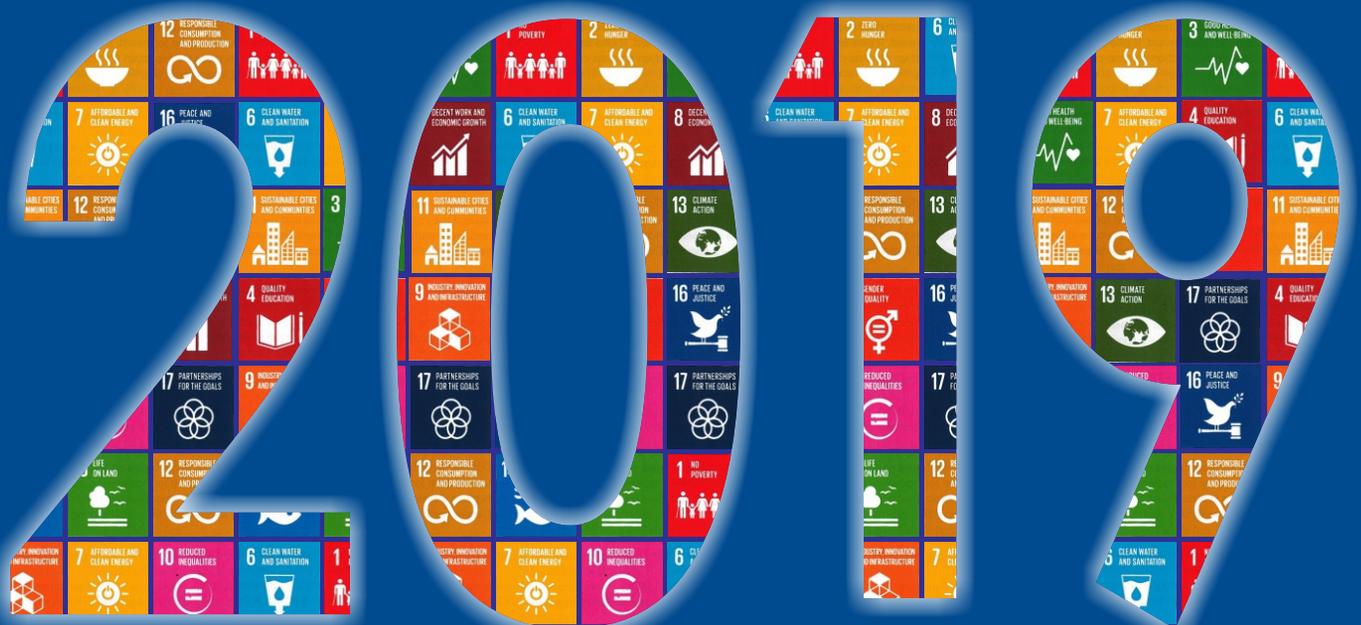




Republic of Azerbaijan

SECOND VOLUNTARY NATIONAL REVIEW

*of the Republic of Azerbaijan on the implementation of
“Transforming our world: the 2030 Agenda for
Sustainable Development”*





**We care about the future of our country,
its long-term and sustainable development**

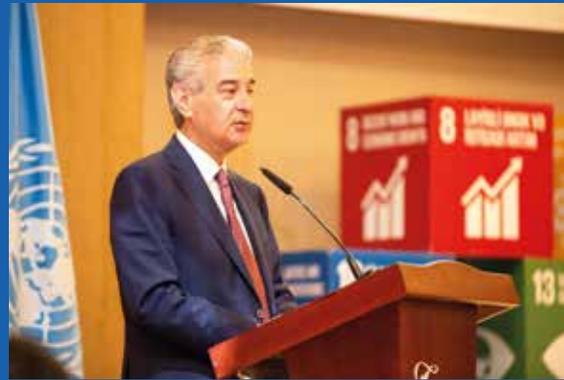
Ilham Aliyev, 

The President of the Republic of Azerbaijan

FOREWORD

Among all of the issues that the world is working on, the implementation of the Agenda for Sustainable Development is of paramount importance. As an essential document addressing major problems relating to issues such as hunger, poverty, women's rights, refugees and IDPs, the environment and injustice, the Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs) reflect crucial issues that need solutions. The goals serve as a milestone for the protection of our world, building an equitable society, full of prosperity, peace and global partnership, and aim to further improve the life quality of the population by ensuring the dynamic development of national economies and reliable solutions for social and environmental problems that face all countries.

Fulfillment of SDG-related commitments is one of the crucial components of Azerbaijan's state policy. Our country has managed to develop rapidly over the last 30 years despite having more than 1 million refugees and IDPs. That is, the socio-economic policy pursued within the past years has led to a high level of development in the country, improved the financial welfare of the population, minimized the poverty rate and helped to turn our country into the political, economic and cultural center of the region and country qualified as high middle income country group by United Nations. As a result, our country



has been able to gain success in all spheres and entered a new phase of development, laying a solid foundation for the sustainable development of the country. Doing Business 2019, a World Bank Group flagship publication, ranked Azerbaijan among the top 10 reformers, and Azerbaijan was recognized as the country with the highest extent of reforms. In the new report, Azerbaijan climbed 32 spots to rank 25th among 190 states this year, topping CIS countries. The Global Competitiveness Report 2018 ranked Azerbaijan 69th among 140 countries, being in the same decile as Turkey, Serbia, Georgia, South African Republic and Croatia. Our country ranked 1st in terms of electricity supply to the population.

Laying the foundations of a sound, enabling environment, including the creation of the National Coordination Council on Sustainable Development (NCCSD), the government has been working with all national and international partners to strengthen its sustainable development policy by ensuring that it is systematic, consistent and SDG oriented.

We have been working to align our policies and national development agenda with SDGs and will continue our efforts in developing and implementing a National Action Plan for the implementation of national SDGs. We have focused on implementing programs and targeted interventions that will result in more economically sound, socially responsive and environmentally friendly results. Priority has been given to improving statistical frameworks, enhancing infrastructure and human capacities towards more detailed data generation, and analysis and strengthening of international partnerships. As a result of intensive consultations with various stakeholders within and outside of the government, 17 SDGs, 88 targets and 119 indicators were deemed a priority for Azerbaijan. Due consideration is given to the “Leaving no one behind” pledge of the 2030 Agenda and the government will

serve to improve the economic and social welfare of the country as a whole, including everyone living in our country, in the spirit of strengthened global solidarity with a special focus on addressing the needs of underprivileged sections of society.

The achievements made by Azerbaijan in such a short period of time give us confidence that we will attain this important mission, and offer hope for a better future for us all. To this end, all world leaders must demonstrate their will and form greater coalition to reduce inequalities between countries, eradicate poverty and hunger, enhance access to quality education, health and other social services, address the challenges faced by vulnerable populations, including refugees and IDPs, and put an end to conflict and war.

Without these, it will be impossible to attain SDGs by 2030.

Ali Ahmadov



**Deputy Prime Minister of the Republic of Azerbaijan,
Chairman of National Coordination Council on Sustainable
Development.**

TABLE OF CONTENTS

| | |
|--|-----------|
| ACRONYMS AND ABBREVIATIONS | 6 |
| HIGHLIGHTS | 7 |
| INTRODUCTION | 11 |
| POLICY AND ENABLING ENVIRONMENT | 12 |
| ■ National ownership of SDGs | 13 |
| ■ Baku Forum on Sustainable Development 2018 | 25 |
| ■ Republic Innovation Contest on SDGs | 30 |
| ■ Mainstreaming of SDGs into national development agenda and integrating three dimensions of sustainable development | 34 |
| ■ Leaving no one behind | 43 |
| ■ Institutional mechanisms | 47 |
| RESULTS OF ANALYSES AND EVALUATION OF MAPS MISSION AND FAO ON IMPLEMENTATION OF 2030 AGENDA FOR SUSTAINABLE DEVELOPMENT IN AZERBAIJAN | 50 |
| ■ Conclusions and recommendations of the evaluation by MAPS Mission on prioritization and alignment of SDGs to the state programs and other policy documents | 51 |
| ■ “Conclusions and recommendations of the evaluation by FAO on prioritization and alignment of SDGs to the state programs and other policy documents. | 53 |
| PROGRESS IN THEMATIC GOALS AND TARGETS | 56 |
| ■ SDG 4 | 57 |
| ■ SDG 8 | 73 |
| ■ SDG 10 | 84 |

| | |
|--|------------|
| ■ SDG 13 | 92 |
| ■ SDG 16 | 98 |
| ■ SDG 17 | 111 |
| STRENGTHENING MEANS OF IMPLEMENTATION OF SUSTAINABLE DEVELOPMENT FOR THE GLOBAL PARTNERSHIP | 124 |
| ■ Strengthen the means of implementation | 125 |
| ■ Revitalizing global partnership for sustainable development | 126 |
| WAY FORWARD | 130 |
| LESSONS LEARNED AND POLICY RECOMMENDATIONS | 132 |
| ANNEX | 134 |

ACRONYMS AND ABBREVIATIONS

| | |
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| AIDA | Azerbaijan International Development Agency |
| BSEC | Organization of the Black Sea Economic Cooperation |
| CIS | Commonwealth of Independent States |
| CoE | Council of Europe |
| CoM | Cabinet of Ministers of the Republic of Azerbaijan |
| EDF | Entrepreneurship Development Fund of the Republic of Azerbaijan |
| EU | European Union |
| FAO | United Nations Food and Agriculture Organization |
| GDP | Gross Domestic Product |
| GPI | Global Partnership Initiative |
| GUAM | Organization for Democracy and Economic Development |
| ICT | Information and Communication Technologies |
| IPU | Inter-Parliamentary Union |
| MAPS | Mainstreaming, Acceleration and Policy Support Mission |
| MCT | Ministry of Culture and Tourism of the Republic of Azerbaijan |
| MDG | Millenium Development Goal |
| MENR | Ministry of Ecology and Natural Resources of the Republic of Azerbaijan |
| MLSSP | Ministry of Labour and Social Protection of Population of the Republic of Azerbaijan |
| MoA | Ministry of Agriculture of the Republic of Azerbaijan |
| MoE | Ministry of Economy of the Republic of Azerbaijan |
| MoED | Ministry of Education of the Republic of Azerbaijan |
| MoF | Ministry of Finance of the Republic of Azerbaijan |
| MoH | Ministry of Health of the Republic of Azerbaijan |
| MoT | Ministry of Taxes of the Republic of Azerbaijan |
| NATO | North Atlantic Treaty Organization |
| NCCSD | National Coordination Council on Sustainable Development of the Republic of Azerbaijan |
| NGO | Non-governmental organization |
| OSCE | Organization for Security and Cooperation in Europe |
| RIA | Rapid Integrated Assessment |
| SCFWCA | State Committee for Family, Women and Children's Affairs of the Republic of Azerbaijan |
| SDG | Sustainable Development Goal |
| SME | Small and Medium-sized Enterprise |
| SSC | State Statistical Committee of the Republic of Azerbaijan |
| TSSA | Targeted State Social Assistance |
| UN | United Nations |
| UNDP | United Nations Development Programme |
| UNICEF | United Nations Children Fund |
| VNR | Voluntary National Review |

Highlights

This review describes actions taken in the Republic of Azerbaijan to achieve SDGs, explains how the government responded to the integrated and indivisible nature of SDGs and the concept of “Leaving no one behind”, reflects the best practices, lessons learned, implementation tools, international partnerships, emerging challenges and the best practices used to address these challenges and future steps.

Based on its experience in attainment of (MDGs), Azerbaijan intends to be one of the countries that is leading the way in terms of achieving SDGs. The Government of Azerbaijan takes a responsible approach to its SDG-related commitments and has mobilized all forces to ensure fulfilment of these commitments. In line with the socially-oriented policy pursued in the country and the principle of “Leaving no one behind”, purposeful steps have been taken towards strengthening social protection measures and improving the living conditions of vulnerable groups. These measures are taken in tandem with our targeted interventions in other areas, including environment protection and fighting climate change and

disasters in partnership with internal and external stakeholders.

Azerbaijan nationalized SDGs and prioritized 17 SDG goals, 88 targets and 119 indicators based on joint work with public institutions as well as a series of consultations with the civil society, business community, youth and international organizations. Four thematic Working Groups were established under the umbrella of NCCSD and have formed a collective approach to not only holding extensive discussions on SDGs but also ensuring the alignment of the state socio-economic programs and strategies with SDGs. The four SDG Working Groups (i) social, (ii) economic, (iii) environment, and (iv) monitoring are also responsible for providing policy advice to decision makers to better mainstream, implement, monitor and report on the progress made on SDGs.

Azerbaijan also identified SDG accelerators with the assistance of the United Nations Mainstreaming, Acceleration and Policy Support (MAPS) mission lead by UNDP. MAPS identified (i) Inclusive Labour Market, (ii) Green Growth Promotion, and

(iii) Enhancing Public Services as the main accelerators, and Gender Equality, Youth Empowerment, Energy Efficiency, Social Protection, Early Childhood Development as proxies of these accelerators. MAPS mission assessments and results have been approved by the government and regarded as the guiding document for government agencies' planning and implementation of development programmes to achieve SDGs. MAPS mission further describes preconditions to boost SDG mainstreaming, data and monitoring, financing of SDGs, advocacy, communications and partnerships. Azerbaijan has embraced these recommendations and as results the following are at the forefront of the government's Agenda for achieving SDGs:

- Consider lessons learned from MDGs period – take action in transitioning from MDGs to SDGs in terms of “unfinished” business and SDG coordination, monitoring and reporting mechanism;
- Develop a new National Development Strategy 2030 considering the possibility of a more coherent approach for crafting national strategic documents until 2030;
- Assess availability of budget means for implementing strategies that is aligned with SDGs;
- Select several Key National Development Priorities as accelerators for SDGs.

As a follow-up to MAPS mission aimed at providing technical and policy support to adaptation of SDGs to national priorities in Azerbaijan, FAO Office in Azerbaijan carried out a study titled “Supporting capacity development in implementing Sustainable Development Goals in Azerbaijan” and issued a report in line with the mandate of FAO. According to the study, the Government of Azerbaijan has carried out sufficiently effective activities to ensure more effective nationalization and adaptation of SDGs to the national development policy. The alignment rate of the SDG targets within FAO mandate with the existing state programs and strategic documents was found to be 80 percent (18 out of 23 targets).

Development cooperation and partnership are given top priority to build bigger coalition with national and international stakeholders and partners for achieving SDGs. Azerbaijan and United Nations Economic Commission for Europe (UNECE) signed a Joint Declaration on cooperation for SDGs implementation. Azerbaijan also promotes south-south cooperation; the first Baku forum on Sustainable Development was organized in 2018 with the participation of representatives from 30 countries; as a result of the forum, the Baku Principles for better implementation of SDGs were adopted.

The NCCSD and UN system in Azerbaijan continued to co-organize SDG-related platforms engaging various stakeholders and segments of the society. To promote innovation for Sustainable Development, NCCSD in conjunction with UNDP, for

the third year in row, co-organized the National Innovation Contest with the aim of finding innovative and practical solutions to the achievement of SDGs. Stakeholder engagement initiatives have been intensified to include engaging youth and civil society as well as the organization of constructive dialogue between public and private sectors on SDGs. Most of these initiatives have been organized with close cooperation of UNDP country Office through the “Support in the Implementation of National SDG Strategy” project.

Azerbaijan faces the following challenges towards the acceleration of the SDG implementation process:

- The Armenia-Azerbaijan Nagorno-Karabakh conflict represents a serious threat to peace, security and cooperation in the South Caucasus. Armenia continues to use military force against Azerbaijan by occupying one fifth of its territory and preventing the Azerbaijani internally displaced population from returning to their homes. It disregards the UN Security Council resolutions 822 (1993), 853 (1993), 874 (1993) and 884 (1993), which reaffirm that the Nagorno- Karabakh region is an inalienable part of Azerbaijan and call for immediate, full and unconditional withdrawal of the occupying forces from all occupied territories of Azerbaijan. With a view of sustaining the status-quo of occupation, Armenia systematically conducts illegal economic activities, including pillaging of natural resources, transfers ethnic Armenians from
- abroad into the occupied territories and changes the Azerbaijani ethno-cultural features of these territories. By exercising effective control over the occupied territories, it also carries out large scale illicit diversion of arms and munitions to, promotes drugs trafficking, arm smuggling and money laundering in these territories. These activities seriously undermine efforts to achieve SDG 16, which, inter alia, aims at reducing illicit financial and arms flows. Addressing the challenges associated with the conflict through its lasting political settlement in accordance with the above-mentioned UN Security Council Resolutions will be a significant contribution to the implementation of SDGs.
- There is a need to increase efforts towards the acceleration of the development and diversification of non-oil sectors in the national economy, strengthening of innovation and export potential, enhancement of the effectiveness of social services and consolidation of environmental safety;
- It is necessary to consistently improve the collection and analysis of sustainable development data and develop capacity to produce and analyze more detailed data disaggregated by gender, ethnicity, age, location (urban/rural), sector and regions/administrative districts;
- Best international practices have shown that issues such as the creation of direct SDG funding

mechanisms, building of efficient partnership between stakeholders and mobilization of their capacities may play a key role in the process of SDG attainment. In terms of needed best international practices, the creation of a direct financing mechanism for SDGs, building constructive partnerships between stakeholders and the mobilization of their capacities are of special importance for Azerbaijan as these mechanisms play a crucial role in the achievement of SDGs.

Finding solutions to these challenges is considered important in terms of accelerating the progress of SDG implementation in the country and they have been taken into account for planned next stages. We seek the attention of the international community in joining our efforts to find solutions to aforementioned challenges and to enhance cooperation with international partners with regards to applying the best practices for the attainment of SDGs.

INTRODUCTION

This review was prepared with the aim of providing an overview of the efforts made by Azerbaijan with respect to policy pursued for the achievement of SDGs given the commitment to make progress towards the 2030 Agenda. This edition of Voluntary National Review (VNR) is composed of progress concerning the enabling environment including national ownership of SDGs, participation and awareness raising, nationalization of global SDGs and prioritizing relevant targets and indicators thereof, mainstreaming of SDGs into the national development agenda, integration of three dimensions of sustainable development, “Leaving no one behind” principle, institutional mechanisms, structural issues and implementation tools and resources.

The preparation of this review was led by the Ministry of Economy (MoE) of the Republic of Azerbaijan which also serves as the secretariat of the National Coordination Council on Sustainable Development (NCCSD). The review was conducted in close collaboration with NCCSD SDG Working Groups composed of technical experts and representatives of various state institutions, as well as academia, civil society organizations, the private sector, youth organizations, international partners and think tanks.

The methodology of the review is based on UNDESA and UN Secretary General Guidelines and recommendations of other

UN specialized agencies. The information compiled here is based on global and national resources, data collected from relevant state agencies, private sector and online surveys.

Special attention was given to (i) universality, (ii) “Leaving no one behind”, (iii) “integration and indivisibility”, (iv) “commitment to human rights”, and (v) “national ownership” principles of the 2030 Agenda as we believe they are the backbone of the review preparation process as we track progress made towards the achievement of SDGs.

The review serves to characterize the current situation in the country with respect to SDGs, evaluate goals according to a thematic plan and partnership mechanisms, share best practices, communicate lessons learned to national and international partners, highlight challenges and essential targeted interventions that need support. The final part of the review captures key findings of the analysis, recommendations on relevant policies, experiences gained, challenges faced, next steps in 2019 and beyond, and support required for better implementation of SDGs and development of such annual and biannual reviews moving forward. The main body of the review is complemented by a large statistical data set including statistics on targets and indicators, details of national SDGs priorities, relevant policies, and feedback of various stakeholders in line with the review.

**POLICY AND
ENABLING
ENVIRONMENT**

■ National ownership of SDGs

Ownership, participation and public awareness raising

Azerbaijan, like other countries, started the implementation of SDGs with national ownership. National ownership requires the participation of all stakeholders, including central and local executive authorities and legislative bodies, academia, civil society and private sector in the process of implementation of SDGs and preparation of related reports. According to the principle of “leaving no one behind”, it is crucial to create opportunities for different vulnerable groups, especially for elderly people, people with disabilities, children, women, youth, refugees and IDPs to be closely involved in these processes, and for all citizens, in general, to directly participate in this process.

It is gratifying that there is a great interest in the Republic of Azerbaijan for the 2030 Agenda as a global development program, and all partners recognize the relevance of the SDGs for the country. All state bodies are willing to support integration of the SDGs into their activities and policies. The Government views the national process on the SDGs as a good opportunity to encourage the local stakeholders’ participation in the dialogue and cooperation for sustainable development. Efforts in this direction are currently ongoing through various dialogue formats. Criteria used as a guide here are joint participation, flexible management, transparency and accountability.

National ownership of SDGs was further strengthened in Azerbaijan in 2018. A number of important measures were taken towards implementation of the SDGs in the

country in 2018. Among them, the following can be particularly highlighted.

On February 14, 2018, a broad consultation workshop was conducted on nationalization of SDGs and the results of the MAPS Report with the participation of the UNDP Regional Bureau for Europe and the Commonwealth of Independent States, the UNDP office in Azerbaijan, the Ministry of Economy, the heads of UN specialized agencies’ country offices in Azerbaijan, as well as the head and representatives of the working groups on SDGs. At the workshop, such issues addressed in the report as inclusive labor markets, support for environmentally cleaner and greener growth, and improvement of the provision of social services were discussed, the MAPS Mission’s proposals related to selection, coordination and monitoring of SDG accelerators were heard, and a new document as a follow-up to the “Azerbaijan 2020: Look into the Future” Development Concept was recommended to be developed.

It should be noted that the SDG targets adopted by the member states in accordance with the UN’s recommendations should be integrated into the policy documents implemented at the national level. As stated above, one of the main recommended actions is the development of a new development strategy for the attainment of the targets that are left out of possible adaptation. The main objective is to achieve the goals identified as targets within a period of 15 years thereby improving the well-being of all people living in the country.

To this end, an international workshop on nationalization and prioritization of SDGs was co-organized by the Ministry of Economy and the UN Office in Azerbaijan on July 2-4, 2018, as a follow-up to the measures to nationalize the SDGs. The

workshop was attended by state bodies, the UN's specialized agencies, as well as civil society and media representatives. At the workshop, extensive discussions were conducted with the participation of the UN's high-level experts about fulfilment of the obligations arising from the 2030 Agenda, alignment of the state programs in socio-economic areas with the SDGs, as well as identification of national priorities for sustainable development and their corresponding indicators.

One of the main targets identified in the 2030 Agenda is to enhance the Global Partnership for Sustainable Development, complemented by multi-stakeholder partnerships that mobilize and share knowledge, expertise, technology and financial resources, to support the achievement of the Sustainable Development Goals in all countries, in particular developing countries. Driven by this principle, a range of awareness raising activities co-organized by the UN's specialized agencies operating in Azerbaijan and the Ministry of Economy (Secretariat of the Council) were implemented for adaptation of the SDGs to the national priorities.

In this connection, a letter of agreement was signed between the FAO and the Centre for Development Research of the University of Natural Resources and Life Sciences, Vienna (BOKU) for implementation of the project "Supporting capacity development in implementing Sustainable Development Goals in Azerbaijan" in December 2017 as part of the FAO's support to the Government of Azerbaijan for implementation of the SDGs. The objective of the above-mentioned project was the analyses of the general situation and gaps in the areas of agriculture, food security, fishery and forestry in Azerbaijan in light of the SDGs.

Furthermore, in the framework of the project: a national workshop on accelerating the contribution of sustainable food and agriculture to the achievement of the SDGs in Azerbaijan was organized with the participation of public and private sector representatives on September 24, 2018; a Conference on the role of the Milli Majlis (Parliament) in the implementation of the SDGs in Azerbaijan was held on September 25, 2018 in order to support development of the capacity related to the process of nationalization and prioritization of SDGs in Azerbaijan; and, regional workshops



on contribution of local Public-Private-People Partnerships (4P) in accelerating the implementation of Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs) were organized in Ismayilli and Khachmaz cities on September 27-28, 2018.

In addition, the meeting of the working groups on Economic development and decent employment, Social issues, Environmental issues and Monitoring and evaluation was held on October 12, 2018, with the aim of completing the process of nationalizing the targets and indicators of the global SDGs, identifying the accelerators and including them in the country's development agenda. As a result of the discussions, the final draft of the goals, targets and indicators for Azerbaijan was developed.

The Government of Azerbaijan considers the national SDG process as an opportunity to enhance the capacities of a wide range of stakeholders in the country, support national participatory dialogue and facilitate broader partnership on sustainable development. Inspired by the "leaving no one behind" principle of SDGs, the National Coordination Council on Sustainable Development of the Republic of Azerbaijan, which is committed to involve all stakeholders in achievement of SDGs, has conducted group discussions on SDG implementation in partnership with the UN Office in Azerbaijan. The discussions were attended by representatives of diverse groups of the society including academia, civil society, women, youth, and parliament.

Awareness raising activities in this area were continued in 2018. On May 21, 2018, an international conference titled "Towards the Sustainable Development Goals: Promotion of sustainable development and decent work" was held in Baku. The

main objective of the conference was to promote the SDGs, in particular SDG 8, and to discuss the ways of addressing the challenges encountered in this direction. During the conference, panel meetings were held on the topics of "Desirable future of labor," "How to ensure that the economic growth is inclusive, sustainable and rich in terms of job creation," "Transition from informal economy to formal economy" and "Introduction of a monitoring system for SDGs," and reports and presentations on the relevant topics were demonstrated. In the course of the discussions, it was emphasized that SDG 8 was one of the key objectives of the successful state policy implemented in Azerbaijan, and important steps were being taken in this direction in our country.

To promote the advocacy of SDGs and find innovative solution on this way as the Secretariat of NCCSD (Ministry of Economy), we showed profound intentions for collaboration among business and innovation activity players. Within this framework we have close cooperation with "Innoland" incubation and acceleration center which provides technical and mentor support for start-ups whose technologies and innovations can be applied in areas of SDG activities. To encourage innovation and expand the startup movement which will be locomotive of cooperation between the parties.

On May 30, 2018, the Fifth Women's Forum dedicated to the 100th anniversary of granting suffrage to women in Azerbaijan was conducted. During the third panel titled "Women in the economy: new opportunities and challenges," discussions were held on the following topics: Empowerment of rural and regional women in decision-making and ensuring their economic rights; Sustainable development and knowledge economy in gender



theoretical-legal paradigms; Impact of the economic empowerment of women based on the principle of “leaving no one behind” on the development of entrepreneurship; Role of Azerbaijani women in leading companies and their prospects for innovative development; and, Recent problems, prospects and new trends in the development of women’s entrepreneurship.

On July 5, 2018, a Women’s Regional Conference titled “Towards Sustainable Development: Promoting Rural Women’s Leadership and Economic Empowerment” was held in Salyan city of Azerbaijan. The key objective of the event was to provide, based on the principle of “leaving no one behind,” a platform for rural women to voice their issues and challenges, and help the Government mainstream rural women’s priorities into national policy-making.

A project titled “World’s Largest Lesson” dedicated to promotion of SDGs was implemented in a number of secondary schools of our country through a partnership between the IDEA Public Union, UNICEF Office in Azerbaijan and the Ministry of Education.

IDEA and UNICEF have developed and published the necessary textbooks in

the Azerbaijani language for conducting the lessons in our country’s schools. For one week starting from September 24, training sessions were organized with the participation of the Ministry of Education for the teachers of 20 secondary schools of Baku and Khachmaz on how to teach “World’s Largest Lesson,” and later, the trained teachers taught the abovementioned lesson to their pupils. Ultimately, the schools involved in the project were tagged on the world map placed on the website of the “World’s Largest Lesson.” The initiative was wrapped up with a final ceremony held with the participation of high-level representatives of the Ministry of Education, UNICEF and IDEA.

As part of the “World’s Largest Lesson” initiative launched in 2015, millions of children and youths from more than 130 countries have so far been informed about the Sustainable Development Goals, including the environmental, social and economic challenges and targets set forth, and learned about how they can contribute to these goals.

On September 26, 2018, the State Statistics Committee of the Republic of Azerbaijan conducted a workshop, in cooperation with the FAO, in the framework of the project titled “Strengthening the government’s

capacity to produce quality data for monitoring Sustainable Development Goals.” The event touched upon all stages of production and exchange of representative data on the existing indicators for monitoring and assessment in the areas of food security of the population, food loss, productivity of agricultural producers, genetic resources of plant and animal origin intended for agricultural and food production, lands suitable for agriculture in terms of sustainable development, price fluctuations in the food market, changes in the efficiency of water use, water stress, fish stocks within biologically sustainable levels, environmentally sound fishing, and sustainable forest management.

A series of training sessions for the teachers in the field of environmental education of the child and youth development centers of the Ministry of Education were conducted in another region of Azerbaijan, in the city of Lankaran, on October 8-10, 2018, and in Baku on October 15-19, 2018. This initiative is part of the “Environmental education for sustainable development” project implemented by UNICEF and Ministry of Education of the Republic of Azerbaijan, and has been adapted to the “National

Strategy for 2017-2020 on the conservation and sustainable use of biodiversity in the Republic of Azerbaijan.”

An active advocacy and communication campaign was conducted in Baku to draw public attention to environmental problems. As part of this campaign, a documentary film contest was announced among the schoolchildren of grades 6-9. The winners of the contest were chosen based on the criteria of best filming of the problems of air pollution, climate change, inefficient use of natural resources, increased droughts, deforestation, reduced availability of drinking water, etc. On November 21, 2018, an award ceremony was held in Nizami Cinema Center with the participation of high-ranking representatives of UNICEF and the Ministry of Education.

On December 20, 2018, an event titled “Sustainable Development Goals for youth” was held at the headquarters of the New Azerbaijan Party. The event discussed the role of the youth in the implementation of SDG 4 and SDG 8 in the context of government, parliament and international organizations.



Businesses at the Core of SDG Development

The novelty of the SDGs lies in their ultimate goal of prompting a paradigm shift, because safeguarding a sustainable future requires not only the commitment by the governments or policymakers, but a multi-stakeholder approach involving businesses and even individuals. Successful implementation of the SDGs cannot be ensured without active participation of various other actors along with the governments. The Government of Azerbaijan also believes that businesses operating both in public and private sectors are indisputable change agents for a transition towards more sustainable economic growth supporting income generation, technology transfer, and job creation. Products and services offered by businesses operating in various sectors contribute to the multiplier effect magnifying the impact on the whole economy. As an example – focusing on technology transfer will improve the quality and productivity of goods and services offered, thereby attracting more customers, creating new job opportunities and contributing to a further expansion of the business environment. Investments made to support local community development, including infrastructural and urbanization initiatives, will open doors to an increased number of highly skilled potential recruits and create a more vibrant economy presenting a range of financial and social benefits. The comparative advantage that businesses hold in terms of SDG development is that realizing profitable and deliberate decisions concerning core business investments, operations and value chains will create a financially sustainable and potentially scalable multiplier effect in the long-term.

Setting the Scene

The Government of the Republic of Azerbaijan acknowledges the crucial role of legislative framework, including policies and regulations in the areas of business registration, investment contracts, project development and operations, trade, taxes, labor, consumer protection, natural resources and the environment, as well as social and economic development, to support the contribution of businesses to SDG development. To facilitate businesses' participation and create a sustainable growth climate by changing the country's economic model to non-oil, private sector and SME-led growth, the Government of Azerbaijan has adopted ambitious ***Strategic Roadmaps in December 2016, defining short-term (2020), medium-term (2025) and long-term agendas.*** The renewed momentum for the country's agenda of structural reforms and economic diversification emerged from the recessionary environment coupled with the continuing fall in oil prices. A number of new legislative acts have also been introduced over the past years to harmonize the local legislative framework with internationally adopted guidelines and regulations, and accelerate the sustainable growth of the local economy.

- National Parliament adopted a new Act No. 1433-VQD in December 2018 that creates a framework for participation of SMEs in public procurement procedures. The act is expected to contribute to the transparency of trading relationships between the local parties.
- President of Azerbaijan Republic established an Agency on Development of Micro, Small and Medium Enterprises in June 2018, thereby significantly

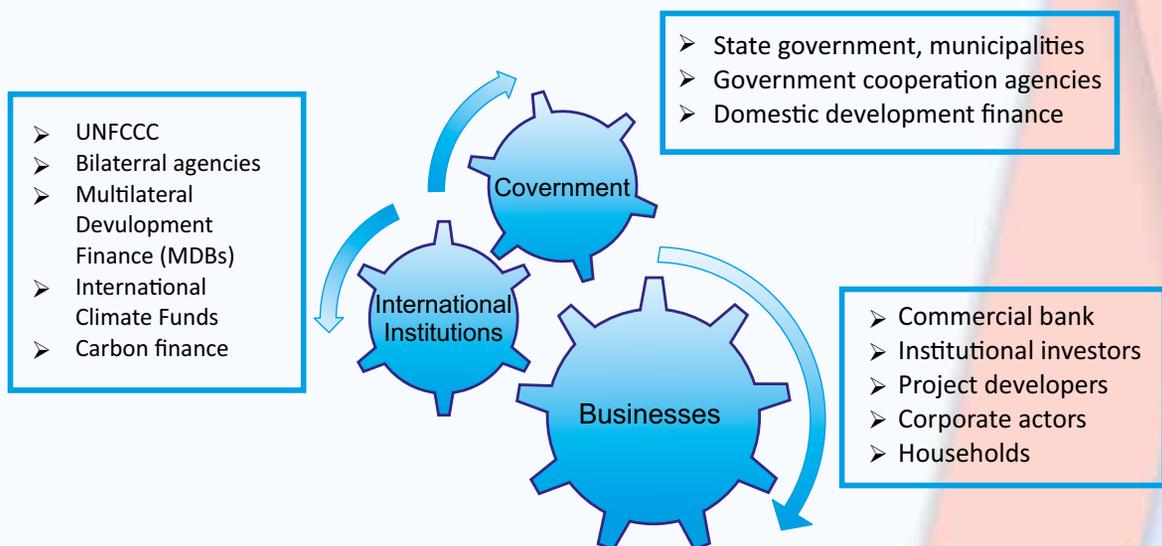
simplifying procedures for registration, reporting, obtaining of licenses and permits, etc.

- National Parliament adopted a new Law No. 1143-VQ on “Free Economic Zone of Alat”, establishing a legal framework for functioning of a free economic zone (FEZ) on the territory of Azerbaijan. The FEZ is expected to attract both local and foreign investors and give a significant boost to the local economy.
- National Parliament made amendment to the Law No. 1140-VQ on “Accounting” in October 2018, completely revising accounting requirements in Azerbaijan, abolishing National Accounting Standards, envisaging application of IFRS for corporations and SMEs, and renewing the requirements for certified accountant profession.
- President of Azerbaijan Republic signed the Decree No. 413 on Optimization of State Support and Leasing in Agriculture in December 2018, establishing a framework for disbursement and utilization of funds disbursed by

the Agency on Agro-Credits and Development with involvement of banks and other loan institutions.

- ❖ President of Azerbaijan Republic signed the Decree No. 497 on Additional Measures for Supporting Competitive Domestic Production in December 2018, introducing a number of new measures aimed at supporting production by domestic SMEs and private companies operating in non-oil sector. This Decree regulates loan financing, export and technology transfer.
- ❖ National Parliament adopted a new Law No. 1175-VQ on Environmental Impact Assessment in December 2018, which is expected to strengthen the protection of environment.

As illustrated below a strong union between the government, international institutions, donor organizations and businesses, is needed to accelerate the transition into the next level where all stakeholders will cooperate to achieve the SDGs.



Starting from the last decade, the public-sector expenditures, hence the role of the Government in overall economy of Azerbaijan has been gradually rising, except a minor decrease in 2009 due to ongoing global financial crisis, until a drastic plunge of oil prices in 2014. In the following years – namely in 2014, 2015 and 2016, this anticipated decline caused a gradual shift of the local economy from its softly dependence on the public sector to an economy increasingly reliant on the private sector. Considering private sector is less dependent on oil prices, unlike the public sector, this trend is expected to create a much more balanced and secure economy.

