



General Assembly

Distr.: General
28 August 2023
English
Original: Russian

Human Rights Council
Working Group on the Universal Periodic Review
Forty-fourth session
6–17 November 2023

National report submitted in accordance with Human Rights Council resolutions 5/1 and 16/21*

Turkmenistan

* The present document is being issued without formal editing.



Introduction

1. Eager to cooperate constructively with the Human Rights Council, Turkmenistan hereby submits its national report in accordance with its obligations under the universal periodic review (UPR) mechanism.

2. This report, covering the period from 2018 to July 2023, has been prepared by the Interdepartmental Commission on Compliance with the International Obligations Undertaken by Turkmenistan in the Field of Human Rights and International Humanitarian Law (hereinafter referred to as the Interdepartmental Commission). It provides an overview of the most important legislative and other measures taken in response to the recommendations of the third UPR cycle dialogue on the human rights situation in Turkmenistan, held on 7 May 2018.

Methodology for preparing the report

3. This report has been prepared in accordance with the general guidelines set out by the Human Rights Council in its decision 17/119. The report is based on information provided by State bodies and voluntary associations. During preparation of the report, consultations were held on reporting under the UPR mechanism.

4. In February 2023, a consultation was organized with an international expert from the United Nations Development Programme (UNDP), a meeting was held with representatives of voluntary organizations, and a seminar was arranged for members of the Interdepartmental Commission's working group for preparation of the fourth national UPR report of Turkmenistan. The results of these discussions were taken into account during finalization of the report.

I. Legal, institutional and strategic framework for the protection and promotion of human rights

A. Ratification of international instruments (recommendations Nos. 114.1–114.3 and 116.1–116.24)

5. During the reporting period Turkmenistan ratified:
- the International Labour Organization (ILO) Tripartite Consultation (International Labour Standards) Convention, 1976 (No. 144)
 - the Marrakesh Treaty to Facilitate Access to Published Works for Persons Who Are Blind, Visually Impaired or Otherwise Print Disabled
 - the Convention against Discrimination in Education
 - the ILO Employment Policy Convention, 1964 (No. 122)
 - the Constitution of the International Labour Organisation Instrument of Amendment, 1986
 - the Convention on the Recognition of Qualifications Concerning Higher Education in the European Region
 - the Convention on the Suppression of Unlawful Acts Relating to International Civil Aviation and its Protocol
 - the Optional Protocol to the Convention on the Safety of United Nations and Associated Personnel
 - the Convention on the Prevention and Punishment of the Crime of Genocide
 - the International Convention for the Protection of Performers, Producers of Phonograms and Broadcasting Organizations

- the Kigali Amendment to the Montreal Protocol on Substances that Deplete the Ozone Layer
 - the Agreement on establishment of the Global Green Growth Institute
 - the United Nations Convention on Contracts for the International Sale of Goods
 - the International Convention on the Harmonized Commodity Description and Coding System
6. Turkmenistan has been a party to the Convention relating to the Status of Stateless Persons, mentioned in the recommendations of the third UPR cycle, since 2011.
7. The plan of cooperation with international organizations for 2021–2023 includes consideration of the question of accession to other international conventions.

B. Engagement with human rights bodies and mechanisms (recommendations Nos. 114.4, 114.5, 114.6, 114.7, 114.8, 114.9, 114.10, 116.25, 116.26, 116.27, 116.28, 116.29, 116.30, 116.31, 116.32, 116.33, 116.34)

8. Turkmenistan has submitted to the United Nations treaty bodies national reports on implementation of the provisions of the following instruments:
- the Convention on the Elimination of All Forms of Discrimination against Women (2022)
 - its Common core document (2020)
 - the International Covenant on Civil and Political Rights (2020)
 - the Convention against Torture and Other Cruel, Inhuman or Degrading Treatment or Punishment (2020)
 - the International Convention on the Elimination of All Forms of Racial Discrimination (2019)
 - The Convention on the Rights of the Child (2020) and its Optional Protocol on the sale of children, child prostitution and child pornography and Optional Protocol on the involvement of children in armed conflict (2020)
9. The 2021–2025 framework programme for sustainable development cooperation between the Government of Turkmenistan and the United Nations provides for United Nations entities to participate in fostering more effective and transparent public administration based on international commitments and standards in the areas of the rule of law, human rights, gender equality and labour rights, acting on the recommendations of United Nations human rights treaty bodies and mechanisms and ILO supervisory bodies, as well as on feedback from civil society organizations.
10. Steps to strengthen tripartite social dialogue and further close cooperation with ILO were discussed during visits by ILO representatives.

C. Reform of legislation in accordance with international human rights standards (recommendations Nos. 114.27–114.29)

11. In order to meet the international human rights obligations of Turkmenistan, laws were adopted during the reporting period on:
- television and radio broadcasting
 - amending the Social Protection Code
 - preventing the harmful effects of alcohol
 - amending and supplementing the Labour Code

- amending and supplementing the Drinking Water Act
- electronic documents, electronic document exchange and digital services
- amending and supplementing the Voluntary Associations Act
- amending and supplementing the Tax Code
- preventing infectious diseases
- education (new wording)
- the legal status of foreign citizens in Turkmenistan
- social services
- prevention and control of non-communicable diseases
- amending and supplementing the Criminal Code and enacting it in its new wording
- e-Government
- amending and supplementing the Anti-Corruption Act
- national youth policy (new wording)
- local government
- mental health services
- civil registration
- amending the Young People's Right to Work Guarantees Act
- environmental information
- the Administrative Procedure Code
- prevention of delinquency
- emergency prevention and response (new wording)
- amending and supplementing the Code of Civil Procedure
- notaries and notarial activity
- the Mejlis (lower house of the parliament) of Turkmenistan

D. Institutional framework

12. In addition to courts at all levels, law enforcement agencies, the Ministry of Foreign Affairs, government bodies with a mandate to ensure and protect human rights in various areas, and voluntary professional associations such as bar associations, Turkmenistan has a number of human rights institutions:

- the Halk Maslahaty (upper house of the parliament, representing the interests of the people of Turkmenistan)
- the Mejlis (Committee for the Protection of Human Rights and Freedoms)
- the Ombudsperson, the authorized representative for human rights in Turkmenistan
- the Institute for State, Law and Democracy
- the Interdepartmental Commission

1. Improving the effectiveness of the Interdepartmental Commission (recommendations Nos. 114.20, 114.24)

13. The Interdepartmental Commission prepares national reports on the implementation of international human rights treaties. The following bodies have been established under the Interdepartmental Commission:

- a working group of national experts
- a working group on international humanitarian law
- a working group to survey women's health and status in the family
- a working group to combat trafficking in persons

14. Members of the Interdepartmental Commission and its working groups participate in activities to study international experience in the field of human rights. The Interdepartmental Commission and its working groups receive technical support from United Nations agencies.

2. Strengthening the institution of the Ombudsperson (recommendations Nos. 114.11–114.19)

15. In October 2022, at the invitation of the Office of the Ombudsperson, a capacity assessment of the Office of the Ombudsperson was conducted in partnership with the Asia-Pacific Forum of National Human Rights Institutions, UNDP and the Office of the United Nations High Commissioner for Human Rights (OHCHR). Recommendations were received for capacity-building and follow-up to accreditation by the Global Alliance of National Human Rights Institutions.

16. The budget of the Office of the Ombudsperson for 2022 was double that for 2021. Technical support for building up the capacity of the Office of the Ombudsperson is provided by United Nations agencies, the Organization for Security and Cooperation in Europe (OSCE) and other international organizations.

E. Institutional framework for the protection and promotion of human rights

National human rights policy documents (recommendations Nos. 114.23, 114.24)

17. The Programme of the President of Turkmenistan on Socioeconomic Development of Turkmenistan, 2019–2025, envisages structural reforms in the economy, the creation of new jobs, stimulation of small and medium-sized enterprises, expansion of employment in the private sector and the transfer of informally employed persons to the formal sector, all of which open new opportunities for the population, including persons with disabilities.

18. During the reporting period, the following plans were approved: the National Action Plan on Gender Equality in Turkmenistan, 2015–2020 and 2021–2025, the National Human Rights Action Plan (NHRAP), 2021–2025, the National Action Plan for the Realization of Children's Rights in Turkmenistan, 2018–2022 and 2023–2028, the National Action Plan for Countering Trafficking in Persons, 2020–2022, and the National Plan of Action for the Elimination of Statelessness, 2019–2024.

