



**Convention on the Rights  
of Persons with Disabilities**

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**Committee on the Rights of Persons with Disabilities**

**Combined second and third periodic reports  
submitted by Armenia under article 35 of the  
Convention, due in 2020\***

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\* The present document is being issued without formal editing.



## I. Principal areas of concern and recommendations

### General principles and obligations (Articles 1–4)

#### Points 5 and 6

1. The Ministry of Labor and Social Affairs of the Republic of Armenia (hereinafter “the MLSA”) actively cooperates with NGOs dealing with the problems of persons with disabilities. The NGO representatives are involved in various commissions and working groups established by the Order of the RA Minister of Labor and Social Affairs.

2. The National Commission on Issues of Persons with Disabilities (established by the Decision of the RA Prime Minister in February 2008) plays a key role in discussion and settlement of problems of persons with disabilities. Representatives of state agencies and organisations of persons with disabilities are involved in the Commission on equal participatory rights. It provides an effective platform for various agencies and organisations to implement mutually agreed and coordinated activities. At the sittings of the Commission, attended by the representatives of state administration and local self-government bodies, NGOs and mass media, issues related to the exercise of rights of persons with disabilities are considered, which are regulated upon the jointly initiated decisions.

3. Upon Decision of the RA Prime Minister of 28 June 2019, the composition of the Commission has been revised. To ensure compliance with general observations of the Committee, a binding requirement on being an organization representing the persons with disabilities was set for the composition of the Commission. In order to ensure the transparency of the process, an application form was made which was submitted for the opinion of the NGOs of persons with disabilities. The NGOs have elected their own representatives by voting. Ultimately, 10 representatives from state bodies and 11 representatives from NGOs are involved in the composition of the Commission.

4. Persons with disabilities and organisations representing their interests are also involved in the composition of the marz (regional) commissions of the Republic of Armenia and the municipal commission of the city of Yerevan dealing with the issues of persons with disabilities.

5. With the view to ensuring participation of persons with disabilities in the decision-making process, the disability-related legislation, policies and strategies are also circulated, while in the drafting process, among the organisations dealing with issues of persons with disabilities, and during discussions reasonable accommodations are provided.

6. Information materials concerning reforms, programmes and measures implemented within the scope of issues of persons with disabilities are published on the MLSA official website ([www.mlsa.am](http://www.mlsa.am)). In order to ensure the access to information for persons with hearing impairment, the published information is accompanied by the translation in the Armenian sign language.

7. The unified website for publication of draft legal acts ([www.e-draft.am](http://www.e-draft.am)) has been operating in Armenia since 2017, giving wide space for the citizens and various specialists in the field to take active part and be involved in the law-making process. The website creates equal opportunities for persons with disabilities and organisations located in remote communities. The legal acts published through the website are accessible for persons with visual impairment, the website interface is intuitive, easy-to-handle for persons with different abilities.

8. It shall also be stated that in the course of the current review of the draft law “On the rights of persons with disabilities”, discussions aimed at identification of problems were held in all marzes of Armenia, with a special focus on the social protection of children with disabilities.

9. In the course of drafting the 2019-2023 Gender Policy Implementation Strategy in the Republic of Armenia, public discussions were held in the marzes of Armenia, where participation of women and girls with disabilities on an equal basis was also ensured.

10. Since the democratic revolution in Armenia in 2018, the draft laws regulating the field of disability have been revised and amended, by enshrining human rights principles. The RA law “On the rights of persons with disabilities” is drafted under the new edition and put in circulation in a prescribed manner, wherein the use of the term “prevention and treatment of disability” is ruled out in principle. In the nearest time, amendments are also envisaged to be made to the RA Constitution, and the clause “prevention and treatment of disability” will be revised.

11. By the draft law “On the rights of persons with disabilities”, the policy and legislation concerning social inclusion of persons with disabilities are brought in compliance with the requirements of UN Convention on the Rights of Persons with Disabilities (UNCRPD). The final observations and general comments given by the Committee to Armenia were set as benchmarks when drafting the law.

12. The draft law stipulates the relations concerning protection of the rights of persons with disabilities, the objective of the state policy for ensuring, promoting and protecting the rights of persons with disabilities, the basic principles and directions of the state policy, the field-related powers of the Government and the authorized state administration bodies, the requirements to ensure accessible conditions and equal opportunities for the persons with disabilities, and target directions to achieve them.

13. Upon the draft, the state undertakes the guarantee to create necessary conditions and equal opportunities for persons with disabilities to live independently and be included in the community on equal basis with others.

14. Pursuant to the draft law, the concept “a person with disability” is stipulated as follows: “A person who may encounter, due to long-term physical, mental, intellectual and sensory impairments and in interaction with various barriers, limitation of full and effective participation in public life on an equal basis with others”.

15. The draft prohibits the discrimination on the basis of disability. Discrimination on the basis of disability is stipulated as “any distinction, exclusion, restriction or preference on the basis of proven or alleged disability which has the purpose or effect of demonstration of less favourable treatment in the political, economic, social, cultural and (or) any other field and (or) impairing or nullifying the recognition and (or) exercise of any right prescribed by law on an equal basis with others. Discrimination on the basis of disability also includes denial of ensuring the reasonable accommodation”.

16. Pursuant to the draft, the accessibility is considered as precondition for ensuring the rights of persons with disabilities and for their social inclusion and as the target direction for ensuring equal opportunities. With the view of ensuring accessible and equal conditions for persons with disabilities, provisions related to ensuring accessibility of the physical environment, information and communication were stipulated. Moreover, a requirement was set to ensure those rights in accordance with the principles of universal design, and where impossible – through reasonable accommodation.

17. The draft envisages creation of a Commission for Accessibility to supervise and promote the accessibility. The Commission shall be established as an autonomous state body, with the assigned tasks concerning protection of accessibility, supervision over provision of accessibility, development of relevant environment for ensuring the principles of universal design, raising public awareness and other tasks. The Commission shall foster the application of norms by way of imposing fines, delivering proper consultations and drawing up methodological guidelines and other actions.

18. Ratification of the Optional Protocol to the UNCRPD will provide new opportunity and platform to voice the violations of the provisions of the UNCRPD and will promote the effective protection of the rights and legitimate interests of persons with disabilities in the country. Works on ratification of the Optional Protocol were launched in 2019. The draft law of the Republic of Armenia “On Ratification of the Optional Protocol to the UN Convention on the Rights of Persons with Disabilities” was approved by the Decision of the Government of the Republic of Armenia of 11 June 2020, and currently further internal procedures towards ratification are in process.

19. The MLSA modifies the disability assessment system, by introducing a new system of evaluating person's functioning, based on the World Health Organization (WHO) International Classification of Functioning, Disability and Health (ICF). The objective is transition from medical and social expert examination to model of evaluation of person's functioning, that will enable to make a multi-profile assessment of person's needs, to view the disability depending on the degree of limitation of person's functioning, within the context of the effect by the environmental factors on the activities and the participation of a person, and to determine individualized services package for each person.
20. The draft law "On evaluation of a person's functioning" was drawn up and put in circulation. Pursuant to the draft, instead of standing commissions on medical-social examination, a multi-specialist commission will be formed, based on a random choice, from among the registry of specialists, aimed at evaluation of functioning of each person. Conditioned by the needs of the assessed person, physicians, psychologists and other specialists will be enrolled in the commission. The draft envisages to determine the degree of limitation of a person's functioning as mild, moderate, severe and extreme, instead of the disability groups (I, II, III and "a child with disability") currently in place.
21. In order to coordinate works for introducing the new assessment model of functioning of a person with disability and arrange more effective cooperation between the agencies, a Coordinating Board was established by Decision of the RA Prime Minister of 19 June 2019, where representatives from interested state and non-governmental bodies are involved.
22. Presently, works aimed at introduction of the programme are in process. In particular, announcement for enrolment on the registry of specialists for assessment of an individual's functioning was posted on the MLSA website. Trainings for the specialists enrolled on the registry are planned, works are undertaken to ensure the automatic exchange of information between the information systems of partner agencies within the context of disability assessment, and to work out the package of services necessary for assessment of degree of functioning.
23. The activities for introduction of the new assessment model are implemented with the assistance of the UN specialized agencies in Armenia, namely UNDP and UNICEF.
24. In 2018 within the EU SOCIEUX+ facility, expert assistance was delivered with the view to defining disability based on the ICF model and considering the international assessment practice.
25. As regards capacity building, various agencies held courses and trainings on the rights of persons with disabilities.
26. In particular, a number of training courses for specialists of judicial sphere were held on "Specific features of proceedings with the participation of vulnerable persons", "Actual issues on ensuring equality and prohibition of discrimination", "Protection of rights of juvenile offenders or offenders belonging to another vulnerable group", "Actual issues on fighting racism and discrimination", etc.
27. Topics concerning persons with disabilities are studied also during regular trainings and seminars held at the RA Police, educational institutions under the Yerevan Municipality, and other entities.
28. The MLSA National Institute of Labour and Social Research conducted a series of trainings in 2017–2019 on improving the skills of public servants dealing with persons with disabilities and raising awareness on protection of rights of persons with disabilities among the respective employees.
29. As regarding the medical staff, the Ministry of Health, within the scope of cooperation with the UNFPA, currently works out learning materials on the rights of vulnerable groups, including women with disabilities.