Considering the situation in Azerbaijan – i.e. that 35% of GDP and net export income are generated by energy and natural resources sector, while along with substantial economic and social contributions the industry has a significant negative impact on the environment, this creates a challenge for the Government of Azerbaijan to transition into a low carbon economy while maintaining the economic surplus. According to the State Statistic Committee, 63% of GHG emissions in Azerbaijan originate from energy and natural resources

industry, whereas the household emissions accounted only for 12% of GHG emissions (State Statistics Committee of Azerbaijan, 2017). This is a clear indication that by means of sound policies and regulations targeting business activities, significant reductions in total GHG emissions can be achieved. A bright example of this is how SOCAR has adopted a proactive approach to reduce GHG emissions and utilize flared Associated Petroleum Gas (APG). With assistance of Global Gas Flaring Reduction (GGFR) partnership, which includes almost 30 governments and oil companies, SOCAR has identified existing gas flaring sources, measured volumes of flared gas, prepared an Associated Gas Recovery Plan (AGRP), defined the measures and budget required for the utilization of the gas, and launched the AGRP's implementation (World Bank, 2017). It is evident that such joint projects will accelerate and drive the much needed advancement in terms of environmental performance.

Hence, main challenges standing in front of Azerbaijani government to achieve SDGs for next years are to preserve its macroeconomic stability by allocating resources in a manner to increase the

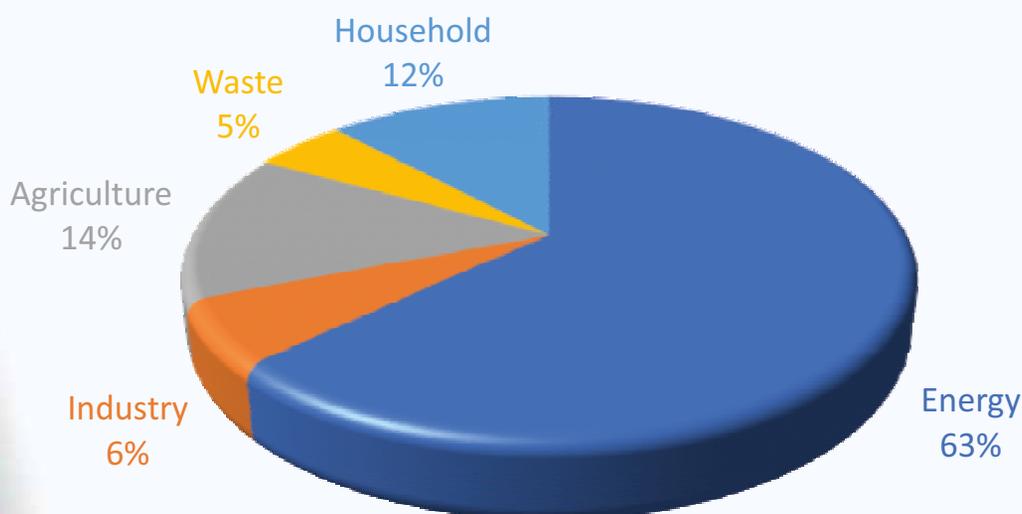


Figure 2. State Statistics Committee of Azerbaijan, 2017.

share of private sector in overall economy, reducing the economic dependency on oil and gas production and integrating sustainability practices into overall business operations by sound legislation and regulations.

Along with being major actors in the economic arena of Azerbaijan, SOEs are equally vital for the social wellbeing of the residents of Azerbaijan not in the least because they are mostly engaged in the provision of essential infrastructure and related services which are vital for a healthy and civilized society, such as electricity, gas, water, airports, seaports, rail, etc. Additionally, next to being significant providers of infrastructure, the SOE sector is also an important sector as it employs a significant share of the workforce in Azerbaijan, namely more than 87.8 thousand persons (The State Statistics Committee of Azerbaijan, 2017) which is approximately 44.5% of the people employed in the industrial sector.

This social factor in its turn contributes to the rationale for SOEs to set and achieve sustainability objectives, ensure that all residents have access to the relevant infrastructure and services at competitive prices, and provide a basis for their stakeholders to make informed decisions as to further investments or the potential disposal of state assets by establishing a transparent and comprehensive reporting on both their financial and nonfinancial indicators.

Environmental outlook

The Government of Azerbaijan acknowledges the role of State-Owned Enterprises to achieve the long-term decarbonization required by the SDGs. SOEs have an essential role to play in the low-

carbon transition as they remain prominent actors of the energy market in the country. Given the fact that some of the largest 20 SOEs are engaged in activities such as extraction of natural resources (oil & gas), energy and water, their operations affect the climate and environment of Azerbaijan. Current situation undermines realization of SDGs primarily concerning SDG 7 (Affordable and Clean Energy) and SDG 13 (Climate Action). Some of the key findings are summarized below:

- Although SOEs are subject to same tax liabilities as private companies, no policy has been developed to implement tax discount and financial incentives program in case of reaching below-industry environmental indicators – i.e. energy efficiency, share of renewable energy, etc.
- Challenges exist with respect to voluntary standards, codes and principles of responsible and sustainable business conduct.
- The renewable share of Azerbaijan on electricity production remained at 8.1%, produced from hydro, solar, wind power and waste incineration.

Although business growth in general is tied to the achievement of the SDGs at a macro level, to take action at a local/micro level SOEs in Azerbaijan in particular, should identify how they can contribute to meeting goals in a way that drives financial performance in the markets they operate in. Nonfinancial reporting is one of the most effective tools for both SOEs and private companies to communicate their commitment to the SDGs and report on the progress so far. Currently two of the largest SOEs in Azerbaijan, namely SOCAR and Azerbaijan Caspian Shipping Company, are

publishing sustainability reports. However, to reach a distinguishable difference on a macrolevel more active participation both from the SOEs and private companies is required, and to achieve this a binding legislation should be in place. The Government acknowledges this, and to adopt respective laws is in Agenda as well.

Private Companies and SMEs Economic and social outlook

Contribution of private sector was defined as one of the key development targets of the Strategic Roadmaps adopted by the Government of Azerbaijan. According to the State Statistics Committee of the Republic of Azerbaijan, the GDP share of private sector totaled 83.8% in 2017.

The private sector of Azerbaijan has competencies, which can make a unique contribution to the adaptation of the SDGs, through innovative technology, design of resilient infrastructure, development and implementation of improved information systems and the management of major projects. The sector also substantially contributes to the social factor of the country by diversifying the economy and creating new job opportunities, particularly in the non-oil sector. The private sector is crucially important for the tourism industry of Azerbaijan which has also been on the strategic development agenda of the Government.

The main key barriers consist of lack of capacity to assess and manage integration of the SDGs within private supply chains, and a limited understanding amongst companies of the potential commercial opportunities that arise as a result. It is also in the Agenda of the Government to implement capacity building measures towards this.

Environmental outlook

The environmental accountability and nonfinancial reporting is at its earliest stages with very small number of private sector players reporting on their nonfinancial indicators. Most corporate citizens perceive the SDGs to be either irrelevance or at best an extension of their Corporate Social Responsibility. A key objective of the National Coordination Council on Sustainable Development is to assess why the businesses are so disengaged from the incorporation of SDGs and what policy measures, both by the Government of Azerbaijan, and also the development partners can be taken. There are future investment opportunities in adaptation in water resources, agriculture and environmental services. In agriculture, investment may be needed for developing irrigation equipment and technologies as well as fertilizers. Provision of clean water is another opportunity, requiring investment in water purification and treatment technologies such as desalination, and wastewater treatment technologies. Environmental services such as weather derivatives are also a possible area for investment.

Development Strategy

It is evident that without a strong regulatory push Azerbaijan will not have a path to implement the SDGs agenda. National plans can serve as a guide for both the public and private sector to align business interests with the needs and priorities identified by the Government of Azerbaijan. Starting with national priorities, partnerships can be built from the beginning on a clear, shared sense of purpose and common objectives. The rationale behind such partnerships is a public-private partnerships (PPP) to achieve

national level sustainability priorities, and establishment of platforms for ongoing discussion on cross-sectoral alignments.

In terms of future policy steps in Azerbaijan, a few concepts emerge which are useful as future objectives:

Acknowledging that a multi-sectoral collaboration is needed to effectively attract foreign investment, a forum to establish a dialogue between the Government and the businesses is in the short-term Agenda of the Government. The dialogue will ideally include academic and civil society as well.

As the carbon market provides incentives and rewards for innovation, finding ways of rewarding both public and private sector actions which enhance adaptation will be necessary to massively upscale both sectors' engagement.

The need to fill information gaps and build awareness by identifying immediate adaptation priorities and as a next step publicize these needs in a form that will encourage business engagement.

As part of this VNR preparation process major highlight areas have been identified below that need to be addressed:

- **Overcoming information gaps:** More effective communication of sustainability issues and opportunities to the key decision makers in Azerbaijani corporations. Broad based information dissemination needs to be supplemented by a more targeted approach. SDG cell or strategy unit should be set up in leading corporations to develop capacity and expertise in addressing opportunities.

- **Regional and global success stories:** Another important potential tool to motivate the private sector is to be more aware of the successful and commercially viable investments and initiatives by other corporations in the region or even globally. This will ensure greater confidence as well as a template or business model that can be followed.
- **Changing the economics of SDG investments:** This can be done by a number of ways including the tax regime, low cost debt financing, equity investments and even sharing of R&D costs.
- **Building partnerships:** Players such as international financial institutions, donor organizations, NGOs, etc. should cooperate with the Government in a more focused and targeted manner to build partnerships with the businesses towards the SDGs.
- **Non-financial reporting at the heart of data management:** Along with relevant updates to the legislative framework regarding nonfinancial performance and reporting, international financial institutions and donor organizations should also accelerate the changes needed to achieve the SDGs that the Government has committed to.

It is undeniable fact the business has a key role to play as an engine of the effective implementation of 2030 Agenda on Sustainable Development Goals.

That is why, Government of Azerbaijan confirms that investment in the SDGs accelerators require a sound, effective and productive partnership between the public and private sectors. Certainly, this in turn can facilitate a sound regulatory



environment, unlock systematic public-private sector collaboration, and identify short-term and long-term investment opportunities for both public and private sectors.

To this effect, the National Coordination Council for Sustainable Development (NCCSD) in close collaboration with the

United Nations Development Program (UNDP) organized a dialogue between the private sector and the government in order to exchange information and identify areas of collaboration and potential synergies in the year of 2019.

With the inception of this inaugural dialogue platform, Azerbaijan sets out a

strategic course to engage the country's vibrant business community in a joint action with the Government to address some of the most pressing challenges of our time, from poverty reduction to gender equality and greener economy.

The event featured stimulating panel discussions, with insights from private sector representatives about investment and partnership opportunities for the achievement of the SDGs, specifically focusing on inclusive labor markets, innovations, big data and gender equality.

The first public-private sector dialogue on the SDGs launched in May 2019, became a platform for building synergies between the Government and the private sector resulting in the development of Azerbaijan's first of its kind Roadmap or Action Plan on Public-Private Sector Engagement and Partnership for the SDGs.

■ Baku Forum on Sustainable Development 2018

Implementation of the 2030 Agenda requires a consistent and integrated approach at national, regional and global levels from the perspective of a concerted action of all countries in addressing global challenges through common partnership and taking decisive steps in transforming our planet into a healthy and safe place. This is why the international links between the social, economic and environmental dimensions of sustainable development need to be adapted to the policies on implementation of state programs and strategies. Similarly, the institutional mechanisms existing in this area should expand their scope of activities by adjusting it in accordance with the new responsibilities arising from the development agenda for post-2015, and should combine efforts to achieve the goals by strengthening international partnership in this direction.





As a country that strives to contribute to solution of global problems and attaches a significant importance to international partnership, Azerbaijan has identified the establishment and strengthening of such cooperative relationships as a key priority for the upcoming years, as in previous years.

As a country that joined the UN Millennium Declaration, Azerbaijan, with a view to

successfully implementing these goals, approved the “State Program for poverty reduction and economic development in the Republic of Azerbaijan in 2003-2005” and the “State Program for poverty reduction and sustainable development in the Republic of Azerbaijan in 2008-2015” with the aim of ensuring comprehensive measures in the field of fighting poverty, which allowed for the implementation of

effective measures to solve the problem of poverty and the poverty rate was reduced from 49% in 2001 to 4.9% in 2015.

It is no coincidence that as a result of successful implementation of MDGs in our country, Azerbaijan was bestowed with FAO's South-South Award in 2015 at the presentation ceremony held in Rome on the completion of the MDGs for its success in the fight against poverty and hunger. Azerbaijan is one of 18 countries out of 128 countries worldwide to have succeeded in reduction of the total number of undernourished.

In addition, the State Agency for Public Service and Social Innovations under the President of the Republic of Azerbaijan (ASAN Service) was declared the winner in the category of "Improvement of public services" established by the United Nations Department of Economic and Social Affairs in 2015.

Besides, it is an undeniable fact that the Government of Azerbaijan considers the process of implementing SDGs in the country as an opportunity to increase chances of involvement of all stakeholders, to establish a common national dialogue platform for an extensive exchange of views, and to support broader partnership for sustainable development.

Drawing on the principles of "universality," "integrated approach" and particularly "leaving no one behind" enshrined in the 2030 Agenda and achievements made in the implementation of the MDGs, this initiative calls upon the countries to ensure that human development benefits also reach vulnerable and marginalized groups, and for this purpose, to eliminate inequalities, promote decent employment, and expand and enhance the social protection systems.

To implement the abovementioned advocacy objectives and involve all stakeholders in achieving SDGs, the NCCSD, in partnership with the UN Office in Azerbaijan, has carried out awareness raising activities with the participation of the representatives of various groups of society (academia, civil society, women, youth, parliament). In this respect, acting as a coordinator for achievement of the SDGs adapted to national priorities, the Government will provide comprehensive support for the initiatives of all stakeholders aimed at effective implementation of the 2030 Agenda.

Recently, one of the most important measures related to the implementation of SDGs in Azerbaijan, serving as an indicator of Azerbaijan's high reputation among the international community, was the Baku Forum on Sustainable Development on Strengthening the Regional Partnership on Implementation of SDGs" organized in Baku with support of the NCCSD, the Ministry of Economy of the Republic of Azerbaijan and the UN Office in Azerbaijan on October 25-26, 2018.

It was for the purpose of achieving the sustainable development goals that the important objectives of the Forum included the following: Promote sustained, inclusive and sustainable economic growth, full and productive employment and decent work for all; Promote peaceful and inclusive societies for sustainable development, provide access to justice for all and build effective, accountable and inclusive institutions at all levels; and, Strengthen the means of implementation and revitalize the global partnership for sustainable development.

Baku Forum, which brought together senior officials from European and Central Asian countries responsible for coordinating

the implementation of global goals at the national level, as well as UN officials, provided an effective platform for discussion of the issues of strengthening regional partnership for implementation of SDGs in the region and joint elimination of the encountered challenges.

High-level representatives from twenty-six countries (Albania, Belarus, Bulgaria, Bosnia and Herzegovina, Montenegro, Czech Republic, Georgia, India, Islamic Republic of Iran, Hungary, Moldova, Islamic Republic of Afghanistan, Uzbekistan, Pakistan, Poland, Kazakhstan, Kyrgyzstan, Russia, Serbia, Slovakia, Slovenia, Tajikistan, Turkey, Turkmenistan, Ukraine and Croatia) and international organizations (International Labor Organization, European Commission, Asian Development Bank, World Bank, Islamic Solidarity Fund) were invited to the Forum.

Of the high-level representatives invited Deputy Prime Minister of the Slovak Republic, Deputy Chairperson of the Council of the National Assembly of the Republic of Belarus, the Minister of Ecology and Agriculture of Georgia, the ombudspersons of Turkey, Kazakhstan, Tajikistan and Uzbekistan, the Ambassador for Special Affairs of Bosnia and Herzegovina, President of the United Nations Economic and Social Council (ECOSOC), Assistant Secretary General of the United Nations, Assistant Secretary-General of the United Nations for Rule of Law, Security and Institutions, Deputy Director of the UNDP Regional Bureau for Europe and the CIS, and Partner of the Ernst & Young International Audit Company participated in the Forum.

In addition, United Nations Under-Secretary-General, Executive Secretary of the United Nations Economic Commission for Europe, and Director General of the World Health

Organization, sent a video message to the participants of the Forum.

During the Forum, special importance of international partnership for development was underlined, and development priorities of participating countries, as well as ways to overcome obstacles in this direction were shared via the interactive platform arranged for discussions.

Besides focusing on the country experience related to implementation of the 2030 Agenda and achievements made in this area, the Forum also covered international and regional experience of other countries in adapting SDGs to national development plans and strategies.

Furthermore, one of the main missions of the Forum was to discuss the success achieved and future steps in respect of the targets and indicators of six Sustainable Development Goals covered by the Second Voluntary National Review to be presented by Azerbaijan, for the first time in the region, in accordance with the UN's thematic plan (Empowering people and ensuring inclusiveness and equality) at the High-Level Political Forum that will be held in the headquarters of the UN in 2019.

The main objectives of the Forum were as follows:

- Share lessons learned and best practices that have been gained by the countries in and around the region, which can contribute to tracking, evaluation and monitoring of implementation plans and strategies developed with a view of achieving SDGs;
- Exchange experiences on challenges, opportunities and solutions related to advocacy work aimed at the impacts of

SDGs on policies at national and regional levels;

- Contribute to the High-Level Political Forum to be held in 2019 and to the regional conferences that will be organized by the regional commissions of the UN;
- Adopt the Baku Principles on the findings of the MAPS mission that visited Azerbaijan with support of the UN Headquarters to provide technical and policy support on the adaptation of SDGs to national priorities;
- Discussions on increasing the role of the parliament, civil society, academia, private sector, youth and other social groups, based on the principle of involvement of all stakeholders in implementation of Sustainable Development Goals.

Extensive discussions were conducted at the Forum, by organizing panels on the following topics: Promote sustained, inclusive and sustainable economic growth, full and productive employment and decent work for all; Interactive discussion on the role of youth, women, parliament, civil society and other stakeholders in implementation of Sustainable Development Goals; Promote peaceful and inclusive societies for sustainable development, provide access to justice for all and build effective, accountable and inclusive institutions at all levels by 2030; Role of UNDP's MAPS Mission in achievement of Sustainable Development Goals; and Strengthen cooperation on clean water supply and combating climate change and its impacts, and its impacts for the implementation of Sustainable Development Goals.

The following can be highlighted as the results and contributions of Baku Forum:

- Adoption of the Baku Principles;
- Bilateral and multilateral discussions were organized with the participation of UN representatives, state officials, authorized representatives of participating countries, and civil society organizations;
- Participants recognized that the integrated approach to implementation of SDGs was more effective and less time consuming;
- The role of different segments of society (women, youth, parliamentarians, private sector and other stakeholders) in implementation of SDGs was acknowledged;
- Youth Ambassadors for 17 Sustainable Development Goals were introduced and their role in relation to SDGs was recognized by everyone;
- Materials on implementation of Sustainable Development Goals, their promotion, and other advocacy materials were presented to Forum participants (a song written for SDGs was sung in the Azerbaijani and English languages);
- Next steps to be undertaken for the production of the Voluntary National Reviews that will be presented at the UN's High-Level Political Forum were widely discussed;
- The recommendations presented by the UN's MAPS Mission with regard to aligning new state programs and strategies with the SDGs were reviewed and discussed once again.

As a result of the discussions at the Baku Forum on Sustainable Development, the Baku Principles for acceleration of implementation of the global goals at the national level were adopted. Taking into account the recommendations given by the MAPS mission during its visit to Azerbaijan with regard to ensuring alignment of the state programs and strategies in socioeconomic and environmental spheres with the SDGs and their corresponding targets and indicators and identification of accelerators, the Baku Principles establish provisions on integration of SDGs and acceleration of their implementation.

Drawing on the principles of universality, integrated approach and leaving no one behind defined in the 2030 Agenda, this document also stresses the importance of implementing SDGs in Azerbaijan at economic, social and environmental levels, and considers it important to ensure coherence through monitoring and evaluation of the strategic national documents adopted in this area in the country (Azerbaijan 2020: Look into the Future; Strategic Road Maps for the prospects of the national economy).

The Baku Principles reiterates to the international and national partners the

importance of international and regional partnership for expanding awareness raising activities by involving all stakeholders in implementation of SDGs, and for sharing best practices and lessons learned in elimination of encountered challenges for comprehensive implementation of the 2030 Agenda.

Republic Innovation Contest

As one of the dynamically developing countries in the world today, the Republic of Azerbaijan has entered a qualitatively new phase. The policy pursued in the country over the past period has allowed significant expansion of the economy, improvement of the social welfare of population, and complete modernization of the socioeconomic infrastructure.

The country's integration into modern innovation processes in recent years, implementation of measures ensuring transition to innovation economy, and main challenges regarding their encouragement have been identified as target areas in important strategic programs and documents of our country. In this respect, promoting the results of intellectual activity,





creating favorable conditions for investment in innovation and creativity, and channeling the joint efforts towards sustainable development of an intellectual-property-based creative economy are highlighted as a key strategic line in the “Azerbaijan 2020: Look into the Future” Development Concept.

Furthermore, promotion of investment in innovation activities and application of scientific achievements and innovations in various fields are among priority targets

in the Strategic Road Maps covering different sectors approved by the relevant decrees of the President. Realization of such opportunities in industry, service and other areas is one of the most significant challenges in the field of improving the national innovation system.

As a country that does not remain outside of the international integration processes and strives to contribute to the solution of global problems as an active member of the UN, adapting to the new challenges

and inspired by the achievements obtained under the Millennium Development Goals, our country has joined the Sustainable Development Goals initiative. Some of the key priorities of the 2030 Agenda are: building a strong infrastructure; promoting inclusive, innovation-driven and sustainable industrialization; and, encouraging innovations.

Expansion of innovation activity in a qualitatively new dimension, transfer of innovations and their use in the field of production create new challenges for countries. The competitiveness of countries promoting high-added-value areas at global and regional levels has an extremely positive impact on the development of innovation activity.

Two initiatives on conducting Republic Innovation Contests have been realized as a result of the successful joint action of the Ministry of Economy and the UN Office in Azerbaijan with the aim of implementing the goals of the 2030 Agenda by adapting to the targets in this area, encouraging innovation, promoting high-added-value areas, and supporting the implementation of the “Azerbaijan 2020: Look into the Future” Development Concept and the “Strategic Road Maps for the national economy and main economic sectors.” This contest is considered to be the first competition of national significance carried out in our country in the field of innovation.

In order to raise awareness about the Republic Innovation Contest jointly announced by the Ministry of Economy of the Republic of Azerbaijan and the UN Office in Azerbaijan, awareness raising activities have been carried out in different academic institutions with the participation of young researchers, volunteers, teachers and students.

The Ministry of Economy, the Ministry of Transport, Communications and High Technologies, the Ministry of Culture, the State Agency for Public Service and Social Innovations under the President, the National Academy of Sciences and the representative office of the Ernest & Young Company in Azerbaijan have signed a Memorandum of Understanding on cooperation to annually organize a Republic Innovation Contest with the aim of ensuring continuance of activity in the relevant field and collecting, evaluating and awarding ideas and projects in different areas in the country every year.

Projects in the following areas have been submitted to the National Innovation Contest:

Economic: innovative startup and business incubator; technologies and innovative production methods capable of generating high added value; advanced engineering to build a sustainable infrastructure and cities; innovative idea or business project in the field of tourism, banking and insurance; advocacy campaign that will ensure the participation of all segments of society in socioeconomic, cultural and public life; new technological equipment and methods that will increase economic productivity; less capital-intensive infrastructure; nanomaterials, nanotechnologies and their application; innovative logistics; IT (IoT) solutions in the field of provision of public services; innovation in the field of ICT.

Social: innovative social services; innovative idea on mutual cooperation between the public and private sectors and vocational education institutions; labor planning and organizational culture; innovative idea or mechanism related to active labor market and employment activities; innovation in social infrastructure and public life;

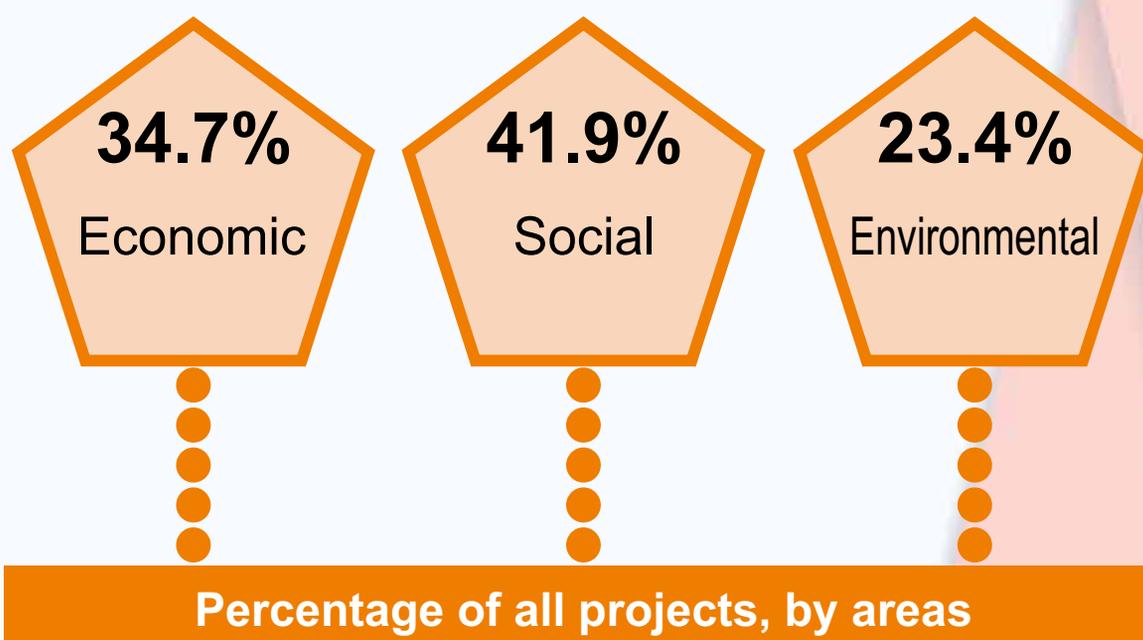
innovative projects aimed at improving the services provided in the areas of healthcare and education; protection of cultural and natural heritage; development of the capacities of vulnerable population groups (children, youth, people with disabilities, etc.) and advocacy related to gender issues; planning and management of residential areas; improving the quality of utility services; solutions for the integration of vulnerable groups (children, youth, people with disabilities, etc.) into society; application of innovative ideas and solutions with regard to the use of publicly available data; IT solutions in city management (Smart City); urbanization.

Environment: green economy; environmentally friendly agricultural production; environmentally friendly transport; establishment of the electronic agriculture system; establishment of an early warning system and awareness raising on climate change and natural disasters;

environmentally friendly city life; technology or social innovation on cleaning up the environment; disposal of waste; energy efficiency; use of alternative energy sources (wind, sun, etc.); no-waste or low-waste technology; efficient and environmentally friendly use of food products; effective planning and management in the national context in connection with climate change; marine and coastal ecosystems; protection, restoration and sustainable use of forests, wetlands, mountains and drylands; conservation of biodiversity.

It should be noted that these areas have been identified based on the priorities of the 2030 Agenda, the “Azerbaijan 2020: Look into the Future” Development Concept and the Strategic Road Maps for the national economy and main economic sectors. In the framework of the contest, more than 200 projects in total were submitted through the Ministry of Economy and the “Idea Bank” of the State Agency for

Figure 3. Proportions of projects submitted to National Innovation Contest



Source: Ministry of Economy

Public Service and Social Innovations under the President of the Republic of Azerbaijan. On November 22, 2018, a meeting of the Evaluation Commission was held and the winning projects of the contest were determined.

The projects submitted within contest covered 34.7% economic, 41.9% social and 23.4% environmental areas. The projects submitted in framework of the contest which fully met the contest criteria qualified for the next round, and 3 most successful projects were selected as winners. In addition, 3 projects were awarded encouragement prizes.

Future activities that will be undertaken in the areas of enabling environment and infrastructure to support innovative projects, developing the relevant human resources and attracting national and foreign investment will be further enhanced and expanded through joint efforts.

■ Mainstreaming SDGs into national development agenda and integrating three dimensions of sustainable development

Along with the national specifics, the nationalization of SDGs in the Republic of Azerbaijan and alignment thereof with the national priorities also take into account the provisions of international treaties to which the country has become a party to or acceded to, particularly the UN's Universal Declaration of Human Rights, Agenda 21 adopted at the Rio de Janeiro 92 conference, as well as the Basic Principles of Sustainable Development, the Millennium Declaration, the 2030

Agenda approved at the Sustainable Development Summit, international conventions on human rights and other similar international documents, and refer to the following main principles enshrined in frames of the integrated approach to implementation of SDGs:

National ownership: When adopting the agenda, the member states emphasized that “for all countries, public policies and the mobilization and effective use of domestic resources, underscored by the principle of national ownership, are central to our common pursuit of sustainable development.” National ownership sets the ground for real changes in the long run. Country-led national review processes may further enhance ownership through wider participation and involvement of national and local authorities, civil society, private sector, etc. This may also consolidate the principle of “leaving no one behind” and help identify gaps in development.

Universality: Being of a universal nature, the goals and targets of the 2030 Agenda serve the interests of all people around the world, are aimed at creating equal opportunities for all, are applicable to all types of countries rather than only to the underdeveloped (poor) or developing (middle-income) or developed (high income) group of countries, and are based on the concept of being contingent upon the participation of all countries in order to be accomplished. The concept of SDGs allows for nationally adapted and differentiated approaches for fulfilment of the targets set forth, by taking into account the shared and collective responsibility. Thus, even if countries undertake to achieve all SDGs, due to the diversity of national circumstances, countries should develop their own unique development strategies with national areas of focus in order to

prioritize the goals and targets appropriately and fulfill global commitments. Based on this principle, during the nationalization of the global SDGs, goals and targets and their incorporation into the development agenda of the country, the Republic of Azerbaijan also strives to make sure that they comply with and support the global goals and targets, along with consideration of national priorities.

Leaving no one behind: This principle implies that “targets are met for all citizens and peoples and for all segments of society” and “an endeavor is made to reach the furthest behind first.” It is based on human rights including gender equality, is expressed in various universal SDGs intended to be achieved globally and in targets set under them (e.g. eliminating extreme poverty, eliminating hunger; systematic use of comprehensive data; qualitative results-based approach; normative frameworks, etc.), and encourages the countries to exert more efforts to identify gaps for each target accurately and to undertake measures in order not to leave them behind. Therefore, to ensure realization of this principle, the national monitoring, evaluation and reporting system should contribute to the creation of quality data that are accessible, up-to-date, reliable and disaggregated, and to the preparation and use of detailed public reports, reviews and other analytical materials based on such information. Besides, national processes may be formed on the basis of lower-level reviews, and the reviews may encourage broad participation that involves civil society organizations representing vulnerable and marginalized segments of the population at all levels. The national review process should also provide for the analysis of policies, laws and strategies in terms of inclusiveness and impact on various groups (for example: Do they draw more attention

to existing inequalities or eliminate them? Do they go beyond the boundary of ensuring formal equality and ensure the equality of outcomes for all groups?). Among these policies, the measures aimed at ensuring financial integration and universal access to education, healthcare, social protection, productive assets, safe drinking water, access to justice, technology, and affordable and sustainable energy sources play an important role. Taking the above into account, the Republic of Azerbaijan re-evaluates its own approaches, its development support measures and its opportunities and resources to overcome the distance in order to reach everyone, and strives to plan their more efficiently for their use, taking into account the vulnerable segments.

Commitment to human rights: The 2030 Agenda stipulates that the implementation process should be consistent with the states’ duties and obligations in the framework of international relations and should be based on commitment to human rights. Human rights are inalienable for all people, and include an obligation to achieve a full realization of economic, social, cultural and political rights. This implies, for example, a universal access to safe public places, quality education, quality healthcare, comprehensive social protection, care services, safe drinking water, justice, technologies, sustainable energy sources, etc.

Integrity and indivisibility (integrated approach): The 2030 Agenda stipulates that the activities aimed at achieving SDGs should be carried out under each goal, target and economic, social and environmental dimension of sustainable development not separately, but in a coordinated manner based on a holistic (integrated) approach. Taking into account

national circumstances, the 2030 Agenda (SDGs and corresponding targets defined) is of an indivisible and interlinked nature. In other words, SDGs should be implemented not selectively, but as a comprehensive package.

An integrated agenda also means that all activities aimed at achieving SDGs should be carried out in an atmosphere of high-level cooperation and coordination, and this process should involve state agencies, including ministries, parliament, local administration bodies (local executive authorities and self-government bodies), private sector actors, academia, civil society organizations, communities and international partners (relevant UN agencies and other international organizations).

It is precisely from this perspective that Azerbaijan has taken the path of encouraging the coordination of activities and policies to strengthen inter-sectoral cooperation between state agencies by retaining responsibilities in the relevant areas, through the formulation of an integrated approach to the process of implementation of SDGs.

In general, the Republic of Azerbaijan has a great interest in the 2030 Agenda as a global development program, and all stakeholders recognize the relevance of SDGs for the country. All state agencies are willing to support the integration of SDGs into their areas of activity and policies. In line with the principle of “leaving no one behind,” issues related to vulnerable groups, including refugees and IDPs, elderly people, people with disabilities, children, as well as youth, gender equality and other similar matters are the focus of attention in the process of implementation of SDGs in the Republic of Azerbaijan.

In order to nationalize the SDGs and the targets and indicators defined in accordance with them in the country, and to include them in the country’s development agenda, the strategies, programs and other policy documents that are currently in force in the country are reviewed for compliance in cooperation with the working groups and partners, and plans are developed for addressing gaps.

In addition to these, the Government of Azerbaijan is laying the groundwork for moving forward with the implementation of the Agenda. To this end, different measures are undertaken by applying the United Nation’s MAPS Mission (Mainstreaming, Acceleration and Policy Support) approach.

Mainstreaming SDGs into the national development agenda requires integration of the 2030 Agenda into national, regional and local development plans and accordingly into budget allocations at national and local levels. The first step taken in this regard was to check compliance of the country’s “Azerbaijan 2020: Look into the Future” Development Concept and “Strategic road maps for the national economy and main economic sectors” with SDGs and their targets, and to identify gaps. Besides, the nationwide and sectoral programs currently implemented or planned to be adopted and other policy documents in the relevant areas are analyzed. This analysis also serves to create an institutional framework that allows to quickly and effectively eliminating existing challenges to achieving SDGs and gaps arising in the course of implementation. Here, the focus is kept on ensuring an integrated approach in the institutional framework to the three dimensions (economic, social and environmental) of sustainable development. The work carried out in this direction is already yielding its first

results. In particular, the targets under the Sustainable Development Goals arising from the 2030 Agenda have been integrated into the relevant sections of the Employment Strategy of the Republic of Azerbaijan for 2019-2030.

Moreover, SDG 17 has been fully aligned with the “State Program for the development of official statistics in the Republic of Azerbaijan in 2018-2025,” and the project titled “Methodology for organizing and conducting the work of active influence on atmospheric processes (hail control)” and the project titled “Targeted Indicators of the Republic of Azerbaijan in accordance with the Protocol on Water and Health of the Convention on the Protection and Use of Transboundary Watercourses and International Lakes” have been integrated into the SDG targets related to the environment.

Local self-governing bodies also have important responsibilities in achieving the SDGs. Just as it is important for the central executive authority to support implementation of the goals and targets at the country level, the responsibility for implementation at the local level falls on regional and local self-government bodies. Therefore, attention is paid to ensure that the action plans developed for SDGs cover the national and regional/local administrative bodies alike.