19. National action plans include various activities developed in response to concluding recommendations made by United Nations human rights committees.

II. Civil and political rights

A. Combating torture (recommendations Nos. 116.42–116.45, 116.52, 116.56)

20. Under the Constitution, no one may be subjected to torture, violence or cruel, inhuman or degrading treatment or punishment, nor may anyone be subjected to medical, scientific or other experimentation without his or her consent.

21. On 17 April 2022, new wording of the Criminal Code was adopted, article 21 of which defines the concept of torture in accordance with article 1 of the Convention against Torture.

22. The prevention of torture and other forms of inhuman treatment is included in section 7 of the country's NHRAP, 2021–2025, which provides for a set of measures to

prevent torture. These include: timely, effective investigation of torture and other inhuman treatment; ensuring that detainees have free access to a doctor and a lawyer; raising public awareness of the prohibition of torture; ensuring that law enforcement officials and lawyers are properly trained with regard to the Convention against Torture; and including the Istanbul Protocol as an essential part of the training of all health professionals.

23. Courses, seminars and training sessions on international standards for the treatment of prisoners are organized to improve the professional qualifications of the staff of special institutions. In 2022, more than 40 training events were held in the relevant units of the Ministry of Internal Affairs and provincial police departments, in which 1,700 officers participated.

24. In order to prevent torture, the Ministry of Internal Affairs is systematically working to provide police stations, remand centres and penal institutions with equipment to make audio and video recordings of interrogations.

25. In November 2022, a round table on “Practical experience of ratification of the Optional Protocol to the United Nations Convention against Torture” was held in Ashgabat, organized by the OHCHR Regional Office for Central Asia and with the participation of the Ombudsperson and representatives of ministries and agencies. The round table discussed the Optional Protocol to the Convention against Torture and other Cruel, Inhuman or Degrading Treatment or Punishment and the advisability of accession to it, as well as the possibility of establishing a national preventive mechanism for the prevention of torture.

B. Conditions of detention (recommendations Nos. 114.44, 116.46, 116.47, 116.52 and 116.56–116.58)

26. Detention facilities are constantly monitored by the Penal Correction Department of the Ministry of Internal Affairs. The staff of this unit periodically visit prisoners and look into their health status and conditions of detention.

27. Work is under way to overhaul and modernize detention facilities. During 2019–2021, major repairs and reconstruction of buildings and structures were carried out at three institutions in the Mary *welaýat* (province), two institutions in Balkan Province and two institutions in Ahal Province.

28. In response to the global spread of the coronavirus disease (COVID-19) pandemic, a number of preventive measures were taken in the penitentiary institutions of the Ministry of Internal Affairs. In particular, all persons serving sentences in correctional institutions in Turkmenistan who had no contra-indications to immunization were vaccinated three times free of charge.

29. The Presidential Decision of 11 April 2014 on nutritional and other material welfare standards for persons held in correctional institutions, remand centres and special rehabilitation centres expanded the range and improved the quantity and quality of the food provided to such persons. Higher nutritional standards have been set for inmates who are pregnant or breastfeeding, minors and prisoners who are ill or have a category I or category II disability.

30. Supervisory commissions established at the provincial level monitor compliance with the law by the authorities engaged in penal enforcement. Visits are made to places of detention in accordance with the commissions’ workplan,. In 2022, there were 11 visits.

31. On the basis of the Penalties Enforcement Code and the Ombudsperson Act, the Ombudsperson may visit correctional facilities without hindrance and without prior notice. During 2018, the Ombudsperson visited a correctional facility for juveniles and a correctional facility for women. In 2019, the Ombudsperson visited a special rehabilitation centre, a correctional facility in Tejen and a remand centre in Yashlyk settlement, Ahal Province. In 2022, the Ombudsperson visited the juvenile correctional facility in Mary Province and the women’s correctional facility in Dashoguz Province.

32. Medical services are staffed by qualified medical personnel and have the necessary equipment, facilities and medicines for proper medical care and treatment of patients.

33. On 6 November 2018, a delegation consisting of representatives of UNDP, the European Union Liaison Office, the OSCE Centre in Ashgabat and the Regional Centre for Preventive Diplomacy in Central Asia, as well as the embassies of France, Germany, Italy, Romania, the United Kingdom and the United States of America, visited the specialized department of Ahal Province Police Department's correctional facility MR-E/16. On 15 July 2023, representatives of a number of diplomatic missions accredited to Turkmenistan visited a correctional labour institution in Ahal Province and familiarized themselves with the conditions of detention of persons sentenced to deprivation of liberty.

C. Arbitrary detention and enforced disappearance (recommendations Nos. 114.37, 116.43, 116.45–116.53, 116.55, 116.56)

34. Under the Constitution, no one may be convicted or punished except in strict accordance with the law. In Turkmenistan, persons may be detained only on grounds clearly specified in law, on the basis of a court order or with the approval of a procurator.

35. Article 214 of the Criminal Code penalizes knowingly unlawful arrest, detention or custody.

36. Suspects have the right to inform their family members, close relatives or place of work of their detention and whereabouts, to participate in investigative actions at their own request or at the request of a lawyer or legal representative, and to lodge complaints against the actions (inaction) and decisions of the person conducting the initial inquiry, the investigator or the procurator.

37. A lawyer is permitted to take part in the proceedings from the moment a suspect is interrogated, from the moment a suspect is charged with an offence or from the moment an arrest warrant or detention order is served on a suspect who has been detained or remanded in custody pending charges being brought, but no more than 24 hours thereafter (article 81 of the Code of Criminal Procedure).

38. With the aim of implementing recommendations, the norms of the Code of Criminal Procedure and the Penalties Enforcement Code will be monitored with a view to bringing them into line with international norms and standards relating to detainees.

D. Measures to combat trafficking in persons (recommendations Nos. 114.48, 114.49)

39. The Trafficking in Persons Act defines a set of measures to protect, rehabilitate and assist trafficked persons and to prosecute traffickers.

40. Article 28 of the Criminal Code defines trafficking in persons as “the recruitment, transportation, transfer, harbouring or receipt of a person, regardless of the victim's consent, for the purpose of exploitation by means of threat, coercion, deception, abuse of trust or the vulnerable position of the victim or bribery of a person on whom the victim is dependent, as well as the purchase or sale of a person or other unlawful transactions involving the person as an object of property”.

41. Offences related to trafficking in persons are not common in Turkmenistan. In 2016, they represented 0.03 per cent of the total number of cases handled; there was one case in 2017, followed by no cases in 2018, one case in 2019 and no cases in 2020–2022.

42. The National Action Plan to Combat Trafficking in Persons, 2020–2022, was adopted in December 2019.

43. Between 2018 and 2022, 141 Ministry of Internal Affairs officials and 90 staff members of the Procurator's Office participated in 52 and 42 anti-trafficking activities, respectively.

44. The Ministry of Internal Affairs combats trafficking in persons through prevention, detection and suppression of trafficking crimes.

45. The work on prevention of trafficking in persons, child prostitution and child pornography carried out by internal affairs agencies consists of two parts: prevention and suppression.

46. Preventive work is carried out not only with potential offenders but also with potential victims.

47. Within internal affairs agencies, units in offices of district inspectors and youth affairs inspectorates are responsible for preventing trafficking in persons, child prostitution and child pornography.

48. In some cases, the victims are children and young girls, and youth affairs inspectorates therefore play a special role in preventing trafficking in persons.

49. In order to prevent and suppress crimes committed not only by but also against minors, representatives of Ministry of Internal Affairs youth affairs inspectorates hold lectures and talks in secondary schools, specialized educational establishments and higher education institutions throughout the country.

50. Between 2018 and 2022, 50 representatives of the Youth Organization participated in 19 anti-trafficking workshops organized by international organizations.

51. There are several telephone hotlines for victims of trafficking in the country. The Ynam Voluntary Association's hotline provided information and support to over 23,000 citizens between 2018 and 2022.

E. Judicial system (recommendations Nos. 114.40–114.43)

52. Justice in Turkmenistan is administered on the basis of equal rights and freedoms, the principle of adversarial proceedings and the equality of all before the law and the courts, regardless of ethnic background, race, gender, origin, financial situation, official status, place of residence, language, attitude towards religion, political convictions, party affiliation or lack thereof.

53. The Courts Act defines the organizational and legal basis for the activity of the courts, the procedure for the appointment and dismissal of judges, and their powers.