## **Equality and non-discrimination (Article 5)**

### **Points 7 and 8**

30. The package of the draft law “On ensuring legal equality” and by-laws was developed during 2019 by the Ministry of Justice and submitted to the Office of the RA Prime Minister.

31. The draft stipulates the concept and types of discrimination, regulates legal tools for elimination of discrimination and protection against discrimination, and the status, tasks and activities of the Legal Equality Board under the Office of Human Rights Defender.

32. The key objective of the draft law is to ensure equal opportunities for exercise of the rights and freedoms of every person and citizen, regardless of gender, race, skin colour, ethnic or social origin, genetic features, language, religion, world view, political or other views, belonging to a national minority, property status, birth, disability, age, or other personal or social circumstances. The draft also stipulates the denial of reasonable accommodation as a form of discrimination.

33. Upon Decision of the RA Government of 10 September 2019 “On making amendments and supplements to the Labour Code of the Republic of Armenia”, the Code was supplemented by Article 3.1 on prohibition of discrimination.

34. Meanwhile, pursuant to the draft law “On the rights of persons with disabilities”, the denial of provision of reasonable accommodation shall also be considered as discrimination on the basis of disability.

35. Within the EU-funded framework on “Human Rights Protection in Armenia” facilitated by UNDP, UNICEF and UNFPA, the Ministry of Justice carried out public awareness raising campaign with the aim of ensuring legal equality.

36. It is also noteworthy that upon Decision of the Government of Armenia of 26 December 2019, the National Strategy for Human Rights Protection and deriving Action Plan for 2020–2022 was approved. Among the key objectives of the Strategy are: ensure public awareness raising on human rights and their protection mechanisms, promote – by the state administration and local self-government bodies, the officials, the society and the citizens – the protection of their own rights, disseminate knowledge about human rights and their protection mechanisms through educational programs.

## **Women with disabilities (Article 6)**

### **Points 9 and 10**

37. The draft law “On the rights of persons with disabilities” envisages that the interests and rights of women and girls with disabilities should be included in the action plans deriving from the national strategies concerning women, childhood and disability and aimed at sector-related reforms. General comment No 3 of the Committee served the ground for the given provision.

38. Participation of women with disabilities is ensured in the consultation groups dealing with issues of women and persons with disabilities, including the Women’s Council chaired by the RA Deputy Prime Minister, where all issues concerning gender policy are debated.

39. As regarding the healthcare sector, under point 3(1) of Decision of the Government of Armenia of 4 March 2004, the list of socially disadvantaged and separate (special) groups of population entitled to receive state-guaranteed free-of-charge medical care and services on privileged terms was approved, wherein persons of all groups of disabilities are involved.

40. Pursuant to Decision of the Government of Armenia of 8 August 2019, the right for medical care and services free of charge or on privileged terms, by use of assistive reproductive technologies, is entitled in case anyone in the couple is a person with disability provided that there are no pregnancy contraindications to the woman.

41. Also, the National Strategy of Disaster Risk Management, developed by the RA Ministry of Emergency Situations (hereinafter “the MES”) and approved upon Protocol

Decision of the Government of Armenia of 6 April 2017, specifies that key objective of disaster risk assessment is to provide safety for population equally considering the specifics of women, men, children, the elderly, persons with disabilities, and the level of their preparedness.

42. Information on measures aimed at providing accessibility and reasonable accommodation for persons with disabilities, including women and girls is reflected in points 6 and 8.

43. Currently, activities for introduction and development of community-based services model are in process. Particularly, the draft law “On the rights of persons with disabilities” contains Article on the right of persons with disabilities to live independently and be included in the community. Pursuant to the draft, the State shall guarantee creation of necessary conditions and equal opportunities for persons with disabilities to live independently and be included in the community on equal basis with others; establishment of care institutions for persons (children) with disabilities, where persons with disabilities are isolated or deprived of the right to make decisions on their everyday life shall be prohibited. The state administration and local self-government bodies, with the view to ensuring the right of persons with disabilities to live independently, shall implement programmes and services aimed at social inclusion of person with disabilities, building the skills of person to live independently, empowerment of person or groups of persons with disabilities for promoting their own rights, etc.

44. The MLSA developed and put into circulation the “2020–2024 Action plan for modification of care services for persons with disabilities”, which frames the introduction of alternative community-based services, particularly community-based small houses, services of home care, personal and social assistants. These services will enable that persons with disabilities, including persons with mental health and intellectual impairment, children, women and girls have an opportunity to actively participate in the community life, live in families or in the environment close-to-the family, and take part in cultural, social, political and economic progress, and assist their independent life. The draft also envisages the list of necessary measures that will ensure conditions for independent living.

45. It is planned to arrange care services for about 130 persons with disabilities (including women), personal assistant services for 50 persons with disabilities (including women) and social assistant services for 280 persons with disabilities (including women) in 16 community-based small group houses in various marzes of the Republic in 2021.

46. Moreover, in parallel with deinstitutionalisation of children’s 24-hour care institutions, it is planned to establish an accompanying service for the independent mode of living, as a new initiative, that will enable persons at the age of 16–23 facing difficult living conditions, including women and girls with disabilities, to make use of relevant specialized services and gain independent life skills.

47. The RA Constitution is the basic guarantee for legal equality of women and men (amendments of 2015), with new provisions enshrined, namely, pursuant to Article 30, “Women and men shall enjoy legal equality”; pursuant to point 4 of Article 86, “(4) promoting actual equality between women and men”, which gives the opportunity to input more viable mechanisms in policy and target programmes.

48. The norm of the RA Constitution concerning “prohibition of discrimination based on gender” is regulated under the RA Law “On ensuring equal rights and equal opportunities for women and men” adopted by the National Assembly of Armenia on 20 May 2013, which is focused on ensuring gender equality in all sectors of public life, legal protection of women and men against gender-based discrimination, supporting formation of the civil society and establishment of democratic relations within society.

49. Equality of opportunities of women and men is among the issues of the law, which helps to regulate ensuring the true equality of rights, obligations and responsibility of women including women with disabilities, equal treatment towards them and rule out discrimination against them, and establishment of a system of means and conditions necessary to achieve true legal equality.

50. As a part of domestic legislation, the above norm is also regulated under the international instruments ratified by the Republic of Armenia.

51. During 2019 the Ministry of Justice initiated the domestic procedures aimed at ratification of the Council of Europe Convention on Preventing and Combating Violence against Women and Domestic Violence. It needs to mention that on 26 July 2019, the RA Minister of Justice applied to the Venice Commission to receive the Commission's official opinion concerning the impact of ratification of the Convention from the perspective of the Constitution of the Republic of Armenia. The Opinion of the Venice Commission was received in October 2019.

52. For the purpose of protection of persons subjected to violence within the family, prevention of violence within the family and providing relevant assistance to persons having experienced violence, on 13 December 2017 the National Assembly of Armenia adopted the Law "On prevention of violence within the family, protection of victims of violence within the family, and restoration of peace in the family". The law has the objectives to:

- Ensure the special protection of the family as a natural and fundamental unit of society;
- Form legal mechanisms required for prevention of violence within the family, ensuring safety and protection of persons having been subjected to violence within the family, their rights and legitimate interests;
- Ensure safety of the family members and contribute to restoration of peace in the family;
- Coordinate the activities of bodies responsible for prevention of violence within the family and protection of persons having been subjected to violence within the family;
- Ensure legal grounds for the activities of bodies responsible for provision of psychological, material and social assistance to persons having experienced violence within the family and for their social rehabilitation.

53. All legal acts ensuring the implementation of the law were adopted and entered into force in 2018–2019. They regulate relations pertaining to the centralized registration of cases of violence within the family, protection of and assistance to persons having been subjected to violence. The Board on prevention of violence within the family was reorganized and currently operates. Activities were carried out to set up services for persons having been subjected to violence within the family.

54. In parallel, since 30 June 2018 the Police of Armenia have been performing the functions vested in them by the law, i.e., making decisions on warning and urgent intervention, conducting supervision over fulfilment of related requirements of the decisions on urgent intervention and protection, and keeping the preventive records of persons having used violence within the family.

55. Since January 2020, the programme on assistance centres to persons subjected to violence within the family has been implemented by state budget funds, within the scope of which NGOs having won grants have established relevant centres of services in all marzes. "The programme for two shelter facilities" for persons having been subjected to violence within the family is also funded by state budget. In addition, bank account for support of persons having been subjected to violence within the family was created by the state, and funding resources are allocated to that account from the state budget.

56. In all Armenian regions 75 family planning services operate which cover the whole female population and provide free of charge contraceptives to women involved in the socially disadvantaged and special groups including those enlisted in the population insecurity system (living in poverty) and women with disabilities.