Based on the Rapid Integrated Assessment (RIA) framework conducted by the NCCSD in Azerbaijan in 2016 and supported by the UN’s country and regional offices, the country’s level of readiness for SDGs was assessed.

In the framework of the RIA, the following were assessed in Azerbaijan:

- 31 current short-term and medium-term state and sectoral strategies and related action plans at target level of SDGs;
- Eight medium-term and long-term strategies, programs and plans that are under development (draft documents);
- More than 25 regulatory legal acts, international treaties and agreements.

Based on the assessment of the nationalization of SDGs and their inclusion in the country’s development agenda, we come to the conclusion that in order to coordinate and accelerate the processes, it would be useful for the Government to develop and adopt, by involving all stakeholders, a comprehensive action plan and a sound policy document such as a National Action Plan (State Program or Road Map) which also includes financing mechanisms. This document can apply a unified, cross-sectoral and integrated approach to the issues related to the 2030 Agenda and help ensure their alignment at target/indicator levels, which can ultimately translate into a guarantee of the country’s success in SDGs.

Discussions were held in the four working groups set up with the aim of ensuring the country’s sustainable development, as well as aligning the country’s programs and strategies in socioeconomic areas with SDGs, and the final list of goals, targets and related indicators considered a priority for Azerbaijan was determined by taking into account the opinions and suggestions of the relevant agencies.

According to the draft, 17 SDGs, 88 targets and 119 indicators were selected in 2018 as national priorities from among 17 SDGs, 169 targets and 244 indicators:

Table 1. The number of goals, targets and indicators considered a priority for Azerbaijan

| Goals | Overall | | Selected | |
|---|-------------------|----------------------|-------------------|----------------------|
| | Number of targets | Number of indicators | Number of targets | Number of indicators |
| Goal 1. No Poverty | 7 | 14 | 4 | 6 |
| Goal 2. Zero Hunger | 8 | 13 | 6 | 7 |
| Goal 3. Good Health and Well-being | 13 | 27 | 9 | 19 |
| Goal 4. Quality Education | 10 | 11 | 9 | 10 |
| Goal 5. Gender Equality | 9 | 14 | 9 | 12 |
| Goal 6. Clean Water and Sanitation | 8 | 11 | 6 | 8 |
| Goal 7. Affordable and Clean Energy | 5 | 6 | 3 | 3 |
| Goal 8. Decent Work and Economic Growth | 12 | 17 | 8 | 10 |
| Goal 9. Industry, Innovation and Infrastructure | 8 | 12 | 6 | 8 |
| Goal 10. Reduced Inequalities | 10 | 11 | 5 | 5 |
| Goal 11. Sustainable Cities and Communities | 10 | 15 | 4 | 6 |
| Goal 12. Responsible Consumption and Production | 11 | 13 | 2 | 2 |
| Goal 13. Climate Action | 5 | 8 | 1 | 1 |
| Goal 14. Life Below Water | 10 | 10 | 2 | 2 |
| Goal 15. Life on Land | 12 | 14 | 3 | 4 |
| Goal 16. Peace, Justice and Strong Institutions | 12 | 23 | 6 | 9 |
| Goal 17. Partnerships for the Goals | 19 | 25 | 5 | 7 |
| Sum | 169 | 244 | 88 | 119 |

Source: Ministry of Economy

It should be noted that the final draft of the goals, targets and indicators for the Republic of Azerbaijan was selected based on a number of criteria. The main criteria applied were the following:

- Inclusion of the targets into strategic documents;
- Possibility of achieving sustainable development;
- Alignment of the targets with the national priorities;
- Availability of indicators enabling assessment of achievements.

In terms of the alignment of SDGs with national policy documents, the international organizations and global research institutions functioning in this field use various tools for assessment and measurement of alignment. These tools are primarily aimed at ensuring the harmonization of the country's development agenda with the relevant SDG targets and nationalization of priorities.

The Rapid Integrated Assessment mechanism for integrated implementation of SDGs can be cited as an example of the efficient and comprehensive tools used for the achievement of the abovementioned results.

In this regard, based on this tool applied by the MAPS Mission, the state programs, strategies and other state documents covering the 17 SDGs and adopted as a priority were assessed for compliance with the targets arising from the 2030 Agenda.

Thus, according to the results of the abovementioned assessment tool, among the SDGs reflected in the important state documents of the country, a full alignment was identified with SDG 5, along with a 90 percent integration with SDG 4 and 75 percent integration with SDG 2 and SDG 6. Besides, the tool in question also allowed identifying the extent to which the priorities identified in the strategic documents of

national importance complied with the targets of other SDGs.

During the alignment of SDGs with the country's Development Agenda, respectively 47.3, 45.2 and 45.3 percent of the priorities concerning people, planet and well-being under the 169 targets set by the UN were selected for our country. This goes to show that improving people's welfare and strengthening their social protection are front and center in the state programs and other strategic documents adopted in our country. Environmental protection is also among the key priorities of the adopted programs. The table below may be used to compare the percentages and extents of coverage of the targets:

Figure 1. RIA results for Azerbaijan

Alignment with SDGs on 54 reviewed policy and regulatory documents in Azerbaijan, %

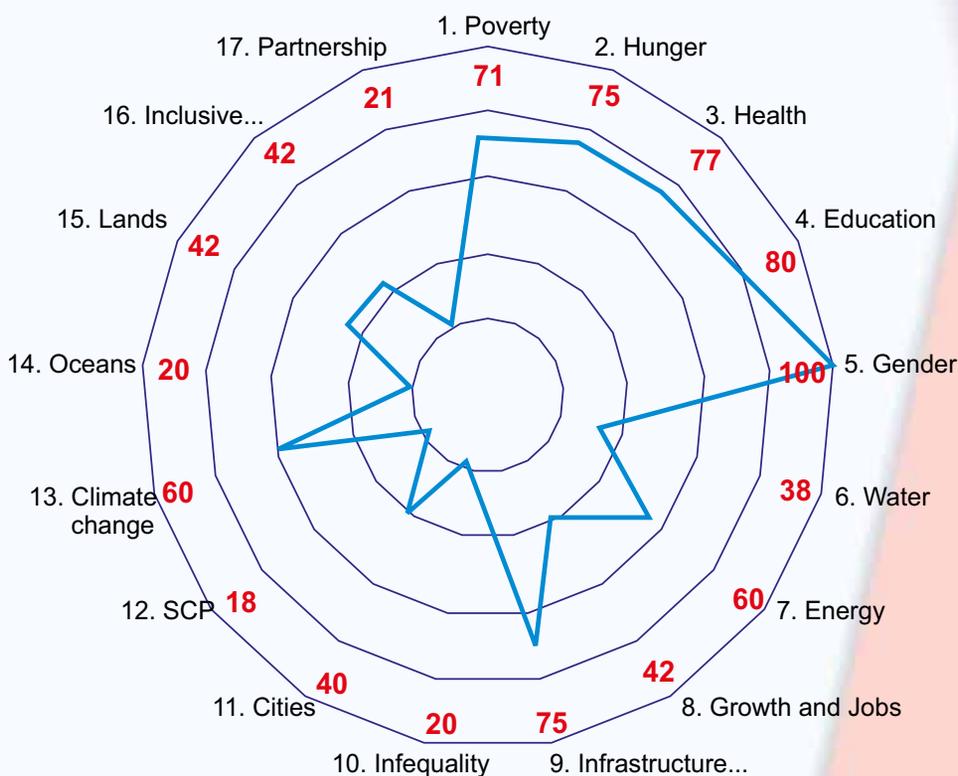
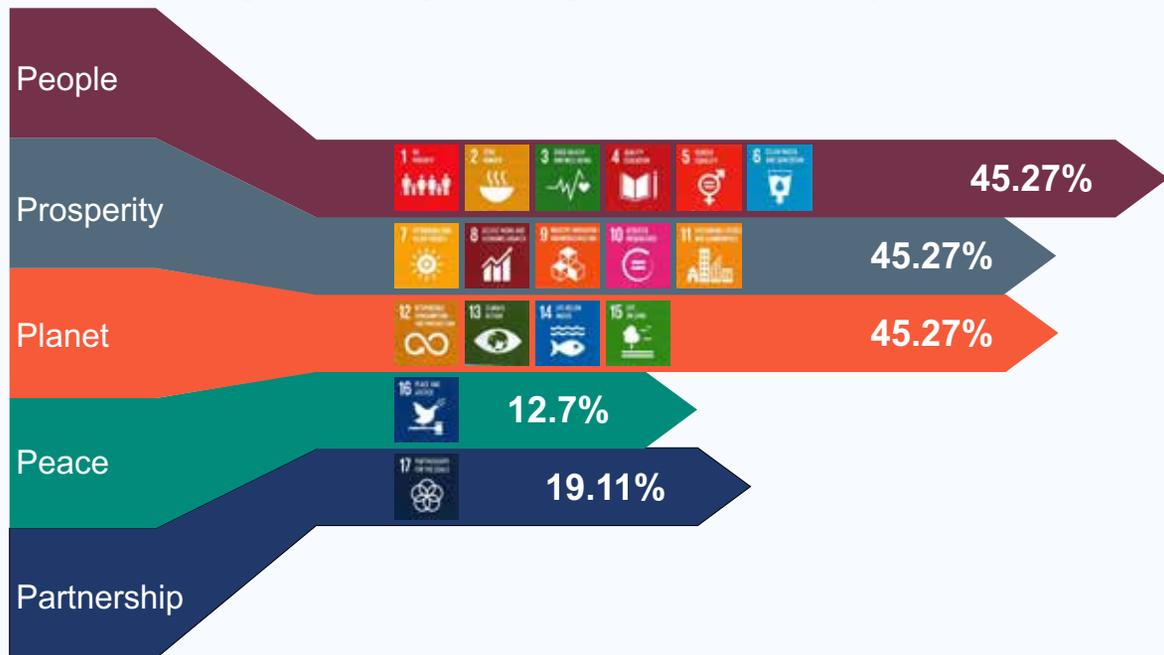


Figure 2. Percentages of the targets selected under SDGs, by sector



Source: UN calculations

The Working Groups faced the following challenges when selecting global goals, targets and indicators in line with national priorities:

- documents such as state program, concept, strategy, etc. in areas and sectors related to some targets do not exist at the national level;
- documents on some targets are in the draft form and are expected to be adopted in the coming years;
- some targets do not comply with national priorities;
- in some cases, targets and indicators are not clear;
- Indicators allowing assessment of achievement or methodologies allowing defining them do not exist.

on the basis of the principle of ‘leaving no one behind’ will serve to improve welfare of the country as a whole, all stakeholders, including everyone living in our country in the spirit of strengthened global solidarity with a special focus on addressing the needs of poor population. This initiative is aimed at achieving development by ensuring that all people live a prosperous and happy life, and the economic, social and technological progress takes place in harmony with nature.

In cases where economic development is not inclusive and does not incorporate all three dimensions (economic, social and environmental) of sustainable development, it can become difficult to create an environment sufficient to reduce poverty. In order to reduce inequalities, the policies should, in principle, be universal in terms of focusing on the needs of disadvantaged and marginalized communities.

It should be noted that by 2030, the Sustainable Development Goals selected

The SDGs are integrated and inseparable, balancing the three dimensions of

sustainable development: economic, social and environmental. Implementation of new development programs on sustainable development require a more holistic, consistent and integrated approach at national, regional and global levels. Likewise, the existing agencies or institutional mechanisms functioning in the field of social development should adjust or expand their scope of activities in a way that includes new duties arising from the development program.

It is a common knowledge that the 2030 Agenda and its accompanying SDGs is a

transformative set of obligations aimed at elimination of poverty, conservation of the planet and ensuring progress for everyone. It is through the inter-agency platform that the UN’s Development System supports the implementation of these obligations at the national level.

An analysis of Azerbaijan’s development plans and strategies listed below shows that these policy documents identify new opportunities for working out national development strategies that are consistent with the SDGs.

**Programes and strategies with best coverage across SDG targets,
#of targets out of 169**

| | | | | |
|--|--|--|--|--|
| Azerbaijan 2020: Look into the Future Concept of Development_19 target | Strategic Road Map for the manufacture and processing agricultural products in the Republic of Azerbaijan_19 targets | State Program on Scio-Economic Development of Regions of the Republic of Azerbaijan for 2014-2018_12 targets | National Strategy for the Development of Information Society in the Republic of Azerbaijan for 2014-2020_8 targets | The Employment Strategy of the Republic of Azerbaijan for 2019-2030_7 targets |
| | | State Program on Azerbaijani Youth in 2017-2021_9 targets | State Program on Maternal and Child Health Improvement for 2014-2020_6 targets | National Action Program on increasing the effectiveness of human rights and freedoms_5 targets |
| | | | National Strategy for the Protection and Sustainable Use of Biodiversity in the Republic of Azerbaijan for 2017-2020_6 targets | State Program for Industrial Development in the Republic of Azerbaijan for 2015-2020_5 targets |

Source: RIA Analysis – UNDP

- **Green economy.** Azerbaijan 2020: Look into the Future Development Concept and the Strategic Road Maps for the prospects of the national economy of the Republic of Azerbaijan promote an ideal of greener growth. Environment/green economy elements of sustainable development are articulated in such policies, especially at the outcome level.
- **Economic growth and jobs.** SDG targets 4.4 (employment, decent jobs), 8.2 (economic productivity), 8.5 (efficient use of global resources) and 8.6 (youth unemployment) are articulated in the “Azerbaijan 2020: Look into the Future” development strategy. This creates conditions for the realization of opportunities to achieve

SDGs 1 (welfare), 10 (inequalities) and 12 (sustainable consumption and production).

- **Gender.** Addressing gender issues in employment, education, health, and access to resources enables implementation of SDG in a more holistic, integrated manner.
- **Leaving no one behind.** The abovementioned documents pay special attention to the issues of balanced spatial/territorial development, reducing inequalities, eliminating all forms of poverty, and empowering women, youth, IDPs and all migrants and refugees.

The Government of Azerbaijan developed a number of progressive documents on development policy in 2016-2017. Among them, we can particularly note the Strategic Road Maps and the National Employment Strategy for 2017-2030. The areas of focus included in these documents and in the “Azerbaijan 2020” once again underscore the Government’s priorities related to the diversification of economy, acceleration of the creation of decent jobs, and continuous improvement of access to and quality of the education, healthcare and social services infrastructure in the country.

Diversification of economy and development of the “green economy” play an important role in the “Azerbaijan 2020¹” and the 2030 Agenda. This section focuses primarily on (i) increasing investment in energy efficiency, (ii) achieving renewable

energy targets and investing in new technologies, and (iii) attachment of greater importance by the energy companies of Azerbaijan to achievement of SDGs, and looks into how these goals can be coordinated in Azerbaijan and how the progress towards achieving them can be accelerated.

At the root of the main links between sustainable management of Azerbaijan’s rich hydrocarbon resources, diversification and “green economy” is ensuring better energy efficiency and reaching the 20 percent target set in the national energy policy. Such investments may increase the longevity of income generated by the country’s confirmed energy resources by reducing the growth rate of domestic oil and gas production (where 25% of the oil and gas produced is used). Renewable energy installations (e.g. hydropower stations, photovoltaic elements used for electricity and heat, biogas installations) and materials ensuring energy efficiency (e.g. insulation, double-glazed windows) require more workforce compared to oil and gas production. Such investments in the “green economy” have more potential to create jobs (“green jobs”) than the funds invested in non-renewable resources. In this way, all such investments in the “green economy” will speed up the diversification of economy.

In any case, an increase of investments in renewable energy technologies will help reduce carbon emissions in Azerbaijan, create new jobs in the renewable energy sector, and thus, accelerate diversification of economy.

¹ “Azerbaijan 2020” reads that “One of the main targets of the concept is to achieve sustainable socio-economic development from an ecological point of view. The necessary measures will be continued in the future to protect biodiversity, neutralize the negative impact of the fuel-energy complex on the environment, eliminate the pollution of the sea and its basin and protect them, restore green areas and effectively protect the existing resources.” (page 38) “The Voluntary National Review” reads that “work has begun on the transition to “green” technologies and the effective use of alternative energy sources” (page 55).

■ Leaving no one behind

The principle of leaving no one behind while implementing SDGs is embedded in various SDG goals/targets which aim at a universal achievement (e.g. eradicate extreme poverty; eradicate hunger – zero targets; systematic use of disaggregated data; quality-outcomes based approach; and normative frameworks). This will require countries to work harder to identify and reach those that are prone to possibility of being left behind. To this end, the Government of Azerbaijan re-evaluates its approaches, its measures for the support of the development and its opportunities and resources for overcoming the distance in order to reach everybody and makes efforts to plan more efficiently for their use, taking into consideration vulnerable groups.

In accordance with the principle of 'leaving no one behind', issues related with vulnerable groups, including refugees and IDPs, elderly people, people with disabilities, children, youth, gender equality and other similar issues are in the centre of attention. The commitment of 'leaving no one behind' and avoiding inequality and discrimination in SDGs requires that efforts are channelled from mid-level layers towards the most marginalized population groups. For this, it is necessary to classify the data according to gender, age, income/welfare, location, ethnicity, and disability, the fact of being a refugee or IDP and other specific socio-economic characteristics (disaggregation) in accordance with the principle of "leaving no one behind".

In line with the social policy pursued in the country, goal-oriented steps have been taken towards strengthening of the social protection and improvement of the living conditions of vulnerable population in

2018 as well. The Decree dated 2 August 2018 of the President of the Republic of Azerbaijan provided for allocation of 20 million manats for purchase of at least 300 additional apartments in 2018 for Karabakh war-disabled persons and families of martyrs, thereby allowing the Ministry of Labour and Social Protection of Population to provide the people from these categories with 626 apartments, that is, three times as much as originally intended. As part of the implementation of Order No.1 dated 19 April 2018 of the President of the Republic of Azerbaijan, a total of 4,190 heirs of 3,097 late military servants had received a lump sum payment of 11,000 manats by the end of 2018. They received 34 million manats in total. During the current year, heirs of over 6,400 late military servants will also receive a lump sum payment. As a result of measures taken in order to ensure targeting accuracy and transparency, as well as prevent negative affairs in implementation of targeted state social assistance, the number of the recipient families went down to 42,683 following a 46% decrease (36,854 families) in December 2018 compared to December 2017.

Boarding schools existing in the country serve to prevent exclusion of vulnerable children from education. 4,700 schoolchildren study in 13 boarding schools under the Ministry of Education in the academic season of 2018-2019, 1,691 out of them are female. 570 of them are in the 2nd grade and 588 are in the 3rd grade. 5,492 students study in 16 gymnasiums with integrated training, 2,003 out of them are female. 4,043 students study in 8 boarding gymnasiums, 1,601 out of them are female. 658 of them are in the 2nd grade and 695 are in the 3rd grade. 402 of them are in the 2nd grade, and 455 are in the 3rd grade.

1,877 children with disabilities study in 7 boarding schools functioning under the Ministry of Education for children with disabilities in 2018/2019, 646 out of them are female. 864 children with disabilities study in 9 boarding schools with integrated training, 274 out of them are female.

In accordance with the *Law of the Republic of Azerbaijan on Education*, education in general schools of our country is also offered in Russian and Georgian languages along with the Azerbaijani languages. Besides, in the regions densely settled by ethnic minorities, the representatives of



these minorities have been enabled to learn their native tongues.

35,000 schoolchildren in 225 general education schools are taught Talysh, Avar, Lezgian, Tsakhur, Kurdish, Udi and Khinalug languages. In a total of 342 general education schools, 115,914 schoolchildren study in Russian divisions, 1,121 schoolchildren study in Georgian divisions, 592 schoolchildren study in Turkish divisions, 2,126 schoolchildren study in English divisions and 77 schoolchildren study in French divisions of schools. A Jewish school is also functioning in Baku, and Hebrew language is taught at a school where Jewish schoolchildren receive education.

The number of pupils from ethnic minorities in state child institutions is 175. 99 of them are Avars, 47 are Lezgins, 20 are Tsakhurs, 5 are Ingiloys, 3 are Laks and 1 is Abkhazian.

With the aim of preserving and developing cultural heritage of ethnic minorities, measures were taken to prepare textbooks of native languages. To this end, textbooks of Talysh, Lezgian, Tsakhur, Khinalug and Avar languages for pupils of 1 to 4th grades of general education schools and relevant teaching aids have been prepared. In order to supply textbook sets to the schools offering education in Georgian language in Balaken, Zagatala and Gakh regions, the Ministry of Education ensured translation into Georgian of 21 Azerbaijani textbooks for primary schools that had been published and tested. The textbooks were provided to schools for schoolchildren's perusal.

2018-2024 State Program on Development of Inclusive Education for People with Disabilities in the Republic of Azerbaijan was approved through the relevant Decree of the President of the Republic of Azerbaijan. The aim of the Program, which

was developed with support from Heydar Aliyev Foundation and UNICEF, is to ensure equitable access of children with disabilities to education at all levels and create an enabling environment for their education. In frames of a joint project with UNICEF in this area, 54 children were enrolled in inclusive education in 4 general education schools.

With a view to enrolling children with disabilities in special education in their communities, special education classes were opened in 8 boarding schools and boarding educational institutions. At present, 1,823 children with disabilities study in boarding schools for them, while 875 children with disabilities study in special education classes of boarding schools with integrated training.

Everyone, irrespective of their gender, ethnicity, social background etc. is provided with equal conditions for enrolment in vocational schools. Besides, students of boarding schools are admitted to vocational schools without competition.

In addition to the measures taken by the government, there are also a number of projects implemented by CSOs, private sector and international partners. These projects include, but are not limited to, the following:

- State Committee for Family, Women and Children Affairs and UNICEF conducted a survey in Gazakh and Agstafa districts in 2017 to study the problem of child negligence and evasion of education. The survey results were analysed in 2018 and discussions were held with UNICEF on implementation of activities to address the problems of neglected children who avoid education. It was determined that it could be

effective to involve social workers in the operation of Juvenile Affairs and Rights Defence Commissions functioning under the district/ city executive powers in order to increase the access of children to education and other social services. During the project, the knowledge and skills of the employees of the Commissions under the executive powers on prevention of negligence of children and evasion of education were improved, and the work with vulnerable children continues based on a relevant program upon the completion of the project. The project benefited a total of 316 people, 140 of them being direct beneficiaries and 176 being indirect beneficiaries. 159 of beneficiaries were children, and 16 of them had disabilities.

- The overall object of the UNDP project “Promoting the role of Civil Society in Gender-sensitive SDG Implementation” (covering 1 June 2018 to 31 March 2020) is to promote greater participation of the CSOs in the gender-sensitive implementation of the national SDG agenda. The specific objectives of the project are to (i) to promote confidence building and dialogue between the civil society and the government around the SDGs issues; (ii) to improve understanding and knowledge of CSOs, to apply gender-responsive approach to SDG implementation; and (iii) to increase participation of the CSOs in the implementation of gender sensitive SDG initiatives. The expected outputs of the project are the following: (i) a platform is established for dialogue and

networking between the CSOs and the government on implementing the SDG agenda, including through gender lens; (ii) CSOs have increased understanding of the SDGs framework and capacities to apply gender-responsive approaches to the SDG implementation; (iii) A grant programme to support CSO-led gender-sensitive SDG initiatives is designed and implemented.

Moreover, within principles of leaving no one behind, Azerbaijan is also one of the first countries in the region that started the process of nationalization of SDGs with focus on children by aligning national priorities, existing strategies and state programs with SDGs under the National Plan of Actions for Children and SDGs that is being developed in a consultative and participatory approach by involving relevant government entities, and youth organizations with support of UNICEF country office.

Additionally, Government of Azerbaijan confirm that social protection encompassing key social services, active labor market policies, and social assistance, play a crucial role in the achievement of SDGs. Within this framework, and to assure equal access of all to public and social services, the government established “Sustainable and Operative Social Protection Agency” under the Ministry of Labor and Social Protection of Population.

Furthermore, ASAN Service, which has been awarded a UN Prize for public service delivery and e-government have continued making services more accessible to the citizens and residents of Azerbaijan with the vision of “leaving no one behind”, as new centers have been launched in the regions situated in a long-distance from the capital city.

Institutional Mechanisms

Pursuant to 6 October 2016 Decree of the President of the Republic of Azerbaijan, National Coordination Council on Sustainable Development of the Republic of Azerbaijan (NCCSD), which brings together senior officials (heads or deputy heads) of

concerned ministries and institutions, was established with the goal to coordinate fulfillment of duties of the state agencies arising from the commitments under 2030 Agenda. NCCSD is led by a chairman, who is the Deputy Prime Minister, and a deputy chairman who is the Minister of Economy of the Republic of Azerbaijan.



Besides, with a view to coordinating the activities of the Council, a permanent Secretariat and thematic working groups comprising authorized representatives of state institutions in 4 areas (economic growth and decent work; social issues; environmental issues; monitoring and evaluation) were established. Moreover, persons responsible for SDGs, targets and indicators were appointed in each agency.

Since its establishment, the NCCSD has built its operation in line with the above-

mentioned Decree and has been fulfilling its responsibilities in a goal-oriented, consistent and systematic fashion.

At present, NCCSD strives to strengthen activities in the following areas with the assistance of its Secretariat and working groups:

- ensure broad-based and comprehensive engagement of stakeholders in the process;

- identify national priorities for sustainable development and gaps, craft inclusive national strategies and policies, coordinate and promote cooperation among different governmental agencies;
- Identify needs and opportunities to strengthen capacity in the areas related to SDG implementation.

During the reporting period, the key aim was to nationalize and prioritize global SDGs and related targets and indicators, and align them with national development agenda, shape implementation mechanisms, organize awareness raising campaigns, create monitoring, evaluation and reporting mechanisms and participate in preparation of VNR for HLPF and national annual report.

At the moment, serious preparatory work is being carried out in connection with the monitoring and evaluation of the results of the work carried out to achieve SDGs. To this end, the division of powers and responsibilities has been carried out within the NCCSD, the Secretariat and the working groups, and relevant works have been initiated. Thus, the country is carrying out intensive work in the areas of creating a comprehensive database on SDGs, identifying data sources and methodologies for data processing and analysis, preparing report forms for relevant targets and indicators and other information that can support the analysis and evaluation of the progress in implementation of SDGs, and collecting, processing, analyzing and evaluating information based on these forms.

Responsibility for the process of collecting, processing and disseminating data has been assigned to the State Statistical Committee (SSC). For this purpose, the Department for Sustainable Development Statistics has been established in the SSC. The following

responsibilities have been assigned to central and local executive power agencies and legal entities whose control packet of stocks (shares) is held by the state:

- providing statistical data on indicators of achievement of SDGs to the State Statistical Committee of the Republic of Azerbaijan;
- Presenting a progress report to the Council NCCSD.

The following have been identified as the main sources of information for monitoring indicators identified in accordance with SDGs:

- Statistical observations (official statistical reports, studies, surveys);
- Population census;
- Statistical studies on economic, social and demographic issues;
- Administrative documents and data.

3 working groups covering all spheres of the economy have been established under the leadership of the SSC and with the participation of other relevant government agencies.

The discussions and studies conducted have shown that there is a need in the country to expand the coverage and deepness of the national information systems relating to SDGs and improve their coordination by enhancing their logistical and human capacities and software support, and to develop evaluation capacity. In the following directions:

- Detailed information: the commitment of “leaving no one

behind” and avoiding inequality and discrimination in SDGs requires that efforts are channeled from mid-level layers towards the most marginalized population groups. For this, it is necessary to classify the data by gender, age, income/welfare, location, ethnicity, disability, refugee or IDP status, and other specific socio-economic characteristics (disaggregation) in accordance with the principle of “leaving no one behind”;

- Monitoring and reporting systems: require on-line systems for working with available data and systems of reporting on those data and information exchange, as well as reporting key indicators and enabling both vertical and horizontal coordination.

UNDP provides some support to the SSC and related institutions in these areas within the framework of supporting the implementation of the SDG agenda in the country.

**RESULTS OF ANALYSES
AND EVALUATIONS
CARRIED OUT BY UN
MAPS MISSION AND
FAO ON IMPLEMENTATION
OF 2030 AGENDA FOR
SUSTAINABLE
DEVELOPMENT IN
AZERBAIJAN**

■ Conclusions and recommendations of the evaluation carried out by MAPS Mission on prioritization and alignment with SDGs of the state programs and other policy documents that are being implemented or drafted

With support from the UN Headquarters, a MAPS mission comprised of 9 experts was fielded to Azerbaijan (may-june, 2017) with a view to providing technical and policy support for adaptation of SDGs to national priorities. In the frame of this visit, the mission met with different state agencies, collected and analysed official documents, administrative and statistic data to draft *Mainstreaming, Acceleration and Policy Support for Achieving Sustainable Development Goals* report. The draft report was discussed in the workshop organized on 14 February 2018 with participation of NCCSD Secretariat, the heads and members of the working groups and was approved in December 2018 upon incorporation of all comments and suggestions put forward by state agencies.

The MAPS mission was preceded by a Rapid Integration Assessment (RIA) which was aimed at assessing the integration of SDGs into national development planning at the level of targets by reviewing *Azerbaijan 2020: Look into the Future* development strategy and Strategic Road Map on Prospects of the National Economy and Key Sectors of the Economy, as well as sectoral policies covering the healthcare, education, food safety and other areas.

MAPS report included chapters such as *Executive summary, Sustainable development in Azerbaijan, Azerbaijan and Agenda 2030, mainstreaming the SDGs, Accelerating progress on SDGs.*

The key objective of the mission aimed at supporting the alignment of SDGs with national development strategy of our country was to carry out a Rapid Integrated Assessment with a focus on gaps in implementation of SDGs in the country. The results of the study, particularly the challenges in implementation of SDGs in Azerbaijan were discussed with a number of stakeholders, including the Government, parliament, private sector and academia at a technical level. Based on the discussions with the stakeholders, the mission came up with 3 key platforms towards effective implementation of the SDGs:

SDG Platform 1 – inclusive labour markets, promoting growth in labour-intensive sectors;

SDG Platform 2 – promoting greener growth, Scenario analysis—Baseline (“business as usual”) versus “green economy” scenarios, Sustainable land, water, and agricultural management;

SDG Platform 3 – enhanced public and social services delivery, addressing regional inequalities, social protection, early childhood development;

The MAPS report describes the 2030 Agenda and its accompanying SDGs, inter-agency MAPS platform of UN Development System, preconditions existing in the Republic of Azerbaijan for achievement of SDGs and works done in this respect, results of the assessment of alignment of SDGs with the national development agenda and directions to boost SDG mainstreaming,

data and monitoring, SDG platforms for sustainable development. It analyses and assesses the issues related to financing of SDGs, advocacy, communications and partnership, and provides conclusions and recommendations.

The analyses on SDG Platform 1 covers employment, labour market, unemployment statistics by age, gender and sectors, wage and decent work, promotion of economic growth in labour-intensive sectors (agriculture, tourism etc.) and enhancement of inclusiveness in these sectors. Besides, the relevant section of the report mentions that the economy of Azerbaijan has been further diversified, rapid and sustainable development is ensured, and generation of jobs for youth, women, and people with disabilities is always promoted. The analysis also notes that apart from SDG targets 4.4 (employment, decent work), 8.2 (economic productivity), 8.5 (global resource efficiency) and 8.6 (youth unemployment) that are articulated in Azerbaijan 2020, such important elements of inclusive growth as the protection of labour rights and employment for all are reflected in *'Azerbaijan 2020: Look into the Future'* Development Concept.

The report provides analyses for promotion of greener growth as part of SDG platform 2 and puts forward proposals in this respect.

This section provides analyses of issues such as diversification towards energy efficiency and encouragement of use of alternative energy and green economy, non-oil growth, sustainable management of land, forest and tree resources, sustainable agriculture and food safety.

In conclusion, it notes that environment/green economy elements are not articulated in some policy documents of the Republic

of Azerbaijan and recommends taking into account certain gaps in this respect. Besides, it was recommended to strengthen institutional capacities for sustainable land management, with a focus on reclaiming degraded lands, preventing soil erosion in mountainous and highland areas and restoring soil fertility, and develop capacity by providing training in the introduction of appropriate approaches for better salinity management in irrigated lands, enhance capacity for forest rehabilitation, afforestation, forest nursery production and plantation techniques and improve climate-change mitigation and adaptation activities within the forestry sector.

SDG Platform 3 of the report analyses issues such as enhanced public and social services delivery, including addressing regional inequalities, expansion of the coverage of social aid and social insurance and facilitation of access to social services.

Moreover, it is noted that compared to other middle-income countries in the region, investment in social insurance and social assistance paid large poverty-reduction dividends in Azerbaijan. Social protection has been particularly important in addressing the hardships faced by the more than a million internally displaced persons and refugees who were expelled from their native lands as a result of the conflict in Nagorno Karabakh.

Besides, it is recommended to pay more attention to issues of balanced development, reducing inequalities, continuing implementation of programs for eliminating poverty, empowering women, youth, IDPs and all refugees, and promote social protection measures and care economy and early childhood development through ASAN service model.

As is mentioned in the report, the Addis Ababa Action Agenda for global development finance emphasizes that, for middle-income countries, Official Development Assistance (ODA) can at the best serve to galvanize other financial flows (both international and domestic) needed to fund SDG implementation. In this spirit, SDG target 12.c calls on member states to *“rationalize inefficient fossil-fuel subsidies that encourage wasteful consumption by removing market distortions . . . including by restructuring taxation and phasing out those harmful subsidies, where they exist”*. It is mentioned that reductions in fossil fuel subsidies could significantly increase fiscal space in Azerbaijan.

The report notes that civil society and the media can play an important role in raising awareness about, and promoting broad participation in, national SDG implementation. This could be particularly important in terms of engaging vulnerable population groups in policies intended to benefit them. Multi-stakeholder partnerships are central to SDG achievement, and partnerships established for advancing national development strategies should integrate CSOs, regional authorities, media, educational institutions, academia, private sector and international partnerships. It is recommended that, in the first five years of the SDG implementation, significant partnerships between key development actors be fostered, including via preparation of Voluntary National Reviews and national SDG reporting.

MAPS mission put forward some other recommendations and proposals upon completion of its task in Azerbaijan:

- Increase the alignment of SDG 10, SDG 11, SDG 12, SDG 13 and 15 into RIA analysis;
- Consider lessons learnt from MDGs – take action in transition from MDGs to SDGs in terms of “unfinished” actions and SDG coordination, monitoring and reporting mechanism;
- Develop National Development Strategy 2030 considering the possibility of more coherent approach for crafting national strategic documents until 2030;
- Assess availability of budget means for implementing strategies that are aligned with SDGs;
- Identify several key national priorities as accelerators and their success indicators that would be the development driving force until 2030 and consider several SDG accelerators to drive the process and progress.

■ Conclusions and recommendations of the evaluations conducted as part of FAO project “Supporting capacity development in implementing Sustainable Development Goals in Azerbaijan”

As a follow-up to MAPS mission aimed at providing technical and policy support to adaptation of SDGs to national priorities in Azerbaijan, FAO Office in Azerbaijan carried out a study titled “Supporting capacity development in implementing Sustainable Development Goals in Azerbaijan” and issued a report within the mandate of FAO.

According to the study, the Government of Azerbaijan has carried out sufficiently

effective activities to ensure more effective nationalization and adaptation of SDGs to the national development policy. The alignment rate of the SDG targets within FAO mandate with the existing state programs and strategic documents was found to be 80 percent (18 out of 23 targets). The report also indicates that in spite of the initiatives and effective activities of the Government of Azerbaijan and NCCSD in particular, there are still some deficiencies and gaps that need to be addressed.

Supporting capacity development in implementing Sustainable Development Goals in Azerbaijan report provides an analysis of the general situation and gaps in implementation of SDGs in the areas of agriculture, food, fishery and forestry in Azerbaijan. The study provides an in-depth analysis of the alignment of various national strategies with SDG targets within the mandate of FAO, explores the existing deficiencies in terms of both policy gaps and data gaps related to indicators, and puts forward recommendations on how to address existing gaps.