54. In a decree dated 5 July 2022, the President of Turkmenistan approved the Judicial System Development Programme, 2022–2028, which provides that:

- the activities of the judicial system will be harmonized with those of developed world systems;
- transparency, quality and accessibility of justice will be improved; and
- steps will be taken to ensure that judges are independent and subject only to the Constitution and the law.

55. The Courts Act is supplemented by article 64¹ of the Code of Judicial Ethics.

56. The Code was discussed and adopted at the first Conference of Judges, held on 19 January 2019.

57. Section 4 of the NHRAP, 2021–2025, provides for improvements to the judicial system, including: legislative improvements; formation and development of self-governing bodies of the judiciary; strengthening the role of judges in reforming the judicial system; ensuring the right to a fair trial; and expanding training programmes on standards and practices for protection of human rights through the courts.

F. Combating corruption (recommendation 114.36)

58. The Anti-Corruption Act defines the basic principles and the legal and organizational framework for combating corruption, preventing corruption and eliminating the causes and conditions that contribute to the commission of corruption-related offences.

59. Turkmenistan is implementing the National Anti-Corruption Programme, 2020–2024.
60. The Act on the introduction of amendments and additions to the Anti-Corruption Act provides for anti-corruption expert reviews of bills, laws and draft regulations.
61. On 13 March 2021, new wording of the Act on combating money-laundering, financing of terrorism and financing of the proliferation of weapons of mass destruction was adopted, on the basis of which the Financial Monitoring Service was established under the Ministry of Finance and Economic Affairs.
62. Turkmenistan has developed a comprehensive scheme to combat corruption. Cooperation has been established between the country's agencies responsible for law enforcement, taxation, financial and other matters.
63. In recent years, Turkmenistan has made significant progress in developing the system of public services and has begun to introduce the "e-Government" electronic document management system.
64. One of the main approaches in the National Anti-Corruption Programme, 2020–2024, is the phased introduction of a system of income declaration for civil servants.
65. The basic standards of behaviour for civil servants to prevent corrupt practices are set out in the Anti-Corruption Act, the Civil Service Act and the Act on Ethics and Official Conduct of Civil Servants.
66. Section 14 of the NHRAP, 2021–2025, provides for stronger measures against corruption, bolstering the relevant bodies, providing accessible opportunities for reporting corruption and imposing proportionate punishment on perpetrators.
67. Since 2019, eight judicial officers have participated in three anti-corruption events organized by the United Nations Office on Drugs and Crime. Between 2018 and 2022, 97 Ministry of Internal Affairs officials and 378 staff members of the Procurator's Office participated in 26 and 294 anti-corruption seminars and training events, respectively.

G. Freedom of thought, conscience and religion (recommendations Nos. 114.45, 114.46, 116.61, 116.74)

68. The State guarantees freedom of religion and worship and the equality of religions and beliefs before the law.
69. Section 11 of the NHRAP, 2021–2025, provides for interfaith harmony in society and effective exercise of the right to freedom of association, assembly and expression; it creates the conditions for implementation of the Media Act; and it improves criminal legislation, including with regard to decriminalization of acts related to defamation.
70. Article 152 of the Criminal Code criminalizes obstruction of the lawful activities of religious organizations or the performance of religious rites.
71. Tax legislation establishes certain privileges for religious organizations: value added tax is not payable on services provided by them, nor on the sale of religious items and those used for religious purposes (Tax Code, article 106).
72. The Freedom of Religion and Religious Organizations Act was adopted in 2016.
73. There are 134 registered religious organizations in Turkmenistan. Of these, 111 organizations belong to traditional Islam (106 Sunni and 5 Shiite), 13 are Orthodox and 12 are organizations professing other religions and confessions.
74. In 2018–2019, the Institute for State, Law and Democracy organized round tables on freedom of religion and belief. The events were attended by the Ombudsperson and representatives of the Ministry of Foreign Affairs, the Ministry of Internal Affairs, the Ministry of Justice (*adalat*), the Institute of State, Law and Democracy, the Religious Affairs Department of the Cabinet of Ministers, and various confessions and religious organizations.
75. In 2019, the Ministry of Justice held five training seminars to explain the legislation to 160 members of voluntary associations and religious organizations.

H. Freedom of movement (recommendations Nos. 116.83, 116.84)

76. Under the Migration Act, every Turkmen citizen has the right to leave and enter Turkmenistan and may not be deprived of that right.

77. The right of Turkmen citizens to leave the country may be temporarily restricted if:

- they hold information constituting a State secret, until the time limit stipulated by law expires;
- criminal proceedings have been initiated against them, until the conclusion of such proceedings;
- they have been convicted of a crime, until their sentence has been served or their early release;
- they fail to meet court-imposed obligations, until such obligations are met;
- they have been convicted by a court for the repeated commission of an especially dangerous crime or are on parole, until the conviction is spent, cancelled or the parole terminated;
- they are the respondent in a civil lawsuit, until the proceedings are concluded;
- they are liable for military service, until completing or being released from their duties,
- there are concerns that they could fall victim to human trafficking or slavery while abroad;
- they have broken the law of a country visited during an earlier stay abroad;
- their departure poses a threat to their life and health;
- their departure is incompatible with the national security interests of Turkmenistan.

I. Freedom of opinion and expression (recommendations Nos. 114.47, 116.61–116.67, 116.69, 116.70, 116.72, 116.73, 116.75–116.82).

78. Freedom of opinion and expression is guaranteed by the Constitution. No one has the right to prohibit a person from freely expressing his or her opinions or to prevent their dissemination in accordance with the law. Everyone has the right to freely seek, receive and impart information by means not prohibited by law, except where it contains official secrets or other secrets protected by law.

79. Under the Constitution and the Act on the Organization and Conduct of Assemblies, Meetings, Demonstrations and Other Mass Events, citizens are guaranteed freedom of assembly in rallies, demonstrations and other mass events in accordance with the procedure prescribed by law.

80. Under the Media Act, the mass media in Turkmenistan have freedom in their activities. No one may prevent or hinder the mass media from disseminating information of public interest, except in accordance with the law.

81. Journalists from Turkmenistan participate in forums on freedom of expression and in professional development seminars organized by United Nations agencies and other international organizations.

82. In August 2022, the Delegation of the European Union to Turkmenistan organized a workshop to introduce local journalists and bloggers to new social media development tools, in order to help build their professional capacity.

83. In December 2022, OSCE conducted a training course on the rights and duties of journalists for media professionals, website developers and representatives of courts and bar associations. On 22–24 May and 26–27 July 2023, OSCE organized seminars on topical issues of the OSCE “human dimension”.

84. The Internet Development and Internet Service Legal Regulation Act establishes State guarantees for protecting the rights and legitimate interests of Turkmen citizens in Internet-based relations.

J. Freedom of association (recommendations Nos. 114.28, 116.72–116.74)

85. The rights of citizens to form voluntary associations are regulated by the Voluntary Associations Act. Decisions denying registration of a voluntary association may be appealed in court.

86. The Act on the introduction of amendments and additions to the Voluntary Associations Act (2020) provides for simplification of State registration, as well as the abolition of certain restrictions. For instance, the number of members of a voluntary association was reduced from 400 to 50 persons, and the format for submitting an application has been changed so that only members of the board of a voluntary association sign the application.

87. The Act also lifted restrictions on participation in the activities of voluntary associations by persons convicted of a serious or particularly serious offence.

88. The Act on Trade Unions, Their Rights and Guarantees relating to Their Activities grants citizens the right to form a trade union on a voluntary basis, to freely join or refrain from joining it in accordance with the established procedure, to take part in trade union activities and to freely withdraw from membership.

III. Economic, social and cultural rights

A. Economic and social development (recommendations Nos. 114.33–114.35, 114.52, 114.54–114.56)

89. The National Programme of Socioeconomic Development of Turkmenistan, 2022–2052, was adopted on 11 February 2022 and the Programme of the President of Turkmenistan for the Socioeconomic Development of Turkmenistan, 2022–2028, was approved on 8 July 2022. They prioritize the ever-increasing role of human capital as the main factor in the country's economic development and the formation of a new social model of development to ensure a high standard of living for the people of Turkmenistan.

90. The United Nations has been assigned the role of the main strategic partner in the implementation of the new national programmes.