57. Pursuant to Article 4 of the Law of the Republic of Armenia "On medical assistance and service to the population", every person, irrespective of national origin, race, gender, language, religion, age, health condition, political or other views, social origin, property or other status, shall have the right to medical assistance and service in the Republic of Armenia.

58. Upon Annex 1 to Decision of the Government of Armenia of 4 March 2004, the following groups are entitled to receive healthcare services free-of-charge, including sexual

and reproductive health services for women, according to the “List of socially disadvantaged and separate (special) groups of population entitled to receive state-guaranteed free-of-charge medical care and services on privileged terms”:

1. Beneficiaries with poverty score of 28.01 and above included in the family benefit system;
2. People of the 1st, 2nd and 3rd disability groups;
3. Women of reproductive age in pregnancy, childbirth and postnatal periods;
4. Individuals belonging to the group of children left without parental care – persons aged 18–23;
5. Servicemen and persons equated to them, members of their families, family members of those servicemen who were killed (deceased) during the defence of the Republic of Armenia, as well as family members, former servicemen subject to military pensions for long-term service or for disability;
6. Rescue officers and members of their families, retired rescue officers, disabled rescue officers, family members of rescue officers killed (deceased) during service;
7. Victims of human trafficking and exploitation;
8. Asylum seekers and their family members;
9. Persons discharged from military service due to disruption, injury, or illness who were not recognized as disabled as a result of medical and social examination.

59. Pursuant to Decision of the Government of Armenia of 23 November 2006 “On approving the lists of diseases and the social groups of the population entitled to medication for free-of-charge or on privileged terms”, persons of the 1st and 2nd groups of disabilities enjoy the privilege to receive free of charge medication, and persons of the 3rd group of disability enjoy the privilege to receive medication with 50% discount.

60. As for provision of reproductive and sexual health services for women with disabilities, they are entitled to free of charge pre- and postnatal outpatient and polyclinic medical care, childbirth, and all types of medical care up to the 42nd postnatal day.

61. Women with disabilities, in terms of inpatient examination and treatment of gynaecological diseases, enjoy the privileges specified under the Decision, as well as free of charge medical care in case of induced abortions.

62. Moreover, upon Decision of the Government of Armenia of 8 August 2019, disability of anyone in the couple has been included on the list of beneficiaries entitled to free of charge assistive reproductive technologies, including extracorporeal fertilization and artificial insemination for the couples with infertility.

63. Meanwhile, conditioned by the nature of disability (deafness, blindness, limitation of mobility, mental disorders), individualized measures aimed at the needs of person with disabilities are undertaken by medical organisations when providing medical care and services, by including the relatives, guardians, escorting persons or other specialists.

64. In cooperation with NGOs, the Ministry of Health has implemented some targeted activities aimed at awareness raising among rural women and girls, at the same time making the medical services closer to them.

65. During 2015–2019 within “Improvement of community health through raising awareness and medical service” UMCOR Charitable Foundation of Armenia held courses on reproductive health in the marzes, with participation of healthcare and community volunteers. They shared the obtained materials and knowledge with about 10000 women and girls. 2847 women have undergone complex and profile clinical, laboratory and instrumental examination, the 70–80 % of cases revealed pathologies, and further free of charge examination and treatment were performed.

66. Regardless of nationality and ethnic belonging, as citizens, women enjoy the same rights and privileges. Moreover, in cooperation with NGOs, targeted examinations and treatment are arranged for them.



67. During 2017–2019 Greek Medical Fund “Hippocrates” performed complex and profile clinical, laboratory and instrumental examination of 1813 women of Greek and other nationality in rural communities with Greek population of Lori marz, the 50–60% of cases revealed pathologies, and further free of charge examination and treatment were performed.
68. It needs to mention that up until 2015 the contraceptives were being received within the international cooperation, while since 2015 the modern contraceptives have been obtained under the RA state budget funds and provided to persons involved in the socially disadvantaged and separate (special) groups.
69. With the view to ensuring the safety of and access to abortion, the guidelines and practices on “The medical criteria for use of contraception methods to prevent unwanted pregnancy” were approved upon Order of the Minister of Health of Armenia, in 2015.
70. Courses on “Medical criteria for use of modern contraceptives to prevent unwanted pregnancy” were initiated for 503 obstetrician-gynaecologists and family physicians, which will help to provide high-quality medical services to population. For distribution and monitoring of contraceptives, Logistics management information system was developed and introduced. More safe medication-induced abortion procedure was put in place at all medical institutions providing reproduction-related services.
71. The “HIV virus” course aimed at continuous professional development of medical personnel dealing with HIV/AIDS is held at the Republican Center for AIDS prevention. The course addresses the enhancement of potential of medical personnel concerning the HIV prevention and treatment, as well as prevention and fighting the possible demonstration of discrimination and stigma towards the HIV patients.
72. Upon relevant decision of the Government of Armenia, “Healthy lifestyle” course was included in the curriculum of the senior classes of the schools of general education, with one of the sections relating to AIDS/HIV.
73. The Republican Center for AIDS Prevention has initiated HIV prevention measures in rural communities of the Republic, with provision of a comprehensive package of health services among the outbound labour migrants and their family members.
74. Due to recent targeted efforts and continuous endeavours focused on creation of viable services related to HIV/AIDS and prenatal care, as well as establishment of an integrated system for prevention of mother-to-child HIV transmission, in 2016 the WHO recognised Armenia among the world’s four and Europe’s first country where mother-to-child HIV transmission was eliminated. In 2019 the WHO officially acknowledged the observance of the criteria confirming elimination of the mother-to-child HIV transmission in Armenia during 2017–2019.
75. To raise awareness on HIV transmission, decrease misunderstanding among the society on HIV/AIDS and eliminate discriminatory attitude towards people living with HIV, a number of awareness raising activities have been held.
76. Within the scope of the state target programme on HIV/AIDS prevention, community groups of women were set up in 6 marzes with the activities aimed at reduction of vulnerability of women to HIV.
77. The Decision of the Government of Armenia “On approving the 2019–2023 Gender Policy Implementation Strategy and Action Plan” was approved on 19 September 2019.
78. The 2nd priority of the Strategy concerns “Overcoming the gender discrimination in the social and economic sector and enhancement of economic opportunities for women”, within the framework of which array of measures is planned directed at the capacity building of persons belonging to various groups involved in the economic and social sectors, including women residing in the border communities and the disaster zone.
79. Under the action specified by the 4th priority of the Strategy – “Enhancement of equal opportunities for women and men in the healthcare sector”, it is planned to ensure the quality, accessibility and affordability of healthcare services for women, including medical assistance in the reproductive health sector, protection of the sexual and reproductive rights of women, including women belonging to various vulnerable groups.

80. Under the 5th priority of the Strategy “Prevention of gender discrimination”, the action “Inclusion of the gender equality problems in the annual events in the disaster risk management sector, preparation of related materials and dissemination on mass media” is envisaged, within the scope of which gender equality problems were included in the education courses conducted for development of disaster risk management plans in 72 settlements of Armenia’s marzes and in educational institutions during 2019, and articles/practical guidelines, manuals/ on “Gender equality issues in disaster risk reduction” were made and publicized.

81. The Strategy also envisages the action “Arranging lectures on gender problems and the specifics of their solution in the training groups of specialists for the disaster risk management”, within which 30 groups were trained in 2019.

82. Furthermore, by 2023, the Strategy envisages to work out local social projects on solution of each of the identified social and economic problems of women with disabilities, belonging to national minorities, the elderly, refugee and women in the areas affected by disasters and conflicts.

83. It should be mentioned that the wide network of the out-of-hospital and hospital medical establishments was completely restored in the regions affected by the earthquake.

84. Currently, a housing programme by the funds of the RA state budget is implemented, and the measures for housing and house construction for the families left homeless due to the earthquake in the settlements of the disaster zone are put in the scope of the programme.

85. Taking into account the priority of reproductive health problems in crisis situations and the need for enhancement of preparedness of medical and rescue personnel, on the initiative of the Ministry of Health, jointly with the National Platform for Disaster Risk Reduction Fund (ARNAP Foundation) and the UNFPA, learning module “Minimum Initial Service Package (MISP) for Reproductive Health in Crisis Situations” was conducted.

86. With the support of the UNFPA, it is planned to implement measures for enhancement of the preparedness level of medical establishments providing reproductive health services and that of disaster resistance.

87. During 2019 the MLSA paid 10 visits to marzes covering the border and the disaster zone communities. During the visits, the key problems of women including women with disabilities were mapped, the framework sectors covering issues of concern for women living in marzes and especially in border and disaster zone communities were identified. Also, relevant needs assessment is planned to get the characteristics of women living in the border and disaster zone communities, related to social and economic situation conditioned by the conflicts and other factors. To that end, the MLSA developed the initial concept of needs assessment. It is planned to have in 2020 rehabilitation and reintegration programmes based on the needs assessment.

88. A series of activities are also implemented in the framework of “Introduction of emergency, disaster response and resilience mechanisms of the social protection system” programme.