Implementation of SDGs is a real opportunity to improve policy coordination (horizontal and vertical) in Azerbaijan. In particular, the new scope of the Agenda creates a unique opportunity to examine the agriculture sector with a view to developing a common vision for sustainable food and agriculture and thus contributing to continuous diversification of the national economy through development of the non-oil sector.

Additionally, the report indicates that there is a need to strengthen the human resources capacity in different Ministries and state agencies responsible for

implementation and monitoring of 2030 Agenda.

Based on the analysis of the general situation and gaps with respect to SDGs, a number of recommendations were prepared with a view to enhancing the efficiency of SDG implementation in Azerbaijan. There is a need to take additional measures with respect to the below-mentioned aspects:

- mainstream SDGs into national policy framework on agriculture, food, fishery and forestry;
- improve the linkage and alignment of 2030 agenda with national policy documents by maintaining the balance between the agenda and policy documents aimed at SDG targets, with the goal to implement 2030 Agenda;
- enhance consultation and coordination with NCCSD more, as well as non-governmental organizations (for example, civil society, academia, private sector) that are in communication with international organizations;
- develop the capacity of all stakeholders in order to address integrated, new, indivisible and inter-sectoral nature of 2030 Agenda;
- address other necessary issues throughout the process of implementation of SDGs, including financing, science and technology.

As is mentioned in the report, there is a strong commitment to SDGs and the country is moving forward in right direction. Besides, the Government of Azerbaijan relies on the support of specialized UN agencies in different phases of national

SDG process from nationalization of goals to monitoring and evaluation. That is why, the support of UN system is important for SDG implementation in Azerbaijan. Activities addressing all components of MAPS, including mainstreaming, monitoring, evaluation and reporting and acceleration of policy support can be brought as an example thereof.

FAO report also touches upon the issues related to availability of SDG indicators.

Unavailability of comprehensive data for assessment of indicators in several areas is considered to be the key gap in nationalization of SDGs in Azerbaijan, which in turn challenges establishment of a comprehensive monitoring system for SDGs. This problem is significant with respect to some SDGs related to management of agriculture, food and natural resources.

Progress towards achievement of SDGs in the country



GOAL 4. Ensure inclusive and equitable quality education and promote lifelong learning opportunities for all



SDG 4 stipulates ensuring free and equal access for everyone to quality early childhood development services and achievement of literacy and numeracy by all

youth and adults, elimination of gender inequality in education, substantial increase in the number of youth and adults possessing acceptable technical and vocational skills for employment, decent jobs and entrepreneurship, and promoting sustainable lifestyles, human rights, gender equality, culture of peace, as well as non-violence. This, in turn, necessitates establishment of educational

institutions that are child, disability and gender sensitive, and provide safe, inclusive and effective learning environment, and substantial global expansion of the number of scholarships for enrollment in higher education, including vocational training and information and communications technology, technical, engineering and scientific programs.

In this chapter particular attention focused on the theme of HLPF-2019 on SDG 4 on Quality Education.

By 2030, ensure that all girls and boys complete free, equitable and quality primary and secondary education leading to relevant and effective learning outcomes.

4.1.1 Proportion of children and young people: (a) in grade 2 or 3; (b) at the end of primary education; and (c) at the end of lower secondary achieving at least a minimum proficiency level in (i) reading and (ii) mathematics, by sex.





According to the data of the Ministry of Education, the proportion of children (both girls and boys) with literacy and math skills is 100 percent at primary, lower secondary and upper secondary levels of general education in Azerbaijan.

According to the results of the Progress in International Reading Literacy Study (PIRLS), the reading skills of Azerbaijani pupils in 2016 increased to 472 points from 462 points (or by 10 points) compared to the relevant indicator of 2011. The pupils' results increased by about 2 percent in the *advanced* component, and from 9 percent to 16 percent in the *High* component. In other words, the number of pupils achieving results corresponding to the *Advanced* and *High* levels in the country has doubled in last 5 years. 170 general education schools, more than 6,000 4th-grade pupils, 340 teachers and more than 6,000 parents

participated in the PIRLS 2016 program from Azerbaijan through random selection.

The indicator is planned to be calculated within framework of Multiple Indicator Cluster Survey (MICS) intended to be conducted in 2021-2022 in in line with "State Program for the development of official statistics in the Republic of Azerbaijan in 2018-2025".

■ By 2030, ensure that all girls and boys have access to quality early childhood development, care and pre-primary education so that they are ready for primary education.

Proportion of children under 5 years of age who are developmentally on track in health, learning and psychosocial well-being, by sex.

According to the information of the Ministry of Education, considering the fact that basic skills are acquired in childhood and in view of the importance of children's development from an early age, state-funded preschool education for 5-year-old children at general education schools has been launched for the first time in our education history in accordance with the relevant decisions of the Cabinet of Ministers based on the proposals of the Ministry of Education. 55 percent of the children of that age were involved in preschool education in 2016, 65 percent in 2017, and 75 percent in 2018. By comparison, this indicator was 24 percent in 2013. More than 10,000 primary school teachers working in preschool groups have been engaged in trainings, and new content and teaching materials have been developed and introduced. As a result of the measures implemented, preschool education has been made available in remote villages and residential areas that traditionally did not have preschool education facilities. The objective is to increase the coverage level to 90 percent by 2020, and in the following years, measures will be taken to create such an opportunity for every child.

Starting from 2017, a project titled "Involving children aged 3-5 in community-based preschool education" began to be implemented with the financial support of UNICEF and European Union. The ongoing project covers 2,000 children in 100 communities located in capital Baku and 10 districts.

To increase the coverage level of preschool education, activities of private education facilities has always been encouraged, and in the last 5 years, their number increased by more than 2.5 times, rising from 41 to 105.

The Law of the Republic of Azerbaijan "On preschool education" was approved by the Decree of the President of the Republic of Azerbaijan on 14 April 2017, in order to ensure a more effective regulation of the preschool education system. To ensure the execution of the Decree dated 19 June 2017 of the President of the Republic of Azerbaijan "On application of the Law dated 14 April 2017 of the Republic of Azerbaijan on preschool education," the "Procedure for admission to preschool education institutions" (approved by the 19.01.2018 decision No.16 of the Cabinet of Ministers), the "State standards for the education of preschool-age children with disabilities," and the "Procedure for the organization of preschool education in family-type community-based short-term training groups" have been approved.

Data on preschool-age children, whose birth has been registered by the Ministry of Justice of the Republic of Azerbaijan through the information system, are regularly submitted to the Ministry of Education. This has resulted in new opportunities for an effective organization of the measures of analyzing the teaching load, producing the required number of textbooks, and determining class sets.

The indicator is planned to be calculated within framework of Multiple Indicator Cluster Survey (MICS) intended to be conducted in 2021-2022 in line with "State Program for the development of official statistics in the Republic of Azerbaijan in 2018-2025".

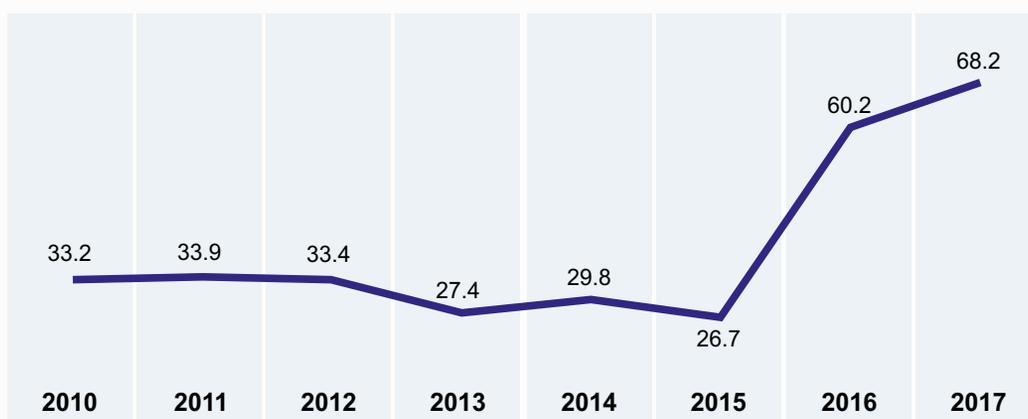
Participation rate in organized learning (one year before the official primary entry age), by sex

The analysis of the data provided in the tables below shows that the rate of participation in various forms of organized learning (*one year before the official primary entry age*) in the country has

increased by 35 percent, going up from 33.2 percent in 2010 to 68.2 percent in 2017. According to the statistics, boys' participation rate in forms of organized learning across the country rose from 34.0 percent in 2010 to 68.7 percent in 2017 (an increase of 34.7 percent), while girls' participation rate rose from 32.4 percent to 67.6 percent (an increase of 35.2 percent).

According to the breakdown by location, during the period of 2010-2017, the participation rate in forms of organized learning increased by 46.4 percent in urban areas (from 39.2 percent to 85.6 percent), and by 24.0 percent in rural areas (from 27.1 percent to 51.1 percent).

Figure 4. General participation rate in forms of organized learning, one year before the official primary entry age, in percent



Source: State Statistics Committee

Figure 5. Participation rate in forms of organized learning, one year before the official primary entry age, by sex, in percent

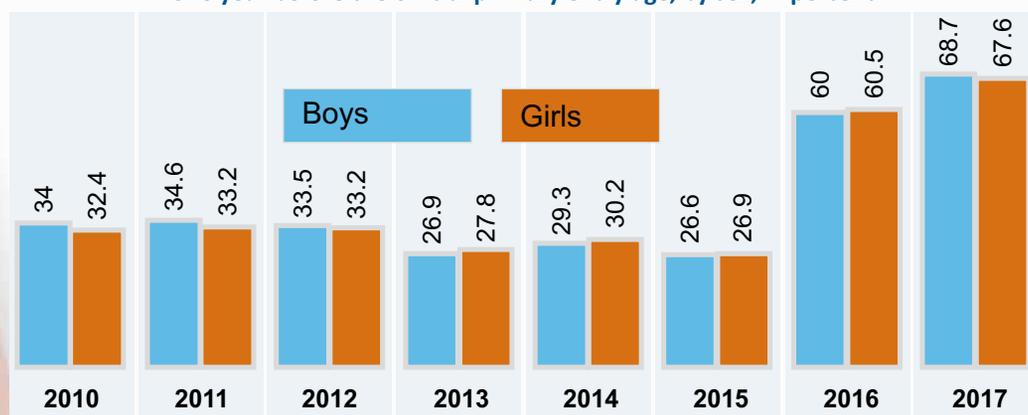
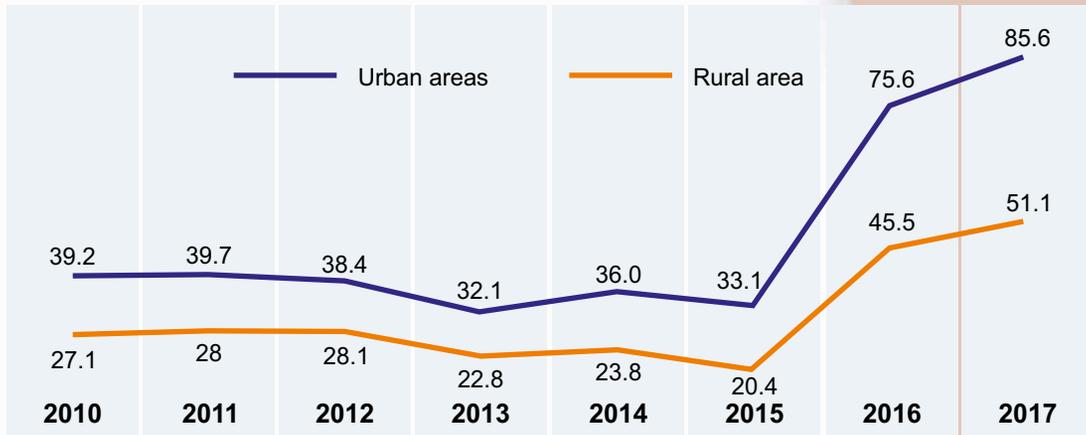


Figure 6. Participation rate in forms of organized learning (one year before the official primary entry age), by location, in percent



■ By 2030, ensure equal access for all women and men to affordable and quality technical, vocational and tertiary education, including university

Participation rate of youth and adults in formal and non-formal education and training in the previous 12 months, by sex

According to the information of the Ministry of Education, a project titled “ASAN Profession” has begun to be implemented from 2016 in order to ensure transparency and convenience for citizens in admission to vocational education institutions. This process initially covered the cities of Baku and Ganja, but now it covers the entire country. Education institutions received more than 16,000 applications in the 2018-2019 academic years through the electronic application system, and more than 15,000 of the applicants became students. The analysis shows a significant change in the qualitative indicators of admission, with 20 percent of those admitted to vocational

education institutions having an average score of high school diploma of above 4. In general, the number of applicants with high school diploma scores of 4 and 5 has more than tripled in the last 2 years.

Taking into account the global trends, analysis of the results from recent years, existing capacity of higher education institutions (scientific and pedagogical staff capacity, academic, logistical and laboratory facilities), and results of analysis conducted by the Ministry of Labor and Social Protection of Population and the Ministry of Economy, admission plans to bachelor’s and master’s levels, as well as to secondary specialized education institutions have been drawn up for the 2018-2019 academic year, and approved by the Cabinet of Ministers on 17 April 2018. The admission plan to the bachelor’s level increased from 43,296 to 45,639 students (or 5.4 percent) compared to the previous year, and the state-funded admission plan stood at 12,304 students (with the establishment of the Institute of Theology) and made up 27 percent of the total admission plan. In the admission plan, 39,059 students (85.6 percent) were provided for state and 6,580 students (14.4 percent) for non-state higher education institutions.

Opportunities to get higher education in the country have been improved, with the number of admitted students increasing by 20.8 percent in the last 5 years and equaling to 41,000 students in 2018.

In order to improve access to higher education, a total of 201 educational loan contracts have been signed with students by the “Maarifchi” Student Loan Fund, which was established in 2016 at the initiative of the Ministry of Education and with the participation of 14 higher education institutions. Furthermore, under the Order signed by the President for social protection of students from low-income families, beginning from 2017, student scholarships have begun to be determined on the basis of academic performance, with tuition-paying students also getting an opportunity to receive scholarship.

In accordance with the Orders dated 14 February 2019 of the President of the Republic of Azerbaijan “On additional measures to improve the scholarship system in higher education institutions” and “On granting scholarships to doctoral students and students studying at higher education, secondary specialized and vocational education institutions, as well as at the master’s level of Azerbaijan National Academy of Sciences” and the Decree “On amendments to the 3 September 2001 Decree No. 564 of the President of the Republic of Azerbaijan on establishment of presidential scholarship for students of higher educational institutions of the Republic of Azerbaijan,” initiatives have been undertaken to improve the scholarship system in higher education institutions, to increase the number of state-funded scholarships by 16,000 units from March 1 of the current year, and to increase the amounts of the presidential scholarship for students of higher educational institutions

and the scholarships awarded to doctoral students and students studying at higher education, secondary specialized and vocational education institutions, as well as at the master’s level of Azerbaijan National Academy of Sciences. Increasing the proportion of scholarship-receiving students to the total number of students from current 31 percent to 45 percent in the 2019/2020 academic year and to a level of not less than 50 percent beginning from the 2020/2021 academic year has been of great importance in terms of expanding access to higher education in general and improving the social protection of students. The abovementioned Orders will have a significant contribution to the development of highly-qualified and professional personnel, creation of additional scholarship opportunities for students achieving high academic results, and formation of a competitive environment in higher education.

■ By 2030, substantially increase the number of youth and adults who have relevant skills, including technical and vocational skills, for employment, decent jobs and entrepreneurship.

It should be noted that the “National Qualifications Framework for Lifelong Learning of the Republic of Azerbaijan” (AzNQF) has been approved by the decision dated 18 July 2018 of the Cabinet of Ministers. AzNQF is a framework document that defines and describes the knowledge, skills and competences of learners at all stages and levels of education. This document systematizes domestic qualifications in accordance

with the international practice, facilitates international mobility and recognition of national qualifications abroad, and creates favorable conditions for Azerbaijani citizens to study and work abroad by enabling recognition of qualifications and diplomas. AzNQF strengthens links between the labor market and the education system, and encourages the creation of a system of recognition of competences acquired through non-formal and informal learning.

Proportion of youth¹ and adults with information and communications technology (ICT) skills, by type of skill, in percent

The analysis of the data provided in the graph and table below shows that in the last five years, the proportion of youth with ICT skills has risen from 84.7 percent to 85.3 percent, while that of adults with ICT skills went up from 58.7 percent to 61.1 percent.

| Indicator name | 2013 | 2014 | 2015 | 2016 | 2017 |
|--|------|------|------|------|------|
| Proportion of youth and adults with ICT skills | | | | | |
| aged 15-24 | 84,7 | 84,9 | 85,3 | 85,7 | 85,3 |
| aged above 15 | 58,7 | 59,1 | 60,2 | 61,0 | 61,1 |
| Copying or moving a file or a folder | | | | | |
| aged 15-24 | 84,0 | 81,2 | 78,1 | 75,1 | 74,7 |
| aged above 15 | 49,9 | 50,6 | 51,1 | 51,6 | 51,7 |
| Copy/pasting or cut/pasting within a document | | | | | |
| aged 15-24 | 81,4 | 78,7 | 75,7 | 72,8 | 72,4 |
| aged above 15 | 48,4 | 49,0 | 49,6 | 50,1 | 50,2 |
| Sending files (document, Figure, video, etc.) via email | | | | | |
| aged 15-24 | 80,6 | 77,9 | 74,9 | 72,0 | 71,6 |
| aged above 15 | 38,0 | 38,5 | 38,9 | 39,3 | 39,4 |
| Using basic calculation formulas in electronic spreadsheets | | | | | |
| aged 15-24 | 42,0 | 40,6 | 39,1 | 37,5 | 37,3 |
| aged above 15 | 12,3 | 12,4 | 12,6 | 12,7 | 12,7 |
| Connecting additional devices to a computer (modem, camera, printer, etc.) | | | | | |
| aged 15-24 | 24,0 | 23,2 | 22,3 | 21,5 | 21,4 |
| aged above 15 | 9,3 | 9,4 | 9,6 | 9,6 | 9,6 |
| Searching, downloading, installing and configuring software | | | | | |
| aged 15-24 | 17,1 | 16,6 | 15,9 | 15,3 | 15,2 |
| aged above 15 | 4,5 | 4,6 | 4,7 | 4,7 | 4,7 |
| Preparing electronic presentations | | | | | |
| aged 15-24 | 12,9 | 12,4 | 12,0 | 11,5 | 11,4 |
| aged above 15 | 3,8 | 3,8 | 3,9 | 3,9 | 3,9 |
| Transferring files from a computer to other devices | | | | | |
| aged 15-24 | 10,3 | 9,9 | 9,6 | 9,2 | 9,2 |
| aged above 15 | 1,9 | 1,9 | 1,9 | 1,9 | 1,9 |
| Developing a computer program using a special programming language | | | | | |
| aged 15-24 | 0,7 | 0,7 | 0,8 | 0,9 | 0,9 |
| aged above 15 | 0,5 | 0,6 | 0,6 | 0,6 | 0,6 |

¹ According to the Law of the Republic of Azerbaijan "On youth policy," youth means people aged 14-29. However, since the UN-approved methodology defines youth as people aged 15-24, this publication looks at the number of people of this age group in order to ensure international comparison of this indicator.

However, the analysis also shows that the proportion of users capable of performing more complicated ICT operations is relatively lower in both groups. Among

both youth and adults, the ability to create computer programs by using a special programming language is still relatively low compared to other ICT skills.

Figure 7. Proportion of youth (aged 15-24) and adults (aged 15 and above) with ICT skills, in percent

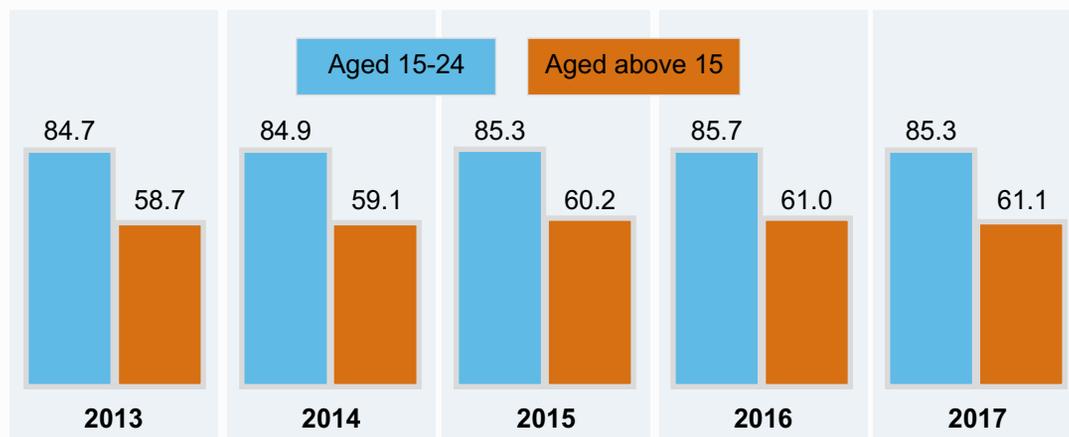


Table 2. Proportion of youth (aged 15-24) and adults (aged 15 and above) with ICT skills, by type of skill, in percent

As a result of the rationalization and optimization of the network of vocational education institutions in accordance with the “State Strategy for the development of education in the Republic of Azerbaijan” and the “Strategic Roadmap on the development of vocational education and training in the Republic of Azerbaijan,” Baku State Centre for Vocational Education in Communications and Information Technologies specializing in the field of ICT was established in 2016.

study group activities are organized for 7th-9th grade pupils in computer science, programming and robotics. The laboratory has been built on the basis of Arduino, which is considered to be the most popular platform in electronic engineering. This platform is widely used worldwide for increasing children’s knowledge in this field from an early age and building a foundation for their future engineering activities.

In upper secondary school No. 23, a robotics laboratory named Robopark was established with the support of the Ministry of Transport, Communications and High Technologies. The laboratory was set up in the framework of a project implemented jointly with the United Nations Development Program. The objective is to increase the scientific and technical knowledge of schoolchildren and their interest in the area of high technologies, and to enable development and testing of robotic prototypes. In the laboratory,

By 2030 eliminate gender disparities in education and ensure equal access to all levels of education and vocational training for the vulnerable, including persons with disabilities, indigenous peoples and children in vulnerable situations

Parity indices (female/male, rural/urban, bottom/top wealth quintile and others such as disability status, indigenous peoples and conflict-affected, as data become available) for all education indicators on this list that can be disaggregated

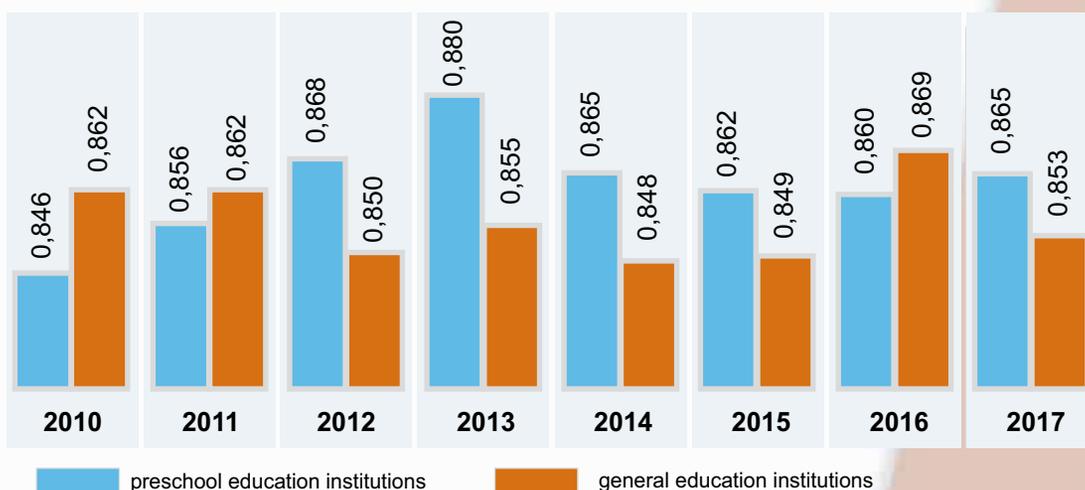
The analysis of the data provided in the graph below shows that the index of gender equality in education rose from 0.846 to 0.865 for preschool education institutions, but decreased from 0.862 to 0.853 for general education institutions during the period of 2010-2017.

In terms of breakdown by location, during the period under review, the index concerning preschool education institutions rose from 0.827 to 0.857 for urban areas, but decreased from 0.902 to 0.893 in rural areas. The index concerning general education institutions rose from 0.835 to 0.849 for urban areas, but decreased from 0.895 to 0.864 for rural areas.

During the period of 2010-2017, the number of boys at preschool education institutions increased from 61,140 to 66,596 (or by 8.9 percent) and that of girls rose from 51,752 to 57,625 (or by 11.3 percent), while at general education institutions, the number of boys went up from 713,970 to 821,252 (or by 15.0 percent) and that of girls grew from 613,562 to 700,898 (or by 14.2 percent).

According to the information of the Ministry of Education, currently women predominate among teachers and students at the education institutions of the country. "According to statistics, currently women (girls) make up 80 percent of the teachers working at and 46 percent of the learners studying at general education institutions of the country. These indicators are respectively 70.1 percent and 24.3 percent

Figure 8. Index of gender equality in education



in vocational education, 78 percent and 65.3 percent in secondary specialized education, and 51.9 percent and 48.2 percent in higher education.

“The number of female students studying at the bachelor’s level of higher education was 67,729 in the 2013-2014 academic year, 69,854 in the 2014-2015 academic year, 71,918 in the 2015-2016 academic year, 72,402 in the 2016-2017 academic year, and 73,613 in the 2017-2018 academic years.

Girls accounted for 49.2 percent of the students admitted to the bachelor’s level in 2014, 47.5 percent in 2015, 49.4 percent in 2016, 49.0 percent in 2017, and 48.5 percent in 2018.

The number of girls studying at the master’s level of higher education institutions is also observed to be on the rise.

Girls constituted 47.8 percent of 11,446 students studying at master’s level in the 2013-2014 academic year, 53.7 percent of 12,476 students in the 2014-2015 academic year, 54.4 percent of 12,389 students in the 2015-2016 academic year, 55.3 percent of 12,165 students in the 2016-2017 academic year, and 54.1 percent of 13,344 students in the 2017-2018 academic years.

Girls made up 3,049 (or 55.3 percent) of those admitted to the master’s level in the 2013-2014 academic year, 2,954 (or 60.1 percent) in the 2014-2015 academic year, 2,921 (or 59.0 percent) in the 2015-2016 academic year, 3,280 (or 64.3 percent) in the 2016-2017 academic year, and 3,614 (or 55.5 percent) in the 2017-2018 academic year.

In Azerbaijan, women are also highly represented in the sphere of science. In particular, 54 percent of master’s students,

51 percent of doctors of philosophy working at higher education institutions, and 46 percent of doctors of science are women. At present, 1,215 of the 2,168 doctoral students (56 percent) are women.

In recent years, women’s proportion among heads of educational institutions has been on the rise. At present, 6 (or 11 percent) of the rectors and 40 (or 20.5 percent) of deputy rectors of higher education institutions, 14 (or 28 percent) of directors and 35 (or 30 percent) of deputy directors of colleges, 10 (or 10 percent) of directors and 27 (or 28 percent) of deputy directors of initial vocational education institutions, and 1,235 (or 33 percent) of directors and 3,941 (or 54 percent) of deputy directors of general education schools are women.

In the 2014-2015 academic year, 15,348 (or 85 percent) of 17,962 applicants to teacher recruitment competition were women. 1,420 of the female applicants passed the competition successfully and were appointed as teachers to schools of their choice according to their specialties. In the 2016-2017 academic year, 23,411 (or 73 percent) of 31,779 applicants were women, of which 1,905 passed the competition successfully and were appointed as teachers to schools of their choice according to their specialties. In the 2017-2018 academic year, 42,585 (or 84 percent) of 50,697 applicants were women, of which 6,765 were recruited.

Gender issues have been mainstreamed into the training programs approved by the Institute of Professional Development of Education Workers. During the period of 2013-2018, a total of 90,263 teachers have been engaged in trainings and 70 percent of them were women.

The Law of the Republic of Azerbaijan “On vocational education” contains a number of provisions related to organization of inclusive education in the vocational education system and ensuring the accessibility of vocational education for all by creating equal conditions for everyone.

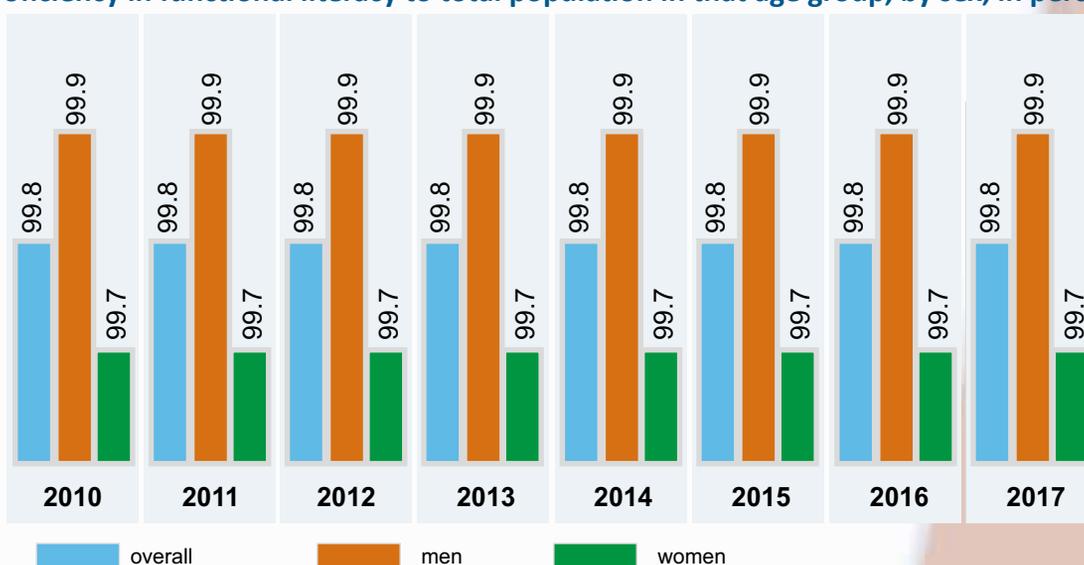
In addition, the “Procedure for admission to vocational education institutions” approved by 15 March 2019 Decision No. 102 of the Cabinet of Ministers of the Republic of Azerbaijan provides that people with disabilities, as well as children who have lost their parents or have been deprived of parental care shall be admitted to vocational education institutions without competition.

■ By 2030, ensure that all youth and a substantial proportion of adults, both men and women, achieve literacy and numeracy

Percentage of population in a given age group achieving at least a fixed level of proficiency in functional (a) literacy and (b) numeracy skills, by sex¹

The statistical observations over the last eight years show that the proportion of persons aged 15 or above in the country achieving at least a fixed level of proficiency in functional literacy to total population in that age group is 99.8 percent. This indicator has been the same for urban and rural areas of the country. For men and women, this indicator was 99.9 and 99.7 percent respectively.

Figure 9. Proportion of persons aged 15 or above achieving at least a fixed level of proficiency in functional literacy to total population in that age group, by sex, in percent



¹ The indicator presented reflects only the percentage of population in the given age group achieving at least a fixed level of proficiency in functional (a) literacy skills, calculated on the basis of official statistical data available

Last year, the number of educated people aged 15 or above was 957,000 at the higher education level, 636,000 at the secondary specialized education level, 4,736,000 at the upper secondary education level, and 979,000 at the lower secondary education level.

■ By 2030, ensure that all learners acquire the knowledge and skills needed to promote sustainable development, including, among others, through education for sustainable development and sustainable lifestyles, human rights, gender equality, promotion of a culture of peace and non-violence, global citizenship and appreciation of cultural diversity and of culture's contribution to sustainable development.

Extent to which (i) global citizenship education and (ii) education for sustainable development, including gender equality and human rights, are mainstreamed at all levels in: (a) national education policies, (b) curricula, (c) teacher education and (d) student assessment

A Youth Research and Training Centre for Sustainable Development has been established at the Academy of Public

Administration under the President of the Republic of Azerbaijan on the basis of a Memorandum of Cooperation signed on 13 December 2018 between the Ministry of Youth and Sports of the Republic of Azerbaijan and the Academy of Public Administration under the President of the Republic of Azerbaijan. The main aim of the establishment of the center was to empowering the country's youth within the framework of cooperation with scientific community and academia for implementation of the SDGs, considering the challenges of improving the effectiveness and inclusiveness of the measures to be undertaken towards achieving the goals and targets set out in the "Transforming Our World: The 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development" in the Republic of Azerbaijan, creating appropriate conditions and opportunities for the development of a young generation of specialists, scientists and researchers who will be functioning in this sphere, and expanding the interaction and communication between stakeholders for the realization of the Sustainable Development Goals.

In addition, at the initiative of the Office of Human Rights Commissioner (Ombudsman) of the Republic of Azerbaijan, legal awareness events, a type of non-formal education, are conducted, using innovative approaches, for each population group by training trainers from among these groups themselves. Clause 4.4 of the "National Action Program to improve the effectiveness of the protection of human rights and freedoms in the Republic of Azerbaijan" provides for the expansion of human rights education at secondary specialized and higher education institutions and development of step-by-step teaching of children's rights at general education schools.

At the initiative of the Ombudsman and in cooperation with the Ministry of Education, the program of step-by-step teaching of children's rights has been successfully carried out in secondary general education institutions every year starting from the 2009/2010 academic year. In the framework of this program, children trained as trainers in accordance with the Convention on the Rights of the Child teach children's rights to pupil's one grade their junior. A total of 3,762 pupils (1,958 girls and 1,804 boys) have successfully graduated from this program implemented in a total of 60 schools, including 24 regional schools, in 2017, 2018 and 2019.

In general, a series of legal awareness events about human rights and gender equality are conducted under relevant programs and topics with the participation of the representatives of the Ombudsman's Office and the Commissioner's Regional Centers in Ganja, Shaki, Guba and Jalilabad that cover 35 cities and districts.

Build and upgrade education facilities that are child, disability and gender sensitive and provide safe, non-violent, inclusive and effective learning environments for all

Proportion of schools with access to: (a) electricity; (b) the Internet for pedagogical purposes; (c) computers for pedagogical purposes; (e) basic drinking water; (f) single-sex basic sanitation facilities; and (g) basic handwashing facilities (as per the WASH indicator definitions)

Currently, the proportion of schools provided with electricity, basic drinking water, single-sex basic sanitation facilities and basic handwashing facilities is 100 percent in the urban and rural areas of the country.

During the period of 2010-2017, the proportion of schools with access to the Internet for pedagogical purposes went up from 39.1 percent to 56.8 percent (an increase of 17.7 percent), and those provided with computers for pedagogical purposes rose from 83.9 percent to 94.7 percent (an increase of 10.8 percent).

