**CALL FOR SUBMISSIONS ON CULTURAL RIGHTS**

**AND SUSTAINABLE DEVELOPMENT**

1. **The cultures of development**

This first part aims at gathering information about the vision, values and aims of

development, and about those who are involved in defining the strategies and evaluating progress in their achievement.

1. **What is your understanding of what “development” should aspire to?**

**Answer:** Sustainable development is directed at solving economic, social, and environmental problems and thus ensuring human rights.

1. **How is development defined in your country?**

**If it exists, please provide the definition of development used in your Government’s / organizations’ strategies or policies towards (sustainable) development.**

**Answer:** The level of development in our country is defined through analyzes based on monitoring and assessments.

1. **Has your country developed and adopted a (sustainable) development strategy?**

**If so, please indicate what the main development model is, the aims that are communicated and monitored.**

**Answer:** As is known, the Republic of Azerbaijan has joined the Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs) approved by the Sustainable Development Summit of the UN Member States on September 25-27, 2015 and adopted by the relevant resolution of the UN General Assembly. Thus, taking into account that the implementation of 17 goals and 169 targets reflected in the “Transforming our world: the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development” and significant for the whole world requires a complex approach, an effective national implementation mechanism has been formed in our country.

On the point of the “Azerbaijan 2030: National Priorities for Socio-Economic Development” approved by the Order No. 2469 of the President of the Republic of Azerbaijan dated February 2, 2021, over the next decade, the following five National Priorities of the country's socio-economic development should be implemented:

1. a steadily growing, competitive economy;
2. a dynamic, inclusive society based on social justice;
3. areas of modern innovations and competitive human capital;
4. the great return to the territories liberated from occupation;
5. a clean environment and country of “green growth”.

These National Priorities are also of particular importance for the implementation of the UN's commitments under the “Transforming our world: the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development”.

The draft “Strategy for socio-economic development in 2022-2026” was prepared and submitted to the country's leadership for approval by the commission and 10 sub-working groups operating in five priority areas established by the Order of the Cabinet of Ministers of the Republic of Azerbaijan in accordance with the National Priorities.

The “United Nations Sustainable Development Cooperation Framework (UNSDCF) between the United Nations and the Government of Azerbaijan for the period 2021-2025” which is in line with the strategic development priorities of the Government of Azerbaijan for 2021-2025 is directly related to the achievement of the SDGs and their relevant targets in support of the implementation of the 2030 Agenda.

1. **Who are the main stakeholders defining, driving and monitoring the (sustainable) development process?**

**Please provide information on the various levels or sectors of stakeholders involved.**

**Answer:** The National Coordination Council for Sustainable Development (NCCSD) was established by the Decree No. 1066 of the President of the Republic of Azerbaijan, Mr. Ilham Aliyev, dated October 6, 2016. The function of the NCCSD, a high-level government panel is to coordinate the integration of SDG targets into state strategies, plans and programs and to monitor the country’s progress towards the 2030 Agenda. The Council’s Secretariat is based at the Ministry of Economy of the Republic of Azerbaijan and reports to the SDG Council chaired by the Deputy Prime Minister. Three Voluntary National Reviews have been conducted to date and the National Information Portal on SDGs has been launched.

The Monitoring and Assessment Group evaluates the activity of the working groups on economic development and decent employment, social and environmental issues, and the achievement of goals and targets on the SDGs formed in order to inform the Mission's assessment of the implementation of the SDGs and to fulfill the responsibilities of state bodies in connection with the defined commitments related to the SDGs.

By the way, representatives of the Ombudsman are also represented in three of the four Working Groups (Social, Environmental Issues, Monitoring and Assessment) established by the NCCSD.

The Chairman of the NCCSD is the Deputy Prime Minister of the Republic of Azerbaijan, and the Deputy Chairman is the Minister of Economy of the Republic of Azerbaijan. The members of the NCCSD are the Chairman of the State Statistical Committee of the Republic of Azerbaijan, the Chairperson of the State Committee for Family, Women and Children Affairs of the Republic of Azerbaijan, First Deputy Minister for Culture of the Republic of Azerbaijan, the Deputy Minister of Foreign Affairs of the Republic of Azerbaijan, the Deputy Minister of Justice of the Republic of Azerbaijan, the Deputy Minister of Healthcare of the Republic of Azerbaijan, the Deputy Minister of Labour and Social Protection of Population of the Republic of Azerbaijan, the Deputy Minister of Education of the Republic of Azerbaijan, the Deputy Minister of Ecology and Natural Resources of the Republic of Azerbaijan and the Deputy Minister of Youth and Sports of the Republic of Azerbaijan. Relevant UN organizations, various government bodies, private agencies and civil society institutions are involved as partners in each priority area. The Office of the Commissioner for Human Rights (Ombudsman) of the Republic of Azerbaijan is a partner in two priority areas:

- Stronger institutions for better public and social services delivery;

- A gender-equitable society that empowers women and girls.