89. Meanwhile, it needs to mention that the RA law “On the disaster risk management and protection of population” was drafted by the MES in 2019, that enables to address the social protection problems during disasters, with a special focus on the most vulnerable population groups (pregnant women, breastfeeding mothers, persons with disabilities, children, the elderly).

90. The 2019–2023 Gender Policy Implementation Strategy determines the priorities of gender policy and is targeted at creation of favourable conditions for fulfilment of rights and opportunities of women and men in all aspects of public life.

91. The following 5 priorities were identified under the Strategy:

- Enhancement of the national mechanism for women’s empowerment, equal participation of women and men in the management sector and decision-making process;

- Overcoming the gender discrimination in social and economic sector, and expansion of social opportunities for women;
- Expansion of equal opportunities for women and men and their full and efficient participation in the sector of education and science;
- Expansion of equal opportunities for women and men in the healthcare sector;
- Prevention of gender discrimination.

92. A number of measures for the exercise of the rights of women and girls with disabilities are planned for 2019–2023 under the Strategy Action Plan.

93. New initiative on “Social inclusion of women with disabilities” was developed. It is targeted at protection of rights of women belonging to vulnerable groups, particularly women with disabilities, and on provision of accessibility to social, healthcare, educational and other services. Pilot project for provision of services in the city of Gyumri is envisaged within this initiative, which will give an opportunity to about 70 women with disabilities at the age of 18–40 in various rural and municipal settlements of Shirak marz to receive diverse services and participate in the capacity building courses.

94. Initiative “Processing and introduction of a gender-sensitive budgeting tool” is also planned under priority 5 of the Strategy. Gender-sensitive budgeting elements and indicators were inserted into the Medium-Term Expenditure Framework of the MLSA in 2019 and in the budget request for 2020, which was approved, and ultimately, the MLSA budget for 2020 is considered gender-sensitive. It is planned to introduce the gender sensitivity component in the budget programmes of all state agencies.

95. The 2019–2023 Gender Policy Implementation Strategy envisages also a number of measures aimed at raising awareness on the rights of women and girls including those with disabilities. In particular, entrenching the gender-related non-discrimination approaches in the economic, social and political sectors; coping with gender stereotypes, and raising awareness on the importance of the balanced participation of women and men in tackling the political problems and the sustainable economic development of the country; enhancing the gender sensitivity of mass media, etc.

96. Within the Strategy Action Plan, it is planned to implement social projects focused on solution of each of the identified social and economic problems of women with disabilities, belonging to national minorities, the elderly, refugee and women in the regions bearing the impacts of disasters and conflicts, and the assessed needs of beneficiaries mapped per communities will be spotted in the course of developing the projects.

97. Awareness raising activities and training courses concerning problems of women with disabilities among the employers and civil officers are envisaged as well.

98. For the conducted training and public awareness campaigns, see also points 6 and 8.

99. For the purpose of ensuring the application of the Law “On prevention of domestic violence, protection of victims of domestic violence, and restoration of peace in the family”, the Decision of the Government of Armenia “On establishing the procedure for the centralized registration of the cases of domestic violence” was adopted on 10 October 2019.

100. Pursuant to the procedure approved by the Decision, the centralised record-registration of cases of domestic violence is implemented by the MLSA, as an authorised body, based on the information provided by the RA Police, the RA Investigative Committee, RA Special Investigation Service, the RA Prosecutor General’s Office, the RA Judicial Department, as well as by the centres of assistance prescribed by law not registered thereby, bodies of custody and guardianship, the RA Ministry of Health, the RA Ministry of Education, Science, Culture and Sport. The information on the cases of violence within family is forwarded to the Authorised body according to the special forms “Sheets” approved by the Decision, where among information concerning the person having subjected to domestic violence, the gender of that person and the fact of having the disability status are indicated.

101. This will help to reveal the occurrence of cases of violence within the family and the factors conducive to violence (including among women with disabilities), and to ensure

provision of relevant protection and support through summarizing the data on prevention of domestic violence, persons having assaulted or subjected to violence.

102. It needs to mention that for the purpose of collecting the information about the cases of violence against persons /women/ with disabilities, the RA Police plans to add a section in the record registrations maintained by the Information Center of the Police, concerning the disability of the person.

## **Children with disabilities (Article 7)**

### **Points 11 and 12**

103. On 2 April 2020, the Government of Armenia adopted Decision “On approving the 2020–2023 Comprehensive Programme for exercising a child’s right to live in a family and the harmonious development of a child’s personality and the timetable for the implementation of the Action Plan”, where deinstitutionalization of the 24-hour care institutions including the non-state institutions and establishments of specialized care was included as a priority.

104. Pursuant to Decision of the Government of Armenia of 31 October 2019, as of 1 January 2020, “Vanadzor Orphanage” SNCO was dissolved. Under the same Decision, 3-night care institutions were dissolved as of 1 December 2019, and Children’s Care and Protection Boarding School No 2 of Gyumri is undergoing reorganization into the children’s crisis support center. MLSA initiated the setting up of crisis support centers in Yerevan, Gyumri and Kapan cities, to support children in need of urgent housing and occupational work, and their families. As of 1 June 2019, 260 children had received care in 4-night care facilities, of which 201 children returned to their biological families.

105. Upon Decision of the Government of Armenia of 13 June 2019, new guardianship procedure was approved, by which the guardianship procedures have been fully reviewed, and 30% increased rate of supplementary financing is specified for profile guardianship. Moreover, 100% payment is fixed for every subsequent child. As of 1 April 2020, 68 children enjoy foster care in 50 guardian families, and awareness raising measures on the profile guardianship are in process.

106. Six centers of family and child support operate under the MLSA, where 600 children facing difficult living conditions are provided with services and care. Since 2020 the Ministry has expanded the span of the day-time services, by delegating services to social facilities in 30 large settlements of the Republic (23 facilities have been providing services since January 2020, and the tender results for 7 areas are under finalization). The facilities envisage providing services to 3277 children and their families facing difficult living conditions. The service is also equipped with a mobile component to provide services to children in the communities with no services located, but in need of support.

107. At the same time, in order to prevent the entry of children to the 24-hour care institutions in all marzes of the Republic, the MLSA delegated another service to NGOs – to support children being at risk group of getting into such institutions and their families in order to prevent the entering of children to 24-hour institutions. Both professional and social assistance is provided to children and their families within the project. As of 31 March 2020, 557 children were involved in the preventive services, and 34 children with disabilities were prevented from entering the institutions.

108. In parallel, the list of community centers providing social and rehabilitation services to children with disabilities and their families was expanded. During 2019, by the partial state financing allocated to community centers providing social and rehabilitation services to children with disabilities and their families, relevant services were provided to approximately 530 children through the services delegated by the MLSA.

109. Within the scope of the Joint Memorandum concluded between the MLSA, the Ministry of Health and “Kind mama” NGO on 25 April 2019, 27 children with health problems were prevented from entering the institutions.

110. Within the scope of the Memorandum concluded between the MLSA, the Ministry of Health, “Izmirlan” Foundation and “Kind mama” NGO on 25 December 2019, activities are

implemented on training of children and persons above the age of 16 of the specialized institutions to live independently.

111. The 2020 RA state budget measures “Provision of day care services to children including children with disabilities” and “Services of returning to families of children receiving care in 24-hour care and protection institutions and preventing the children to appear in such institutions and providing support” are implemented in Yerevan and 10 marzes of the Republic through delegation to NGOs. It is planned to provide services to around 3800 children including those with disabilities. Furthermore, the day-time service is comprised of the components of the mobile team and the social assistant services by making possible provision of services in the adjacent rural communities.

112. Meanwhile, in 2019, certificates for purchasing apartments were granted to children above the age of 18 of the specialized institutions; also, within the framework of the Memorandum concluded with “Izmirlian” Foundation in 2019, through “Kind mama” NGO, for the beneficiaries having attained the age of eighteen, two small houses were purchased, where at least fifteen adult beneficiaries from the specialized establishments will reside.

113. Decision of the Government of Armenia “On establishing the procedure for the specialized fostering for the persons of the age of 18–23, as a post-care support provided by the state” was adopted on 3 October 2019. Children receiving care in the specialized care establishments keep receiving it there after attaining the age of 18, as they have no place to go. After approval of the decision, the awareness raising activities are underway to promote the specialized foster care for the persons of the age of 18–23 and to create opportunities to arrange care for these persons in the foster families.

114. The system of provision of integrated social services is being introduced in Armenia, and needs assessment of children facing difficult living conditions (with disabilities) is implemented within its framework. Furthermore, the needs are assessed within the family which helps to more correctly “diagnose” the problem and provide more targeted services.

115. As of 1 January 2020, 3088 families are record-registered in the family insecurity assessment system to receive social support, which involve children with disabilities. 2905 of them receive family benefit. 3040 children with disabilities are record-registered in the families receiving family benefit.

116. The Yerevan Municipality and the marzpetarans of the Republic of Armenia also implement projects for social support, particularly, financial assistance is provided to citizens. The majority of those receiving assistance are families with persons with disabilities, including children.