Table 3. Proportion of schools with access to the Internet for pedagogical purposes across the country

| Indicator name | 2010 | 2011 | 2012 | 2013 | 2014 | 2015 | 2016 | 2017 |
|---|------------|------|------|------|------|------|------|------|
| | in percent | | | | | | | |
| Proportion of schools provided with the following: | | | | | | | | |
| a) electricity; | 100 | 100 | 100 | 100 | 100 | 100 | 100 | 100 |
| b) access to the Internet for pedagogical purposes; | 39,1 | 47,4 | 48,3 | 49,4 | 51,4 | 51,8 | 55,6 | 56,8 |
| c) computers for pedagogical purposes; | 83,9 | 86,7 | 87,2 | 88,3 | 93,1 | 93,9 | 94,3 | 94,7 |
| d) basic drinking water; | 100 | 100 | 100 | 100 | 100 | 100 | 100 | 100 |
| e) single-sex basic sanitation facilities; | 100 | 100 | 100 | 100 | 100 | 100 | 100 | 100 |
| f) basic handwashing facilities (as per the WASH indicator definitions) | 100 | 100 | 100 | 100 | 100 | 100 | 100 | 100 |

Source: State Statistics Committee

In 2017, 98.5 percent of the schools in urban areas were provided with computers for pedagogical purposes and 90.0 percent with access to the Internet for pedagogical purposes.

As for the rural areas, the rate of provision with computers for pedagogical purposes was 93.4 percent. The number of pupils studying in general education institutions connected to the Internet network has been increased to 85 percent of all pupils and 73 percent of all teaching staff in the country.

Figure 10. Proportion of schools provided with computers for pedagogical purposes, by residential area, in percent

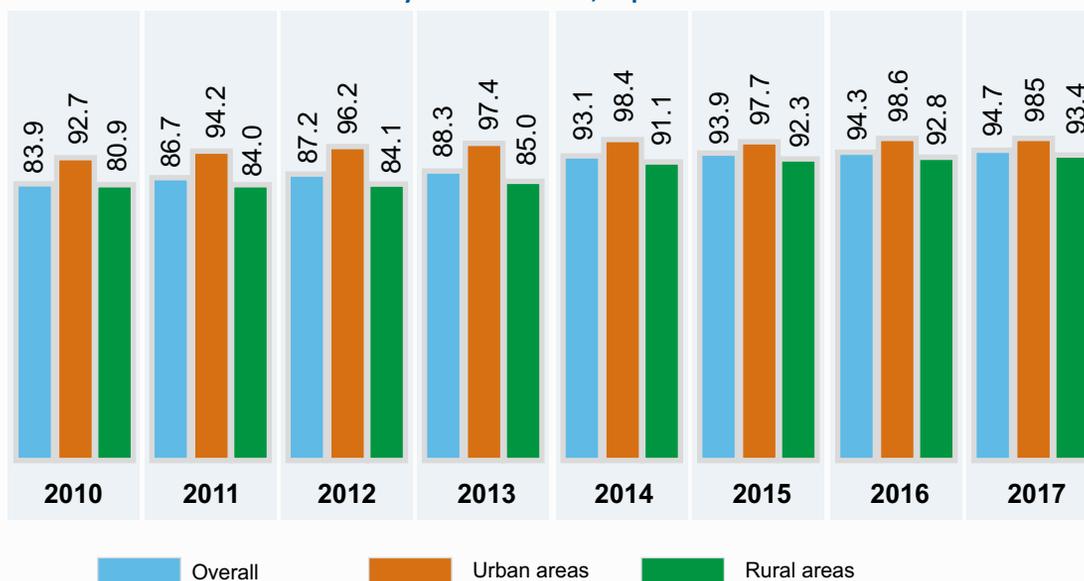
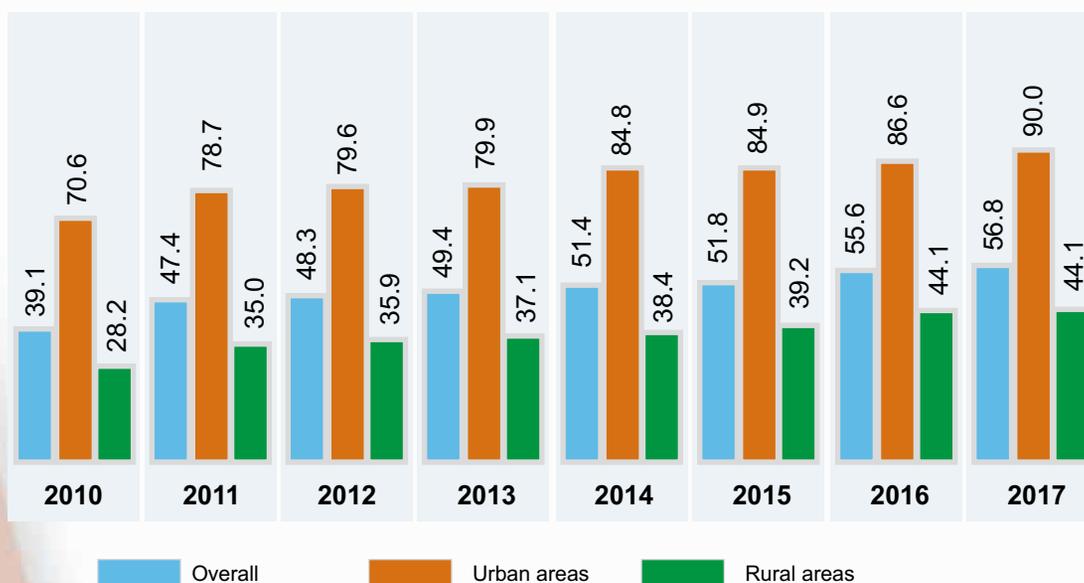


Figure 11. Proportion of schools provided with access to the Internet for pedagogical purposes to schools having computers, by residential area, in percent



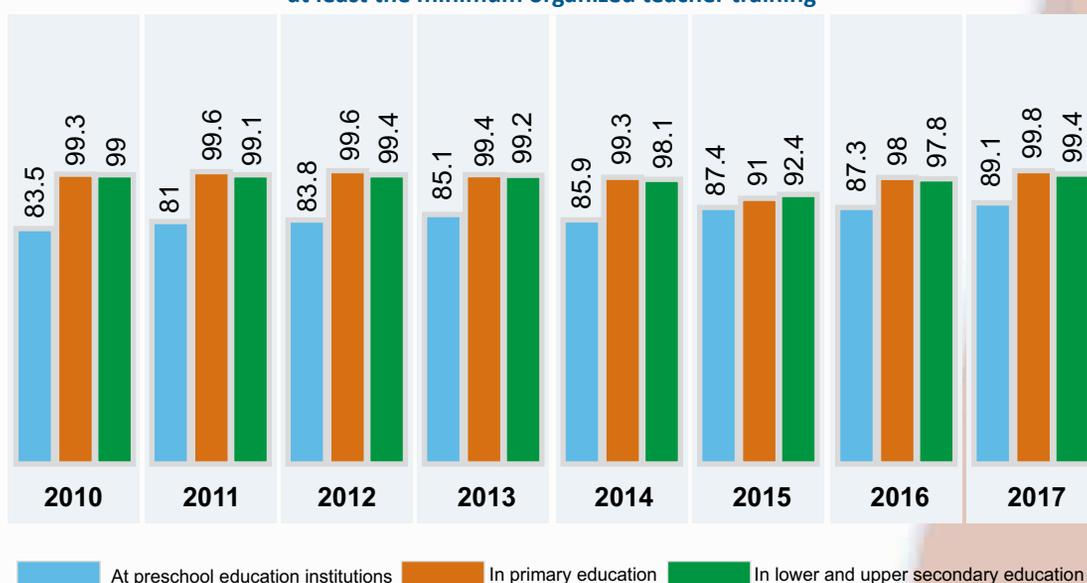
By 2030, substantially increase the supply of qualified teachers, including through international cooperation for teacher training in developing countries, especially least developed countries and Small Island developing States

Proportion of teachers in: (a) pre-primary; (b) primary; (c) lower secondary; and (d) upper secondary education who have received at least the minimum organized teacher training (e.g. pedagogical training) pre-service or in-service required for teaching at the relevant level in a given country

During the period of 2010-2017, the proportion of teachers working at preschool education institutions, who have received at least the minimum organized teacher training, rose from 83.5 percent to 89.1 percent (an increase of 5.6 percent). In urban areas, this indicator increased from 87.0 percent to 91.8 percent, and in rural areas from 72.6 percent to 80.6 percent.

During the period under review, the proportion of teachers in primary education, who have received at least the minimum organized teacher training, went up from 99.3 percent to 99.8 percent (an increase of 0.5 percent). The proportion of teachers in lower and upper secondary education, who have received at least the minimum organized teacher training, grew from 99.0 percent to 99.4 percent (an increase of 0.4 percent) in comparison to 2010.

Table 12. Proportion of teachers in primary education who have received at least the minimum organized teacher training



Observations show that the proportion of teachers who have received at least the minimum organized teacher training pre-service or in-service required for teaching at the relevant level in the country is close to 100 percent.

The number of teachers, who received teacher training during 2018, was 33,151:

- a) In preschool groups of general education institutions- 5,000 teachers
- b) In primary education- 10,069 teachers
- c) and d) In lower secondary and upper secondary education- 18,082 teachers

During the period of 2008-2019, new curricula began to be applied in general education. In this connection, up to 140,000 teachers have been trained.

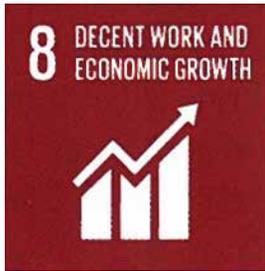
Moreover, the Ministry of Education has been implementing a project titled “eTwinning Plus” in Azerbaijan since 2016. The objective of the project is to increase communication among teaching staff, create opportunities for cooperation, and provide conditions for implementation of various

projects aimed at the development of education together with counterparts from other countries. In the framework of this project, 1,318 education projects have been carried out so far with the participation of 1,690 teachers from 482 schools of Azerbaijan. As of 2018, the number of projects awarded a national quality mark has reached 145. Online trainings and workshops and conferences in various European countries have been organized for teachers participating in the project. In February 2017, the Centre of eTwinning in Europe announced an eTwinning School competition for schools of all countries which have joined the project.

As part of the competition, schools were assessed based on such criteria as ensuring effective use of digital technology and information security in education process, presence of an innovative and creative approach in education process, continuous professional development of teachers, etc. As a result of the assessment, Azerbaijan came 5th out of 41 countries participating in the project for the number of winning schools.



GOAL 8. Promote sustained, inclusive and sustainable economic growth, full and productive employment, and decent work for all



This goal in the context of national development provides for achievement of economic growth, higher levels of economic productivity through

diversification, technological upgrading and innovation, ensuring full and productive employment, and equal remuneration for work of equal value, eradicating forced labor, and slavery and human trafficking, and eliminating any forms of child labor.

This, in turn, allows promoting development-oriented policies that support decent job creation, entrepreneurship, creativity and innovation, enabling access to financial services, and substantially reducing the proportion of youth who do not participate in employment, education or training.

With regard to the above-mentioned, efficient use of resources in consumption and production processes should be increased gradually, the relationship between the sustainable consumption and economic growth, and the environmental pollution should be loosened, labor rights should be protected, safe and secure working environment should be promoted, policies for the development of sustainable tourism that create new jobs, promotes local culture and products should be defined and pursued, the capacity of local

financial institutions should be strengthened with the purpose of ensuring access to financial services, and the strategies for youth employment should be developed and implemented.

In this chapter particular attention focused on the theme of HLPF-2019 on SDG 8 on promote sustained, inclusive and sustainable economic growth, full and productive employment, and decent work for all Quality Education.

In 2018, within the framework of the self-employment program, 7,267 unemployed persons, including 1,174 young men successfully defended their business plans and as a result more than 5,000 households were provided with assets and created small family businesses.

■ Sustain per capita economic growth in accordance with national circumstances

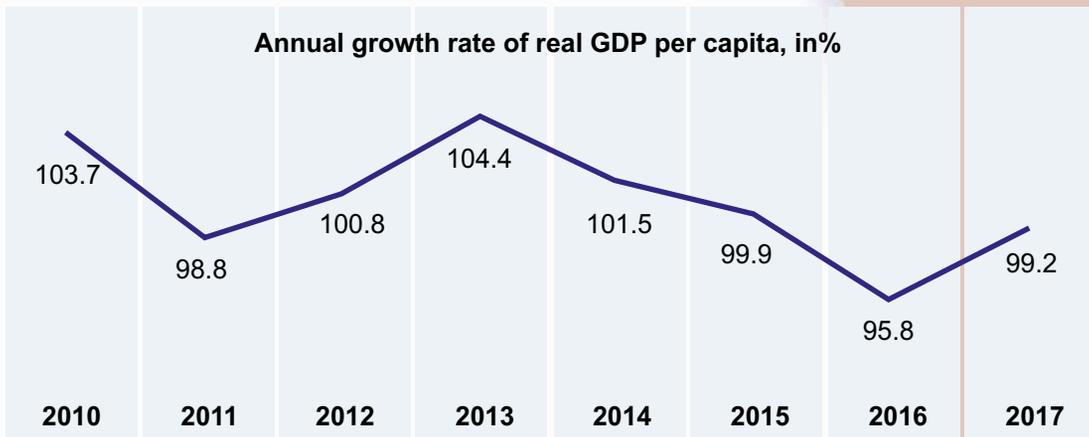
Annual growth rate of real GDP per capita

During 2010-2017, the annual growth rate of real GDP per capita decreased from 103.7% to 99.2%.

In 2017, the country's gross national product was 70,337.8 million manats, of which 63.0% was produced in the non-oil, and 37.0% in the oil and gas sector. The GDP production by economic sectors: 40.1%- industry, 10.4%- trade and repair of transport means, 9.6%- construction, 6.7%- transportation and storage, 5.6% - agriculture, forestry and fishing, 2.4% - accommodation and food services, 1.6%- information and communications,



Figure 13. Annual growth rate of real GDP per capita, in percentage



and 16.5%- others, whereas net taxes on products and imports amounted to 7.1% of the GDP.

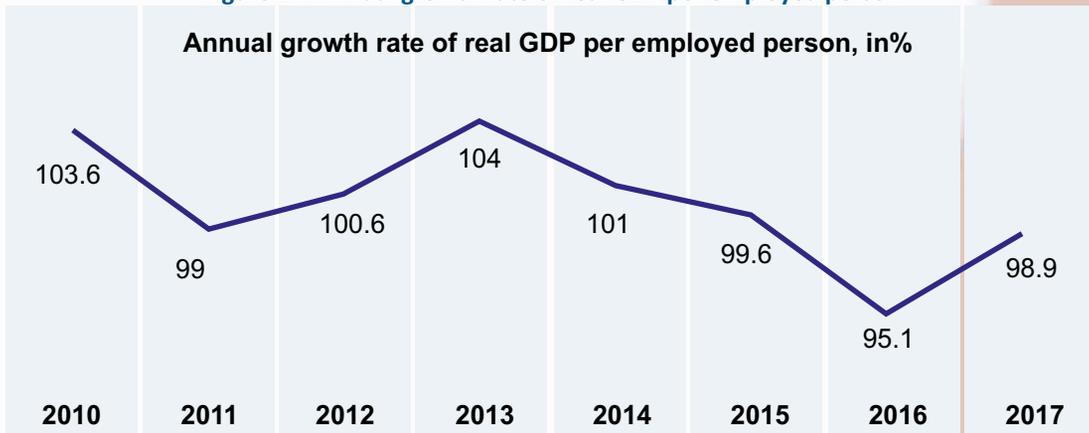
During 2010-2017, the annual growth rate of real GDP per employed person decreased from 103.6% to 98.9%.

Achieve higher levels of economic productivity through diversification, technological upgrading and innovation, including through focus on high-value-added and labor-intensive sectors

In 2017, the number of employed persons increased by 11.4%, from 4329.1 thousand to 4822.1 thousand compared to that of 2010. Last year, 36.4% of the employed population worked in agriculture, forestry and fishing, 14.6% in trade and repair of transport means, 7.8% in education, 7.2% in construction, 5.9% in public administration and defense, social protection, 5.2% in manufacturing, 4.2% in transportation and storage, 3.9% in delivery of healthcare and social services to population, and 14.8% in other sectors of the economy.

Annual growth rate of real GDP per employed person

Figure 14. Annual growth rate of real GDP per employed person



As for the classification by ownership, the proportion of the employed population in the private sector was higher than that in the public sector. That is, 76.0% of the population worked in the private sector, and 24.0% in the public sector.

The Agency for Development of Small and Medium-Sized Businesses of the Republic of Azerbaijan was created in accordance with the Presidential Decree No.1771 dated 28 December 2017, with the purpose of protecting the rights of micro-, small- and medium-sized enterprises and solving their problems, providing a range of services to the entrepreneurs, and coordinating the services of public and private enterprises in this sector, and the funds were provided for in the state budget for 2018-2019 to ensure the operation of the Agency.

At the same time, on the basis of the Presidential Decree No.224 dated 31 July 2018 *“On improving the mechanisms of state support for the development of entrepreneurship in the Republic of Azerbaijan”* the National Fund for Entrepreneurship Support was liquidated and the Entrepreneurship Development Fund of the Republic of Azerbaijan was established as the public legal entity under the Ministry of Economy with a view to improving the support mechanisms for development of entrepreneurship, creating new manufacturing, processing and infrastructure enterprises in the non-oil sector based on innovative technologies, financing export operations, accelerating investment processes in the real sector and expanding opportunities for access to financial resources for economic entities in the private sector.

Along with this, in accordance with the Presidential Decree No.325 dated 6 November 2018 the Innovations Agency was

established under the Ministry of Transport, Communications and High Technologies of the Republic of Azerbaijan as the public legal entity to render assistance to local business entities in acquisition of modern technologies and technological solutions and organizing their transfer, to support innovation-oriented scientific research, encourage innovative projects (including startups), to finance them through grants, subsidized loans and investments in authorized capital (including venture financing), and to promote initiatives in innovation, and the funds were provided for in the state budget for 2019 to ensure the operation of the Agency.

In addition, provisions regarding the following were added to the Tax Code of the Republic of Azerbaijan pursuant to Law of the Republic of Azerbaijan No.1356-VQD dated 30 November 2018: entitling consumers to cashback of 15% of VAT paid cashless, and 10% of VAT paid in cash with a view to providing entrepreneurs with concessions in retail trade and catering; exemption of the income of educational institutions (excluding the portion of profit paid as dividend) with the aim to finance the development of education; portion of the reporting period's profit allocated for the development of science, education, health and culture, not exceeding 10% of the reporting period's profit; 50% of the income from the disposal of shares/participation interest held for at least 3 (three) years; the portion of income of SME cluster member individual entrepreneurs, which are directed for capital expenditures, from income and profit taxes for 7 years; the profit, property and land of SME cluster member individual entrepreneurs from respective taxes for 7 years; and the legal entity startups classified as subject of micro or small entrepreneurship from income and

profit taxes for 3 years upon receipt of the startup certificate.

According to the information provided by the Ministry of Labor and Social Protection of Population, the labor productivity (a man-hour) indicator in Azerbaijan increased during the recent years due to a sustainable growth in the GDP, and reached to 7.59 AZN (4.4 USD) in 2017 in current prices from 2.35 AZN (2.6 USD) in 2006. During 2006-2013, the labor productivity increased in current prices in terms of USD, decreased in the years 2014-2016, and started to go up as of 2017. There are serious differences in the labor productivity indicators among the economic activity types. That is, in 2016 the labor productivity indicator in mining industry was 257.7 AZN (161.4 USD) in current prices, whereas in agriculture it was 1.03 AZN (0.6 USD), in processing industry – 6.3 AZN (3.9 USD), and in construction – 9.4 AZN (5.8 USD). The low level of labor productivity in the agriculture is explained by poor use of intensive methods, innovation and consulting services in this sector, and that the majority of workforce is unskilled. On the other side, there is a need to improve the accounting system in the labor productivity for conducting regular calculations in the above-mentioned fields.

This is why the targets for the Employment Strategy implementation provide for achievement of higher levels of economic productivity and twofold increase in labor productivity by 2030 by focusing on high value-added and labor-intensive sectors (3.3.4). Also, the implementation of target 8.2 is provided for in the draft Action Plan being developed for the realization of the Employment Strategy.

In 2016, the “ABAD” (Easy Support to Family Business) centers, which implement social projects, were established to carry out

socially oriented projects aimed at ensuring the active participation of the citizens in the social-economic life of the Republic of Azerbaijan, developing small and medium entrepreneurship, raising the employment rate of the population and supporting the establishment of competitive family businesses in the country. As a new social innovation system, ABAD centers aim to assist the family businesses engaged in small and medium-sized entrepreneurship with production facilities and equipment, and provides different design, branding, standardization, marketing services to family households throughout the whole business process. Up to now, 332 households have joined ABAD, 279 of which joined support program in the field of decorative and applied popular craftsmanship, and others joined the program in the areas of food production. Ten ethno-boutiques are operating to organize sale fair of handmade products and national souvenirs made by craftsman families.

The “INNOLAND” Incubation and Acceleration Center established under the “Innovations Center” of the State Agency for Public Service and Social Innovations under the President of the Republic of Azerbaijan became operational on 12 November 2018. “INNOLAND” is an innovation center created with a goal to support the establishment of startup ecosystem and encourage innovation and development of private sector in Azerbaijan and outside of its border. “INNOLAND” consists of “Co-working”, “Incubation”, “Acceleration”, and “IT Training and Education Center”. The Co-working center is a favorable workplace with a range of opportunities for those who work independently or in a small team in the field of startups, programming, and innovation. The center offers 7/24 accessibility, a high-speed internet connection, a unified data kiosk, and mentoring support.

■ Promote development-oriented policies that support productive activities, decent job creation, entrepreneurship, creativity and innovation, encourage the formalization and growth of micro-, small- and medium sized enterprises, including through access to financial services.

The targets for implementation of the Employment Strategy (2019-2030) of the Republic of Azerbaijan include the increase of non-agricultural employment to population ratio up to 80% by 2030, and expansion of the coverage of the self-employment program by up to 6 times by 2020.

■ By 2030, achieve full and productive employment and decent work for all women and men, including for young people and persons with disabilities, and equal pay for work of equal value.

Pursuing employment-oriented economic development policy, which is one of the main directions of the Employment Strategy, and supporting micro-, small- and medium-sized enterprises, are linked with the Strategic Road Maps.

In the field of labor and employment, the Republic of Azerbaijan has ratified the conventions of the International Labor

Organization “Equal remuneration for men and women workers for work of equal value”, “Discrimination in respect of employment and occupation”, “Maternity protection” and “Employment of women on underground work”, and others.

The Labor Code of the Republic of Azerbaijan, which entered into force on 1 July 1999, determines labor rights of women and legal safeguards for their implementation. Articles 16 and 154.2 of the Labor Code envisages the principles of inadmissibility of discrimination in labor relations and reducing employee wages in any way or paying less than the minimum wage set by the government by not observing these principles is prohibited by the Code. Under Article 155 of the Labor Code of the Republic of Azerbaijan, employees shall have the right to payment of no less than the minimum salary set by the government, without discrimination.

According to Article 16 of the Labor Code of the Republic of Azerbaijan, during hiring or a change in or termination of employment no discrimination among employees shall be permitted on the basis of citizenship, gender, race, religion, nationality, language, place of residence, property status, social background, age, marital status, political views, affiliation with trade unions or other public associations, professional standing, or other factors unrelated to the professional qualifications, professional competence or job performance of the employees, nor shall it be permitted to establish privileges and benefits or directly or indirectly limit rights on the basis of these factors. The concessions, privileges and additional safeguards for women, people with disabilities, and others under the age of 18 who are in need of social protection shall not be considered discrimination. Employers or other natural persons who, in frames

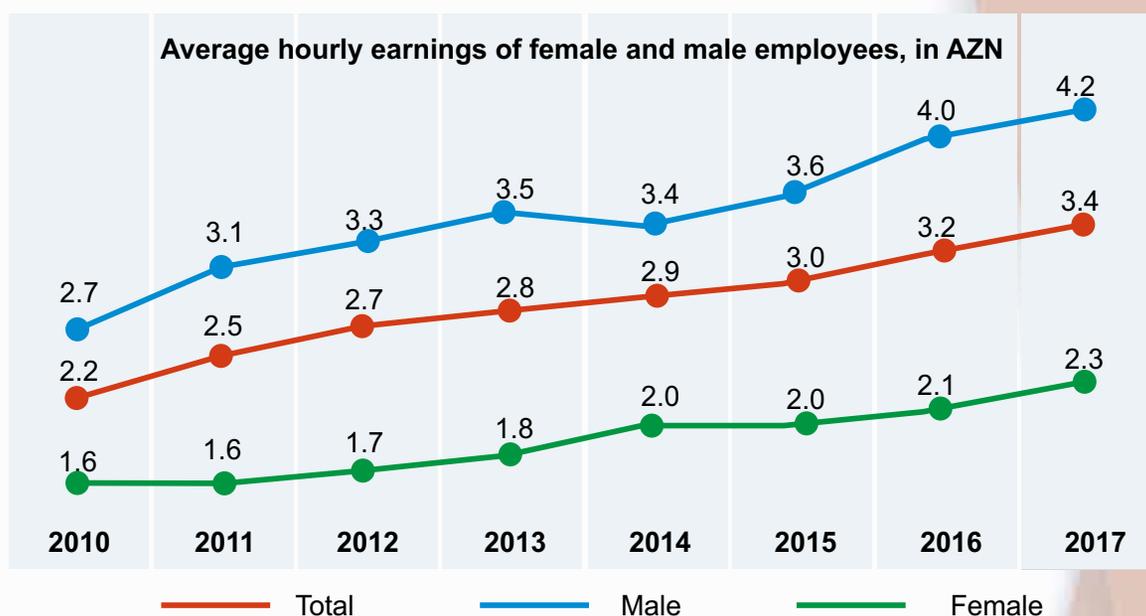
of labor relations, subject employees to discrimination described in Paragraph 1 of this Article shall be liable in the manner established by the Legislation.

Average hourly earnings of female and male employees

During 2010-2017, the average hourly earnings of female and male employees

in general increased by 54.5%, from 2.2 manats to 3.4 manats. Specifically, during this period the average hourly earnings of female employees increased by 43.8%, from 1.6 manats to 2.3 manats, whereas the average hourly earnings of male employees increased by 55.6%, from 2.7 manats to 4.2 manats.

Figure 15. Average hourly earnings of female and male employees, 2010-2017



In 2017, the average nominal monthly wages of male employees was 663.1 manats, and that of female employees was 335.7 manats. The average monthly nominal wage of female and male employees was higher in the private sector compared to the public sector.

That is, the average monthly nominal wage of female employees in public sector was 296.1 manats, whereas in private sector it was 455.9 manats. The average monthly nominal wages of male employees were 509.8 manats and 792.4 manats respectively.

Unemployment rate, by sex

During 2010-2017, the national unemployment rate dropped from 5.6% to 5.0%, wherein the unemployment rate among men dropped from 4.4% to 4.1%, and from 6.9% to 5.9% among women.

Figure 16. Unemployment rate by sex, in %



In 2017, the number of economically active population increased by 486.4 thousand people compared to 2010 to reach 5,073.8 thousand people, 5.0% of which was unemployed. Last year, the highest level of unemployment by age groups was among the men and women aged 15-24, which constituted 14.9% and 11.1% respectively. In general, the unemployment rate among women was 6.9% in urban areas, and 4.8% in rural areas; and among the men, it was 5.0% and 3.1% respectively.

Take immediate and effective measures to eradicate forced labor, end modern slavery and human trafficking and secure the prohibition and elimination of the worst forms of child labor, and by 2025 end child labor in all its forms

According to the information provided by the State Committee for Family, Women and

Children Affairs, the Committee and the Ministry of Labor and Social Protection of Population implemented the Joint Action Plan on the Prevention of Child Labor Abuse (2013-2015), aimed at prevention and detection of child labor abuse and protection of the rights of affected children. Within the framework of the implementation of the Action Plan, the Committee initially carried out a study during 2015-2016 on the status of child labor in the country with the purpose of understanding the current situation in the country on the child labor and preventing the child labor abuse. As a result of strengthened control measures and preventive communication with the families of the children subjected to child labor, the number of child labor cases decreased from 94 down to 34. At the same time, the State Program on Development of Official Statistics in the Republic of Azerbaijan in 2018-2025 envisages the development of statistical survey methodology to study the state of child labor, and conduct of the survey.

The Prosecutor General's Office of the Republic of Azerbaijan recorded 587 criminal offences committed against minors in 2018.

Four of these cases are related to human trafficking, which constitutes 0.6% of the crimes committed against minors. Criminal cases were opened and preliminary investigations were conducted on these facts under Article 144-1.2.3 of the Criminal Code.

In 2018, no information was recorded on involvement of minors in forced labor.

When using the labor of the employees under the age of 18 with respect to working conditions, business hours and vacation time, additional legal safeguards and concessions in the Labor Code of the Republic of Azerbaijan has been determined and suggested.

The Code of Administrative Offences of the Republic of Azerbaijan provides for administrative liability for employment of a child under the age of 15 by an employer

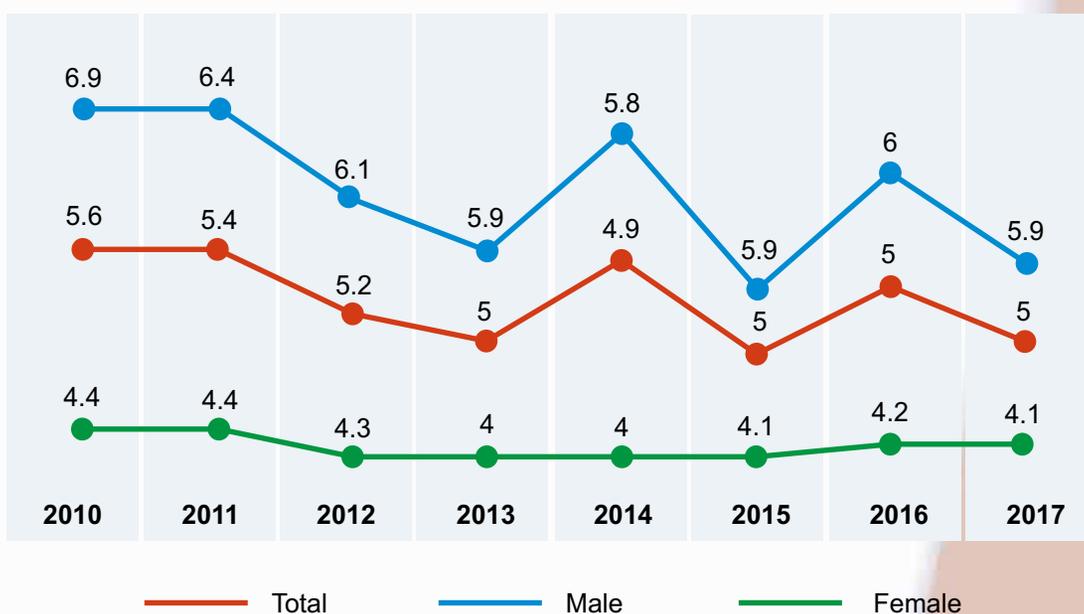
(Article 192.8), involvement of children in the activity which can be harmful for their life, health or morality (Article 192.9), and involvement of a minor in an idleness by an adult (Article 523.2).

In 2018, 144 human trafficking and 4 forced labor cases were recorded and 98 persons were identified as the victims of those illegal actions. 22 of these victims were aged between 18 to 25, 54 of them were aged between 25 to 35, and 22 were aged above 35 years.

Frequency rates of fatal and non-fatal occupational injuries, by sex

The number of persons with fatal and non-fatal occupational injuries per 100,000 employees decreased from 19 in 2010 to 12 in 2017. The number of men with fatal and non-fatal occupational injuries was higher than that of the women.

Figure 17. Number of fatal and non-fatal occupational injuries per 100,000 employees, by sex



The number of employees with fatal occupational injuries dropped from 68 in 2010 to 60 in 2017, and those with non-

fatal occupational injuries dropped from 196 to 122 respectively.

The number of persons with fatal and non-fatal occupational injuries by type of economic activities in 2017 was as follows: mining industry – 34, manufacturing industry – 27, production, distribution and supply of power, natural gas and steam – 6, water supply and sanitation – 2, construction – 42, transportation and storage – 19, information and communication – 3, and others – 49.

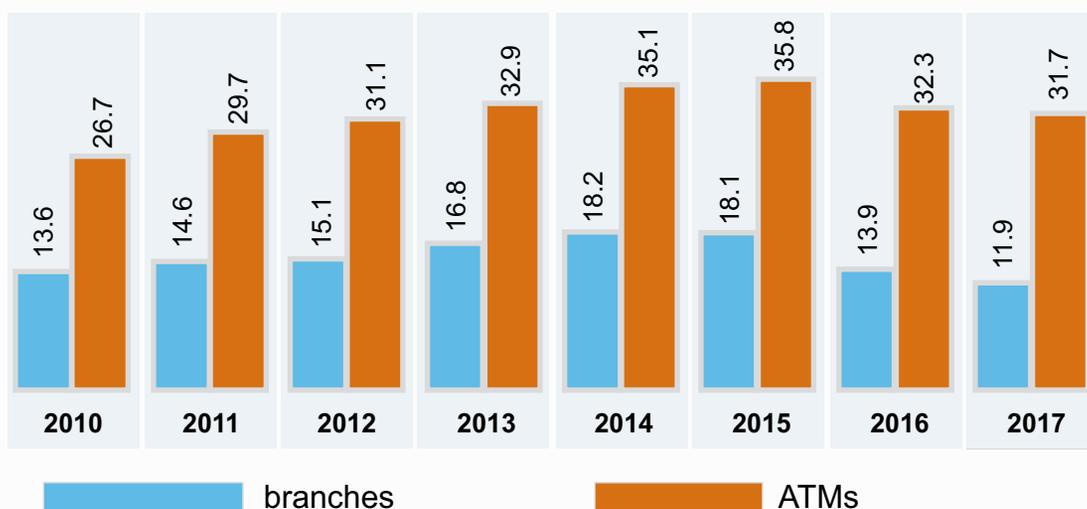
Strengthen the capacity of domestic financial institutions to encourage and

expand access to banking, insurance and financial services for all

Number of commercial bank branches, and b) automated teller machines

The number of commercial bank branches per 100,000 adults decreased from 13.6 in 2010 to 11.9 in 2017, and the number of automated teller machines increased from 26.7 to 31.7.

Figure 18. Number of commercial bank branches and automated teller machines, per 100,000 adults



In 2010, even though the number of automated teller machines in the country was 1892 in absolute terms (of which 1053 were in Baku and 839 in regions), this indicator reached 2431 (of which 1308 were in Baku, and 1123 in regions) by the end of 2017¹.

In 2017, there were 509 branches and 2431 ATMs which belonged to 30 commercial

banks (of which 2 were public, and 28 were private banks) operating in the country².

In accordance with the requirements of the Law of the Republic of Azerbaijan “On Compulsory Insurance”, notarization of the deeds of alienation of buildings, residential and non-residential areas, residential houses, apartments and buildings that belong to individuals and legal entities, as

¹ <https://uploads.cbar.az/assets/94d3a48f7317a64d70c538a27.pdf>

² [https://www.fimsa.az/assets/upload/files/Bank%20icmal%C4%B1_31%20dekabr%202017\(1\).pdf](https://www.fimsa.az/assets/upload/files/Bank%20icmal%C4%B1_31%20dekabr%202017(1).pdf)

well as power of attorneys for use of means of transport shall be carried out only after they are insured.

At present, as a result of exchange of data stored in the information systems between the Compulsory Insurance Bureau and the Ministry of Justice, instant insurance of properties that belong to individuals who apply for certain notary transactions is provided as well.

■ By 2020, develop and operationalize a global strategy for youth employment and implement the Global Jobs Pact of the International Labor Organization

Existence of a developed and operationalized national strategy for youth employment, as a distinct strategy or as part of a national employment strategy

Provision of economic development through efficient use of labor resources, expanding employment and entrepreneurship opportunities of the population, supporting decent work, raising competitiveness of the workforce and increasing labor productivity in the country are the main goals in the strategic road maps on national economy and the main sectors of economy approved by the Decree No.1138 dated 6 December 2016 of the President of the Republic of Azerbaijan. In this regard, on the basis of existing

¹ https://azertag.az/xeber/2019_2030_cu_iller_uchun_Azərbaycan_Respublikasinin_Mesgulluq_Strategiyasi-1209753

demographic trends and development perspectives and the determined economic priorities in the Republic of Azerbaijan, “The Employment Strategy of the Republic of Azerbaijan for 2019-2030” was approved by the Presidential Decree No.1138 dated 30 October 2018 with the purpose of formulation of a long-term state employment policy aimed at ensuring effective employment¹.