91. The National Programme to reduce the impact of the current difficult circumstances in the global economy on the country's economy and sustainable development of the national economy, 2020–2021, and the Plan of operational socioeconomic measures in Turkmenistan against the acute infectious disease pandemic constituted a comprehensive package of measures to mitigate the negative impact of the global COVID-19 pandemic on the socioeconomic situation in the country, with special attention to the most vulnerable groups of the population, in accordance with the principle of "Leave no one behind".

92. Over the past 10 years, hundreds of social infrastructure projects have been implemented within the framework of the National Programme to improve social and living conditions in villages, settlements, towns and district centres. As of 1 May 2022, 70 hospitals, 146 polyclinics, 258 preschool institutions, 251 general education schools, 76 cultural centres, 115 sports schools and 73 sports facilities – a total of 989 buildings and facilities – had been constructed in Turkmenistan in the period 2012–2022.

93. The Social Protection Code increased pensions, the State childcare allowance, the State disability allowance, the State social allowance for mothers awarded the honorary title of "Ene mähri", the survivor's pension for orphans, the State childbirth allowance and the childcare allowance from January 2022. The wages of employees in budget-financed

institutions, self-supporting enterprises and voluntary associations, as well as pensions, State benefits and student grants, are increased by 10 per cent each year.

94. The Concept of Development of the Digital Economy in Turkmenistan, 2019–2025, was approved on 30 November 2018.

95. The e-Government Act, adopted on 24 July 2022, obliges State agencies to improve the provision of electronic services to the public.

96. The Act requires public bodies to regularly improve the procedure for providing electronic services by eliminating redundant administrative procedures and reducing the number of documents and the time frame for providing services.

97. UNDP is implementing the Single Window for Export-Import Transactions project with the State Customs Service (jointly with the United Nations Conference on Trade and Development (UNCTAD)); a project on facilitating the introduction of a pilot electronic data interchange system was launched by UNDP with the Turkmenaragatnashyk Agency.

B. Sustainable development (recommendations Nos. 114.31, 114.32)

98. Turkmenistan is successfully implementing the Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs). The Interdepartmental Technical Coordination Committee for implementation of the SDGs is chaired by the Ministry of Finance and Economic Affairs.

99. Turkmenistan is taking steps to strengthen the link between human rights and attainment of the SDGs. The NHRAP, 2021–2025, includes a separate section on sustainable development.

100. Turkmenistan presented its first Voluntary National SDG Review at the High-Level Political Forum in July 2019.

101. The second Voluntary National Review of Turkmenistan was submitted in June 2023.

102. As of 23 June 2022, Turkmenistan had adopted 136 targets and 180 indicators that will be implemented until 2030.

103. Implementation of the SDGs is closely linked to development of the country's regions. In this regard, the Government is paying special attention to industrializing provinces, building up production structures, increasing the population's income and creating new jobs.

104. A third rapid integrated assessment was conducted in 2022, as part of preparation for the Review. The assessment found that there continues to be a high level of integration (85 per cent) of SDG targets into strategies, programmes and action plans; the country's adopted SDG targets 1–4, 7–9, 11, 13 and 17 are fully (100 per cent) integrated.

105. For the remaining goals, attainment of the SDG targets ranges from 50 per cent (SDG 10 – Reduce inequalities within and between countries) to 88 per cent (SDG 6 – Ensure availability and sustainable use of water and sanitation for all).

106. Turkmenistan supported the Addis Ababa Action Agenda and started implementation of the integrated national financing framework for the SDGs.

107. The Ministry of Finance and Economic Affairs and the United Nations signed a memorandum of understanding on cooperation in achieving the SDGs in Turkmenistan, which covers the seven areas of the Addis Ababa Action Agenda.

108. In May 2020, an international workshop on “Financing the implementation of the SDGs: the role of integrated national financing frameworks” was held in Ashgabat. The outcome of the workshop was circulated as an official document of the seventy-fourth session of the United Nations General Assembly.

109. On the initiative of the United Nations, a joint United Nations/Government expert working group on SDG financing has been set up.

110. In 2022, within the framework of phase II of the project on a platform for attainment of the Sustainable Development Goals being implemented by UNDP and the Ministry of

Finance and Economic Affairs, and the regional project on establishment of an SDG platform in central Asia, an assessment of financing for development was carried out applying UNDP methodology. Preliminary estimates show that the largest share is accounted for by revenues from the State budget and investment by private enterprises.

C. Right to education (recommendations Nos. 114.64–114.68)

111. The literacy rate of the population aged 15 years and older is 99.8 per cent for women and 99.9 per cent for men, and 99.9 per cent for both women and men aged 15–24 years.

112. There has been a strong emphasis on providing schools in the country with basic infrastructure. Work is under way to provide schools with Internet access.

113. Special attention is paid to vulnerable social groups and persons with disabilities. Curricula for teacher training and professional development, as well as those used at all levels of education, are being improved through the phased introduction of a competency-based approach to education, with the participation of international experts from the United Nations Children's Fund (UNICEF) and the United Nations Educational, Scientific and Cultural Organization (UNESCO).

114. Children who, for health reasons, cannot attend general educational establishments are educated in special institutions and receive a basic or full secondary education and the necessary rehabilitation and measures to eliminate developmental disorders (hearing, vision, speech, mental development, musculoskeletal disorders) and restore lost skills. There are currently 17 such institutions in the country, with more than 4,000 children enrolled. Students and pupils at these institutions who have restored or improved their health are transferred to general educational establishments. For children who are undergoing long-term treatment in medical institutions, education is organized at their place of stay (treatment) by teachers from a nearby secondary school. Home education for children with disabilities is organized in the same way.

115. All citizens have equal access to vocational training. Ministries and departments that have vocational schools under their jurisdiction provide assistance to persons with disabilities in the form of tuition waivers, and local government sponsorship of these schools is also a way of providing free tuition to persons with disabilities.

116. Under the Education Act, orphans and children left without parental care or persons in loco parentis are maintained and educated in educational establishments, including vocational establishments, on the basis of full State support until they reach the age of 24.

117. Each year, Turkmenistan increases budget allocations for the development of social services, including education. New educational establishments, equipped with modern equipment and the latest technologies, are put into operation every year. In 2019–2022, 18 general education schools and 11 preschool institutions were opened.

118. As part of the implementation of the Policy framework for development of an online education system, the capacity of teachers to support the introduction of e-learning in schools and the organization of distance learning for children has been strengthened.

119. In 2019–2022, 97 professional development courses were held at the National Institute of Education, where more than 10,000 teachers were trained.

120. Between 2015 and 2021, the number of students in higher education institutions and in secondary vocational education institutions increased by 65.3 per cent and 25.5 per cent, respectively.

121. The Policy framework for inclusive education in Turkmenistan, 2023–2028, including a step-by-step action plan, has been drawn up with the support of UNICEF. The country is developing a system for the delivery of comprehensive services for young children with disabilities and their families, with a focus on early identification and early intervention, interdisciplinary and cross-disciplinary support, social rehabilitation and habilitation, in close inter-agency and intersectoral collaboration.

122. The country's education system is being developed on the principle of sustainability. The Ministry of Education, together with UNICEF, has established early childhood development centres for children with disabilities and their families, which are also attended by healthy children; these centres are based in existing general preschool institutions.
123. The vocational education system in Turkmenistan includes three types of institutions – basic, intermediate and higher vocational educational institutions.
124. Higher vocational education has both a two-stage structure for training bachelor's and master's degree students and a traditional one-stage structure for training specialists. Higher education institutions in Turkmenistan comprise academies, universities, institutes and conservatories.
125. New basic, intermediate and higher vocational education institutions are being opened, taking into account the specific features of the country's economic development.
126. Intermediate and higher vocational education in the country is provided by 21 State higher education establishments and 44 intermediate vocational education institutions, which trained more than 83,800 students in the 2020/2021 academic year and 91,600 students (an increase of 9.3 per cent) in the 2022/2023 academic year. For the 2023–2024 academic year, 35 new specialties (21 undergraduate, 8 specialist and 6 master's degree programmes) have been opened in the country's higher education establishments.
127. Turkmenistan is paying particular attention to strengthening the innovative potential of the vocational education system, based on knowledge and modern technologies. Knowledge of foreign languages and mastery of digital competencies are the main qualifications required.
128. Turkmenistan has constantly reaffirmed its commitment to the fundamental principles of "Education for all".¹ Gender equality is respected in the field of education, women and girls have the right to freely choose a profession, and equal conditions for admission to educational institutions are ensured. Girls make up two thirds of the students studying in vocational education institutions.
129. The proportion of female students enrolled in higher education has increased in recent years, to 45.4 per cent in 2021–2022.
130. Although higher education is predominantly male-dominated in sectors such as industry, agriculture, transportation and communication, the proportion of girls enrolled in higher education has increased, approaching 50 per cent in recent years.
131. The training of teaching staff is one of the most important priorities in State education policy.
132. In order to train specialists, the National Institute of Education regularly organizes professional development courses for employees in the education system.
133. Turkmenistan has been a party to the Regional Convention on the Recognition of Studies, Diplomas and Degrees in Higher Education in Asia and the Pacific since 1996 and acceded to the Convention on the Recognition of Qualifications Concerning Higher Education in the European Region on 20 November 2022. Intergovernmental agreements on mutual recognition have been concluded with the following countries: Belarus, China, Kazakhstan, the Russian Federation, Ukraine and Tajikistan.
134. At present, more than 110,000 teachers and educators are engaged in education and training in educational establishments.
135. In the 2021/2022 school year, the percentage of trained teachers was 81.3 per cent in preschools (95.6 per cent of whom were women), 100 per cent (82.8 per cent women) in primary schools and 99.9 per cent (61.8 per cent women) in secondary schools.
136. The proportion of women teachers is increasing every year. In 2022, one third of secondary school teachers were men. Fewer than 5 per cent of preschool teachers were men.
137. In 2023, the National Institute of Education developed training manuals on climate change adaptation for teachers, in collaboration with UNICEF, and published 8,000 copies.