117. The Ministry of Health provides vouchers to children with disabilities and chronic diseases and children in-need of individualized care to receive treatment in various healthcare facilities.

118. The procedures on launching preparatory courses for persons intending to adopt children, aimed at provision of psychological, pedagogical and legal support to these persons, necessary for the care and rearing of adopted children, are aimed at upgrading the practice of adoption by the RA citizens.

119. The Decision of the Government of Armenia on “Arrangement and performance of the preparatory courses programme for persons intending to adopt children” was adopted on 23 May 2019. In the framework of the programme training courses on topics related to the care of children with health problems were conducted for around 60 persons intending to adopt children.

120. To promote the procedures for adoption of children with disabilities, awareness raising measures are carried out to encourage the adoption of children with disabilities by persons living in Armenia.

121. The following amendments made to the RA legislation are aimed at elimination of violence against children:

- Point 2 of Article 36 of the RA Constitution – “Deprivation or restriction of parental rights may be exercised only by law, upon court decision, for the purpose of protecting

the vital interests of the child”, based on which amendments were made to the RA Family Code. The amended Article 59 envisages that for the purpose of ensuring the vital interests of the child (inter alia, where a child periodically experiences such physical violence which does not contain features of corpus delicti as provided for by the RA Criminal Code, psychological violence that is the intended causing of severe mental suffering including the threat of using physical or sexual violence, periodical humiliation of human dignity, is used against the child), parents or one of them can be deprived of parental rights, as well as the parent shall be deprived of the parental rights if he/she is sentenced for committing an intended crime against his/her child;

- An amendment was made to the RA Family Code stating that the ways of children’s rearing should exclude, as a rearing method, physical or psychological violence, as well as ignorant, cruel, violent attitude towards them or attitude humiliating human dignity, offence or exploitation;
- On 13 December 2017 the Law “On prevention of domestic violence, protection of victims of domestic violence, and restoration of peace in the family” was adopted, which enshrined legal mechanisms for prevention of violence against the person within the family including children and protection thereof;
- Meanwhile, under the Action Plan for 2020–2022 deriving from the National Strategy for Human Rights Protection, the more effective protection of children’s rights was specified as a strategic goal, which will have the objective to prevent and eliminate violence against children, child trafficking and other child-related crimes. In particular, by the first semester of 2021 it is planned to prohibit – under the legislation – the corporal punishment of a child, make amendments to the RA Law “On the rights of children”, by defining basic concepts and procedures for establishing the National Commission on Protection of Children’s Rights.

122. In case of physical, sexual, psychological, economic violence and negligence within the family, the competent police officer renders a decision towards the family member having used violence, on warning (where the Police revealed the case of violence for the first time, and the committed act does not contain substantial features of corpus delicti) or on urgent intervention, based on which a preventive record-registration card concerning the indicated person is made.

123. In the institutions within the MLSA system, 2 cases of violence committed by the nurse (slapping in the child’s face) were recorded in “Kharberd Specialized Children’s Home” SNCO and “Marie Izmirlian Children’s Home of Yerevan” SNCO. The nurses were dismissed. In 2020 a case of violence took place in “Marie Izmirlian Children’s Home of Yerevan” SNCO, and the concerned materials are under investigation by the law-enforcement bodies.

124. In the draft law “On the rights of persons with disabilities”, the negative attitude of people towards the disability is considered among the environmental barriers affecting the disability, which not less than other factors limits the individual’s functioning and prevent the individual from his/her social inclusion, full and efficient participation in public life. By the draft, demonstration of less favourable attitude is deemed as manifestation of discrimination, hence, it is subject to responsibility as prescribed by law.

125. The information on implementation of recommendations contained in the concluding observations of the Committee on the Rights of the Child concerning children with disabilities (see CRC/C/ARM/CO/3-4, para. 36) is provided in point 36 of Article 21.

## **Awareness-raising (Article 8)**

### **Points 13 and 14**

126. In order to raise public awareness on the rights of persons with disabilities, the MLSA carries out multi-format events, namely press conferences, public discussions, television and radio broadcasts, reporting in the print and electronic press, etc.

127. Within the awareness raising campaign “Let’s speak one language” launched by “Full Life” NGO during 2018, the specialists of MLSA and “Full Life” NGO involving persons with disabilities participated in the sittings of marz commissions on issues of persons with disabilities.

128. During 2018 “AGATE” Rights Defense Center for Women with Disabilities” NGO developed the sign language guide-dictionary “Human rights and disabilities”, which promotes protection of rights and ensuring equal opportunities for persons with hearing problems.

129. During 2019 a series of events participated by children with disabilities were implemented in SNCOs, which were aimed at appraisal of children’s role in the society, breaking the stereotypes and portraying their positive images (<http://www.mlsa.am/?p=22504>).

130. The RA Minister of Labor and Social Affairs had several meetings with schoolchildren on capacities of and opportunities for persons with disabilities, the inclusiveness of education, occupational guidance, highlighting the importance of the role of each of them in the social life of the country. The Minister also had meetings with young women and girls, and issues concerning the rights of women with disabilities including the right of sexual and reproductive health were discussed.

131. Within the Memorandum between the MLSA and “Kind mama” NGO, large-scale works on life of children with health problems in families were performed. The cooperation resulted in publication of information materials.

132. On the initiative of the International Academy for Management and Technology of Germany (INTAMT) and “AGATE Rights Defense Center for Women with Disabilities” NGO, in December 2019 a Conference took place concerning the issues and problems of employment of persons with disabilities.

133. The MLSA and the Embassy of the Republic of Finland in Armenia held a joint Scientific Conference. The representatives of the civil society of Armenia and Finland debated on the issues of persons with disabilities in both countries.

134. The MLSA and the UNDP Country Office organized discussion on “Promoting participation and leadership of persons with disabilities”. The activists with disabilities and persons dealing with the problems of persons with disabilities spoke out on technologies, the inclusive working environment, leadership and other topics (<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=2OSooxUrn5M>).

135. To raise public awareness among mass media on the rights and issues of persons with disabilities, in 2019 the MLSA set a special prize for the annual mass media awards “Equal opportunities” held by “Bridge of Hope” NGO. The EVN Report English-language weekly magazine won the prize, for addressing the problems of persons with disabilities in a holistic and periodic manner.

136. Information materials on the reforms, projects and events implemented in the disability sector are published at the MLSA website.

137. Within the EU-funded framework on “Human Rights Protection in Armenia” facilitated by the UNDP, UNICEF and UNFPA, the Ministry of Justice carried out public awareness raising campaign on provision of legal equality.

138. On 26 December 2019, the Government of Armenia approved the National Strategy for Human Rights Protection and deriving Action Plan for 2020–2022. The following were set among the key objectives of the Strategy: raising the public awareness on human rights and their protection means, encouraging – by the state administration and local self-government bodies, the officials, as well as the society and the citizens – the protection of their own rights, and dissemination of the knowledge about human rights and their protection means through educational programs.

139. The RA Healthcare and Labour Inspectorate, within its functions of awareness-raising and prevention, for the purpose of protecting the health of persons with disabilities and ensuring their security, periodically publishes awareness raising materials and conducts

consultation seminars by presenting the guarantees prescribed by the RA legislation for persons with disabilities.

140. A number of projects have also been implemented by the Ministry of Education, Science, Culture and Sport, with the objectives to strengthen cooperation platform between the persons with disabilities and the persons with no disabilities, promote integration of young people with disabilities in Armenia, break the stereotypes towards persons with disabilities, etc.

141. In the marzes, the marzpetarans, local authorities and NGOs also undertake various events aimed at awareness-raising. Yerevan Municipality also proceeds with respective activities.

## **Accessibility (Article 9)**

### **Points 15 and 16**

142. According to the draft law “On the Rights of Persons with Disabilities”, accessibility is viewed as a target direction for ensuring the rights of persons with disabilities, the social inclusion and equal opportunities thereof. Provisions on ensuring accessibility to physical environment, as well as to information and communication have been stipulated to ensure accessible and equal conditions for persons with disabilities. State and local self-government bodies and organizations shall ensure access for persons with disabilities to physical environment, information and communication, as well as create conditions for unimpeded access to buildings and premises of residential, public and other operational significance, to transport systems, means of information and communication, rest and entertainment destinations.

143. The principles of universal design are also defined in a separate article of the draft law. Moreover, a requirement to ensure accessible conditions for persons with disabilities according to the principles of universal design and – in case it is found impossible – through reasonable accommodations has been set down.

144. As stated above, the draft law envisages the establishment of an Accessibility commission to exercise control over the accessibility and ensure the promotion thereof.

145. “The set of design rules for ensuring the accessibility of buildings and constructions to population groups with limited mobility and persons with disabilities” was approved by the Order of 5 April 2018 of the Chairperson of the State Urban Development Committee adjunct to the Government of Armenia. The Set of Rules includes details of creation of comfortable urban development environment, unimpeded access to buildings and premises, unimpeded movement within buildings, orientation in space, use of equipment and services, etc.