The purpose of the Strategy is to ensure the transition of employment policy from extensive to intensive phase, increase the employment rate of the population, provide full employment, and support decent work and increase labor productivity.

The main goals of the Strategy include the minimization of the youth unemployment rate, reduction of the proportion of youth (15-24 year old) not involved in employment or education to 15% by 2030, achievement of effective employment and decent work for all layers of population (especially for youth, women and people with disabilities) by 2025.

It is a priority direction of the Strategy to improve professional career consulting and career planning services, as well as ensure transition to wide use of digital technologies with a view to strengthening the integration of youth from vocational education into the labor market.



GOAL 10. Reduce inequality within and among countries



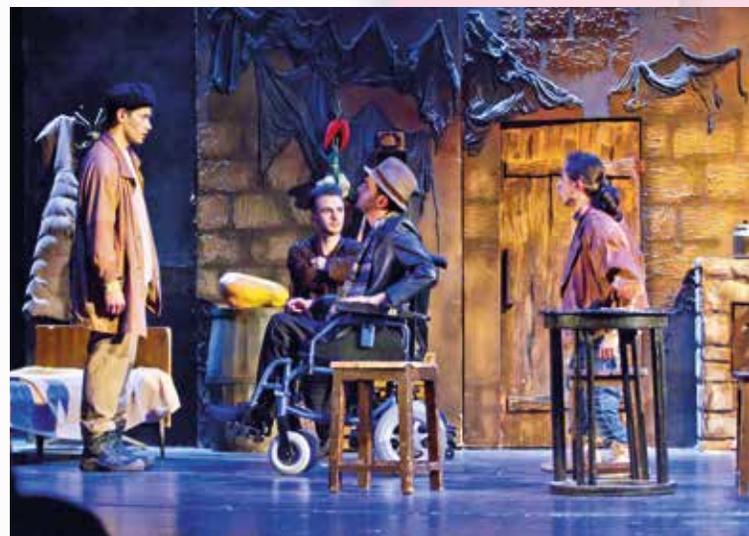
This goal provides for the creation of equal conditions for active involvement of everyone in social, economic and political life, reduction of inequalities in income,

improvement of the regulation and monitoring mechanisms of global financial markets and institutions, and facilitation of legal migration and safe mobility of people irrespective of their age, sex, disability, race, ethnicity, religion or other properties.

This requires promotion of relevant laws, policies and practices that enable elimination of discrimination, progressively achieving greater equality especially through adoption of financial, wage and

social protection policies, implementation of well-managed migration policies, and delivery of more effective, reliable, responsible and legitimate institutions. In connection with the above, developing countries must be widely represented in decision-making in global international economic and financial institutions, the principle of differential treatment for developing and least developed countries must be implemented in accordance with the treaties of World Trade Organization, and official development assistance and financial flows, including foreign direct investment, to States where the need is greatest must be encouraged.





By 2030, empower and promote the social, economic and political inclusion of all, irrespective of age, sex, disability, race, ethnicity, origin, religion or economic or other status.

According to Articles 54 and 55 of the Constitution of the Republic of Azerbaijan, the citizens of the Republic of Azerbaijan have the right to freely participate in the political life of society and state, and to take part in governance of the state.

In this regard, the Employment Strategy identifies social dialogue and partnership as one of the priority areas

in strengthening the social protection of population, increasing the level of employment, ensuring decent work, and improving workforce quality. To this end, several priorities have been identified, including improvement of the institutional framework for tripartite social dialogue at the national level, increasing effectiveness of activities of the Tripartite Commission on Socio-Economic Issues, and refining the principles of social partnership in ensuring employment of population and implementation of active measures.

Furthermore, Article 15 of the Law of the Republic of Azerbaijan “On employment” envisages the creation of local coordination

committees supporting employment which consist of equal number of representatives of trade unions, employers' associations, the agency (institution) designated by the relevant executive authority, relevant state agencies and local self-government bodies, and public associations representing the interests of people in special need of social protection, in order to make coordinated decisions in the field of employment.

In addition, since 2013, the State Agency for Public Service and Social Innovations under the President of the Republic of Azerbaijan has been providing public services on mobile basis to people with disabilities in need of outside care and assistance and to children with disabilities at no extra charge. In 2018, mobile services at no extra charge were provided in Baku and Sumgayit cities at the request of 299 people with disabilities in need of outside care and 18 children with disabilities.

Adopt policies, especially fiscal, wage and social protection policies, and progressively achieve greater equality.

Over the past period, based on the principle of "leaving no one behind," a number of important measures have been carried out with the aim of strengthening social protection of vulnerable population. Specifically, as part of the implementation of the 8 February 2019 Order of the President of the Republic of Azerbaijan "On amendments to the 25 December 2017 Order No. 3545 of the President of the Republic of Azerbaijan on increasing the minimum monthly salary," under the 28 February 2019 Decision No. 68 of the Cabinet of Ministers of the Republic of Azerbaijan, monthly base salary, as determined by the Common Pay Scale, of persons employed in state-funded education, healthcare, culture and social areas, which are prevailed by women, were increased on average by 30 percent as of 1 March 2019.



Under the above-mentioned Order, the minimum monthly wage in the country was substantially increased and reached the cost of living in the country.

The number of employees countrywide whose wages are determined by the Common Pay Scale is 450,000 (70 percent of the employees financed from the state budget), and the majority of them are women.

Along with strengthening the social protection of low-paid employees, the above-mentioned reforms are also aimed at reducing the disparity between average wages of women and men.

It is planned to raise the minimum wages in the country on a continuous basis, to increase the ratio of net minimum wage to net average wage to 60 percent in line with the European standards, and to reduce the disparity between average monthly wages of female and male employees in the future. Proposals are being drafted in this regard.

Furthermore, in order to compensate the financial loss faced by population in connection with their foreign-currency loans as a result of the devaluation of national currency, the President of the Republic of Azerbaijan signed the Decree "On additional measures related to resolving the issue of problematic loans of individuals in the Republic of Azerbaijan."

According to the above Decree, the state will pay 25 kopecks per each USD of the principal loan for the increased part of the loans taken before the first devaluation, and 60 kopecks per each USD of the principal loan for the increased part of the loans taken during the period between the first and second devaluations.

In addition to the foregoing, with the aim of restructuring the delinquent loans of individuals with a principal amount of 10,000 (ten thousand) USD in foreign currency or 17,000 (seventeen thousand) AZN in national currency, the above Decree also provides for issuance of state guaranteed soft loans in the amount of 682 million AZN by the Central Bank of the Republic of Azerbaijan to banks at an annual interest rate of 0.1 percent for a period of 5 years (with one year grace period) in order for banks to grant soft loans to these individuals at an annual interest rate of 1 percent.

Pursuant to Decree of the President on 19 April 2018 on improving the social protection of family members of military servicemen who died for the territorial integrity of the Republic of Azerbaijan, a lump sum payment of 11,000 AZN to the heirs of these servicemen is stipulated. During 2018, payments were made to the heirs of 5,491 servicemen.

Under the 28 January 2019 Decree of the President, the scope of the lump sum payment was further expanded and instructions were given for making a lump sum payment also to the heirs of additional 2,725 martyrs who died for the territorial integrity of the Republic of Azerbaijan before 2 August 1997 (including 2,264 martyr servicemen and 461 martyr policemen for whom an insurance payment of less than 11,000 AZN was received). After the new Decree, the process of lump sum payment now covers the heirs of 12,268 martyrs, and a total of 135 million AZN is allocated for this purpose.

According to the President's 26 February 2019 Order "On increasing the single monthly allowance for internally displaced persons and persons equated to them,"

the amount of single monthly allowance for IDPs and equivalent persons has been increased from 40 AZN to 60 AZN (or by 50 percent) as of 1 April 2019. The single monthly allowance increase applied to 496,557 IDPs.

During the reporting period, a total of 119,230 people applied to Employment Service agencies. 51,774 of them were provided with appropriate jobs, 1,022 people were engaged in paid social work and 2,559 people were enrolled in vocational training courses, 6,331 people were granted unemployment benefit related to previous assignment, and 2,449 people received unemployment insurance payment in connection with the entry into force of the Law of the Republic of Azerbaijan “On unemployment insurance.” Compared to 2017, an increase is observed in the number of people applying to Employment Service agencies and those provided with a job.

In the recent periods, important work has been carried out in terms of improving the country’s labor legislation in line with the international norms and standards, increasing wage income of population, and raising the salaries of employees working in the areas financed from the state budget, as well as public servants (including the special type of civil service).

Social protection encompassing key social services, active labor market policies, and social assistance, play a crucial role in the achievement of SDGs. Within this framework, and to assure equal access of all- to public and social services, the government established “Sustainable and Operative Social Protection Agency” under the Ministry of Labor and Social Protection of Population. This will enhance the capacity the ministry and its subsidiary units to serve

all segments of the society in a timely and effective manner.

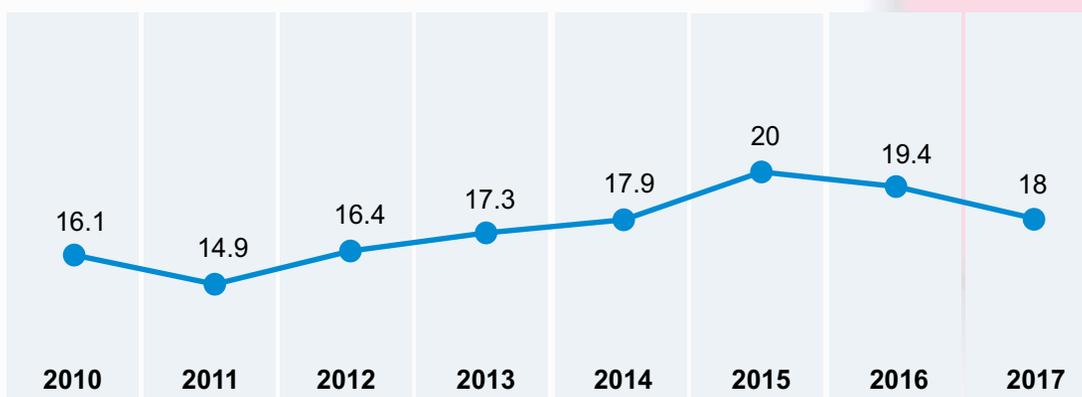
Under the Decree dated 5 September 2018 of the President of the Republic of Azerbaijan “On expansion of the use of electronic services in the fields of labor, employment, social protection and social security,” a Centralized e-Information System (CEIS) comprising 18 sub-systems based on the information systems of the Ministry of Labor and Social Protection of Population, an e-Social internet portal providing a single platform [for services], and an Employment sub-system [under the CEIS] have been established.

Labor share of GDP, comprising wages and social protection transfers

During the period of 2010-2017, the labor share of GDP, comprising wages and social

protection transfers increased from 16.1 percent to 18.0 percent (or by 1.9 percent)

Figure 19. Labor share of GDP, comprising wages and social protection transfers, in percent



Over the past seven years, the total income of population almost doubled, rising from 25.6 billion AZN to 49.2 billion AZN. Thus, the per capita income of population increased by 76.3 percent, going up from 2,866.1 AZN to 5,053.2 AZN.

Facilitate orderly, safe, regular and responsible migration and mobility of people, including through the implementation of planned and well-managed migration policies

Status of implementation of well-managed migration policies¹

During the recent years, there have been significant changes in regulation of the migration area in the Republic of Azerbaijan. Specifically, in accordance with the 19 March 2007 Decree No. 560 of the President of the Republic of Azerbaijan, the State Migration Service was established

to carry out the state policy in the field of migration, to develop the management system, to regulate and forecast migration processes, and to coordinate the activities of relevant state agencies in this sphere. Eight regional departments of the State Migration Service and migration units at state border checkpoints, as well as the State Migration Service of Nakhchivan Autonomous Republic (in 2010) have been founded with a view to effectively regulating the migration processes within the country, ensuring the convenience of applicants, and facilitating the handling of applications of foreigners and stateless persons.

Application of the one-stop-shop principle in the management of migration processes pursuant to the Decree dated 4 March 2009 of the President of the Republic of Azerbaijan has been an important step in the development of the migration management system in light of international

¹ In the UN's system of global indicators for the SDG, the indicator is defined as '10.7.2 Number of countries with well-managed migration policies'. The application of the indicator at national level implies the status of implementation of legal, institutional and organization activity in the relevant field.



experience, and has led to regulation of migration processes in the country based on more flexible and effective mechanisms, improvement and simplification of the migration management mechanisms, and ensuring of responsiveness and transparency in this area. Exercising the powers of a single state agency regarding the one-stop-shop principle, the State Migration Service issues permits and related certificates to foreigners and stateless persons for temporary or permanent residence in the territory of the Republic of Azerbaijan, registers them at their place of residence, extends the term of temporary stay in the country for foreigners and stateless persons arriving in the Republic of Azerbaijan, and grants work permits to engage in paid work in the territory of the country. From the day of application of the one-stop-shop principle, exit and return visas issued to foreigners were abolished. Currently, foreigners and stateless persons can leave the country's territory and return without obtaining any visa, by presenting their temporary or permanent residence permits and valid passports (other border passing documents).

By the 4 June 2010 Decree No. 276 of the President of the Republic of Azerbaijan, the Single Migration Information System (VMIS) of the State Migration System was established to keep a record of foreigners and stateless persons residing, working or temporarily staying in the Republic of Azerbaijan, to provide necessary information to state agencies involved in management of migration processes, to automate the documentation, inspection, inquiry and analysis activities related to migration, and to improve the electronic services provided in this area, and the VMIS was integrated into the "Entry-Exit and Registration" automated interagency information-search system and into the relevant systems of other state agencies (Administration of the President of the Republic of Azerbaijan, Prosecutor's Office of the Republic of Azerbaijan, Ministry of Justice, Ministry of Taxes, Ministry of Labor and Social Protection of Population, Ministry of Education, Ministry of Health, State Border Service, State Security Service, and Foreign Intelligence Service). Moreover, the existing systems of hotels, sanatoriums, rest homes, boarding houses, camps, tourist facilities, hospitals and other similar public places were integrated into the VMIS.

The VMIS is a database accumulating accurate statistical information on foreigners and stateless persons, who reside, work or temporarily stay in the Republic of Azerbaijan.

For the convenience of applicants, a special electronic service section has been created on the official website of the State Migration Service to provide e-services within the powers of the Service, and starting from September 2011, the State Migration Service began providing e-services. Currently, the number of e-services rendered by the State Migration

Service is 14. The e-service section contains the names of relevant services provided, an accurate list of documents required for provision of these services, electronic templates of relevant documents (application, application-questionnaire, form, etc.), and information on the amounts of state fees charged for issuance of permits, decisions and other documents.

By the 2 July 2013 Law No. 713-IVQ of the Republic of Azerbaijan, the Migration Code of the Republic of Azerbaijan was approved and entered into force on August 1 of the same year. The Code establishes regulations related to implementation of state policy in the field of migration, regulation of migration processes and relations arising in this area, and legal status of foreigners and stateless persons in the Republic of Azerbaijan.

The State Migration Service also provides services at Azerbaijani brand “ASAN Service” centers established in light of the need for increased transparency in the activities of state agencies, provision of services to citizens in a more qualitative, convenient and innovative way using modern innovations, and ensuring the satisfaction of citizens. These services are related to receiving applications for issuance of foreigners and stateless persons with temporary or permanent residence permits and work permits to engage in paid work in our country, and for determination of a person’s affiliation to citizenship of the Republic of Azerbaijan.

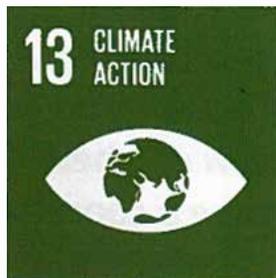
In accordance with the instruction given under the 1 June 2016 Decree No. 923 of the President of the Republic of Azerbaijan “On facilitation of the issuance of electronic visas and creation of the “ASAN Visa” system,” the ASAN Visa system has been established. The ASAN Visa system allows

foreigners and stateless persons to apply for an e-visa directly through the ASAN Visa system, to enter information required to obtain an e-visa directly to the ASAN Visa system, to pay the state fee for processing e-visa applications electronically via the ASAN Visa system, and to send the e-visa to the email address of the applicant. Launched in 2017, the ASAN Visa system is used to issue e-visas to citizens of 95 countries within 3 days, and in case of urgent application, within 3 hours. Starting from May 2018, real time issuance of visas to citizens of 15 countries via the ASAN Visa system is implemented at four international airports of the country. The number of people who obtained e-visas to visit our country was 268,514 in 2017, and 680,000 in 2018. Since the launch of the system, a total of 1,113,661 visas have been issued, of which 336,000 are visas issued at the border. During the two years of the system’s functioning, 98.2 percent of all e-visa applications have been granted. According to the results of a survey conducted among the persons visiting our country, the website of ASAN Visa, which operates in 9 languages, has been rated 4.8 out of 5 by users for user-friendliness and ease of visa application, and 75 percent of the users have given the maximum rating (5 points) to the website of ASAN Visa on all criteria.



GOAL 13. Take urgent action to combat climate change and its impacts

This, in turn, necessitates strengthening of early warning systems, as well as promotion of education, effective planning and mechanisms to increase governance capacity.



The SDG 13 provides for strengthening resilience to climate-related hazards and natural disasters in all countries, combating climate change and its impacts.

In view of the foregoing, the climate change measures must be incorporated into national policies, strategies and planning tools, the developed countries that are parties to the United Nations Framework Convention on Climate Change should implement their commitments for full operationalization of the Green Climate Fund¹.



¹ “Transforming our world: the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development” approved by UN General Assembly resolution A/RES/70/1 of 25 September 2015



Strengthen resilience and adaptive capacity to climate-related hazards and natural disasters in all countries

Number of deaths, missing persons and directly affected persons attributed to disasters per 100,000 population¹

The disaster risk preparedness, prevention thereof and recovery represent one of the priorities of the Government of Azerbaijan.

¹ In the UN's system of global indicators for the SDGs, the indicator is defined as '13.1.1 Number of deaths, missing persons and directly affected persons attributed to disasters per 100,000 population'.

In this regard, the Ministry of Emergency Situations, established in 2005, in accordance with the main directions of Hyogo Framework for Action adopted in the same year at the UN World Conference on Disaster Reduction, has established a close cooperation in disaster risk reduction and management with the United Nations International Strategy for Disaster Reduction (UNISDR) Office in view of the high risk of emergencies in the geographical location of the Republic of Azerbaijan, the widespread landslides in the highlands of the country, landslips, floods and periodical earthquakes, and most importantly, the

fact that those disaster risks are the source of potential threats for the global energy (BTJ, BTE, TANAP) and the transportation (BTK, International North-South Transport Corridor) projects. During the past years, the employees of the Ministry were involved at the events organized both locally and internationally, experience sharing workshops and scientific-practical workshops regarding the topic in question. The Ministry of Emergency Situations is developing a national strategy on disaster risk reduction and coordinates the implementation of the targets of Sendai Framework for Disaster Risk Reduction at the national level. The Ministry has appointed a national focal point for implementation of the Framework and the relevant international cooperation is in progress. At present, the works are carried out for the formulation of the National Strategy Coordination Group in order to ensure provision of appropriate information by the relevant government agencies to prepare national strategy indicators for developing a national platform aimed at adoption of national strategies on disaster risk reduction by the country.

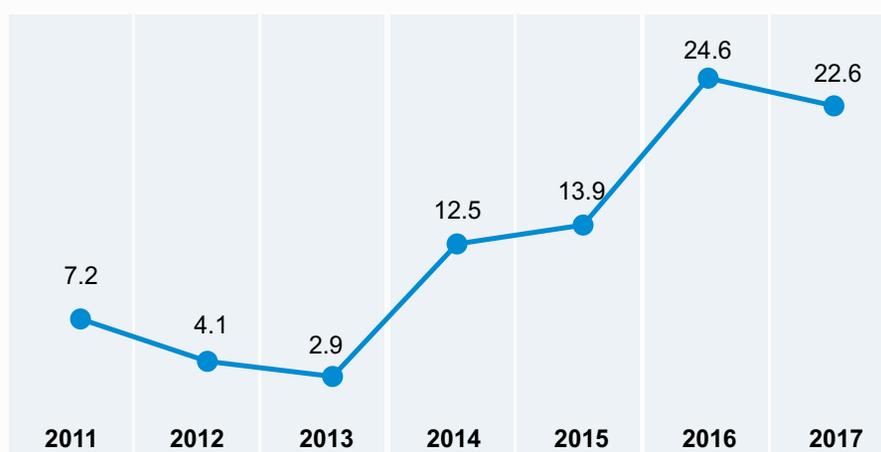
The Ministry carries out or is planning carried out the following activities in the field of Disaster Risk Reduction:

- Reduce the casualties as a result of disasters;
- Reduce the number of population affected by disasters;
- Reduce the economic losses due to disasters;
- Comprehensive development of early warning systems, improvement of databases;
- Works on development of the Electronic Regional Risk Atlas of the Republic of Azerbaijan are in progress;

The Ministry of Emergency Situations carries out works on the improvement of early warning system.

During 2011-2017, the number of killed, injured, rescued and evacuated persons as a result of disasters per 100,000 population increased from 7.2 to 22.6. During 2017, 13,170 natural and industrial disasters

Figure 20. Overall number of killed, injured, rescued and evacuated persons as a result of disasters per 100000 population

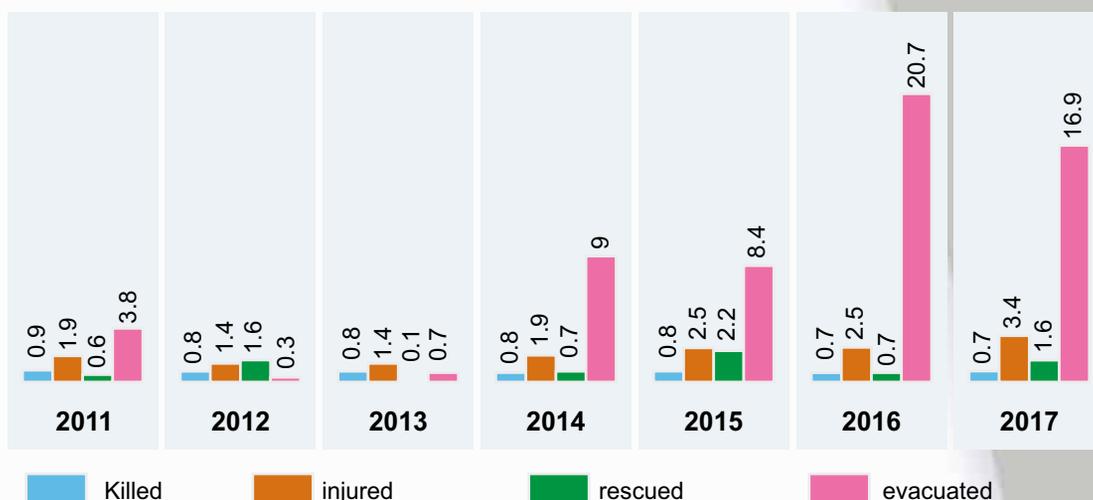


Source: The Ministry of Emergency Situations

occurred in the country, which is by 1,059 or 9% higher than that of 2016. As a result of the disasters, 72 people died, 334 were

injured, 153 were rescued, and 1,644 were evacuated.

Figure 21. Number of killed, injured, rescued and evacuated persons as a result of disasters per 100000 population



Source: The Ministry of Emergency Situations

Improve education, awareness-raising, human and institutional capacity on climate change mitigation, adaptation, impact reduction and early warning

Number of countries that have integrated mitigation, adaptation, impact reduction and early warning into primary, secondary and tertiary curricula

The contents of “Life skills” and “Geography” subjects taught at the general schools, the curricula of appropriate specialties at higher educational institutions provide for education and awareness raising on the issues of climate change mitigation, impact reduction and early warning.

3rd Environmental Forum of Schoolchildren was held at Baku State University as part of the “Green Network” environmental awareness campaign. The annual reports of leaders of so-called Eco-Clubs were heard, new action plans were discussed, and a flashmob was organized during the Forum which was attended by approximately 400 young ecologists. The Ministry of Emergency Situations and the Ministry of Youth and Sports co-organized district and zone rounds of national competition “Young Rescuers and Firefighters” and international competition “Young Rescuer”. From June 24 to July 1, 2018, the final stages of the competitions were held in Gabala district. More than 3,000 schoolchildren attended the competition.

Environmental Education for Sustainable Development project was implemented in frames of the 2018-2019 Action Plan for Education Program signed between the Ministry of Education of the Republic of Azerbaijan and the United Nations



Children’s Fund (UNICEF) in accordance with the 2016-2020 UNICEF Azerbaijan Country Program Action Plan. According to the project implementation plan, the environmental awareness workshops were held on October 3-5, 2018 in Quba city (Quba, Qusar, Khachmaz, Shabran, Siyazan districts), on October 8-10 in Lankaran city (Lankaran, Astara, Masalli, Jalilabad, Bilesuvar, Yardimli, Lerik, Jabrayil, Salyan, Neftchala districts), and on October 24-28 in Baku city. The workshops on the sustainable development goals were attended by 100 methodologists and heads of circles working in the relevant fields at non-school educational institutions.

On 20 October 2018, an excursion for a group of winners of the national and international Olympiads was organized to Shamakhi Safari Park, a wildlife environmental reserve, located on the territory of mountainous woodland *Pirgulu* in Shamakhi district.

On 21 November 2018, the awarding ceremony for the winners of the “Eco

Travel” National Short Film Festival for Children was held at Nizami Cinema Centre with the purpose of increasing the public attention towards the environmental issues. At the screening stage of The Festival, in which 710 schoolchildren participated, 112 video clips were shortlisted. The winners were selected for 3 places, and the owners of 13 video clips were awarded with valuable prizes. The children of Qazma village secondary school No.2 of Balaken district won the first place, Baku city school-lyceum No.20 won the second place, and Yenigishlaq village secondary school named after A.Dadashov of Neftchala district and Goygol district lyceum of Technical and Natural Sciences won the third place.

Based on a joint decision of the Ministry of Education and the Ministry of Emergency Situations, the 8th National Children’s Creativity Contest on the theme of “Emergency situations through the eyes of children” was organized with the participation of the children from the secondary and boarding schools, and the

members of the circles of Children-Youth Development Centers.

With a view to supporting the project “Let’s change a paper for a leaf” on the paper waste collection, co-organized by the State Agency for Public Service and Social Innovations under the President of the Republic of Azerbaijan, IDEA Public Union and “Azersun Holding” Ltd. The State Agency for Public Service and Social Innovations started the “Green ASAN” initiative on 1 May 2015. The main purpose of the “Green ASAN” initiative is to raise the environmental awareness of youth and promote healthy lifestyle and environmental protection. Different

campaigns, workshops, projects and trainings on paper waste collection, as well as environmental protection were organized as part of this initiative. As a result, more than 1,000 tons of paper was collected for recycling. Meetings were organized at 211 secondary schools in Baku and regions, and 7,473 citizens were sensitized on the issue. Volunteers were trained by experts. 454 environmental trainings were conducted by the team of the “Green ASAN” initiative. To note, 141 collection points were equipped with waste paper collection bins in Baku and regions.

GOAL 16. Promote peaceful and inclusive societies for sustainable development, provide access to justice for all and build effective, accountable and inclusive institutions at all levels



SDG 16 provides for significant reduction of all forms of violence and related death rates everywhere, ending of abuse, exploitation, trafficking and torture of children, provision of legal identity for all, including birth registration, substantial reduction of corruption and bribery in all their forms, significant reduction of illicit financial and arms flows, and promotion of non-discriminatory laws and policies. This, in turn, requires combatting all forms of organized crime, broadening and strengthening the participation of developing countries in the institutions of global governance, ensuring public access to information and protecting fundamental freedoms, and ensuring responsible, inclusive, participatory and representative decision-making at all levels.

In light of the above, it is necessary to develop effective, accountable and transparent institutions at all levels, to strengthen the capacity of relevant national institutions to prevent violence and combat terrorism and crime, to promote the rule of law and ensure equal access to justice for all.

Significantly reduce all forms of violence and related death rates everywhere

In 2018, the rate of intentional homicide (168 incidents) was 1.7 incidents per 100,000 (one hundred thousand) population, and the combined rate of intentional homicide and attempted intentional homicide (262 incidents) was 2.6 incidents per 100,000 (one hundred thousand) population.

Number of victims of intentional homicide, by sex

During the period of 2010-2017, the number of victims of intentional homicide per 100,000 population decreased by 0.5 point, falling from 2.3 to 1.8. During this period, this indicator for men decreased by 1.0 point falling from 3.2 to 2.2, and for women it increased by 0.2 point, rising from 1.3 to 1.5.

The rate of intentional homicide went down from 194 incidents in 2010 to 162 incidents in 2017. During the compared period, the proportion of homicide in the structure of main types of crimes fell from 0.8 percent to 0.6 percent.

End abuse, exploitation, trafficking and all forms of violence against and torture of children

Proportion of children aged 1-17 years who experienced any physical punishment and/or psychological aggression by caregivers in the past month

Figure 22. Number of victims of intentional homicide per 100,000 populations, by sex



As part of the activities carried out in this area by the Commissioner designated as a national preventive mechanism for the prevention of torture and other cruel, inhuman or degrading treatment or punishments, a special focus has been placed on the issues of putting an end to abuse, exploitation, trafficking and all forms of violence against and torture of children.

The Commissioner and members of the National Preventive Group have conducted visits to the institutions under the Ministries of Education, Health and Labor and Social Protection of Population and local executive authorities without prior notice. The main subject of investigation during visits was related to issues such as living conditions and treatment of children in childcare facilities, increasing the quality of medical care, education and effective organization of leisure time, and the requests received were raised before responsible authorities on the conditions of confidentiality, and legal awareness-raising measures were carried at those facilities.

One of the causes of violence is the forced early marriage of underage girls, as a result of which underage girls physiologically and

psychologically unprepared for childbirth are kept away from pursuing an education or mastering a profession, and thus, lose their chances to defend their own rights or realize their physical or intellectual potential. Despite the progress we have achieved in this area recently, the problem still remains.

In order to prevent early marriages, events aimed at legal education of women have been conducted in the cities, districts and remote villages of the country and proposals have been made for the tightening of legislation, with the participation of the representatives of the Commissioner's Office and Regional Centers, local executive authorities, judicial, prosecution and police authorities, municipalities, local communities, NGOs, as well as Azerbaijan Women and Development Center, which has been established by the Commissioner and is already experienced in this sphere.

Furthermore, subparagraph 7.4 of the "Azerbaijan 2020: Look into the Future" Development Concept, as well as Paragraph 3.5.2.1 of the Action Plan (for 2011-2015) on the implementation of the "State Program on poverty reduction and

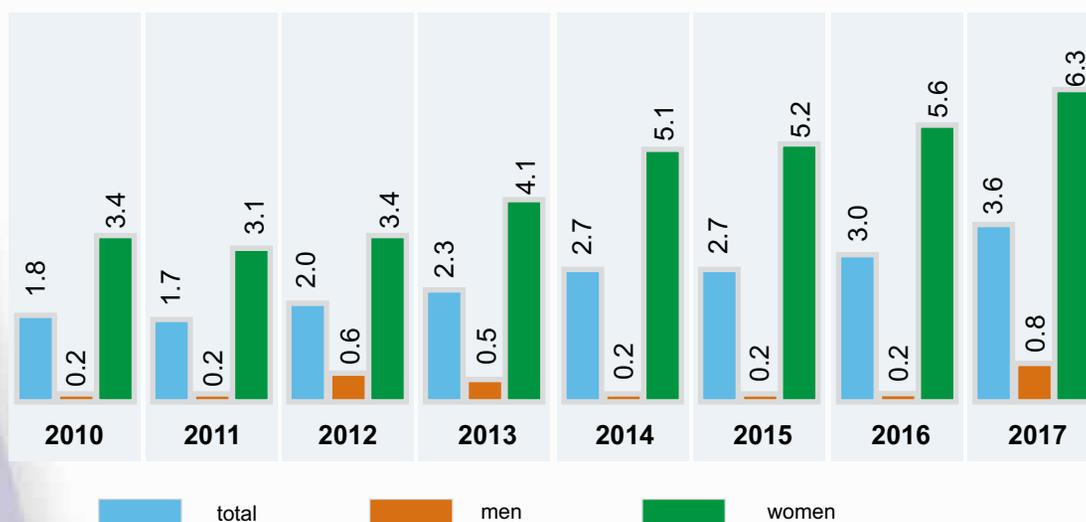
sustainable development in the Republic of Azerbaijan in 2008-2015” approved by the 28 June 2011 Order No.1578 of the President of the Republic of Azerbaijan provides for the establishment of a reliable mechanism (system) for monitoring violence against children and domestic violence. To this end, monitoring groups on violence against children composed of representatives of local executive agencies were established under all local executive authorities by the order of the heads of respective local authorities in 2015. As a reliable mechanism for monitoring of violence against children, the local monitoring groups perform such functions as assessment of the situation on the ground, monitoring of the effectiveness of measures implemented, investigation and analysis of the causes of violence, in particular discussion of the cases of serious violence, protection of victims of violence and provision of appropriate assistance to them, prevention of children’s evasion from education, and coordination of efforts to effectively combat cases of violence against children.

Furthermore, the minimum marriage age for women was raised from 17 to 18 through amendments to the Family Code of the Republic of Azerbaijan in 2011. Also, a new article has been added to the Criminal Code of the Republic of Azerbaijan under the title of “Forcing a woman into marriage.” The positive result of the measures undertaken is also captured in the statistical indicators. Specifically, according to the State Committee for Family, Women and Children Affairs (SCFWCA), the childbirth rate for young women aged 15-17 has decreased from 4,392 in 2011 to 2,421 in 2017.

Number of victims of human trafficking per 100,000 population, by sex

During the period of 2010-2017, the number of victims of human trafficking per 100,000 population increased by 1.8 points, going up from 1.8 to 3.6. This indicator increased respectively by 2.9 points for women (reaching 6.3) and 0.6 point for men (reaching 0.8).

Figure 23. Number of victims of human trafficking per 100,000 population, by sex



■ Promote the rule of law at the national and international levels and ensure equal access to justice for all

One of the most important measures in the development of our judicial and legal system has been the creation of the first ever institution of administrative justice in our country. In particular, new administrative courts began operating in 7 regions of our country in 2011, in order to prevent violation of human rights by state agencies. The fact that today 85.1 percent of claims brought by citizens in administrative cases are granted should be assessed as the triumph of the administrative justice institution in our country.

All of these measures have facilitated expansion of people's access to courts and reduction in the caseload of judges and in the red tape and other violations, enabled better consideration of cases, and substantially contributed to the development of other legal institutions in the regions.

Moreover, in accordance with the UN Convention on the Rights of Persons with Disabilities, facilities for easier movement of people with disabilities, including visually impaired people, are provided in new court buildings. In particular, lifting equipment has been installed in those court buildings to help people with disabilities enter the building, a special floor coating has been used on the first floor for their easy movement, and the boards placed in public area displaying the names of all rooms also feature special lettering for visually impaired people.

When talking about the access of people with disabilities to justice, the Law "On the

rights of people with disabilities" adopted on 31 May 2018 should be specifically mentioned. The law contains provisions on judicial guarantees for people with disabilities, including provision of specialist intermediary (readers and professional sign language interpreters) services for people with disabilities who participate in court proceedings and need assistance of specialist intermediaries.