The Ministry of Education has developed basic modules of a digital education management information system for piloting and further implementation.

138. In 2022, Turkmenistan drew up a national summary report on the country's commitment to transform education. This report was the result of national consultations organized in preparation for the Transforming Education Summit.

D. Right to health (recommendations Nos. 114.59-114.64, 114.66–114.68, 116.88)

139. The Health Care Act regulates relations in the area of protection of people's health.

140. Systematic work on disease prevention, diagnosis and treatment in accordance with international standards is carried out jointly with United Nations agencies.

141. The country is implementing, inter alia:

- the Health information system development strategy, 2019–2025
- the National programme on enhancing resistance and disease control, 2020–2025
- the National programme for developing sanatorium and spa services, 2021–2025
- the National strategy for strengthening measures to control viral hepatitis, 2019–2030
- the National strategic plan for delivering tuberculosis control services, 2021–2025
- the National programme for preventing the harmful effects of alcohol, 2018–2024
- the National strategy for the prevention and control of non-communicable diseases, 2015-2020
- the National healthy diet programme, 2020–2025
- the National “Healthy mother – healthy child – healthy future” strategy, 2021–2025
- the National early childhood development strategy, 2020–2025

142. Within the framework of the State Health Programme, investments in the health sector for 2019–2023 amounted to more than 2.5 billion manat. Between 2019 and 2023, 11 rural health facilities were built or renovated.

143. The volume of medicines produced by the Turkmendermansenagat consortium increased by 58 per cent between 2019 and 2022.

Table 1²

Distribution of family physicians, nurses and midwives by region on 1 January 2023

	<i>Number of family physicians</i>	<i>Number of family nurse practitioners</i>	<i>Number of midwives</i>
Turkmenistan	2 592	5 333	1 166
Ashgabat city	528	695	124
Ahal Province	282	824	123
Balkan Province	256	411	146
Dashoguz Province	415	987	211
Lebap Province	655	1 120	242
Mary Province	456	1 296	318

144 Turkmenistan has received awards and certificates from international organizations such as the World Health Organization (WHO) and UNICEF for preventing non-communicable diseases (WHO, 2019) and maintaining high childhood immunization rates (UNICEF, 2019) and for the efforts of health and social workers during the COVID-19 pandemic (WHO, 2022).

145. There are 137 hospitals in Turkmenistan. A network of health centres has been developed, most of which are located in rural areas. New health care facilities are provided with advanced apparatus and high-precision equipment. More than 30 new methods of prevention, treatment and patient rehabilitation have been introduced into national medical practice.

146. In the period under review, the gap in the quality of health care services available to urban and rural populations has been bridged.

147. Development of the health care system is being accompanied by a process of digitalization. In 2019, the Strategy for development of the national health information system in Turkmenistan, 2019–2025 was drawn up and approved, with technical support from the United Nations Population Fund (UNFPA), UNICEF and WHO.

148. Turkmenistan is increasing its capacity for early warning, risk reduction and management of national and global health risks. The country provides State party self-assessment annual reporting (SPAR) on progress in implementation of the International Health Regulations (IHR), and significant improvement in this indicator was seen in 2021.

149. In the United Nations global report on maternal mortality trends, Turkmenistan was among the countries with a maternal mortality rate below the average for the Eastern Europe and Central Asia region in 2019. According to the global report, the maternal mortality rate in Turkmenistan in 2017 was 7 per 100,000 live births, which is 10 times lower than the global target. However, according to the State party's official statistics, the rate in 2021 was 2.5 per 100,000 live births.

150. In Turkmenistan, 99.9 per cent of births are attended by skilled health personnel, which is ahead of the WHO Thirteenth General Programme of Work (GPW13) target for 2023 (88.6 per cent) and almost fully in line with the 2030 target (100 per cent).

151. The country has introduced a tool to assess the quality of family planning services, identified risk groups and introduced a maternal reproductive health "passport". All family planning methods are available in 97 per cent of reproductive health clinics. The 2019 Multi-Indicator Cluster Survey (MICS-6) found that 79.6 per cent of women were of reproductive age (15 to 49 years) (MICS-5, 80.5 per cent).

152. Over the period 2015–2021, there was a positive trend of a declining birth rate among 15–19 year-olds. In 2021, this indicator was 21.4 births per 1,000 women (19.4 in urban areas and 23.1 in rural areas).

153. In 2021, the Communicable Disease Prevention Act was adopted and the Acute Communicable Disease Preparedness and Response Plan was approved. WHO Regional Office for Europe experts carried out technical advisory missions and issued recommendations in 2020/2021.

154. Turkmenistan received a \$20 million loan from the World Bank to strengthen its preparedness for and response to COVID-19. The skills of 6,000 health workers have been upgraded under the COVID-19 project.

155. Immunization in Turkmenistan is carried out according to the SDG principle of "Leave no one behind". A total of 98.5 per cent of the country's population has been vaccinated against 14 infections: tuberculosis, diphtheria, pertussis, tetanus, poliomyelitis, hepatitis B, *Haemophilus influenzae* type b, pneumococcus, rotavirus, measles, rubella, mumps, hepatitis A and human papilloma virus.

156. The National Tobacco-Free Country Programme, 2022–2025, is being implemented. Considerable progress has been made in signing, ratifying and implementing the WHO Framework Convention on Tobacco Control (FCTC) and the WHO FCTC Protocol to Eliminate Illicit Trade in Tobacco Products. Two WHO STEPwise approach to surveillance (STEPS) surveys have been carried out, and the country is the leader in smoking prevalence in the world. In 2018, the age-standardized prevalence of tobacco use among persons aged 15 years and older was 3.4 per cent of the population, nearly 2.5 times lower than the 2013 rate (8.3 per cent).³

157. The Prevention of Harmful Effects of Alcohol Act introduced requirements for the packaging and labelling of alcoholic beverages.

158. The National programme for preventing the harmful effects of alcohol, 2018–2024, is being carried out. As a result of the measures taken, the level of alcohol abuse (measured in litres of pure alcohol per calendar year) decreased from 8.6 per cent in 2015 to 4.8 per cent in 2018.

159. The Act on Countering the Spread of Disease Caused by the Human Immunodeficiency Virus (HIV Infection) establishes the legal, organizational and economic basis for the prevention of disease caused by HIV and lays down the procedure for regulating issues related to the prevention of HIV/AIDS.

160. There is mandatory free HIV testing for pregnant women, blood donors and recipients, medical personnel in contact with biological fluids, patients undergoing surgical treatment, and patients with cancer, tuberculosis, viral hepatitis and other infectious diseases.

161. Every year in December, as part of the global AIDS campaign “Let’s unite against HIV infection”, information campaigns are organized among various population groups, with a focus on young people.

162. Six AIDS prevention centres have telephone hotlines providing information to the population, including persons at risk, anonymously and free of charge.

163. Between 2019 and 2022, 100 staff members from HIV/AIDS centres and other health care facilities underwent further training.

