**Inputs by the Republic of Azerbaijan for the Report on "Women, girls and the right to a clean, healthy and sustainable environment"**

1. **How are the climate, pollution, and biodiversity crises adversely impacting women and girls? What are the principal barriers facing these rightsholders’ realization of the right to a clean, healthy and sustainable environment, a right that includes: clean air; a safe climate; access to safe water and adequate sanitation; healthy and sustainably produced food; non-toxic environments in which to live, work, study and play; healthy biodiversity and ecosystems; access to environmental and climate information; participation in environmental and climate decision-making processes; access to justice and an affective remedy when the aforementioned rights are violated.**

Climate change is one of the most important challenges facing the world. In Azerbaijan, agriculture, water resources and coastal areas are vulnerable to climate change. Impact of climate change on these areas has consequently resulted in adverse effects on drinking water, food security and people's economic activities.

During the 30 year occupation of the territory of the Republic of Azerbaijan by Armenia, the crimes committed against the environment caused environmental destruction, rivers were polluted with various types of waste, including chemicals and heavy metals, and serious damage was done to the environmental components of the occupied territories by burying a large number of unexploded shells and mines. According to the initial environmental monitoring conducted in the liberated territories of the Republic of Azerbaijan, 60 thousand hectares of dense forest cover, more than 130 ancient trees with the status of a natural monument, up to one million trees and shrubs were destroyed in areas not belonging to the forest fund, more than 30 hydrometeorological stations were completely destroyed, and more than 50 mineral-raw deposits were exploited. As a result, environmental crises occurred in the territories freed from occupation by restricting the opportunities of people, including women and girls, to live, study and engage in activities, and led to the violation of their rights to live in a safe and healthy environment.

Restoration and reconstruction measures are carried out in the liberated territories, “smart city”, “smart village” and “green energy” concepts are applied. Thus, the first pilot project in the direction of the restoration of settlements was realized in Agalı village of Zangilan district. Currently, work in this direction is being continued. Placement of the population in those areas, creation of new socio-cultural infrastructures, opening of schools, kindergartens, medical facilities encourages people, including women and girls, to exercise their right to live in a safe and healthy environment, and at the same time to solve employment issues by involving them in activities in social and other service areas.

**2. What are the specific obligations of States and responsibilities of businesses in terms of adopting a gender-responsive approach to protecting (for States) and respecting (for businesses) women’s and girls’ rights to a clean, healthy and sustainable environment? Please provide specific examples of constitutional provisions, legislation, institutions, regulations, standards, jurisprudence, policies and programs that apply a gender-responsive approach to ensuring the right to a clean, healthy and sustainable environment.**

The Government of Azerbaijan attaches great importance to the implementation of relevant policies, establishment of legislative foundations and its periodic alignment with international best practices and improvements to respond to these global challenges. The state takes measures in order to eliminate all forms of discrimination based on gender, create equal opportunities for men and women, and prevent the dominance of representatives of the same gender in state management and decision-making processes. These policies are guided by the Constitution of Azerbaijan, its codes, government programs, strategies, and work plans.

Legislative and regulatory aspects of environmental management and sustainability are reflected in several articles and provisions of the Constitution. Article 39 on environment defines everyone’s right to live in a healthy environment. It also notes that everyone has the right to collect information on true environmental situation and receive compensation for damage to his/her health and property by violation of environmental requirements.

**5. Please identify specific ways in which the rights of particularly marginalized or vulnerable women and/or LGBTI persons are (or should be) recognized and protected to enable the realization of the rights to a clean, healthy and sustainable environment without discrimination based on sex or gender. “Marginalized women” include girls; women and girls in Indigenous local community, Afro-descendant and peasant communities, older women; differently abled women and girls, LGBTI women and girls, migrant, displaced, and refugee women and girls, unmarried, informally married and widowed women and women and girls living in protracted armed conflict. How can these populations be empowered to increase their impact as agents of positive environmental transformation?**

The rights of all groups of people are guaranteed in Azerbaijan without any restrictions. As stipulated in Article 25 of the Constitution of the Republic of Azerbaijan the State shall guarantee the equality of rights and freedoms to everyone, irrespective of race, ethnicity, religion, language, sex, origin, property status, occupation, beliefs or affiliation with political parties, trade union organizations or other public associations. To restrict human and civil rights and freedoms on the grounds of race, ethnicity, religion, language, sex, origin, belief, political and social affiliation, is prohibited.

The State Committee for Family, Women and Children Affairs of the Republic of Azerbaijan implements the project jointly with the UN Development Program on "Ensuring early recovery and resilience of vulnerable groups in Fuzuli-Horadiz, Agjabadi and Tartar regions of Azerbaijan" to improve the situation of women and girls affected by the Armenian aggression against Azerbaijan, as well as to identify and meet the urgent needs of vulnerable groups, to ensure their rights to a clean, healthy and sustainable environment. The main goal of the project is to meet the basic needs of the most affected population, since the beginning of the crisis by establishing Community Resource Centers (CRCs) in Fuzuli, Agjabadi and Tartar (covering Barda and Agdam regions) regions of Azerbaijan. It also provides psychological and social services to victims, especially women, children and people with disabilities, as well as, consulting services for the development of family farms and businesses to support employment and increase economic activity.