Use of information and communication technologies also considerably facilitates access to courts. The President's Order dated 13 February 2014 "On establishment of the Electronic Court information system" contributed to continuation of the measures implemented in this area at a whole new level, and digitalization of judicial activity has ensured electronic access to justice for citizens.

According to the Order, the e-Court information system includes, inter alia, the following components:

- electronic conduct of court proceedings and electronic exchange of documents;
- automated distribution of cases among judges and development of an electronic schedule of cases with hearing dates;
- audio and video recording of court hearings and allowing to watch them online;
- monitoring the compliance with procedural deadlines in cases and availability of warning functions with regard to their expiration.

By having a Personal Account in this system, parties to a proceeding, using their

electronic signature and without physically going to the court, may:

- file electronic applications or complaints,
- pay the state fees electronically,
- get information on the date and result of a proceeding to which he or she is a party,
- submit and receive statements of claim and other documents (notices, judicial acts, etc.) electronically and so on.

It should be noted that currently the e-Court system covers 60% of the country's courts and is used in the courts under the jurisdiction of the appellate courts of Baku, Sumgayit, Shaki cities and Nakhchivan Autonomous Republic.

A single internet portal of the judicial system (www.courts.gov.az) has also been established to improve legal services provided to population. This portal presents information on all courts and their jurisdictions, judges, contact details, and sample statements of claim and other court documents.

The results of measures undertaken to facilitate access to justice can be seen more clearly in judicial statistics. It would suffice to quote just one number: compared to 2000 when the new judicial system started operating, the number of civil cases considered by courts increased by about 13 times, reaching 283,000.

This, undoubtedly, is a manifestation of people's growing confidence in courts and citizens' preference to go to court to secure their rights.

It is no coincidence that international organizations show a great interest in the judicial reforms aimed at a more reliable provision of human rights, appreciate the achievements accomplished, and recommend them to other states as a good example. Last year our country was awarded the "Crystal Scales of Justice" prize by the Council of Europe due to its accomplishments in the judicial system.

Furthermore, during the election of the president of CEPEJ at the plenary meeting of the institution held in Strasbourg on 4 December 2018, Azerbaijani representative was elected as the President of CEPEJ in light of our progressive achievements in the field of justice and our country's active involvement in and contributions to the work of CEPEJ (European Commission for the Efficiency of Justice of the Council of Europe).

The fundamental changes made to the Law "On notary" have opened up broad opportunities for use of modern technologies and innovations in this area. Due to the growing need for on-site services and in order to ensure public satisfaction, a special bag equipped with modern equipment and with direct access to the Electronic Notary information system has been developed. Using these bags, notaries will provide on-site services for all types of notarial actions to individuals and legal entities without being bound to any location.

Moreover, under the new law, an e-Justice kiosk allowing remote provision of services has also been established. These kiosks will be installed in places where there may be a need for justice services without delay, including at the border, in airports and seaports, and in railway stations, and will enable registration of notarial actions and

obtaining of documents directly on the spot through video communication with notaries. Using this innovative device operating 24/7, people facing a travel ban due to a debt will be able to pay their debt and remove the restriction automatically.

The introduction of a mobile application of notarial directory, an Azerbaijani product, has granted everyone access to information about all notary offices and notaries around himself or herself, as well as the amounts of fees charged and the documents required for registration of notarial actions, and the persons who must participate in the conduct of notarial actions. The main feature of this function is that the person can keep all documents related to notarial actions involving him or her in a single source in the mobile phone, can use the electronic version at any time, and can immediately receive information about the expiry of a document.

Another set of amendments made to the legislation provide for settlement of civil cases on the basis of an executive note of the notary to allow out-of-court electronic settlement of cases concerning undisputed claims in order to increase the effectiveness of judicial activity and to reduce the caseload of judges. To this end, relevant analysis has been performed to organize the process of management and enforcement of notarial executive notes electronically via the Electronic Enforcement information systems starting from 2019, necessary changes have been made in the abovementioned information system, and personal electronic accounts have been formed for applicant individuals and legal entities.

It should also be noted that the “State Program for 2019-2023 on the development of Azerbaijani justice” has been approved by the Order dated 18 December 2018 of the

President. The Program contains provisions on the improvement of the infrastructure of courts and justice agencies, strengthening of institutional and personnel capacities of justice agencies, improvement of citizen satisfaction and quality of legal services provided in the field of justice, ensuring of flexibility and convenience in service areas by developing e-Justice, and development of Azerbaijani justice in other areas.

In addition, on April 3 of the current year, the President signed an important Decree “On deepening of reforms in the judicial and legal system” with an aim to expand access to courts, to improve transparency in the activities of courts, to enhance the effectiveness of court proceedings, to ensure full and timely enforcement of court decisions, and to eliminate red tape and other negative cases.

The document envisages implementation of a number of important measures and focuses on the important issues, including the following:

- creation of a court specialized in cases related to disputes arising in connection with payment of taxes, customs fees and mandatory state social insurance contributions, as well as other matters related to entrepreneurial activity;
- improvement of civil procedure legislation by taking into account international best practices in order to increase the effectiveness of judicial proceedings in civil cases and economic disputes, particularly to ensure faster and more effective resolution of entrepreneurship-related issues in courts;
- promotion of effective international arbitration procedures in our country taking into account the best practices

of foreign countries with a view to expanding the means of out-of-court settlement of disputes related to entrepreneurial activity;

- examination of international best practices on alternative mechanisms of enforcement of the decisions of courts and other bodies, as well as entrustment of the enforcement to private agencies;
- studying of the international experience regarding alternative mechanisms for forensic examination activities and conduct of forensic examination by private agencies;
- specification of the terms for conduct of forensic examination and issuance of an expert opinion in civil cases and cases related to administrative offences and economic or administrative disputes, and expansion of the rights of the parties to court proceedings associated with the appointment of forensic examination;
- improvement of the mechanisms for preventing interference with the activities of courts and increasing liability for such interference;
- setting up of a hotline to receive the relevant information in order to ensure the independence of judges and eliminate interference with the activities of courts and other negative cases.

In 2018, two new electronic services (“online payment of fees for notarial actions, issuance of apostilles and state registration of vital records” and “registration of a candidate for participation in the competition for recruitment to service in justice agencies”) were launched, and their regulations were agreed with the State Agency for Public

Service and Social Innovations under the President of the Republic of Azerbaijan and was approved at the Board meeting of the Ministry on 29. June 2018. The abovementioned services have also been placed on the e-Government portal.

Four other services related to judicial activities (“online payment of court fees,” “submission and receipt of electronically signed statements of claim and other documents related to economic disputes,” “provision of information to persons participating in cases related to economic disputes about the course of the court proceedings in the cases concerned,” and “submission and receipt of electronically signed applications and other documents in writ proceedings”) have been arranged on the e-Court portal, and drafting of their regulations is currently underway.

In the reporting year, a list containing 21 new types of electronic services in different areas of activity was developed in order to expand the scope of electronic services. The above list was discussed at the Board meeting on 28 September 2018, and it was decided to introduce most relevant services in a step-by-step manner. In this connection, necessary measures are being taken for implementation of 5 service types (informing individuals and legal entities about enforcement cases they are a party to; getting information about the result of forensic examination; recognition of a court decision in a foreign country, and of a foreign country’s court decision in our country; applying for extradition of an Azerbaijani national serving a sentence abroad to serve the remainder of his or her sentence in our country; and, getting information about municipalities).

Furthermore, the software of seven most used services has been updated in terms

of security, stability and speed, and a more user-friendly interface with mobile support has been developed.

Unsentenced detainees as a proportion of overall prison population

On 10 February 2017, the President signed an Order “On improvement of activities in the field of penitentiary, humanization of the penal policy, and expansion of the use of alternative punishment and procedural coercive measures not related to social isolation.” To ensure implementation of the Order, about 300 amendments have been made to the Criminal Code. In accordance with those amendments:

- a number of articles providing for liability have been annulled;
- the amount of damage giving rise to liability under the relevant articles has been increased;
- articles specifying a prior offense as a qualifying circumstance have been annulled;
- the institutions of exemption from criminal liability and reconciliation with the victim have been further improved;
- drug addicts have been exempted from liability in return for treatment.

Besides, in order to reduce the use of imprisonment, a new type of punishment not related to social isolation has been determined, and alternative sanctions, including restriction of freedom which is a new type of punishment, have been added to the punitive parts of 158 articles, and prison sentence stipulated for 31 crimes has been alleviated.

In addition, amendments have been made to the Criminal Procedure Code for simplification of the procedure for replacing arrest with alternative measures of restraint and further limitation of the grounds for application of the restrictive measure of arrest for less serious crimes and crimes not posing major public threat, in connection with humanization of the penal policy.

Moreover, as part of the implementation of this Order, amendments have been made to the Criminal Procedure Code in order to improve the procedure for extending the term of pre-trial detention during criminal proceedings while observing the rule of law. Prior to the amendments, the term of pretrial detention was extended by court, each time based on the submission of the prosecutor in charge of the procedural aspects of preliminary investigation. According to the amendments, however, only the first time the term of pretrial detention is extended by court based on the submission of the prosecutor in charge of the procedural aspects of preliminary investigation, while any subsequent extension of the term of pretrial detention is done by court only on the basis of the submission of the relevant higher-rank prosecutor.

Thus, as a result of the measures undertaken in connection with humanization of the penal policy, the number of people held in the penitentiary facilities of the Ministry of Justice decreased by 1,450 people in comparison to 2016, and equaled to 21,861 people. During this period, the proportion of unsentenced detainees in overall prison population fell from 0.13 to 0.12. The table below has been drawn up in this connection using the methodology established by the UN:

Table 4. Number of people held in penitentiary facilities

| Year | Number of people held in penitentiary facilities (person) | Of them | |
|------|---|------------------|--------------------------------|
| | | Arrested persons | Proportion of arrested persons |
| 2016 | 23,311 | 3,102 | 0.13 |
| 2018 | 21,861 | 2,606 | 0.12 |

Source: Ministry of Justice

Develop effective, accountable and transparent institutions at all levels

Through the Law dated 24 June 2011 of the Republic of Azerbaijan, the Criminal Code was amended, and the chapter related to corruption offenses was named as “Corruption crimes and other crimes against official interests,” articles concerning corruption offenses were improved, and the scope of officials being subjects of corruption offenses was defined.

After this, through the law dated 1 February 2017, heads and employees of public legal entities were included in the scope of officials liable for corruption crimes and other crimes against official interests specified in the Criminal Code.

In this connection, the Law “On combating corruption” was amended on 2 October 2017, and heads and employees of public legal entities, including persons specially authorized to perform organizational-managerial or administrative-economic functions were specified as subjects of corruption related offenses. This Law is aimed at detecting and preventing corruption related offenses and eliminating their consequences, protecting social justice and human and civil rights and freedoms, creating favorable conditions for the development of the economy, and ensuring the legality, transparency and effectiveness

of the activities of state agencies, local self-government bodies, public legal entities and officials.

In particular, according to the Law, the report about corruption-related offenses can be made by anyone in written (including electronic) or verbally. If the person reporting corruption-related offenses wants to remain anonymous, the head of the competent structural unit, agency, institution or organization and agencies specialized in combating corruption must ensure his or her confidentiality. The person reporting corruption-related offenses may only be identified if he or she has given a written consent. The person guilty of violating the confidentiality of the informant shall bear responsibility as provided by law.

“During 2018, the General Directorate for Combating Corruption under the Prosecutor General of the Republic of Azerbaijan examined 8,058 appeals made by citizens, including 4,204 applications and complaints (of these 1,584 being new and 2,620 being repeated) and 3,854 appeals received through the 161-Hotline (of these 3,442 being new and 412 being repeat).

In 2018, the Preventive Measures and Preliminary Investigation Department ensured conduct of consolidation and analysis by all employees in the areas assigned to them based on the division of responsibilities with the aim of further strengthening of analytical work and preventive measures and development of

Directorate prosecutors' analytical thinking and analytical skills in the fight against corruption.

By taking into account the international experience, the following legislative measures were undertaken to prevent corruption and ensure transparency in the judicial system:

- For the first time ever, the procedure for termless appointment of judges and assessment of their activities was established;
- The practice of reception of citizens by judges was prohibited with the aim of preventing cases of corruption;
- All decisions of higher courts, along with reversed or altered decisions of district courts were stipulated to be published to ensure transparency in judicial activity;
- Code of Ethics of Judges was adopted;
- Distribution of the total staff number of judges among courts was entrusted to the Judicial-Legal Council;
- Ensuring the independence of judges was included in the powers of the Council;
- For the first time in our country's history, the institution of seconding judges to the Office of the Judicial-Legal Council, as well as to the Ministry of Justice for participation in educational activity and inspection of the organization of work in courts, was established, etc.

The accessibility of the "Proposals and Initiatives" section created on the official website of the Ministry of Justice (www.justice.gov.az) for public discussions on

open government, fight against corruption and other draft legislative acts, as well as participation of the general public and NGO representatives in these discussions, and their ability to put forward proposals or initiatives have been kept in focus, and the essence and role of this section have been regularly promoted during events held with NGOs and at meetings of the Public Committee under the Minister of Justice.

Besides, in order to regularly inform the public about the role of the Public Committee, relevant information has been placed on the "Public Participation" section of the Ministry's official website, and the institution also has its own website (www.publiccommittee-az.org).

Primary government expenditures as a proportion of original approved budget

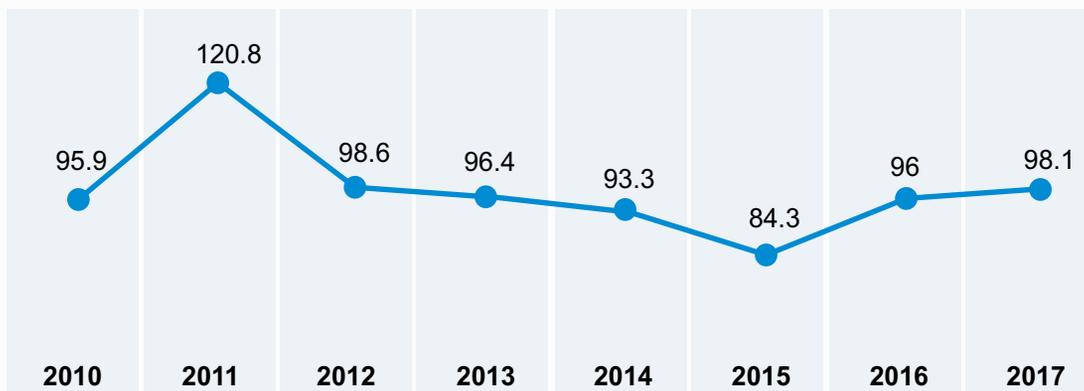
The proportion of primary government expenditures to original approved budget has seen an increase of 2.2 percent, rising from 95.9 percent in 2010 to 98.1 percent in 2017.

The amount of executed expenses of state budget in 2017 was 17,594.6 million AZN, which is 1.5 times as much as in 2010.

The amount of approved state budget expenses in 2017 was 1.5 times more compared to 2010 (12,275.0 million AZN).

In accordance with the Decree dated 12 June 2012 of the President of the Republic of Azerbaijan "On the establishment of the State Agency for Public Service and Social Innovations under the President of the Republic of Azerbaijan and improvement of services provided to citizens by state agencies," the State Agency for Public Service and Social Innovations under the President of the Republic of Azerbaijan and its subordinate "ASAN Service" centers have

Figure 24. Primary government expenditures as a proportion of original approved budget, in percent



been established. At the “ASAN Service” centers, public services based on the principles of promptness, transparency, courtesy, responsibility and convenience are provided for all citizens irrespective of their registered residence address on all calendar days. Currently, at 15 “ASAN Service” centers, 11 state agencies render 45 main types of services (130 types of services per subgroups) and more than 185 functional support services to citizens.

Moreover, at two ASAN Utility Centers set up in Baku in accordance with the Decree dated 4 May 2016 of the President of the Republic of Azerbaijan, a total of about 50 functional services, including electricity, water, gas and other utility services are provided. Since their dates of launch, the ASAN Service and ASAN Utility centers and the mobile ASAN Service have received a total of more than 28 million requests. Citizens can get information about service types provided and documents required at the ASAN Service centers, obtain queue numbers, and give their suggestions

regarding the activity of the center through the Call Center (using a phone or the internet), without physically visiting the center. The Call Center started operating in February 2013, and its role is to provide information service about the activity of the ASAN Service centers and to receive complaints and proposals regarding the services. Currently the Call Center receives 2,500 calls a day, and so far, it has received more than 3 million queries in total.

■ By 2030, provide legal identity for all, including birth registration

Proportion of children under 5 years of age whose births have been registered with a civil authority, by age

During the period of 2010-2017, the proportion of children under 5 years of age whose births have been registered with a civil authority was 100 percent.

Table 5. Proportion of children under 5 years of age whose births have been registered with a civil authority, in percent

| Indicator name | 2010 | 2011 | 2012 | 2013 | 2014 | 2015 | 2016 | 2017 |
|--|------------|------|------|------|------|------|------|------|
| | in percent | | | | | | | |
| Proportion of children under 5 years of age whose births have been registered with a civil authority | 100 | 100 | 100 | 100 | 100 | 100 | 100 | 100 |

■ Ensure public access to information and protect fundamental freedoms, in accordance with national legislation and international agreements

Number of countries that adopt and implement constitutional, statutory and/or policy guarantees for public access to information¹

Article 47 of the Constitution of the Republic of Azerbaijan guarantees everyone's freedom of thought and speech. In addition, under Article 50 of the Constitution, everyone is free to legally seek, obtain, pass, prepare and disseminate any information they want. The legal basis for providing the right to access information enshrined in Article 50 of the national Constitution on free, unimpeded and equal conditions for all and based on the principles of open society and democratic legal state have been established in the Law of the Republic of Azerbaijan "On access to information."

Everyone has the right to apply for access to information. The relations arising from the exercise of freedom of information are governed by the Law of the Republic of Azerbaijan "On freedom of information."

The general rules for seeking, receiving, preparing, transmitting, producing and disseminating mass information in the Republic of Azerbaijan, as well as

organizational, legal and economic bases for the activities of the press, information agencies, television and radio organizations aimed at the realization of citizens' right to receive complete, accurate and timely information are governed by the Law of the Republic of Azerbaijan "On mass media."

Freedom of mass information is based on the state's guarantee of citizens' right to seek, receive, prepare, transmit, produce and disseminate information in the legal manner.

Strengthen relevant national institutions, including through international cooperation, for building capacity at all levels, in particular in developing countries, to prevent violence and combat terrorism and crime

The State Committee for Family, Women and Children Affairs, in cooperation with the UN Population Fund, has drafted the "National Action Plan for 2019-2023 on eliminating and combating domestic violence in the Republic of Azerbaijan."

Existence of independent national human rights institutions in compliance with the Paris Principles

After the adoption of the Constitution of the Republic of Azerbaijan, the system of institutional mechanisms has been rebuilt in order to ensure effective provision of human rights in the country and to carry out democratic and legal reforms in this area.

¹ In the UN's system of global indicators for the SDG, the indicator is defined as "16.10.2 Number of countries that adopt and implement constitutional, statutory and/or policy guarantees for public access to information". The application of this indicator at the national level implies the existence of constitution and relevant laws in the area concerned.

By considering the provision of human rights in the Republic of Azerbaijan as a state duty, the Decree dated 22 February 1998 of the President of the Republic of Azerbaijan “On measures to ensure the rights and freedoms of man and citizen” stipulated the establishment of a first ever institution of human rights commissioner. Furthermore, the “State Program on the protection of human rights” approved by the Order dated 18 June 1998 of the President of the Republic of Azerbaijan also envisaged the creation of the institution of Human Rights Commissioner.

On 28 December 2001, the Parliament of the Republic of Azerbaijan adopted the Constitutional Law “On the Human Rights Commissioner (Ombudsman) of the Republic of Azerbaijan.” On 5 March 2002, the President signed a Decree on the implementation of this Law. Thus, the legal framework was formed for the establishment and operation of this institution.

On 2 July 2002, the Parliament elected the first Ombudsman of the Republic of Azerbaijan by 111 votes (out of 112 votes) from among the three candidates nominated by the President of the Republic of Azerbaijan.

The post of the Human Rights Commissioner of the Republic of Azerbaijan has been established in order to restore the human rights and freedoms enshrined in the Constitution of the Republic of Azerbaijan and the international treaties to which the Republic of Azerbaijan is a party, that have been violated by the state or local self-government bodies or officials of the Republic of Azerbaijan, and to prevent human rights violations in cases specified in the Constitutional Law “On the Human Rights Commissioner (Ombudsman) of the

Republic of Azerbaijan,” and operates in accordance with the Paris Principles.

Moreover, the Armenia-Azerbaijan Nagorno-Karabakh conflict represents a serious threat to peace, security and cooperation in the South Caucasus. Armenia continues to use military force against Azerbaijan by occupying one fifth of its territory and preventing the Azerbaijani internally displaced population from returning to their homes. It disregards the UN Security Council resolutions 822 (1993), 853 (1993), 874 (1993) and 884 (1993), which reaffirm that the Nagorno-Karabakh region is an inalienable part of Azerbaijan and call for immediate, full and unconditional withdrawal of the occupying forces from all occupied territories of Azerbaijan. With a view of sustaining the status-quo of occupation, Armenia systematically conducts illegal economic activities, including pillaging of natural resources, transfers ethnic Armenians from abroad into the occupied territories and changes the Azerbaijani ethno-cultural features of these territories. By exercising effective control over the occupied territories, it also carries out large scale illicit diversion of arms and munitions, promotes drugs trafficking, arm smuggling and money laundering in these territories. These activities seriously undermine efforts to achieve SDG 16, which, inter alia, aims at reducing illicit financial and arms flows. Addressing the challenges associated with the conflict through its lasting political settlement in accordance with the above-mentioned UN Security Council Resolutions will be a significant contribution to the implementation of SDGs.



GOAL 17. Revitalize the global partnership for sustainable development



SDG 17 envisions enhancement of macroeconomic stability, assistance to developing countries in attaining long-term debt sustainability, addressing the external debt of highly indebted poor countries, doubling the least developed countries' share of global exports, facilitation of market access and science, technology and innovation capacity-building for these countries, and strengthening national statistical capacity to increase significantly the availability of high-quality, timely and reliable data disaggregated by income, gender, age, race, ethnicity, migratory status, disability, geographic location and other characteristics relevant in national contexts in order to measure progress on sustainable development.

This, in turn, demands mobilization of financial resources for developing countries from multiple sources through international support, enhancement of North-South, South-South and triangular regional and international cooperation on science, technology and innovation, as well as promotion of environmentally sound technologies, an open and non-discriminatory multilateral trading system in developing countries.

Having regard to the above, international support for implementation of sustainable development goals should be increased, relevant policies should be identified and carried out¹.

Strengthen domestic resource mobilization, including through international support to developing countries, to improve domestic capacity for tax and other revenue collection

Total government revenue as a proportion of GDP²

Analysis of the data described in the chart below shows that during the period of 2010-2017, the share of state budget revenues in GDP decreased by 3.4 percent, declining from 26.9 percent in 2010 to 23.5 percent in 2017. This can be explained by reduced state expenditures due to devaluation in the country.

The analysis shows that the executed revenues of the state budget in 2017 stood at 16,516.7 million AZN (an increase of 44.8 percent compared to 2010), with tax revenues accounting for 56.6 percent (9,356.2 million AZN) and other revenues making up 43.4 percent (7,160.5 million AZN).

¹ "Transforming our world: the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development" approved by UN General Assembly resolution A/RES/70/1 of 25 September 2015

² In the UN's system of global indicators for the SDG, the indicator is defined as "17.1.1 Total government revenue as a proportion of GDP, by source." In the report, the indicator presented in the national context describes the data on state budget revenues.

Proportion of domestic budget funded by domestic taxes³

Although the share of taxes in state budget revenues dropped by 6.9 percent during

the period of 2010-2013, it took the reverse trend in the last four years (2014-2017) and went up from 39.3 percent to 56.6 percent (an increase of 17.3 percent).

Figure 25. Proportion of domestic budget funded by domestic taxes, in percent



The amount of tax revenues in the state budget grew from 5,266.8 million AZN in 2010 to 9,356.2 million AZN in 2017. Last year, the amount of tax revenues in the state budget consisted of 1,040.3 million AZN or 6.3 percent in income tax of individuals, 2,285.9 million AZN or 13.8 percent in profit (income) tax of legal entities, 50.4 million AZN or 0.3 percent in land tax, 178.6 million AZN or 1.1 percent

in property tax, 3,668.6 million AZN or 22.2 percent in value added tax, 612.6 million AZN or 3.7 percent in excise tax, 111.1 million AZN or 0.7 percent in mining tax, 903.0 million AZN or 5.5 percent in taxes related to foreign economic activity, 371.4 million AZN or 2.2 percent in simplified tax, and 134.3 million AZN or 0.8 percent in road tax.

Figure 26. Total government revenue as a proportion of GDP, in percent



³ In the UN's system of global indicators for the SDG, the indicator is defined as "17.1.2 Proportion of domestic budget funded by domestic taxes." In the report, the indicator presented in the national context describes the data on state budget revenues.

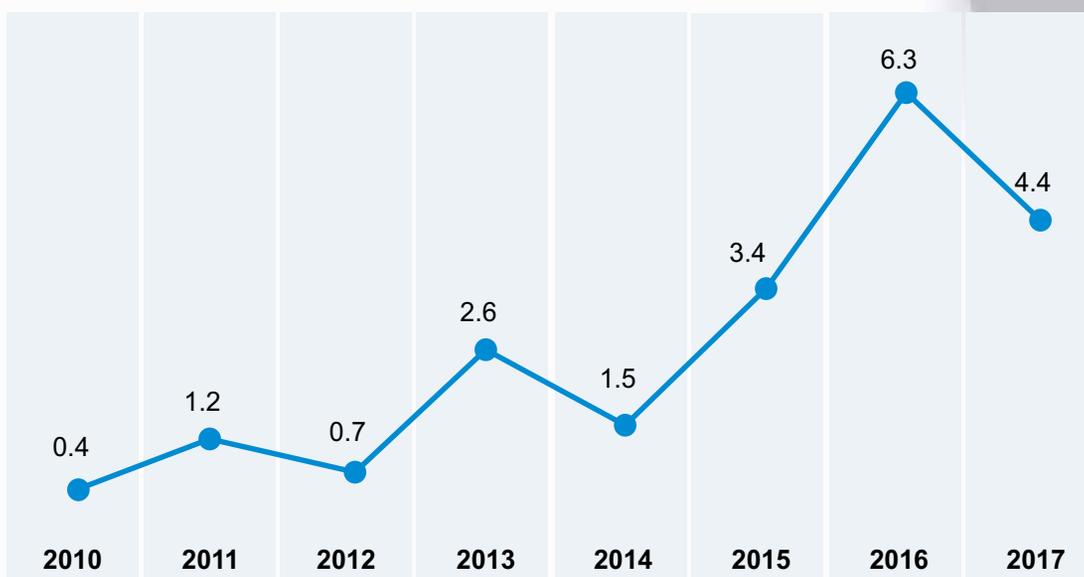
■ Assist developing countries in attaining long-term debt sustainability through coordinated policies aimed at fostering debt financing, debt relief and debt restructuring, as appropriate, and address the external debt of highly

indebted poor countries to reduce debt distress

Debt service as a proportion of exports of goods and services

During the period considered, the proportion of debt service costs in exports of goods and services increased by 4.0 percent, rising from 0.4 percent in 2010 to 4.4 percent in 2017. Overall, the indicator showed a changing trend in 2010-2017.

Figure 27. Debt service as a proportion of exports of goods and services



■ Enhance North-South, South-South and triangular regional and international cooperation on and access to science, technology and innovation and enhance knowledge sharing on mutually agreed terms, including through improved coordination among existing

mechanisms, in particular at the United Nations level, and through a global technology facilitation mechanism

The initiatives put forward by our country in the area of technological development are being continuously promoted in order to expand regional and international cooperation. In particular, with a view to introducing developing countries to the “ASAN Service” experience, Memoranda

of Understanding on cooperation have been signed by the State Agency for Public Service and Social Innovations under the President of the Republic of Azerbaijan with the Ministry of Public Administration of Montenegro on 18 January 2018, with the Ministry of Administrative Reform and Civil Service of the Kingdom of Morocco on 29 August 2018, and with the Ministry of Public Service of the Republic of Uganda on 26 November 2018.

In the framework of the “Trans-Eurasian Information Super Highway (TASIM)” project which envisages the creation of a new fiber-optic backbone connecting Europe and Asia at the initiative of the Republic of Azerbaijan, relevant negotiations are ongoing. A protocol has been signed between the operators of the states included in the TASIM Consortium on the preparation of a feasibility study for the project. During a regular meeting of the project members AzInTelecom LLC (Azerbaijan), China Telecom (China), KazTransCom (Kazakhstan), RosTelecom (Russia), TurkTelecom (Turkey) and TransTelecom (Kazakhstan) in April 2018 in Istanbul, an evaluation was carried out based on certain criteria, as a result of which German company Detecon was selected to perform the Feasibility Study.

A multilateral agreement to be signed between the parties has been drafted and is at the stage of coordination. The final version of the agreement on the Feasibility Study will be signed after being accordingly agreed with the Ministry of Foreign Affairs of the Republic of Azerbaijan.

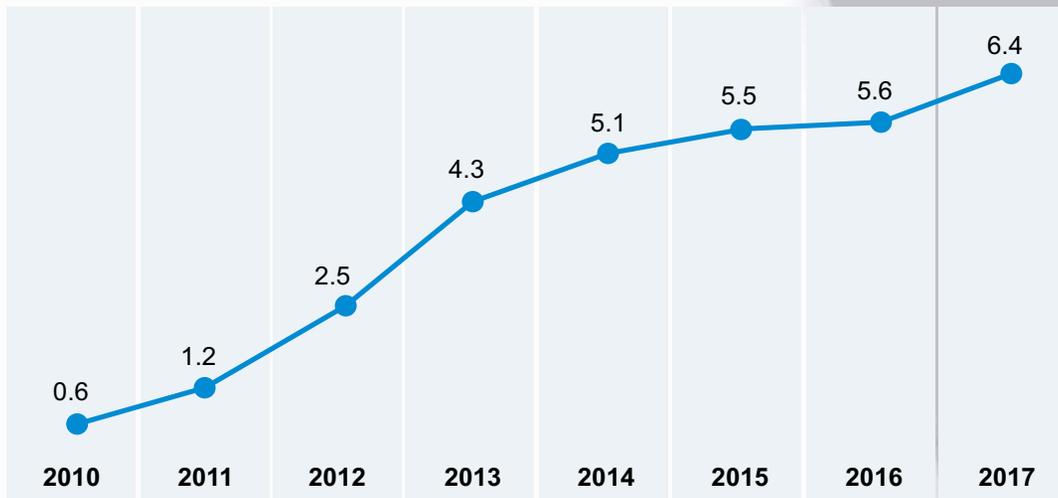
According to the Ministry of Foreign Affairs, the Azerbaijan International Development Agency (AIDA) of the Ministry of Foreign Affairs joined the Global Partnership Initiative (GPI) established

at the initiative of the official donor agencies of Mexico, Canada and Japan, the Islamic Development Bank, the UN Office for South-South Cooperation, as well as the Organization for Economic Co-operation and Development. GPI was launched at the 2016 High Level Meeting of the Global Partnership for Effective Development Cooperation in Nairobi, in order to advance effective actions in international aid policy. AIDA’s accession to GPI will help to build global awareness about the donor activities of our country, to expand its global partnership relations, and to ensure its participation in important events taking place in the sphere of international development. By joining GPI, AIDA takes an active part in actions, discussions and establishing of the rules aimed at increasing the effectiveness of South-South and triangular regional and international cooperation and enhancing the impact of the programs and projects implemented globally, and provides access for less developed countries to benefit from development programs and projects.

Fixed Internet broadband subscriptions per 100 inhabitants

Between 2010-2017, the number of fixed broadband internet subscribers per 100 population increased by 5.8 points, going up from 0.6 to 6.4. As per the trend of the last eight years, the number of fixed broadband internet subscribers in the country continues to grow.

Figure 28. Fixed Internet broadband subscriptions per 100 inhabitants



■ Fully operationalize the technology bank and science, technology and innovation capacity-building mechanism for least developed countries by 2017 and enhance the use of enabling technology, in particular information and communications technology

According to the information of the Ministry of Transport, Communications and High Technologies, ensuring safe and high-quality access for population to communication services through expansion of the communication and broadband service infrastructure in the country and its modernization based on new technologies has been set as one of the key targets in the “National Strategy for development of information society in the Republic of Azerbaijan for 2014-2020.” Furthermore, the “State Program on the implementation of the National Strategy for development of information society in the Republic of Azerbaijan for 2016-

2020” and the “Strategic Roadmap for the development of telecommunication and information technologies in the Republic of Azerbaijan” have been approved. In 2018, the following work has been done in respect of the targets and goals identified in the abovementioned documents:

- In order to expand provision of broadband internet services to population and organizations in Baku, during 2018, Baku Telephone Communication LLC increased the installation capacity of ADSL equipment at automatic telephone exchanges (ATEs) of its network by 12,992 ports, bringing the total number of ports to 255,719, and 245,991 (or 96.2 percent) of the installed ports were made available for use. During 2018, the number of broadband service subscriptions increased by 19,708.
- Baku Telephone Communication LLC continues the work related to provision of uninterrupted and high-quality telecommunication services using GPON technology. The first phase of the “Internet to Home” project, which envisages provision of the capital’s population with broadband services,

is being finalized. The commissioning of the project, which covers 30,000 apartments, has been completed, and currently 24,000 subscribers are provided with communication services based on GPON technology.

- Since March 2017, the “Public Internet” project has been implemented in the central parks of Baku, and currently there are plans to expand the coverage of this project. The main objective of the project is to provide free-of-charge internet to residents and guests of our capital city through wireless and pervasive technology. Additional work is planned to be carried out to increase the number of connections (currently it is 5.9 million) to the “free wi-fi” network covering 18 locations in the capital, and provision of modern telecommunication services to citizens using LTE technology along with GPON technology in the network of Baku Telephone Communication LLC. Specifically, it is intended to install 54 base station towers in Baku and surrounding areas in 2019 to provide communication services to 15,000 subscribers.

It is planned to increase the capacity of internet ports by 256,724 units (ADSL and GPON technologies combined) and the capacity of the telephone network by 803,637 numbers, and to install 2496.078 km of fiber-optic lines.

Installation of NOKIA OLT equipment at 12 ATEs is envisaged as part of the GPON project in 2019, in order to bring the total number of GPON subscribers to 26,521.

- Under the investment projects implemented by Aztelekom LLC and Baku Telephone Communication

LLC, 30 new modern ATEs have been commissioned, expansion work has been carried out in 45 ATEs, the capacity of fixed network internet ports (ADSL and GPON technologies combined) and of the telephone network have been increased by 128,000 units and 18,800 numbers respectively, and 1,011.0 km of fiber-optic cable lines have been installed.

- In order to expand provision of broadband internet services to population and organizations, during 2018, Aztelekom LLC increased the installation capacity of ADSL equipment at automatic telephone exchanges (ATEs) of its network by 58,144 ports, bringing the total number of ports to 352,056, and 306,326 (or 87.0 percent) of the installed ports were made available for use. During 2018, the number of broadband service subscriptions increased by 50,523.
- As a result of the work performed by Aztelekom LLC in 2018, the installation capacities of the network increased by 14,954 numbers compared to the start of the year, and at the end of the reporting period, the installation capacities of the network’s ATEs were increased to 848,828 numbers.
- The total capacity of international internet channels was raised to 820 GB/s, and 20 Gb/s of this capacity is exported to neighboring and regional countries.

