Ref: 0460/12/19/23

The Permanent Mission of the Republic of Azerbaijan to the United Nations Office and other International Organizations in Geneva presents its compliments to the Office of the United Nations High Commissioner for Human Rights and with reference to the Latter’s request dated 20 March 2019, has the honour to transmit the information by the Government of the Republic of Azerbaijan to the Report by Secretary-General on steps taken by States to combat intolerance, negative stereotyping, stigmatization, discrimination, incitement to violence and violence against persons, based on religion or belief to be submitted to the General Assembly at its seventy-fourth session.


Enclosure: 7 pages

Geneva, 24 May 2019

Office of the United Nations
High Commissioner for Human Rights
GENEVA
INFORMATION

on implementation of the relevant provisions of the UN Resolution A/RES/73/164
entitled "Combating intolerance, negative stereotyping, stigmatization,
discrimination, incitement to violence and violence against persons, based on
religion or belief"

Based on religious diversity of society, the policy of the Republic of Azerbaijan in the
area of state-religion relations is aimed at ensuring freedom of thought, speech and
conscience, interfaith dialogue, tolerance, mutual understanding. In addition, state
policy in this field is based on norms and principles of international law, international
treaties signed by the Republic of Azerbaijan, Constitution and other legislative acts.

An atmosphere of friendship dominates among members of different religious
communities. The State Committee on Religious Associations of the Republic of
Azerbaijan (SCRA) as the central executive body responsible for the implementation of
the state policy in the sphere of religion undertakes special efforts to promote freedom
of religion and conscience and promotes awareness-raising among various
communities to prevent intolerance, discrimination, confrontation, violence and
incitement to radicalism in society.

Azerbaijan “On freedom of religious belief” have established solid legal and policy
framework based on international human rights norms and regulations, including
freedom of conscience and religion. The Law regulates state-religion relations by
providing reliable guarantees for every citizen’s freedom of conscience regardless of
his/her language, religion, racial or ethnic identity.

940 religious communities were registered in Azerbaijan, of them 907 being Islamic and
33 (Christian-22, Jewish-8, Krishna-1, Baha’i-2) non-Islamic.

The State provides necessary conditions to celebrate significant religious ceremonies
by Islamic and non-Islamic communities functioning in the country including Ramadan,
Eid al Adha and Muharram, Christmas, Easter, Purim, Pesach, Shabuoth, St. George’s
Day, Sacred Nino, Kurmukoba and other significant religious days and festivals, as well
as birthday of Bahaulla, the founder of the Baha’i religion.

Moral Values Promotion Fund was set up by the Presidential Decree dated October 10,
2017 under SCRA. The objectives of the Fund are advocacy and awareness raising in
the field of religion and belief, support to preservation and development of moral values,
preparation of programmes related to state-religion relations, and implementation of
different projects aimed at promoting freedom of religion and belief among various
communities and society at large.
Furthermore, Azerbaijan Institute of Theology (AIT) under the SCRA established by the Order of the President of the Republic of Azerbaijan on 9 February 2018 ensures promotion and preservation of healthy religious and spiritual environment and trains qualified staff in the implementation of state policy in relevant area.

The second conference on "Inter-faith dialogue and anti-radicalisation" was held on April 25-26, 2019, organized jointly by the European Union, SCRA and ADA University.

The annual World Forum on Intercultural Dialogue hosted in Azerbaijan has become an international platform to enable and encourage individuals, countries and organizations around the globe to take concrete actions to support diversity, dialogue and mutual understanding among nations by raising awareness on the importance of intercultural dialogue worldwide. Among topics of the sessions conducted in the framework of the 5th World Forum on Intercultural Dialogue held in Baku on 2-3 May 2019 were "Increasing ethnic and cultural diversity in the modern world and importance of the policy of multiculturalism in its regulation" and "Moving Towards Greater Spiritual Convergence in Support of Equal Citizenship Rights".

In the new academic year of 2019-2020 new discipline “Introduction to Multiculturalism” will be taught as one of main subjects in all higher education institutions of Azerbaijan and will provide basic information concerning religious radicalism and methods of its propaganda, religious and moral values and their protection, as well as state policy in this field. In addition, it is considered to include broad information about world religions in “Social sciences” discipline taught in secondary schools.

A series of documentaries titled “Provocation” (“Fitna”), “Evidence/witness” (“Shahadat”) and “The Future in the Horizon” (“Ufuqdaki galacak”), and “Unity is in our blood” (“Birlik qanımızdadır”) commissioned by SCRA and “Read” (“Okhu”) produced by the “Towards Healthy Youth” Public Union with the support of Moral Values Promotion Fund were screened in universities, schools and youth centres.

"Provocation" (2016) talks about fight against religious radicalism. The film focuses on issues of protection of young people from radical religious groups. The film showcases psychological, legal, political and moral aspects of the struggle against religious radicalism.

"Evidence/witness" (2017) is dedicated to the memory of martyrs who lost their lives for the sovereignty and territorial integrity of Azerbaijan. The film focuses on those affected by religious fanaticism and radicalism and enlisted in extremist and terrorist armed units in a number of foreign countries.

"Unity is in our blood" (2018) is about traditions of inter-sectarian unity, solidarity and unity formed in Azerbaijan over the centuries. The main purpose of the documentary is
to highlight the necessity of unity and solidarity and to present the culture of unity existing in our country.

"Future on the horizon" (2018) is about peacefulness and tolerance of the Islamic religion.

"Read" (2019) is dedicated to fighting prejudices and keeping young people away from them. It is about spiritual gaps caused by intellectual darkness, ignorance and threats as a result of the rise of prejudices.

In addition, SCRA publishes "State and Religion" magazine and "Society and Religion" newspaper which also contribute to the wider awareness raising and advocacy. These publications inform their readers about policy and legislature in this field, state-religion relations, measures taken to further promote multicultural and tolerant environment, freedom of religion, as well as consequences of religious radicalism, extremism and attempts of turning religion into the political instrument.

In relation to the Part 5 of the Report of the Special Rapporteur on extrajudicial, summary or arbitrary executions of the Office of the UN High Commissioner for Human Rights, on the use of force by law enforcement officials with regard to persons with psychosocial, intellectual or developmental disabilities (including places of detention) by the lectures with relevant topics were added to the programs and taught as mandatory training and qualification courses organized at the Academy of Justice.

Since 2017, lectures on “Prevention of discrimination under the European Convention on Human Rights (Article 14)” were included in the initial training course for judgeship nominees, the mandatory training for successful candidates for admission to Justice service, qualification courses for employees of the Forensic Examination Center, legal training courses for graduates of the Military Medical Faculty of the Azerbaijan Medical University, who have been newly appointed to service at the Medical Service, and in the training course of the Legal Clinic.

In 2017, trainings on “Property Rights and Prohibition of Discrimination under the European Convention on Human Rights” jointly with Council of Europe and Academy of Justice were held for judges, trainings on “Article 6 (Right to a fair trial) and Article 14 (Prohibition of discrimination) of the European Convention for Human Rights” were organized for advocates.