman.az/en/view/pages/59>/)

**3) What are the good practices initiated by the Government to ensure that social protection benefits the rights of children in your country?**

Agency for Sustainable and Operative Social Provision (DOST Agency) under the Ministry of Labor and Social Protection of Population of the Republic of Azerbaijan was established by the Presidental Decree of the Republic of Azerbaijan. The Agency was established with the aim of improving the quality of services provided to citizens in the fields of population employment, labor, social protection and security, increasing transparency, implementing innovative solutions and accelerating the transition to electronic services, as well as preventing procrastination and increasing citizen satisfaction. The agency has several centers. Dost centers provide services for disability, employment, labor pension, social benefits, social assistance, social services, adoption and other areas. (<https://dost.gov.az/en/> )

The "DOST" concept allows for the provision of public social services from a "one-stop shop", modern and flexible, fully transparent mechanisms, according to citizen satisfaction. In 2022, more than 1 million 250 thousand 300 citizens benefited from "DOST" services, and citizen satisfaction with these services was 98.5 percent.

Currently, the expansion of the "DOST" network throughout the country is underway. "DOST" Agency received four international ISO certificates. "DOST" centers were assessed as an advanced reform in the "European Union Business Climate Report-2021". (<https://dost.gov.az/en/news/408> )

In addition, we can emphasize other good practices such as the provision of targeted state social assistance, the activity of day care and community-based rehabilitation centers based on social state orders, the creation of a Care Call Center to respond to requests related to cases of domestic violence and children in difficult living conditions, as well as providing online psychological support.

**4) Are there examples of how measures and responses to alleviate poverty through social protection systems in emergency situations or, for example, in response to the COVID-19 pandemic, have positively affected children’s rights, particularly to social security?**

In order to prevent the consequences that the coronavirus disease may cause in the territory of Azerbaijan, and to promptly implement preventive and decisive measures, the Task Force was established under the Cabinet of Ministers, consisting of high-level officials of the relevant authorities. In general, social support measures related to the pandemic have been implemented in the country. (<https://ereforms.gov.az/files/review/pdf/az/bfc701bd153235bcc4ab26abd5cba6fd.pdf>)

A significant part of the wages of people working in the sectors most affected by the pandemic was covered by the State, people working in informal employment and temporarily losing their jobs, people belonging to the low-income group, including children, benefited from social support measures. Payment of tuition fees of students from low-income families was also implemented within the framework of social support measures.

“Rules on ensuring of equality of children on safe access to education, social and other services in emergency situations, pandemy and other such special cases” was approved by the Decision of the Cabinet of Ministries dated of 13 January, 2023.

**5) Can you provide information on any programs or activities your organization has implemented regarding inclusive social protection and the rights of the child?**

Child rights protection and promotion are one of the main directions of the Commissioner’s activities. Complaints addressed to the Ombudsman regarding the protection of children's rights, including appeals regarding children's right to social security, are investigated. Monitoring is conducted in state children's institutions. In addition, the implementation of legislative acts and state programs related to the social protection of children is analyzed. Based on the results of the analysis, proposals are prepared and sent to relevant authorities. Ombudsman put forward proposals on providing alimonies, social allowances, social service, improving working conditions and other relevant directions.

Awareness-raising activities on children's rights, including children's social protection, are carried out throughout the year in Baku city and regions. Fruitful cooperative relations with state authorities, international organizations and civil society institutions operating in the field of children's rights are ongoing. In addition, the information obtained from the mass media and social networks related to the violation of children's rights is promptly investigated and kept under the control of the Ombudsman. At initiative of the Commissioner, annually “Child Rights Month-Long Campaign” is held between the 20th October and 20th November on the eve of the anniversary of UN Convention on the Rights of the Child throughout the country. The aim of this month-long campaign is to promote attention and care to children by involving relevant bodies, to prevent ill-treatment and violence against them, to increase awareness in this field, and to achieve effective protection and promotion of children's rights. Within the framework of this month, Ombudsman Office, state and local self-government bodies, civil society institutions, and relevant institutions organize round tables, trainings and seminars, campaigns, exhibitions and competitions, researches and other events on children's rights.

The Commissioner for Human Rights (Ombudsman) of the Republic of Azerbaijan addressed an appeal to the state and local self-governing authorities, officials, and other offices, enterprises, organizations and business entities regarding the protection of the rights of persons, including children with disabilities due to the coronavirus (COVID-19) infection outbreak.

In the appeal, the relevant calls indicated in the statement of the UN Special Rapporteur on the Rights of Persons with Disabilities, regarding the protection of the rights of persons with disabilities during the current period of the spread of the COVID-19 pandemic in the world were taken into account .

(<https://ombudsman.az/en/view/news/1786/message-of-the-commissioner-for-human-rights-ombudsman-of-the-republic-of-azerbaijan-to-the-state-and-local-self-governing-institutions-officials-and-other-offices-enterprises-organizations-and-busine/> )

**6) How can States deliver more effectively to ensure the effective implementation of universal social protection for children, including through international cooperation?**

States can contribute to more effective provision of children's rights in this area by taking measures on learning and implementing existing good practices aimed at social protection of children in cooperation with international organizations and other states.