1. **Are there participatory processes influencing and informing the definition and evaluation of (sustainable) development policies? If so, how?**

**Answer:** Within the framework of the Azerbaijani Ombudsman’s cooperation with the European Network of National Human Rights Institutions (ENNHRI), a representative of the Ombudsman participated in the general assembly of the Network held in Brussels in 2017, provided extensive information on the Commissioner’s activities in the implementation of the SDG, recommended the priority of projects and programs that ensure the participation of children and young people, and the inclusion of national institutions in this area as a key partner. In addition, the Ombudsman's representative also took part in the meeting of the EOI General Assembly in Bucharest, Romania, and made a report on the implementation of the SDG and shared Azerbaijan's experience with the participants.

During the meeting of the Board of Directors of the Asian Ombudsman Association (AOA) held in Baku in 2018, the topic of “Reduce inequalities within and among countries” defined as the Goal 10 in the SDGs was discussed upon the motion of the Azerbaijani Ombudsman, who is the vice-President of this Association, and relevant decisions were adopted. The Ombudsman mentioned in her speech the necessity of building future relations of the states on the basis of close partnership by introducing the successful activity of Azerbaijan as an example for the implementation of the SDGs based on close cooperation with the interested parties at the national and international level.

Moreover, in 2020, the Ombudsman prepared and sent opinions and suggestions on draft of “the UNSDCF between the UN and the Government of Azerbaijan for the period 2021-2025” In 2022, Ombudsman and the UN Resident Coordinator in Azerbaijan bilaterally signed a Memorandum of Understanding (MoU) and the memorandum provides for the implementation of joint projects on human rights education and awareness-raising activities, further expansion of the UN human rights mechanisms, follow-up on and implementation of recommendations of within those mechanisms, strengthening the institutional capacity-building for the Ombudsman Institution, developing national human rights strategies, and other activities to support the implementation of “the UNSDCF between the UN and the Government of Azerbaijan for the period 2021-2025”.

1. **The cultural rights dimension of the sustainable development goals**

This part of the questionnaire aims to gather experiences on how cultural resources and cultural rights have been considered in the strategies and programs aiming to achieve the Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs) generally as well as for specific goals.

1. **Where cultural resources and creative capacities were leveraged in achieving the SDGs, what were in your experience the results, successes, weaknesses, or lessons learned?**

**Answer:** The Azerbaijani Ombudsman regularly made proposals on the development of intercultural dialogue, and inter-religious cooperation, holding awareness-raising events in education facilities by involving scholars of theology for fostering religious tolerance in children and youth, developing inter-civilizations and inter-nation cooperation and inter-religious dialogue contributing to the restoration of peace, preparation of different publication on this topic, involvement of mass-media to religious enlightenment work, promotion of upbringing in the spirit of respect for the freedom of conscience and strengthening religious enlightening work, promoting the tolerance policy of the country in the world.

Simultaneously, the Commissioner made several proposals to ensure the effective protection of the rights of foreigners, stateless persons, and migrants. Furthermore, it was recommended to take joint measures to provide legal, psychological, and other assistance to aliens and stateless persons when deemed necessary. Recommendations of the Ombudsman also included preparing specialized modules of, legal publications, and posters on the linguistic and cultural development of migrants, organization of joint assessment work on the fulfillment of obligations arising from the Convention on the Protection of the Rights of all Migrant Workers, and Members of their Families, creating conditions for paid employment of foreign students studying in the country and the establishment of an Action Plan at the national level for the effective implementation of the Global Compact.

In her annual reports, the Ombudsman once again suggested ratifying the Optional Protocol to the International Covenant on Economic, Social, and Cultural Rights (signed by Azerbaijan on September 24, 2009, but not yet ratified).