146. Also, “Format of assessment of conditions accessible to persons with disabilities in existing buildings and premises of public and industrial significance” has been approved by Order of the Chairperson of the Urban Development Committee of 15 October 2018. The Format allows to assess the conditions in existing buildings and premises of public and industrial significance from the point of view of accessibility for persons with disabilities.

147. Currently, measures for establishing a unified transport network in the Republic of Armenia are being implemented, as a result of which each community will be provided with accessible transport service. A transport positioning system, an interactive map of the transport network, as well as a unified ticketing system will be introduced within the framework of the unified transport network. It is envisaged to operate transportation means adjusted for transportation of persons with disabilities.

148. Also, large-scale road construction works were conducted in 2019, due to which wide opportunities have been created to have “Accessible Armenia” in the near future.

149. In order to make buildings and premises under construction and reconstruction in Yerevan accessible to persons with disabilities, the design permits require to ensure the



design in accordance with the requirements of the construction normative document “Accessibility of buildings and premises for population groups with limited mobility”.

150. The need for the installation of ramps is mentioned as a mandatory condition in the architectural-planning tasks given for the construction plans of multi-apartment, multifunctional and public buildings. The kindergartens and schools included in the major renovation programs will be adapted to the physical needs of children with disabilities.

151. The introduction of “social taxi” service is being considered aimed at solving problems related to transportation of persons with disabilities.

152. Directing panels are planned to be installed in the subway for persons with visual impairments, and electronic information screens are planned to be set up in the subway vehicles for persons with hearing impairments.

153. Smart bus stops are also functioning in the marzes of Armenia, which are equipped with a ramp for citizens with mobility problems.

154. In rural communities works are conducted for the mandatory provision of ramps or elevators in the design tasks of newly constructed buildings and premises of public and industrial significance.

155. The heads of communities were offered to be mandatorily guided in the construction programs by point 30 of Decision N 1317-N of the Government of Armenia of 29 October 2015, that is to coordinate the design permit or architectural plan assignment in advance by clearly stating the requirements for the facility to be adapted for persons with disabilities.

156. By the Decision of the Government of Armenia of 12 January 2017 “The 2017–2021 Comprehensive Program for Social Inclusion of Persons with Disabilities” was approved. The Program sets out comprehensive measures aimed at ensuring equal conditions and social inclusion for persons with disabilities in all spheres of public life.

157. In particular, in order to ensure accessibility of transport and road traffic, by 2021 it is envisaged to ensure accessibility of transports involved in regular passenger transportation by 30% and adaptation of sidewalks, bus stops, parking lots, bus stations, installation of special sound signals on traffic lights by at least 50%.

158. In order to ensure the accessibility of information, it is envisaged to provide access to programs broadcast on TV by 25%, to provide access to websites for persons with disabilities, etc.

159. The above-mentioned measures are implemented within the framework of the Annual Programs of Social Inclusion of Persons with Disabilities.

160. The Ministry of High-Tech Industry envisages the development of universal standards for providing digitalization solutions to the state administration system and state-provided services through the Digitalization Strategy. The standards set out a number of principles, including accessibility.

161. It is also planned to implement comprehensive educational programs for all age and social groups of the society, to make the digital transformation agenda of Armenia a reality, to meet the challenges of economy of the future and the evolving cyber security requirements. The digital capacity building will be targeted at persons with special needs as an essential means for social inclusion and operational capacity building.

162. It is planned to develop an incentive program for the use of digital solutions to promote their introduction in the private sector. Special attention will be paid to programs with social impact, which will contribute, for example, to the involvement of persons with disabilities in business processes, or ensure their full access to services.

163. The Code on Administrative Offences currently being revised by the Ministry of Justice provides for liability for non-adaptation of buildings or premises commissioned by owners or developers (except for individual dwellings) for the purpose of accessibility and use by persons with disabilities or population groups with limited mobility.

164. The draft law “On the Rights of Persons with Disabilities” establishes prohibitive norms, in particular, on non-observance of universal design principles during the design and

construction works of settlements, construction and reconstruction of buildings and premises of public significance, transport system, non-adaptation for the use of persons with disabilities, and the failure of television and radio companies to provide the minimum amount of information accessible to persons with hearing impairments in their programs. In order to effectively implement the provisions on ensuring accessibility prescribed by the draft law, it is envisaged to make a supplement to the RA Code of Administrative Offences, by enshrining provisions on liability.

165. The draft law “On the Rights of Persons with Disabilities” establishes grounds for ensuring control mechanisms and procedures for access provision to the environment for persons with disabilities. As stated above, the draft law envisages establishment of an autonomous state body – Accessibility Commission.

## **Situations of risk and humanitarian emergencies (Article 11)**

### **Points 17 and 18**

166. The Disaster Risk Management National Strategy and the Action plan on the implementation thereof, approved by the Government of Armenia Protocol Decision of 6 April 2017, enshrine provisions on the rights of persons with disabilities, which are included in the measures under implementation, as well as in by-laws and sectoral policies arising from the Strategy. The strategy is in line with Sendai’s 2015–2030 Action Plan.

167. Armenia has had achievements in disaster risk reduction related to policy elaboration, implementation and development, introduction of a participatory decision-making format involving all key players from national to local level, as well as NGOs, scientific and international organizations, persons with disabilities and other vulnerable groups.

168. Since 2016, based on exemplary Disaster Risk Management Plans developed by the MES, as well as with support of the territorial subdivisions of the MES Rescue Service, Disaster Risk Management Plans are being developed in educational and pre-school educational institutions and in communities. The age, gender and disability specific characteristics of children, including children with disabilities have been taken into account when developing the plans.

169. According to the annual activity plan, various evacuation measures were carried out in the communities and organizations each year, intended for the cases of fire, earthquake, landslides etc.; when carrying out the measures, the specialists paid special attention to evacuation of persons with disabilities and other vulnerable groups.

170. The buildings and premises, engineering infrastructures, vehicles of the MES are adapted for the free movement and transportation of persons with disabilities.

171. The “911 SOS ARMENIA” application has introduced a system for alerting citizens with hearing impairments.

172. The MES Seismic Protection Service carried out the following measures:

- The orphanages and nursing homes of Armenia were filled with a large number of people who acquired disability as a result of 1988 earthquake. The purpose of the works carried out by the MES Seismic Protection Service in those institutions is to improve the seismic safety of orphanages and nursing homes by informing the residents and service staff about seismic protection. The beneficiaries of the aforementioned works are the most vulnerable groups of the population: persons with disabilities, the elderly people, children of orphanages. Earthquake protection codes of conduct have been developed by the Service for people with special needs, abandoned children and the elderly.
- Training courses on seismic protection codes of conduct, seismic resistance of buildings and premises were held in special educational institutions, orphanages and nursing homes.

## **Equal recognition before the law (Article 12)**

### **Points 19 and 20**

173. The Ministry of Justice has initiated legislative reforms aimed at introducing a legal capacity and decision-making support system for persons with disabilities.

174. The 2020–2022 Action Plan deriving from the National Strategy on the Human Rights Protection envisages participation of people with intellectual disabilities, including those with mental conditions, in all decision-making processes concerning them until the second half of 2020.

175. The strategic plans for the development and implementation of active programs, the introduction of new services based on international best practices, and the creation of legal preconditions thereof are aimed at promoting the legal and decision-making capacity of persons with disabilities. In particular, in the draft law “On the Rights of Persons with Disabilities” the concept of “personal assistant” is introduced. The term “personal assistant” is defined as a natural person who is with a person with disability at the moment concerned and/or provides care or support (assistance) to a person with disability in overcoming environmental barriers (including those of movement and communication) for free or on a paid-for basis.

176. At the same time, the draft decision of the Government of Armenia “On approving the 2020–2024 Action Plan of the transformation of care services for people with disabilities and the implementation schedule thereof” envisages implementation of personal assistant, as well as social assistance and home care services, creation of community-based small group houses. The services have two purposes: to exclude the accommodation of people in large care facilities, and to prevent entry to such facilities.

177. The introduction and development of human rights-based services, the provision of services by professional experts will provide flexible mechanisms for persons with disabilities to live independently.

## **Access to justice (Article 13)**

### **Points 21 and 22**

178. The information on the trainings conducted in judicial sphere is presented in point 6 of Article 6.

179. The RA legislation envisages provision of free legal assistance to persons belonging to vulnerable groups. In particular, Article 41 of the RA law on Advocacy stipulates that besides providing legal assistance to a suspect or accused under a criminal case, the Office of Public Defender provides free legal assistance to persons of first and second disability groups.

180. A number of legislative reforms are being implemented by Armenia in this sphere. The Government has, in the frames of its program “Equality of all before the law, justice and protection of human rights”, emphasizing the importance of ensuring the quality, accessibility and efficiency of justice, enshrined, inter alia, the need and commitment to introduce measures to encourage the provision of free legal assistance, as well as to promote the development of advocacy.

181. On 11 October 2019, the Government adopted the National Strategy for Judicial and Legal Reforms and the Action Plan deriving therefrom, which envisage expanding the range of beneficiaries of free legal assistance and developing alternative mechanisms for providing free legal assistance in 2020.