E. Access to drinking water (recommendations Nos. 114.57, 114.58)

164. The General programme to provide clean drinking water, 2011–2025, has been adopted and the Drinking Water Act is in force.

165. Every person is guaranteed a supply of drinking water that meets quality standards in quantities corresponding to drinking water consumption norms.

166. The population’s drinking water needs are met through measures aimed at the development of centralized (as a priority) and non-centralized drinking water supply systems.

167. Protection of drinking water sources and supply systems from pollution is achieved by compliance with sanitary, environmental and other requirements and measures.

168. In 2010, 82 per cent of the population had access to clean and safe water; in 2020, this indicator reached 95 per cent. The gap between regions of the country in terms of access to clean water has also narrowed.

169. The population is provided with drinking water through access to a centralized water supply. The length of the water supply network increased from 5,000 to 7,600 kilometres in the period 2015–2020.

170. According to the MICS-6 cluster survey, the percentage of the population using water services organized in compliance with safety requirements increased significantly, reaching 99.9 per cent in 2019 compared to 82.8 per cent in 2015/2016. The significant progress of 17.1 per cent is due to systematic work to this end.

171. Water treatment and desalination plants are being built in the country, existing water treatment facilities and water supply systems are being reconstructed, and modern technologies are being introduced to promote water conservation and improve the availability of water resources.

172. Activities are regularly carried out to find new deposits of drinking water. Virtually the entire population is covered by basic sanitation services.

173. Water samples tested in the period 2015–2021 (2022) showed that over 80 per cent of water bodies had good water quality.

174. The supply of good-quality water is a challenging issue for practically all regions of the country.

175. Comprehensive measures are being taken to treat wastewater: large and small wastewater treatment facilities have been built, drainage systems are being extended, and new sewage plants are being installed. This has enabled the proportion of safely treated wastewater in the country to be significantly increased, to 60 per cent in 2021.

176. In Turkmenistan, national strategies for integrated water resources management (IWRM) are drawn up taking account of water basin and territorial priorities. Cooperation with regard to transboundary rivers is carried out in the framework of existing agreements. Cooperation on joint management of the transboundary waters of the Amu Darya River is carried out within the framework of the International Fund for Saving the Aral Sea.

177. The proportion of transboundary basin area with an operational arrangement for water cooperation (SDG indicator 6.5.2) amounts to 66.02 per cent.

178. Turkmenistan complies with its obligations under the Convention on the Protection and Use of Transboundary Watercourses and International Lakes, the Convention on Wetlands of International Importance, the Convention for the Protection of the World Cultural and Natural Heritage, and the Paris Agreement on climate change.

179. In 2021, the National Programme on the Aral Sea for the period 2021–2025 was adopted, which contributes to implementation of the tasks included in the United Nations General Assembly resolution on Cooperation between the United Nations and the International Fund for Saving the Aral Sea.

F. Labour rights and prohibition of forced labour (recommendations Nos. 114.50, 114.51, 116.89)

180. Labour legislation is being improved with a view to implementing ILO conventions and guaranteeing the labour rights of workers.

181. The Labour Code prohibits any form of forced or compulsory labour. All work or service which is exacted from any person under the menace of any penalty and for which the said person has not offered himself or herself voluntarily is considered to be forced or compulsory labour. In addition, it is prohibited to require the performance of work that is not in accordance with the employment duties.

182. Units of the Ministry of Labour and Social Protection monitor the implementation of labour legislation and relevant international treaties.

183. Trade unions exercise public monitoring of the observance of the rights and legitimate interests of workers.

184. The cotton industry provides the opportunity to create jobs in both agriculture and textiles, as well as in medical and food processing and other sectors of the economy.

185. Practical measures are being implemented to reduce manual labour in cotton harvesting. The widespread use of cotton harvesters has reduced manual harvesting rates from 71 per cent in 2015 to 20 per cent in 2022.

186. Turkmenistan is committed to creating conditions for decent work and social justice for all, as evidenced by the ratification of United Nations and International Labour Organization conventions on human rights and the improvement of labour legislation.

187. The Constitution guarantees the right of citizens to work, to choose at their discretion a profession, occupation and place of work, to healthy and safe working conditions, and to remuneration commensurate with the quantity and quality of their labour.

188. Section 17 of the NHRAP, 2021–2025 contains activities aimed at:

- developing cooperation with ILO to prevent forced labour;
- developing measures to prevent the use of forced labour;

- ensuring full implementation of programmes to improve employment in Turkmenistan, especially with a view to maximizing the employment of persons with disabilities, etc.

189. In November 2022, ILO representatives visited Turkmenistan to discuss implementation of the Abolition of Forced Labour Convention, 1957 (No. 105), particularly in the cotton sector.

190. The mission's proposed key areas of cooperation included:

- a review of the policy and administrative framework governing cotton harvesting, taking into account the risks and possible prevalence of forced labour, including a gap analysis of legislation and practices;
- improving the capacity of labour inspectorates and law enforcement agencies;
- promoting full, productive and freely chosen employment;
- raising awareness;
- promoting social dialogue in the cotton production and processing sectors.

191. The Act on the Tripartite Commission for the Settlement of Social and Labour Issues was adopted in October 2018.

192. In 2019, Turkmenistan joined the Tripartite Consultation (International Labour Standards) Convention, 1976 (No. 144).

IV. Equality and non-discrimination (recommendation No. 116.41)

193. Turkmenistan guarantees equal human and civil rights and freedoms and equality before the law, irrespective of nationality, skin colour, gender, origin, property or official status, place of residence, language, religion, political beliefs or any other circumstances.

194. In line with the new version of the Constitution and international conventions, a number of laws have been amended and supplemented to guarantee equality within the jurisdiction of each law, irrespective of nationality, skin colour, gender, origin, property or official status, place of residence, language, religion, political beliefs or any other circumstance, as well as age and health status.

195. Criminal law makes it an offence to directly or indirectly violate or restrict human and civil rights on grounds of nationality, race, gender, origin, property or official status, place of residence, language, religion, political beliefs or any other circumstances. One of the main aggravating factors is the commission of a crime for political, social, national or ethnic motives or out of racial or religious hatred or enmity.

A. Gender equality and women's rights (recommendations Nos. 114.21–114.23, 114.26, 114.30, 114.53, 114.69–114.76)

196. Under the Act on State Guarantees of Equal Rights and Equal Opportunities for Women and Men, the State establishes guarantees of gender equality in all areas of government and public life.

197. Turkmenistan was a member of the Commission on the Status of Women between 2018 and 2022 and is also a member of the Executive Board of UN Women, the United Nations entity dedicated to gender equality and the empowerment of women, for 2022–2024.

198. A number of laws have been adopted and amended to further improve legislation in the area of gender equality.

199. The National Plan of Action for Gender Equality in Turkmenistan, 2021–2025, was adopted in December 2020.

200. Owing to their high level of education and involvement, women are widely represented in representative and executive bodies at all levels and participate actively in the social and political life of Turkmenistan.

201. Thirty-two (25.6 per cent) of the deputies elected to the seventh Mejlis are women. The Speaker of the parliament, the Ombudsperson and one of the Deputy Chairs of the Cabinet of Ministers are women.

202. Women make up 28.75 per cent of the members of people's councils (*halk maslahaty*) in provinces, 29.58 per cent of the members of people's councils in *etraplar* (districts) and 28 per cent of the members of the Milli Geňeş, the parliament or legislature of Turkmenistan.

203. In the judiciary, 37.4 per cent of employees are women. In the Ministry of Justice (*adalat*), 57.14 per cent of the staff are women. There are 1,800 women in the internal affairs agencies.

204. In March 2019, the Labour Code was amended to remove restrictions on employing women in jobs with harmful and/or hazardous (or extremely harmful and/or extremely hazardous) working conditions.

205. The Labour Code prohibits the unjustified refusal to conclude an employment contract. Refusal to conclude an employment contract is recognized as unjustified in respect of women on grounds related to pregnancy, as well as of women with children under the age of 3 (or a disabled child under the age of 18).

Table 2⁴**Women's employment and level of economic activity**

	2018	2019	2020	2021
Proportion of women in the number of persons registered	30.9%	30.7%	38.9%	41.4%
Proportion of women in the total number of persons placed in jobs	30.1%	29.6%	35.0%	36.2%

Table 3

Women's employment and level of economic activity

	2018	2019	2020	2021
Proportion of women in the economically active population	43.2%	43.4%	45.8%	46.0%
Proportion of women in the total number of people actually employed	45.6%	45.8%	46.1%	46.1%

Table 4⁵**Women's employment and level of economic activity**

	2018	2019	2020	2021
Men	58.6%	58.8%	58.1%	57.5%
Women	41.4%	41.2%	41.9%	42.5%

206. Trade unions participate in raising public awareness of gender issues, improving legislation on gender equality and identifying priority areas in combating violence against women.