Proportion of individuals using the Internet

During the period of 2010-2017, the proportion of individuals using the internet

increased by 33 percent, going up from 46 percent to 79 percent.

In 2017, 68.5 percent of the users connected to the internet at their homes (apartments), 3.4 percent at internet cafes, 17.6 percent at work, 8.0 percent at educational facilities, 0.6 percent at libraries, and 1.9 percent at other places.

On average, the proportion of daily internet users to the total number of internet users is 81.7 percent.

Currently 41.9 percent of internet users are youth aged under 24. The proportion of users aged above 64 is 0.1 percent. People with higher education constitute 21.3 percent of all users.

Figure 29. Proportion of individuals using the Internet, in percent



Enhance international support for implementing effective and targeted capacity-building in developing countries to support national plans to implement all the sustainable development goals, including through North-South, South-South and triangular cooperation

Dollar value of financial and technical assistance (including through North-South, South-South and triangular cooperation) committed to developing countries.

According to AIDA, the total dollar value of assistances provided by the Republic of Azerbaijan through North-South (including to Western countries), South-South and triangular cooperation since 2015 has been 8,099,608.64 USD, of which 3,410,747 USD was provided in 2015, 2,265,700 USD in 2016, 1,337,208.05 USD in 2017, and 1,085,953.59 USD in 2018 (it should be noted that, some of the assistances have been converted from national currency to USD, which may have resulted in a difference in the total figures due to exchange rate difference).

Significantly increase the exports of developing countries, in particular with a view to doubling the least developed countries' share of global exports by 2020

Azerbaijan's share of global exports¹

During the period of 2010-2017, Azerbaijan's share of global exports dropped by 0.05 percent, falling from 0.14 percent to 0.09 percent. In 2017, the amount of exports to about 116 world countries totaled 15,319,977,100 USD, which is

1,862,385,000 USD more than in 2016.² In the structure of exported goods, mineral products accounted for 90.8 percent, crop products- 3.4 percent, base metals and products made of them- 1.6 percent, precious stones and metals and products made of them- 0.9 percent, plastic mass, caoutchouc, rubber and products made from them- 0.7 percent, and other goods for the remaining percentage.

In the geographical structure of the export, the Europe's share was 64.7 percent, followed by Asia with 29.8 percent, America with 4.3 percent, and Africa with 1.2 percent.

Figure 30. Azerbaijan's share of global exports, in percent



In recent years, the Republic of Azerbaijan has implemented a number of reforms to increase its foreign trade capacity and continues this process. Particularly, the adoption of the Strategic Road Map for the Development of Logistics and Trade, and the country's involvement in various transport projects promises a substantial increase in the share of transit trade.

In order to increase the production and export capacity of the country, Azerbaijan has created a number of industrial,

technological and agricultural parks and other production structures to develop new innovative sectors. The Free Trade Zone (in Alat settlement) will cover logistic and port services and will increase the transit capacity and cross-border trade of the country and the region. The Baku-Tbilisi-Kars railway makes it possible to increase cross-border trade with Georgia, a traditional trade partner for Azerbaijan. Priority 2.3 of the Strategic Road Map for the Development of Logistics and Trade in the Republic of Azerbaijan envisages

¹ The publication presents Azerbaijan's share of global exports based on official statistical data, in line with the global indicator's reference to developing countries.

² Information of the State Customs Committee of the Republic of Azerbaijan

provision of logistic services in multimodal operations and high value container transportations, as well as establishment of logistics and trade centers in Baku and different parts of the country in order to increase the transit trade. In this connection, work is underway to set up 4 more logistics centers in Azerbaijan by 2020.

Through all this, Azerbaijan, together with Georgia and Turkey, will support joining the New Silk Road Corridor (China's One Belt – One Road).

Created on the basis of new innovative technology, the Digital Trade Hub is the groundbreaking solution that allows to strengthen Azerbaijan's position as a digital trade center in the region and to further boost the e-commerce infrastructure in the country. This creates a number of opportunities for business.

The azexport.az portal created in 2016 is particularly noteworthy in this respect. This portal has been created for purpose of posting information related to promotion and sale of goods and services in domestic and international markets. The portal allows users to provide mail information, as well as photo, video, text and other information about the services and products offered, without registering or creating a user profile. Integrated with the most popular e-commerce platforms, azexport.az introduces products to potential buyers from around the world.

In order to ensure electronic drawing up and signing of documents, including contracts, between persons registered as taxpayers and their foreign business partners and implementation of cross-border e-services in real time, the Digital Trade Hub of Azerbaijan was established in accordance with the Decree dated 23

February 2017 of the President of the Republic of Azerbaijan "On additional measures to strengthen Azerbaijan's position as a Digital Trade Hub and to expand foreign trade operations."

Azerbaijan's favorable geostrategic position opens up new possibilities for our country in terms of postal transportation and delivery of international e-commerce products. Using these possibilities, a project is currently being carried out with regard to Azerbaijani Post's role as a regional transit post center (HUB) in implementation of transnational e-commerce. In the framework of a cooperation agreement signed between Azerpost LLC and Silk Way Airlines, e-commerce products ordered from the People's Republic of China, a major cargo hub of the world, are received by Silk Way Airlines from the local courier companies of China and brought to Azerbaijan, and are then processed, transported and delivered by Azerpost LLC to CIS and other countries. At present, negotiations are being conducted with other companies acting as express carriers in China, South Korea and Singapore in order to expand activities under the project.

■ **By 2020, enhance capacity-building support to developing countries, including for least developed countries and small island developing States, to increase significantly the availability of high-quality, timely and reliable data disaggregated by income, gender, age, race, ethnicity, migratory status, disability,**

geographic location and other characteristics relevant in national contexts

Availability of national statistical legislation that complies with the Fundamental Principles of Official Statistics¹

The national statistical legislation consists of the Constitution of the Republic of Azerbaijan, the Law of the Republic of Azerbaijan “On official statistics,” other legislative acts of the Republic of Azerbaijan and the international agreements wherein Azerbaijan is one of the parties. The currently effective Law No. 789 of 18 February 1994 of the Republic of Azerbaijan “On official statistics” reflects the UN principles on official statistics. The law governs legal relations in the field of official statistics in the Republic of Azerbaijan, and sets out the powers and functions of state statistical agencies.

Availability of a national statistical plan that is fully funded and under implementation²

The State Statistical Committee of the Republic of Azerbaijan, which carries out state policy and regulation in the field of statistics and produces official statistical data on social, economic, demographic and environmental situation in the country on the basis of a uniform methodology, organizes its activities towards fulfilling the tasks set by the Statistical Work Program

annually coordinated and approved with the Cabinet of Ministers of the Republic of Azerbaijan, as well as the methodological work plan and the plan for work with data users, quarterly work plans on economic analysis, and the “State Program for the development of official statistics in the Republic of Azerbaijan in 2018-2025.”

The “State Program for the development of official statistics in the Republic of Azerbaijan in 2018-2025,” which covers an 8-year period and is the sixth in order, was approved by the 14 February 2018 Order No. 3672 of the President of the Republic of Azerbaijan. The main objective of the State Program is to develop official statistics by carrying out comprehensive measures to improve statistical work in line with domestic and global socio-economic processes and modern challenges. These measures include organization of statistical observations and development of methodologies in social, economic and other areas, provision of legal, administrative and informational support for the production of metadata and classifications and official statistical materials, increasing of the user satisfaction, international cooperation, and strengthening of the material-technical base and personnel capacity.

■ By 2030, build on existing initiatives to develop measurements of progress on sustainable development that complement gross domestic

¹ In the UN’s system of global indicators for the SDG, the indicator is defined as “17.18.2 Number of countries that have national statistical legislation that complies with the Fundamental Principles of Official Statistics.” The application of the indicator at the national level implies the existence of relevant legislation in the field of statistics.

² The application of the indicator in the national context implies the existence of relevant legislation in the field of statistics.

product, and support statistical capacity-building in developing countries

The need to organize adequate provision of information to make quick decisions against the backdrop of current challenges and to analyze their implementation requires producing accurate and detailed statistical data to monitor the status of achievement of the national priorities and improving official statistics based on new challenges to provide continuous informational support. To this end, organization of statistical observations in social, economic and multidisciplinary statistics for the next period and development of their methodologies, provision of legal, administrative and informational support for the production of metadata and classifications and official statistical materials, increasing of the user satisfaction, international cooperation, and strengthening of the material-technical base and personnel capacity in the framework of the “State Program for the development of official statistics in the Republic of Azerbaijan in 2018-2025,” which was launched last year, will support further development of the statistical data collection capacity. The State Program contains such important measures as integrating the databases of

state agencies with the statistical database of the State Statistical Committee, and creating a statistical database and internet portal to monitor the progress on the SDG and inform the public, with the aim of achieving a number of indicators under the SDG, including acquiring statistical data on workforce, poverty, informally employed population, employment of people with disabilities, use of child labor, different population segments’ access to food and factors affecting it, structure and development trends of agriculture through census, cargo and passenger transportation by road, social welfare of mothers and children in the country, time use by different socio-demographic groups of population, population’s access to and use of information and communication technologies, etc., as well as producing additional statistical data on the SDG in accordance with the growing demand.

In order to improve the statistics system, strengthen the national statistical capacity, and apply the best practices in accordance with the national legislation, the State Statistical Committee continues cooperation in the field of statistics with the UN and its regional organizations, European Union, IMF, ILO, UNICEF, UNESCO, World Bank, Asian Development Bank, OECD, OIC, Eurostat, CIS Interstate Statistical Committee and a number of other international organizations.

Table 6. Value of resources made available to strengthen statistical capacity

| Indicator code and name | 2015 | 2016 | 2017 |
|--|---------|---------|---------|
| | USD | | |
| Dollar value of all resources made available to strengthen statistical capacity ¹ | 2385026 | 1254798 | 2946051 |

¹ In the UN’s system of global indicators for the SDG, the indicator is defined as “Dollar value of all resources made available to strengthen statistical capacity in developing countries.” The indicator presented in the national context indicates only the amount of resources allocated from the state budget to the State Statistical Committee for these purposes.

Conduct of at least one population and housing census in the last 10 years¹

A population census was conducted in Azerbaijan on 13-22 April 2009 in accordance with the 7 July 2006 Decree No. 415 of the President of Azerbaijan “On conducting population census in the Republic of Azerbaijan in 2009” and the 12 December 2006 Decision No. 200 of the Cabinet of Ministers of the Republic of Azerbaijan “On the action plan to ensure preparations for and conduct of the 2009 population census.”

The next population census in the Republic of Azerbaijan is scheduled for 1-10 October 2019 pursuant to the 7 September 2016 Decree No. 1040 of the President of the Republic of Azerbaijan. In accordance with the 16 December 2016 Decision No. 517 of the Cabinet of Ministers of the Republic of Azerbaijan “On the action plan related to preparations for and conduct of the 2019 population census in the Republic of Azerbaijan” aimed at ensuring the implementation of the 7 September 2016 Decree No. 1040 of the President of the Republic of Azerbaijan “On conducting population census in the Republic of Azerbaijan in 2019,” a trial population census was conducted in Gabala district on 1-10 October 2018 to assess the state of readiness for the actual population census.

The State Statistical Committee has developed a “Schedule for preparation and conduct of population census in the Republic of Azerbaijan in 2019,” approved by the Committee’s Order No. 01/05s of 17 January 2018, which covers organizational work related to census, and the work to be carried out in connection with preparation and printing of census materials, provision of staff, organization of public awareness work, logistical issues, conduct of census and receipt of documents, processing of census data, publication and dissemination of final results, archiving of census materials, and international cooperation.

Status of achievement of 100 per cent birth registration and 80 per cent death registration

During 2010-2017, 100 percent birth and death registration was achieved. In the past one year, the numbers of births and deaths have been 144,041 and 57,109 respectively. 69,479 (or 48 percent) of the births were recorded in urban areas, and 74,562 (or 52 percent) in rural areas. And, 31,222 (or 55 percent) of the deaths occurred in urban areas, and 25,877 (or 45 percent) in rural areas.

76,584 (or 53.2 percent) of the newborns were male, and 67,457 (or 46.8 percent) were female. And, 30,429 (or 53.3 percent) of those who died were male, and 26,680 (or 46.7 percent) were female.

Table. 7. Birth and death registration in 2015-2017

| Indicator code and name | 2015 | 2016 | 2017 |
|---|------------|------|------|
| | in percent | | |
| Status of achievement of 100 per cent birth registration and 80 per cent death registration²: | | | |
| Status of achievement of 100 per cent birth registration | 100 | 100 | 100 |
| Status of achievement of 80 per cent death registration | 100 | 100 | 100 |

¹ The indicator presented under two different codes in the publication describe the existing situation at the national level on the basis of official statistical data.

² In the UN’s system of global indicators for the SDG, the indicator is defined as “17.19.2 Proportion of countries that (a) have conducted at least one population and housing census in the last 10 years; and (b) have achieved 100 per cent birth registration and 80 per cent death registration.” The indicator presented under two different codes describe the existing situation at the national level.

**STRENGTHEN THE MEANS
OF IMPLEMENTATION
AND REVITALIZE THE
GLOBAL PARTNERSHIP
FOR SUSTAINABLE
DEVELOPMENT**

Strengthening the means of implementation for sustainable development

The international best practices emphasize the importance of mobilizing the resources and capacities of public, private, national and international organizations to strengthen the means of implementation. Experts believe that the application of science and technology to sustainable development challenges may play a transformative role in reducing poverty, expanding human rights, and accelerating inclusive economic growth. Enhancing the capacity for statistics, data collection, monitoring and evaluation is also considered important. Creating opportunities for mutual cooperation to leverage resources and capacities of the private sector, coordinating the policies pursued, and supporting the development of science, technology and innovations are also deemed vital for strengthening the means of implementation.

The Republic of Azerbaijan also intends to make progress on SDGs by ensuring the sustainability of strategic resources, in particular human resources, nature, culture, digital capital and finance (both at public and private levels). Further improvement of the situation in the field of healthcare, education and decent employment is considered crucial. Over the past period, as a follow-up to the improvement measures carried out in areas such as economic, social and environmental, as well as management system and implementation mechanism in accordance with global challenges, the Republic of Azerbaijan conducted extensive reforms to achieve objectives in key strategic areas. In order to take the necessary initial measures

for the development of a medium-term expenditure framework clearly setting out the short-term and medium-term targets of the economic and social policy identified as a continuation of these reforms and transition to the result-based budgeting mechanism on this basis, the Ministry of Economy of the Republic of Azerbaijan developed the “Procedure for preparing a medium-term expenditure framework,” which was approved by the 24 August 2018 Decree No.235 of the President of the Republic of Azerbaijan. Paragraph 4.7 of the above Decree stipulates that state-funded organizations shall prepare strategic plans in the manner prescribed by the Cabinet of Ministers of the Republic of Azerbaijan and shall submit these plans to the Ministry of Finance and the Ministry of Economy by March 1.

To ensure the implementation of Paragraph 2.4 (determining the procedure for preparation of sectoral strategic plans of state-funded organizations) of this Decree, the “Procedure for preparation of sectoral strategic plans (strategic plan) of state-funded organizations in the Republic of Azerbaijan” was approved by the 28 December 2018 Decision No. 571 of the Cabinet of Ministers of the Republic of Azerbaijan. According to this Decision, the organization responsible for preparation of a sectoral strategic plan shall identify expenditures and sources of funding for the medium term based on the measures specified for the next year and planned for the subsequent three years (including the measures whose implementation does not require any funds).

Furthermore, under the 4 February 2019 Decree No. 513 of the President of the Republic of Azerbaijan “On amendments to the 24 August 2018 Decree No. 235 of the President of the Republic of Azerbaijan

on additional measures related to ensuring the implementation of the medium-term expenditure framework and approval of the Procedure for preparing the medium-term expenditure framework," it is intended to ensure submission of sectoral strategic plans associated with the "National Expenditure Priorities" under the "Education," "Agriculture" and "Environmental protection" sections of the functional classification of budgetary expenditures and a medium-term (for the next year and subsequent three years) expenditure framework based on these plans, along with the draft state budget for 2021.

To this end, in order to determine the mechanism for result-based budgeting pursuant to the abovementioned legislative acts during preparation of draft budgets in coming years in light of the results related to the development of the 2021 state budget, a relevant draft law is envisaged to be submitted to the President of the Republic of Azerbaijan by 1 January 2021.

In this connection, the sectoral strategic plans (started to be developed in 2019) associated with the "National Expenditure Priorities" under the "Education," "Agriculture" and "Environmental protection" sections of the functional classification of budgetary expenditures and their action plans are planned to be coordinated with the sustainable development goals and targets (attached).

Revitalizing the global partnership for sustainable development

During the review period, significant work has also been done in the Republic

of Azerbaijan in respect of international cooperation which is a key tool in achieving the SDGs. Specifically, as part of international cooperation, the Government of Azerbaijan has further developed the bilateral and multilateral relations with a number of foreign states and international and regional organizations such as UN and its specialized agencies, Inter-Parliamentary Union, Council of Europe and its specialized agencies, OSCE, Organization for Economic Co-operation and Development, European Union, CIS, GUAM, NATO, Organization of the Black Sea Economic Cooperation, Organization of Islamic Cooperation, Economic Cooperation Organization, etc.

The country signed up to the SDGs arising from the "2030 Agenda" in 2015, which opened up broad opportunities for cooperation with specialized agencies of the UN. As a follow-up to the said cooperation and in light of the priority nature of Sustainable Development Goals, the UN Economic Commission for Europe (UNECE) and the Government of Azerbaijan have discussed the expansion of cooperation in various areas and identification of areas for partnership.

As a result of the abovementioned discussions, new consultations have been conducted about the partnership between the Republic of Azerbaijan and the UNECE with the participation of the Ministry of Economy and Ministry of Foreign Affairs of the Republic of Azerbaijan, and the Permanent Mission of the Republic of Azerbaijan to the United Nations Office and other international organizations in Geneva, and taking into account the proposals of both parties and with the intention of cooperating on SDGs to support the implementation of the SDGs arising from the "2030 Agenda," fulfillment of global commitments in this context, and

dissemination of policies, experiences, innovative solutions and financial mechanisms for sustainable development, a Joint Declaration was signed by the Government of the Republic of Azerbaijan and the UNECE on cooperation for the implementation of SDGs on 30 November 2018.

The Joint Statement sets out such intentions as cooperation on the implementation of activities aimed at achieving the SDGs and related reporting, joint action aimed at determining the national priorities and indicators for sustainable development, adaptation of national programs and strategies covering economic areas and acceleration of application of best practices in this area, and ensuring sustainability of various sectors of national economy.

This Statement identifies priority cooperation areas covering economic, social and environmental areas. In the future, depending on the availability of needed funds, projects conforming to the abovementioned priority cooperation areas will continue to be implemented and review of the progress achieved on cooperation will be possible.

The Republic of Azerbaijan, which enjoys growing influence among the economically fast-developing countries of the world and plays a unique role in regional and global processes, is determined to act as an international donor and to get actively involved in global partnership for development.

Despite suffering a crisis in the first years after independence, Azerbaijan has entered the stage of macroeconomic stability and dynamic economic growth thanks to its revenues from the sale of oil and natural gas. Economic growth has had a positive

impact on a number of areas in the country, particularly significant reduction of poverty, solution of social problems, as well as investments in the development of human and physical capital, and laid the groundwork for strengthening of Azerbaijan's reputation among world countries and its gradual shift from an assisted country into an assisting country. Now Azerbaijan acts as a donor country in the international arena, and extends a helping hand to countries in various parts of the world facing natural and anthropogenic crises and economic difficulties. AIDA, a national donor institution established under the Ministry of Foreign Affairs on 14 September 2011 to ensure quick response to requests and centralized provision and coordination of international assistances, plays an important role in this regard. AIDA, whose two main areas of activity are supporting international development and providing humanitarian aid, supports the implementation of humanitarian and development projects on poverty reduction, development of science, culture and healthcare, application of information and communication technologies, efficient use of energy resources and other areas corresponding to the key targets of SDGs on a bilateral and multilateral basis. AIDA is expanding its cooperation with UNDP, UN Office for the Coordination of Humanitarian Affairs, Organization of Islamic Cooperation, Islamic Development Bank, OECD Development Assistance Committee and other influential international organizations.

Furthermore, AIDA implemented the following projects in the field of development assistance in 2018: Visiting Scientific Workers Program; promotion of research on Azerbaijani Studies and the Caspian basin region at higher education and scientific-research institutions of foreign countries; publication of scientific-research

materials; the program of Azerbaijani language for foreigners; a scholarship program for foreign students; a foreign policy program for foreign diplomats; introducing developing countries to the “ASAN Service” experience; establishing the International Association of Foreign Students of Azerbaijan; organization of a roundtable titled “Investing in our future: towards sustainable and inclusive development” at ADA University in the framework of the 6th Baku International Humanitarian Forum on 26 October 2018; supporting Baku’s candidacy for EXPO 2025; assistance to schools in La Rioja region of Argentine; assistance for repair and restoration work in the military cemetery in Romania; and, organization of foreign language courses for representatives of state agencies.

During the reporting period, AIDA also conducted purposeful work aimed at building partnership relations with international organizations. Specifically, AIDA held meetings with Islamic Development Bank, UN Office for the Coordination of Humanitarian Affairs, UENSCO, OECD Development Assistance Committee, African Union and other international organizations on implementation of joint projects and programs in various parts of the world, and continued the existing cooperation relations.

In the reporting period, AIDA continued its activity in the field of humanitarian assistance. In accordance with the relevant instruction of the President of the Republic of Azerbaijan, an assistance in the amount of 200,000 USD was provided to the United Nations Relief and Works Agency for Palestine Refugees in the Near East. The key objective of the assistance was to demonstrate Azerbaijan’s moral support to

the Palestinian people and Islamic solidarity, as well as to assist the financially strapped United Nations Relief and Works Agency for Palestine Refugees in the Near East in its humanitarian activities.

In compliance with the relevant instruction of the President of the Republic of Azerbaijan, our country provided a humanitarian aid in the amount of 50,000 USD for elimination of the consequences of the powerful earthquake with a magnitude of 6.9 that hit Indonesia on 5 August 2018.

Moreover, a second humanitarian aid in the amount of 50,000 USD was delivered to the Indonesian side as per the instruction of the President of the Republic of Azerbaijan for elimination of the consequences of another earthquake that occurred on the Sulawesi island of Indonesia on 28 September 2018.

Overall, the programs and projects implemented by AIDA on unilateral or multilateral basis, as well as its international activities encompassed 80 countries.

It should be noted that Azerbaijan’s operation as a donor country is taking place under unusual circumstances. Specifically, the Republic of Azerbaijan continues to follow the principles of humanism and extend a helping hand to other countries in spite of the fact that over 1 million people became refugees and IDPs as a result of conflict with Armenia and 25-year-long occupation of Azerbaijani territories by Armenia and that the Government of Azerbaijan allocates huge amounts of funds for improvement of the living conditions of these people against the backdrop of significantly decreased international aid to our country by donors. Thus, our country can be regarded one of the exemplary countries of the world in terms of international aid activities. Liberation

of the 20% of Azerbaijani territories from occupation, repatriation of refugees and IDPs to their homes represent the key direction of the domestic and foreign policy of Azerbaijan. If this happens, the Republic of Azerbaijan can take part more actively in the global partnership for development as a powerful donor.

All of these have enabled the Government of Azerbaijan to further develop cooperation in frames of global partnership for SDGs and strengthen the means of implementation thereof.

It is considered adequate to strengthen the works in the following directions with a view to boost success in this area:

- Continue and expand successful projects implemented by AIDA, set up and implement similar new projects in cooperation with local and international organizations;
- Provide support, through programs implemented by AIDA abroad, to the interested public and private companies of Azerbaijan, particularly those with the capacity to export intellectual products operating in the field of information and communication and services, in terms of access to the markets of these countries and their operation;
- Help developing countries who are reforming public administration and are interested in building e-government implement ASAN model, considering that ASAN Service received a UN award in the area of public services delivery in 2015;
- Enable AIDA and the Azerbaijan National Agency for Mine Action (ANAMA) to implement aid projects and carry out

demining activities in foreign countries together;

- Support interested developing countries in studying the achievements and experience of the State Oil Fund of the Republic of Azerbaijan in efficient and transparent management of oil and gas revenues.

The afore-mentioned show that cooperation with international partners may prove very useful in SDG attainment. That is, cooperation with international partners must be strengthened in order to study and apply best practices related to SDG implementation, benefit properly from existing opportunities in the international development system, and share existing experience and capabilities.

WAY FORWARD

Azerbaijan considers SDGs an important opportunity and will continuously work on aligning state programs and policies with the SDGs to make sure there is greater policy coherence at all levels and that resources are utilized in areas that need them the most. The following initiatives are on the spotlight for working towards the achievement of SDGs in Azerbaijan:

Revisit the list of nationalized targets and indicators and select several SDG accelerators on goals, targets and indicators that are considered priorities for Azerbaijan: the list of targets and indicators will be enhanced including adding a number of targets deemed necessary. Moreover, the report made by UN's MAPS Mission recommended to select SDG accelerators in line with the platforms of "Greener growth", "Inclusive labor markets" and "Enhanced public and social services delivery" and boost activities in this direction. In this regard, it is planned to select SDG accelerators in line with these platforms and enhance activities in this direction in the next phase.

Draft National Action Plan (strategy 2030) on SDG implementation. Based on a number of functional reviews and analyses including during the nationalization and mainstreaming of SDGs into the national development agenda, it is concluded that it would be useful to prepare and adopt a policy document including a National

Action Plan (this could be a State Program or a Road map) with the involvement of all stakeholders and partners, as well as funding and monitoring (with identification of baseline and target values for each indicator) mechanisms for National SDG Priorities. Introduction of an integrated cross-sectoral approach to the issues relating to SDG attainment and the alignment thereof at the level of targets/ indicators will not only pave the way for the success of the country, but it could also be useful for acceleration of the country's transition into a sustainable development model. Furthermore, UN recommended developing a new Development Strategy 2020-2030 as a continuation of *Azerbaijan 2020: Look into Future* Development Concept taking into account the possibility of a more coherent approach for development of national strategic documents by 2030 with the purpose of accelerating the alignment of National development agenda with SDGs.

Implementation of targeted projects on priority targets: Developing and implementing projects and targeted interventions aimed at accelerating progress towards achieving national SDG priorities. These include:

- Continuously improve the statistical framework for SDGs and relevant data infrastructure and capacities;

- Improve reporting on SDG targets and indicators in line with national priorities, taking the local context into account;
- Study international best practices and proven methodologies in the area of data collection and processing for various reporting cycles;
- Improve availability of high-quality, relevant and reliable data on SDG indicators disaggregated at the level of sub-groups by income level, sex, age, race, ethnicity, migration status, disability, geographical location and other specifications important in national context;
- Enhancement of cooperation with international organizations. We further opt for more enhanced cooperation and seek the assistance of international institutions and partners including the United Nations Department of Economics and Social Affairs (DESA) to help Azerbaijan in building a stronger and more comprehensive statistical framework for SDGs monitoring and reporting;
- Unify the format of all strategies and programmes that will be developed in light of SDGs and means of implementation; resources and financing (state budget, private sector contribution and others).

Another essential measure to understand progress on the ground and best practices at the national and regional levels is to organize the next Baku Forum on Sustainable Development in 2020 on the theme of “Strengthening regional partnership on implementation of Sustainable Development Goals”.

LESSONS LEARNED AND POLICY RECOMMENDATIONS

Azerbaijan's VNR underscores the Government of Azerbaijan's commitment to implement all 17 SDGs and the principles that underpin the 2030 Agenda, including "Leaving no one behind". Building opportunities for inclusive and sustainable economic growth, peace and inclusive society for all is a priority for the Government of Azerbaijan and we have demonstrated firm commitment to transitioning to sustainable development and aligning our national development strategy to the SDGs. To ensure complete and integrated implementation of the SDGs, active involvement of the private sector and state-owned enterprises in all stages of SDGs is indispensable. Awareness raising, more stringent regulation of environmental issues, increasing private sector financing for the SDGs, and harnessing corporate social responsibility funding are all therefore impending.

Awareness-raising efforts and advocacy campaigns must be complemented by result-oriented implementation and monitoring mechanisms. Azerbaijan views all steps towards SDGs as equally important. From our experience, knowledge of SDGs is critical to the success of the 2030 Agenda; without this, the set of complex goals (SDGs) and indicators cannot be reviewed

and progress cannot be traced. It is for this reason that the Government of Azerbaijan placed a special focus on raising awareness at all levels and engaging in a meaningful dialogue with different segments of society at national and regional levels.

Some of the best practices include the creation of innovative facilities in an effort to simplify business process and ease access to public and business services. Both the UN and other countries may benefit from best practices and lessons learned in terms of SDG mainstreaming and acceleration, the Baku Forum on Sustainable Development, which adopted "Baku Principles on the integration of the Sustainable Development Goals at the national level and the acceleration of their implementation". These lessons and trends will be integrated into national strategies and action plans and can be further integrated into the action plans of partner international organizations' strategic plans, including the strategic plan of UNDP 2018–2021, UN-Azerbaijan Partnership Framework (UNAPF) and others.

Moreover, we outline a number policy measures and interventions that can greatly contribute to the progress towards SDGs and the 2030 Agenda as a whole:

- The Armenia-Azerbaijan Nagorno-Karabakh conflict represents a serious threat to peace, security and cooperation in the South Caucasus. Armenia continues to use military force against Azerbaijan by occupying one fifth of its territory and preventing the Azerbaijani internally displaced population from returning to their homes. It disregards the UN Security Council resolutions 822 (1993), 853 (1993), 874 (1993) and 884 (1993), which reaffirm that the Nagorno-Karabakh region is an inalienable part of Azerbaijan and call for immediate, full and unconditional withdrawal of the occupying forces from all occupied territories of Azerbaijan. With a view of sustaining the status-quo of occupation, Armenia systematically conducts illegal economic activities, including pillaging of natural resources, transfers ethnic Armenians from abroad into the occupied territories and changes the Azerbaijani ethno-cultural features of these territories. By exercising effective control over the occupied territories, it also carries out large scale illicit diversion of arms and munitions to, promotes drugs trafficking, arm smuggling and money laundering in these territories. These activities seriously undermine efforts to achieve SDG 16, which, inter alia, aims at reducing illicit financial and arms flows. Addressing the challenges associated with the conflict through its lasting political settlement in accordance with the above-mentioned UN Security Council Resolutions will be a significant contribution to the implementation of SDGs;
 - There is a need to speed up efforts towards further acceleration of the development and diversification of non-oil sectors of the national economy, strengthening of innovation and export potential (innovative economy), enhancement of the effectiveness of social services (socially-oriented economy) and consolidation of environmental safety (green economy);
 - It is necessary to consistently improve the collection and analysis of sustainable development data and develop capacity to produce and analyze more detailed data disaggregated by gender, ethnicity, age, location (urban/rural), sector and regions/administrative districts;
 - Best international practices have shown that vital tools such as the creation of direct SDG funding mechanisms, building of effective partnership between stakeholders and mobilization of their capacities may play a key role in the achievement of SDGs.
- The Government of Azerbaijan is committed to take aforementioned lessons learnt into account for the planned next phases of SDG localization as well as implementation at large. Azerbaijan calls upon the international community to support these efforts through direct SDG funding mechanisms, sharing best international practices, building effective partnerships, addressing challenges, developing capacities and platforms that are of significant importance for the Republic of Azerbaijan in order to achieve the SDGs by 2030.

ANNEX

The Baku Principles for National SDG Mainstreaming and Acceleration:

Adopted in Baku forum on SDGs, 25-26 October, 2018

- 1) Build on Azerbaijan’s experience with the implementation of the SDG “Mainstreaming, Acceleration, and Policy Support” (MAPS) platform introduced by the UN Development Group (UNDG) and implemented in Azerbaijan starting with the May-June 2017 MAPS mission;
- 2) In addition to addressing SDG mainstreaming and acceleration, also focus on SDG finance and reporting issues;
- 3) Have both *internal* and *external* dimensions.
 - a) Internally, the Baku Principles serve as a compact between the Government (GoA) and the UN Country Team (UNCT) in Azerbaijan, concerning GoA implementation of the SDGs and UNCT support for this implementation.
 - b) Externally, the Baku Principles codify initial national lessons in MAPS implementation – reflecting *inter alia* the fact that Azerbaijan has been a leader in promoting SDG achievement through its commitment expressed in the Presidential Decree of 6 October 2016. Azerbaijan has since been one of the first countries in which a MAPS mission was fielded, and for which a MAPS report has been drafted and approved by the Government. Both the UN and other countries can find good practices and lessons learned in Azerbaijan’s SDG mainstreaming and acceleration experience. Among other things, UNDP is looking to take these lessons on board in the design and implementation of its “country platforms to support national SDG implementation”, as set forth in UNDP’s Strategic Plan 2018-2021.
- 4) The Baku Principles recognise that SDG mainstreaming and acceleration are multi-year processes that require long-term, consistent engagement on the part both of the GoA and the UN. These concern in particular—for SDG mainstreaming:
 - a) Efforts to align national development frameworks with the SDGs, and their targets and indicators. This means in particular: (i) extending national sustainable development strategies (NDSs) to 2030; and (ii) closely aligning sectoral, sub-national, and financial

- planning and programming frameworks with the NDS (and thereby the SDGs);
- b) Continuous improvements in the collection and analysis of sustainable development data. This is necessary to:
 - i. strengthen national reporting against global SDG targets and indicators (taking national specifics into account);
 - ii. increase the numbers of national SDG indicators for which the appropriate methodologies are in place and relevant data are collected; and
 - iii. make possible disaggregated reporting against these indicators by vulnerability criteria (e.g., gender, ethnicity, rural/urban status, etc.);
 - c) In keeping with the universality of the agenda, UNCT partnership frameworks with national governments (such as the UN-Azerbaijan Partnership Framework, and other UN Development Assistance Frameworks—UNDAFs) also need to be aligned with national SDG implementation. This applies both to UNDAF targets and indicators and to such institutional arrangements as national coordinating committees for sustainable development and other SDG-related inter-ministerial structures;
- 5) For SDG acceleration, the Baku Principles recognise that:
- a) Accelerators are more than the national priorities set forth in the NDS. They are policy and programming areas, activities, and instruments that can accelerate the attainment of these priorities by supporting multi-sectoral solutions to national development challenges that integrate the economic, social, environmental, risk-management, and rights-based elements of the sustainable development paradigm;
 - b) Accelerators may vary across countries, or over time within one country;
 - c) More data and analytical work are needed to identify relevant accelerators in Azerbaijan and estimate their magnitudes. The accelerator framework presented in the MAPS report is intended to serve as an initial contribution to this effort;
- 6) For SDG finance, the Baku Principles recognise that—for middle-income countries:
- a) ODA can at best serve to galvanize additional, larger sources of SDG finance. These include first and foremost national fiscal revenues;
 - b) UNCT programme finance for SDG implementation needs to be aligned with, contribute to, and draw upon, national budget (and other sources of) financing for SDG implementation;
- 7) On SDG reporting, the Baku Principles:
- a) Call for supplementing the voluntary national reports presented by the GoA at the UN High Level Political Forum with regular national SDG reports, that would:
 - i. be linked to the monitoring and evaluation of Azerbaijan’s strategic national development documents (e.g., Azerbaijan 2020, the Strategic Road Maps);

- ii. monitor national progress on SDG implementation; and
 - iii. serve to raise awareness among Azerbaijani society about the SDGs and sustainable development;
- b) This reporting would be supported by the UNCT, drawing on UN human resources and technical capacity;
- c) Call for the establishment of a UN Database of National SDG Focal Points in order to facilitate direct contact and dialogue at national, regional and global level. Subsequently, launch this database at the 2019 high level political forum where countries will be presenting voluntary national reviews. We hope to see this initiative supported by the participating states of Baku Forum on Sustainable Development as well as by the UN leadership.