182. In order to improve the professional qualities of the Armenian police officers and to develop legal knowledge, by the order of the Head of Police, in addition to Armenia’s domestic legislation, the provisions of international agreements are also being studied within the framework of service trainings.

183. It should be noted that on the initiative of the General Department of Criminal Investigation of the Police of Armenia, in February 2019, with the participation of experts from non-governmental organizations cooperating with the Police, training courses for the officers of the Units on issues related to Juveniles and Domestic Violence were organized and held. During courses, the peculiarities of work carried out with disabled persons having committed a crime or being victims of or having been subjected to violence were presented.

## **Liberty and security of a person (Article 14)**

### **Points 23 and 2**

184. On January 30, 2020, the RA Government approved the draft law “On Making Amendments to the Law of the Republic of Armenia “On Psychiatric Care”, which stipulates the procedures for involuntary hospitalization and compulsory treatment.

185. The procedure for stipulating the involuntary hospitalization derives from Article 27 of the Constitution of Armenia, according to which no one may be deprived of personal liberty in a manner other than the procedure prescribed by law.

186. Based on this provision, the draft stipulates that a person with mental health condition may, based on a psychiatric indication, be involuntarily hospitalized without his/her consent and, in the presence of a legal representative – without the consent of the legal representative, in order to prevent danger from a person with a mental health condition (including for the life or health of themselves or others), if the treatment of person without hospitalization cannot be effectively organized and delay in psychiatric care can pose a danger to his/her life and health, or to the others. Within 72 hours after his or her hospitalization, the person with a mental health condition must be examined by a Psychiatric commission and in case the involuntary hospitalization is justified, the Executive body of the psychiatric organization shall file a motion to the Court with a request to subject the person to involuntary psychiatric hospital treatment in accordance with the procedure prescribed by the Civil Procedure Code of Armenia.

187. Involuntary treatment lasts no more than six months. If, on the expiration of the mentioned period, the grounds prescribed by law for involuntary treatment of the person with a mental health condition still exist, the Executive body of the psychiatric organization shall submit an application to the court within 72 hours after the expiration of the six-month period with a request to subject the person to involuntary psychiatric hospital treatment in accordance with the procedure prescribed by the Civil Procedure Code of Armenia.

188. As a guarantee, administrative liability for the Executive body of the psychiatric organization and the doctor-psychiatrist has been provided for by law for violating the procedure of involuntary hospitalization.

189. The court decision to impose a coercive measure of a medical nature on the person may serve as a ground for subjecting the person to compulsory treatment. The general requirements for compulsory treatment are defined by the Criminal Code of Armenia.

190. While being subjected to compulsory outpatient supervision or treatment or hospital treatment, a person with a mental health condition shall be informed, in accordance with the law, of the rights, freedoms, the restrictions thereof, the purpose and reasons of compulsory supervision or treatment.

191. The requirement for providing accessible material conditions of detention for persons with disabilities in penitentiary establishments is enshrined as a separate strategic direction in the Decision of the Government of Armenia of 28 November 2019 on approving the 2019–2023 Strategy for the penitentiary-probation sphere of the Republic of Armenia.

192. The strategic goals of this direction are aimed at providing adequate material conditions for disabled persons in places of detention. When developing and implementing a policy to improve the situation in the penitentiary system, the study of problems of vulnerable groups, in particular, of detained persons with disabilities, and the search for solutions thereto are of particular importance.

193. In the context of providing disabled persons in penitentiary institutions with an accessible environment and reasonable accommodation, “The 2019–2023 Strategy of Penitentiary and Probation Services of the Republic of Armenia” stipulates the accessibility of health services for disabled convicts, the need to provide professional care, as well as the need for training the penitentiary staff to communicate with disabled persons.

194. According to Article 63 of the Constitution of Armenia, everyone shall have the right to legal assistance. In cases prescribed by law, legal assistance is provided at the expense of state funds. In order to provide legal assistance, the advocacy based on independence, autonomy and legal equality of lawyers is guaranteed. The status, rights and responsibilities of lawyers are defined by law.

195. At the same time, Article 12 of the Penitentiary Code of Armenia defines the basic rights of a convict, according to which, inter alia, a convict has the right to legal assistance.

196. Article 13 of the Law of the Republic of Armenia on “Arrested and Detained Persons” also stipulates the arrested or detained persons’ right to legal assistance.

197. One of the main factors in ensuring accessibility of justice is the provision of free legal assistance, within the framework of which the RA Law “On Advocacy” provides for free legal assistance in criminal cases; Article 41 of the same law provides for free legal assistance to persons of first and second groups of disabilities (legal consultation, compilation of lawsuits, applications, complaints and other legal-procedural documents, including the provision of legal information, representation or defense in criminal, civil, administrative and constitutional cases).

198. The penitentiary institutions of the Ministry of Justice are constantly undergoing renovation works aimed at making the areas accessible for persons with disabilities.

## **Freedom from torture and cruel, inhuman or degrading treatment or punishment (Article 15)**

### **Points 25 and 26**

199. The Government of Armenia has implemented a number of measures in the context of combating torture, in particular, legislative and practical actions to ensure mandatory video and audio recording of criminal interrogations and equipping all interrogation rooms in police units and other places of detention with video and audio recorders. The cameras have already been installed in 10 pilot subdivisions of the Police.

200. The amendments to the RA legislation on the elimination of violence against children are presented in Article 7.

201. It should be noted that the order of the Minister of Labor and Social Affairs of Armenia of 23 October 2019 “On approving the procedure for detecting and notifying about the suspicious cases of violence against or among persons being under care in state non-commercial organizations providing care services for the disabled elderly and disabled persons over 18 years, as well as the injuries sustained thereby, and the form of the register of the injuries sustained” was issued, which was forwarded to all care establishments as a guideline.

202. Methodological guideline on the indications, contraindications, forms and methods of fixing the special positions of persons under care in the residential social protection establishments has been developed. Guideline emphasizes the fact that special positioning methods for persons with physical problems should not be aimed at punishing or restraining, but can be used to ensure the person’s functional comfort and to avoid secondary complications.

203. It is noteworthy that the delegation of the European Committee for the Prevention of Torture and Inhuman or Degrading Treatment or Punishment made preliminary observations on day-care establishments under the MLSA at the end of their periodic visit to Armenia carried out in December 2019. In particular, during the visit to “Dzorak” Social Care Center

for Persons with Mental Disorders”, the delegation received no allegations of physical ill-treatment of residents by staff or of verbally inappropriate behaviour.

204. For the first time, the draft law “On Making Amendments to the Law of the Republic of Armenia “On Psychiatric Care”” enshrines the terms of physical restraint, seclusion, methods of calming, physical force, the grounds for applying thereof, medical indications, the procedure and conditions for applying them, by defining, inter alia, the duration thereof.

205. According to the draft, persons with no legal capacity and those over 16 years shall have the opportunity to give informed consent if the age and the nature of the mental condition thereof allow them to express their will and to understand the nature of medical intervention and the consequences thereof. In the absence of the mentioned conditions, the psychiatric care and service of a child or a person having been recognised as having no legal capacity under the law will be provided upon a court decision. With regard to children under the age of 16, a procedure for giving informed consent through a legal representative has been established.

206. In order to prevent inhuman or degrading treatment or all forms of punishment against persons with disabilities in establishments, the above-mentioned draft established the concept of a group of public observers conducting public monitoring of the actions (inaction) of psychiatric care and service providers, the main purpose of which is to provide the inspection body supervising the health sector with information on the failures revealed as a result of the monitoring.

207. In addition, persons with mental health conditions have been entitled with the right to free legal assistance during their stay in a psychiatric establishment and with the opportunity to appeal, as prescribed by law, against the actions (inaction), decisions, professional opinions of psychiatric care and service providers. See also Article 16.

## **Freedom from exploitation, violence and abuse (Article 16)**

### **Points 27 and 28**

208. A public observation group was formed by the Order of the Minister of Labor and Social Affairs of Armenia of 3 December 2018 to carry out monitoring in state non-commercial organizations under MLSA providing care services to children, the elderly and persons with disabilities. The group consists exclusively of representatives of NGOs with group members having exclusive rights to visit establishments.

209. In 2019, the MLSA National Institute of Labor and Social Research conducted trainings on “Rehabilitation assistance in the Republic of Armenia and the procedure for and conditions of providing thereof” and “The Probation Service and the Re-socialization of Offenders through Community Partnership Development” for professionals providing services to children in difficult life situations.

210. It should be noted that in accordance with the draft law “On the Rights of Persons with Disabilities”, the State takes legislative, administrative, judicial or other measures to prevent torture or inhuman or degrading treatment or punishment of persons with disabilities. See also Article 15.

## **Liberty of movement and nationality (Article 18)**

### **Points 29 and 30**

211. In order to protect the rights and interests of persons with disabilities, 10 mobile stations of biometric system have been operating in the city of Yerevan and in marzes since 2013 to take necessary biometric data on the spot in order to issue an identification card or a passport containing biometric data to persons with disabilities, those with illness, or other problems, as well as the ones undergoing inpatient treatment in medical establishments. It is planned to increase the number of mobile stations in the near future.