207. During the reporting period, 26 judicial officers participated in 16 events on gender equality, prevention of domestic violence, women's rights and awareness-raising.

208. Between 2018 and 2022, 145 officers working for internal affairs agencies participated in 52 gender equality workshops, and 30 representatives of the Youth Organization participated in 22 seminars on gender equality organized by international organizations.

209. At a meeting of members of the Mejlis on 6 April 2023, the President of Turkmenistan noted the advisability of revising the Status of Members of the Armed Forces Act and the Military Duty and Military Service Act.

210. The Women's Union, in cooperation with the Mejlis, periodically organizes information events on the importance of women's participation in public and political life. During the reporting period, 215 events were held.

211. The Women's Union has a Businesswomen's Centre, which was established to integrate opportunities for women. Branches of the Centre have been established in all provinces. The Centre organizes events and provides methodological, legal and other assistance to women planning to start their own entrepreneurial activities. During the reporting period, the Centre held 72 events.

212. Every year, on the initiative of the Women's Union, a "Woman of the Year" competition is held in seven categories, including that for women serving in the armed forces and the law enforcement system. The competition helps to overcome gender stereotypes.

213. The Youth Organization, together with ministries, departments and voluntary organizations, carries out activities aimed at raising awareness among young people, including rural women and girls, of human rights legislation and international standards. Between 2019 and 2022, 981 gender equality events were held in all regions of the country.

B. Violence against women, domestic violence (recommendations Nos. 114.38, 114.39, 114.76–114.81)

214. According to the Act on State Guarantees of Equal Rights and Equal Opportunities for Women and Men, the State guarantees and ensures equal protection of women and men against domestic violence manifested in the form of physical or psychological impact or damage (harm) committed by one family member against another.

215. The Criminal Code introduced liability for enforced termination of pregnancy and established the criminal offence of compelling a person to engage in sexual relations at the workplace.

216. Since 2019, work has been carried out to study and set up a system for ensuring a multi-agency response to gender-based violence against women. With the assistance of UNFPA, the Interministerial Commission and its working group were briefed on the concept of a multi-agency response to gender-based violence.

217. An assessment of existing practices to prevent and address domestic violence against women was conducted with technical assistance from UNFPA.

218. Draft standard operating procedures have been developed for health personnel, police officers and social workers. They were piloted for health personnel in 2020 and for police officers and social workers in 2021.

219. In 2020, a sample survey on the health and status of women in the family in Turkmenistan was conducted jointly with UNFPA.

220. A road map for implementation of the survey recommendations in 2022–2025 has been developed, which includes improvement of legislation, and specifically development and adoption of a law on the prevention of domestic violence, and building a coordinated system of services to support and protect women victims of violence.

C. Children's rights (recommendations Nos. 114.21, 114.53, 114.82–114.89, 116.89)

221. Turkmenistan has established a legal framework for the protection of children's rights: the Labour Code, the Family Code, the Social Protection Code, the Guarantees of Young People's Right to Work Act, the Education Act, the State Youth Policy Act, the Children's Rights Act, the Health Care Act, the Breastfeeding Promotion and Support Act, the Guardianship and Custody Act, the Civil Registration Act, the Social Services Act and others.

222. UNICEF, in collaboration with UNDP and UNFPA, is supporting the Ministry of Justice (*adalat*), the State Committee on Statistics and the Ministry of Health and Medical Industry in digitalization of the civil registration system.

223. In 2021, the Mejlis and UNICEF reviewed and analysed legislation related to children in contact with the law. The analysis noted progress made by Turkmenistan in improving legislation to further develop juvenile justice.

224. An important area of State policy is the prevention of crimes and offences among minors. The State youth policy programme, 2015–2020, has been implemented. The State youth policy programme, 2021–2025, was adopted in 2021.

225. UNICEF supported the Ministry of Internal Affairs in preparing the first child-friendly pretrial interrogation room for children in contact with the law, located in the police building in Kopetdag district, Ashgabat, which was opened on 26 April 2023. UNICEF also plans to continue supporting the preparation of a second such room in 2023.

226. A four-day training event on tactics and techniques for conducting investigative interviews of child victims and witnesses of crime in accordance with international standards and best practices was organized for investigators from the Procurator's Office and internal affairs agencies. The second cycle of training is planned for 2023.

227. Between 2018 and 2022, 176 internal affairs officers participated in 72 seminars and training events on children's rights in the context of cooperation with UNICEF. In the same period, 53 staff from the Procurator's Office participated in 38 activities on children's rights in the framework of cooperation with UNICEF.

228. On 8 and 9 November 2022, social work specialists from the Ministry of Labour and Social Protection delivered an effective training course on strengthening the professional competence of the staff of reception centres operated by the Ministry of Internal Affairs by introducing elements of social work in their practical activities.

229. A two-day training course was also held in November 2022 for the staff of bodies making decisions about children in difficult situations, introducing elements of social work in their practical activities.

230. Topics related to the specific features of hearing juvenile cases are discussed at training courses organized by the Supreme Court twice a year, as well as at regular seminars conducted by experienced judges with the involvement of experts.

231. Between 2018 and 2022, 59 representatives of the Youth Organization participated in 30 workshops and trainings organized by UNICEF.

232. The new wording of the Criminal Code provides for mitigation of the liability of minors and introduces article 155 on the involvement of a minor in prostitution.

233. Under the 2022 Workplan between the Government and UNICEF, work continued on ensuring comprehensive protection of children from all forms of violence and abuse. An analysis has been made of legislation to prohibit corporal punishment of children and cruel or degrading treatment of children, and its conclusions and recommendations will be discussed in 2023.

234. Under the Labour Code, an employment contract may be concluded with a person who has reached the age of 18. The proportion of children under the age of 18 employed in sectors of the economy is 0.002 per cent. A special working time regime is established for persons under the age of 18, with reduced working hours and prevention of their involvement in night work, overtime work and work on weekends, non-working holidays and memorial days.

235. By ratifying ILO Convention No. 182 in 2010, Turkmenistan committed itself to preventing the worst forms of child labour in the country.

236. The list of jobs, occupations and positions with harmful and hazardous (extremely harmful and extremely hazardous) working conditions in which persons under the age of 18 may not be employed, including in the agricultural sector of the economy, was approved in July 2018.

237. The Women's Union, together with the Ministry of Education and the Ministry of Internal Affairs, regularly conducts work on reproductive health in the country's general education schools.

D. Rights of persons with disabilities (recommendations Nos. 114.51, 114.90–114.95)

238. Persons with disabilities are guaranteed socioeconomic, political and individual rights and freedoms. Discrimination is prohibited and protection of rights, freedoms and legitimate interests, support for public associations of persons with disabilities, rehabilitation, employment, education and vocational training, access to social infrastructure and social assistance are guaranteed.

239. The Social Protection Code Amendments Act brings the concept of a person with a disability into line with the provisions of the Convention on the Rights of Persons with Disabilities.

240. Social assistance to persons with disabilities is provided in the form of State allowances and benefits under the Social Protection Code. As of 1 January 2023, 130,500 people were receiving State disability allowances.

241. Section 12 of the NHRAP, 2021–2025, aims to secure the rights of persons with disabilities by: improving legislation; considering the adoption of a social model of disability; including persons with disabilities in the implementation of the National Action Plan; expanding programmes to eliminate negative stereotypes; improving the legal status of persons with disabilities; making the necessary adaptations in educational institutions and workplaces and improving access to facilities and services open to the public.

242. The 2020 survey of persons with disabilities found that 8 per cent of adult respondents and 26 per cent of children with disabilities noted a challenge in obtaining an education.

243. Respondents also noted the desirability of increasing the level of pensions and allowances (35 per cent among adults and 38 per cent among children). The quality and accessibility of health services was mentioned as an issue by both adults and children with disabilities (21 per cent of adult respondents and 17 per cent of child respondents).

244. Particular attention is paid to social services for persons who have partially or completely lost the ability to provide their own services. As of 1 January 2023, 2,004 elderly citizens and persons with disabilities, including 1,580 women (78.8 per cent), were served by social service institutions.