The project entitled "Increasing the economic empowerment of women in the South Caucasus"is implemented in the Women Resource Centers of 4 regions of the Republic with the financial support of the Swiss Development and Cooperation Agency and the Austrian Agency. The purpose of the project is to ensure the economic empowerment of women in Azerbaijan, especially low income and socially isolated women, and their participation in relevant decision-making processes.

**7. To what extent do the environmental ministries, nationally determined contributions, and national biodiversity strategies and action plans of your State include gender action plans, gender-responsive budgets or budgets specifically devoted to gender equality? At the global level, what changes to climate and biodiversity finance mechanisms are needed to ensure that these are gender-responsive and equitably inclusive of female beneficiaries?**

Gender aspects are taken into consideration in climate change related projects and action plans covering the years 2020-2025 (Country Programming Prepared Under Green Climate Fund Readiness And Preparatory Support Project For Azerbaijan, EU4 Climate Regional Project financed by the European Union and implemented by UNDP with the partnership of MENR, Fourth National Communication of the Republic of Azerbaijan under the UN Framework Convention on Climate Change, The Action Plan of the Working Group of State Commission on Climate Change and etc.). In the framework of the mentioned projects, educational seminars and webinars were organized to apply technologies aimed at reducing and adapting to the effects of climate change for women and population groups that are more sensitive to the effects of climate change.

The National Action Plan for Gender Equality of the Republic of Azerbaijan Republic for 2022-2025 will accelerate the promotion of gender equality in all spheres of public life, and the sensitive approach to gender issues in the media, the education and political parties will be strengthened. The government attaches great importance to the increasing women's participation in environmental decision-making processes through temporary special measures and capacity building programs.

Recognizing women as key stakeholders within climate change policies and also address women as key to achieving low emission development pathways are curtail step forward. One of the ways is creating spaces for women to voice their needs, concerns, and ideas, and by enabling women to join and benefit from low emission developments initiatives.

**8. How can business best contribute to the realization of the right to a clean, healthy and sustainable environment, based on sex and gender? What policies or practices are already in place to ensure that business activities identify, assess, prevent, cease, mitigate, and effectively remedy adverse impacts to women’s and girl’s rights to a clean, healthy and sustainable environment, as articulated in the UN Guiding Principles on Business and Human Rights.**

The project "Support to community-based initiatives led by women" is implemented with the financial support of international organizations in the Women's Resource Centers in two regions of the country. The aim of the project is to support the full implementation of women's socio-economic rights.

**9. Please share any good practices for: i) protecting women’s and girl’s rights to a safe, clean, healthy and sustainable environment; ii) empowering women and girls to act as positive agents of environmental justice; and iii) encouraging men and boys to act as allies in these endeavors. In addition, please highlight the work of any women or girl environmental defenders. Good practices may occur at the international, regional, national, sub-national or local levels, and may include: the implementation of measures to ensure women’s participation in environmental decision-making processes; efforts to support women environmental defenders; measures to facilitate women’s access to climate and biodiversity finance; gender-responsive legislation, regulations, standards, jurisprudence, plans and policies; and initiatives to increase women’s access to and control over productive resources including land, forest resources, freshwater, credit, loans, and extension services. Examples that treat girls distinctly from adult women would be particularly appreciated.**

In 2019, the State Committee for Family, Women and Children Affairs jointly with the United Nations Development Program (UNDP) and the Global Environment Facility conducted trainings within the project "Kura II: Strengthening integrated water resources management in the Kura River Basin through the implementation of cross-border coordinated activities and national plans."The purpose of the trainings was the integrated management of water resources, the involvement of women in the work carried out in this field and ensuring gender equality, the efficient use of water resources.

Since September 2020, the State Committee for Family, Women and Children Affairs, with the support of the German International Cooperation Agency, has been implementing the project "Support to women's employment and micro-entrepreneurship in Goychay region". The aim of the project is to involve women living in rural areas in entrepreneurship, to develop micro-entrepreneurship among them, to strengthen their knowledge and skills in entrepreneurship, and to expand their economic opportunities to increase employment.

In 2020-2021, within the framework of the project, a Women's Resource Center was launched and 28 vulnerable women were provided with non-cash financial support to start a business and strengthen existing businesses, and the women were provided with equipment in accordance with their business plan.

Trainings and seminars are regularly organized there with the participation of local and international experts, in order to increase women's activity, develop communication and leadership skills, and improve their knowledge in the field of finance and business. Women's environment-oriented businesses were also supported within the framework of both mentioned projects.