245. The 2019 MICS cluster survey found that 98 per cent of children under 3 were covered by welfare benefits.

246. Established disability is not an obstacle to realization of the right of persons with disabilities to work.

247. In line with the Programme for improvement of employment and creation of new jobs in Turkmenistan, 2015–2020, a regulation was approved that laid down the procedure for setting quotas for employers to employ citizens in need of special support and unable to compete equally in the labour market. The regulation lays down the procedure for applying a quota of from 2 to 5 per cent of the total number of employees of enterprises, organizations and institutions for persons with disabilities, single parents, parents of large families, parents bringing up minor children, children with disabilities or orphans, first-time job seekers, young specialists and other citizens in need of social support.

Table 5⁶**Employment of citizens in accordance with the procedure for job quotas**

<i>Category of citizen</i>	<i>2018</i>	<i>2019</i>	<i>2020</i>	<i>2021</i>
Persons in need of social support employed under the quota, as a percentage of the total number of persons hired	2.2%	2.6%	4.2%	5.2%
Persons employed under the quota and distribution by category:				
• persons with disabilities	6.0%	5.4%	2.7%	2.6%
• orphaned children seeking work for the first time	5.3%	6.9%	5.2%	3.7%
• single parents and parents of large families, or persons in loco parentis, bringing up minor children or children with disabilities	25.8%	30.4%	22.8%	22.2%
• other categories of citizens in need of special State care (persons who have lost their jobs due to liquidation of an enterprise or staff reductions, persons from low-income families, etc.).	62.9%	57.3%	69.3%	71.5%

248. By an order of 29 June 2020, the Minister of Health and Medical Industry approved the lists of types of work and professional activities, professions and positions recommended for persons with disabilities, taking into account their functional disorders and the limitations (opportunities) of their activities of daily living.

249. According to the Social Protection Code, persons with category I and category II disabilities, as assessed by a medical and social expert commission, are permitted to study in primary, secondary and higher vocational education institutions. The Code stipulates that such persons are admitted to vocational education institutions without competition. Persons with group III disabilities have, under equal conditions, a preferential right to enrol in primary, secondary and higher vocational education institutions. During the period of training of persons with disabilities in vocational education institutions of all types, State benefits and scholarships are paid to them in full.

250. Persons with category I disabilities and family members living with them are entitled to free use of water, gas, electricity and housing and communal services, funded by the relevant authorities.

251. According to the Social Services Act, disability is the basis for recognizing a person as being in need of social services, including home-based services.

252. By an order of 29 June 2020, the Chair of the Road Transport Agency approved the rules for the organization of social taxi services for persons with disabilities.

253. Enterprises of public associations of persons with disabilities that employ at least 20 persons with disabilities and where at least 70 per cent of the employees are persons with disabilities are exempt from corporation tax and value added tax.

254. In accordance with the Tax Code, the income of parents or persons in loco parentis bringing up a disabled child up to the age of 18 (including adopted and foster disabled children) is not subject to taxation.

255. The Criminal Code establishes liability for ill-treatment of a person with a disability.

256. Under the NHRAP, 2016–2020, the State Statistics Committee, the Ministry of Health and Medical Industry and the Pension Fund concluded an agreement on cooperation and interdepartmental exchange of information on disability statistics.

257. The State Statistics Committee, in cooperation with UNICEF, initiated a survey in 2021 on the situation of children and adults with disabilities covered by the social protection system.

258. The main purpose of the sample survey was to assess and analyse the specific features of communication by persons with disabilities covered by the social protection system, according to the International Classification of Functioning, Disability and Health for Children and Youth.

E. Rights of minorities (recommendations Nos. 114.96, 114.97)

259. Protecting the rights of ethnic minorities is one of the State's tasks as defined by the Constitution.

260. In Turkmenistan, memorial concerts and cultural events are organized to mark national holidays of national and ethnic minorities, as well as days of culture of foreign countries.

261. A programme for development of the cultural sphere of Turkmenistan, 2019–2025, had been approved.

262. As a member of UNESCO since 1993, Turkmenistan participates actively in events of various formats to strengthen international humanitarian cooperation.

263. The Government of Turkmenistan and UNESCO are implementing an action plan for 2021–2023.

264. Turkmenistan has a National Commission for UNESCO (established by presidential decree of 23 October 2020). Meetings of the Turkmen National Commission for UNESCO are held every three months.

265. A solid international legal basis for cooperation between Turkmenistan and UNESCO has been established in recent years. The year 2023 will mark the thirtieth anniversary of the country's membership of UNESCO. Cooperation with UNESCO in the field of education and science is increasing. UNESCO Chairs have been established in two higher education institutions in Turkmenistan and a number of general education schools in the country have been included in the UNESCO Associated Schools Network. UNESCO Clubs on "Languages of peace", "Culture of peace" and "Environmental protection – an important concept for sustainable development" were also opened in three higher education institutions in 2022–2023.

266. Dozens of meetings and consultations with representatives of UNESCO and its regional offices were held during 2020–2023, during which promising areas of cooperation were considered.

267. In 2022, "Dutar-making craftsmanship and traditional music performing art, combined with singing and *bagshy*", "Sericulture and traditional production of silk for weaving", "Telling tradition of Molla Ependi" and "Turkmen-style needlework art" were included in the UNESCO Representative List of the Intangible Cultural Heritage of Humanity.

268. On 10–24 May 2023, at the 216th session of the Executive Board of UNESCO, a decision was made to include the collection of manuscripts of the Turkmen philosopher and poet Magtymguly Fragi in the UNESCO Memory of the World International Register. The proposal to celebrate the 300th anniversary of the Turkmen poet Magtymguly Fragi in 2024 was also approved.

F. Rights of stateless persons (recommendation No. 114.98)

269. As a permanent member of the Executive Committee of the Programme of the United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees, Turkmenistan is an active supporter of the consolidation of international efforts to ensure and protect the rights of refugees and stateless persons.

270. By law, stateless persons enjoy fundamental rights, including the right to nationality.

271. As of September 2022, over 28,000 stateless persons living in Turkmenistan have been admitted to Turkmen citizenship since independence.

272. A National Plan of Action for the Elimination of Statelessness, 2019–2024, was adopted in January 2019.

273. Under the Education Act, the State ensures access to preschool and general education establishments for all children living in Turkmenistan who have the right to such access in accordance with their age, irrespective of the child's nationality.

274. Under the State Guarantees of Children's Rights Act, a child who is not a Turkmen citizen but who is legally present in Turkmenistan enjoys the same rights and bears the same responsibilities as children who are Turkmen citizens.

275. Turkmenistan, in accordance with the generally accepted norms of international law, grants asylum to foreign nationals and stateless persons under the procedure prescribed by law. Children from refugee families and families of displaced persons have free access to education, sports and cultural services.

276. Under the Employment Act, foreign citizens and stateless persons permanently residing in Turkmenistan have equal rights with Turkmen citizens in the area of employment.

277. The Health Care Act applies to citizens of Turkmenistan, foreign citizens and stateless persons.

278. Under the Legal Status of Foreign Nationals in Turkmenistan Act, stateless persons with disabilities are exempt from paying State duty or consular fees for the issuance, extension, replacement or duplicate of a certificate or for the issuance of a travel document.

G. Other human rights issues (recommendation No. 114.25)

279. A census of the population and housing stock was conducted from 17 to 27 December 2022. The Government of Turkmenistan decided to conduct the census electronically.

280. Media activities on various topics related to the census were carried out with the cooperation and support of United Nations agencies in Turkmenistan.

281. On 17 December 2022, the population of Turkmenistan was 7,057,841. Of the total population, 22.9 per cent are in Mary Province, 22 per cent in Dashoguz Province, 20.5 per cent in Lebap Province, 14.6 per cent in Ashgabat city, 12.5 per cent in Ahal Province and 7.5 per cent in Balkan Province.

282. About 50 per cent of the population is male and more than 50 per cent is female; 47.1 per cent are urban dwellers and 52.9 per cent live in villages.

283. In general, statistical data collected are intended to serve as a major information base for drawing up the country's socioeconomic development programmes.

Notes

¹ World Declaration on Education for All, 1990.

² Data from the Ministry of Health and Medical Industry.

³ STEPS surveys 2013, 2018.

⁴ Data from the State Statistics Committee.

⁵ Data from the State Statistics Committee.

⁶ Data from the State Statistics Committee.