212. In addition, according to Article 3 of the RA Law «On Identification Cards», identification card is issued to a citizen having no legal capacity on the basis of the application of his/her guardian. An identification card is issued to a citizen recognized as having limited legal capacity upon the application thereof. Persons of first group of disability shall have the right to get an identification card based on the application of their representatives. Similar legal regulations are defined by Article 4 of the Law “On Passport of a Citizen of the Republic of Armenia”, by the Decision N 821 of the Government of Armenia of 25 December 1998 “On approving the passport system charter of the Republic of Armenia and the description of the passport of the citizen of the Republic of Armenia”, as well as by part 11 of Article 30 and part 9 of Article 30.1 of the Law “On Refugees and Asylum” of 17 December 2015, as a result of making amendments and supplements to the mentioned law.

213. In order to ensure the implementation of the above-mentioned provisions, Decisions of the Government of Armenia N 914-N of 2 September 2016 “On approving the procedure for and the cases of taking the biometric data necessary for issuing a refugee identification card, as well as a conventional travel document at the location of a person, in case it is impossible to be done in the Police” and N 54-N of 19 January 2017 “On defining the procedure for and condition of taking photos and fingerprints in the place of residence (location) of the person applying to obtain (exchange) a passport or identification card of a citizen of the Republic of Armenia” were adopted. Under the mentioned decisions, the citizens of Armenia with disabilities, those with illness, age-related or other problems, as well as the ones undergoing inpatient treatment in medical establishments and persons recognized as refugees and granted asylum in the Republic of Armenia shall be given the opportunity to submit the data necessary for obtaining identity documents at the place of their residence and get the document through an authorised person. See also Article 9.

## **Living independently and being included in the community (Article 19)**

### **Points 31 and 32**

214. Deinstitutionalization of social care establishments, including non-governmental establishments and specialized care establishments, was included as a priority in the Government of Armenia Decision of 2 April 2020 “On approving the 2020–2023 Comprehensive Program for the Realization of the Right of a Child to Live in a Family and Have a Harmonious Development and the Actions Implementation Schedule of the Comprehensive Program”.

215. For information on setting up services, see also the information provided under Article 7.

216. According to the draft law of the Republic of Armenia “On the Rights of Persons with Disabilities”, one of the main directions of the state policy in the field of rights of persons with disabilities is the establishment and development of accessible services in communities, the establishment and improvement of conditions necessary for ensuring the right of persons with disabilities to live independently and be included in the community. The draft prohibits the establishment of such social care establishments for persons (children) with disabilities in the Republic of Armenia, in which persons are deprived of the right to make decisions regarding the daily life thereof.

217. In addition, the draft law defines the concept of “independent living” and lists all principles that independent living services should be aimed at.

218. Meanwhile, the MLSA is developing a draft decision of the Government of Armenia “On approving the 2020–2024 Action Plan for the transformation of care services for persons with disabilities and the schedule for the implementation of the Plan”. The Plan aims to ensure the right to independent living for persons with disabilities, including those with mental health and intellectual health conditions, and to provide alternative community-based services to 851 persons living in social care establishments by preventing persons with disabilities from entering large social care establishments. These services should be accessible to every person with disability, regardless of the type of disability, place of residence, gender, etc.

219. In this context, it is planned to implement a deinstitutionalization process, along with the establishment of community-based services: small community group homes, sheltered housing, personal assistant and home care services, daily employment centers. In particular, measures are currently being taken to introduce personal assistance services and to set up small community group homes. The process of deinstitutionalization and provision of alternative services shall involve both state administration and local self-government bodies, as well as NGOs with a clear distribution of the roles thereof.

220. Within the framework of separate expenditure measures of Armenia's State budget, day-care and social rehabilitation services are provided to persons with disabilities, aimed at organizing day care for persons with disabilities, the social inclusion thereof and the formation of independent living skills.

221. Since 2019 tenders have been announced for the implementation of services, in which the organizations certified in accordance with the procedure defined by the MLSA can participate.

222. Grants for organizing the care, employment and training of persons with disabilities in day-care centers are being provided at the expenses of Armenia's state budget to the organizations having won the tenders.

223. The following services were delegated to non-governmental organizations through tenders announced in 2020:

- "Providing employment and social-psychological services to persons with autism in a day care center";
- "Social and psychological support for persons with disabilities in a day care center";
- "Social and rehabilitation services for persons with mental and intellectual conditions";
- 1845 elderly and disabled persons are served in 20 social day-care centers in Armenia's marzes and in Yerevan. The purpose of day-care centers is to support the needy and vulnerable elderly persons and those with disabilities, provide first aid, social and psychological counselling services in the community centers;
- "Providing day care services for children", within the framework of which about 3277 children in difficult life situations are being provided with relevant services.

224. Under the 2021 state budget, the Government plans to expand the grants provided to day-care centers, aiming to expand the geography of centers providing services for persons with disabilities. See also Article 6 and Article 12.

## **Personal mobility (Article 20)**

### **Points 33 and 34**

225. Within the framework of the state programs, assistive measures, prostheses, orthoses, walkers, wheelchairs, hearing aids are being provided on the basis of the individual rehabilitation program for persons with disabilities to promote their participation in public life. Pursuant to the Government's Decision of 20 December 2018, since 2019 state certificates have been issued for obtaining assistive measures.

226. Through the state certificate, the beneficiaries get the opportunity to choose and acquire assistive means relevant to their needs from an organization suitable for them, which has signed a contract with the MLSA. The process of acquiring state-certified assistive devices ensures a participation of a larger number of organizations in the market, and, consequently, the competitive price and quality of assistive devices.

227. In 2020, assistive means will be provided by about 15 organizations providing services in about 35 service areas across different marzes of the Republic.



228. In 2019, beneficiaries were provided with 12571 state certificates for obtaining assistive devices. The list is expanding, taking into account the global study of WHO on assistive technologies and its priorities.

229. During the same period, 12813 assistive means were obtained by 6632 beneficiaries (including orthopaedic and prosthetic shoes which are issued without a certificate).

230. The new mechanisms introduced enable to cover the full demand for state-funded assistive means, i.e. all applications for obtaining assistive means are met under the procedure for and conditions established by law. The motor wheelchairs and more expensive assistive technologies are being provided in cooperation with governmental and non-governmental bodies.

## **Freedom of expression and opinion, and access to information (Article 21)**

### **Points 35 and 36**

231. The Republic of Armenia has initiated the process of joining the Marrakesh Treaty to Facilitate Access to Published Works for Persons Who Are Blind, Visually Impaired, or Otherwise Print Disabled (hereinafter referred to as the Treaty). By the Decision N 32-A of the Government of Armenia of 16 January 2020, the RA draft law on the ratification of the Treaty was approved.

232. The RA Law “On Language” stipulates that the education and upbringing of persons with hearing impairments in the RA shall be carried out in Armenian sign language (Article 2).

233. According to Article 5.1 of the Law of the Republic of Armenia “On Television and Radio”, the Public TV Company and the private television companies operating in the Republic of Armenia broadcasting, inter alia, children and (or) news programs, are obliged to provide possible accessible information for persons with hearing impairments in the programs thereof, broadcasting at least one children’s and news program a day with sign language translation or Armenian captions. Besides, according to the Law, the National Commission on Television and Radio carries out direct monitoring of programs broadcast by television and radio companies on a selective basis.

234. The 2017–2021 Comprehensive Program for Social Inclusion of Persons with Disabilities envisages ensuring the accessibility of programs broadcast on TV.

235. In order to ensure the recognition, dissemination of the Armenian sign language and the right of persons with disabilities to receive and seek information, the 2020 Annual Program on Social Inclusion of Persons with Disabilities includes the measure “On Harmonization of the laws of the Republic of Armenia “On Language” and “On the Freedom of Information” with the Convention on the Rights of Persons with Disabilities”.

236. Meanwhile, the 2020 Annual Social Inclusion Program for Persons with Disabilities includes the measure “Development of a program aimed at introducing a video communication system among service providers; implementation of a pilot program”.

237. The 2017–2021 Comprehensive Program also envisages the measure “Providing access to official websites of government agencies for disabled persons with visual or hearing impairments”.

238. Since 2020 the information materials published on the official website of the MLSA are accompanied by translations into Armenian sign language. The official websites of the Office of the Human Rights Defender of the Republic of Armenia and the Central Electoral Commission of the Republic of Armenia have been equipped with tools that provide accessibility for persons with visual and hearing impairments.

239. The Ministry of Justice has introduced the electronic platform (website) [www.e-rights.am](http://www.e-rights.am) aimed at raising awareness and transparency of the Human Rights Defender’s strategy and the 2020–2022 Action Plan arising thereof, which has been adapted for the visually impaired persons.

240. In order to introduce accessible information and communication technologies for persons with disabilities in all spheres of public services, work has been and is still being carried out in the RA marzes, including the introduction of accessible websites and the use of easy-to-read templates.

### **Respect for privacy (Article 22)**

#### **Points 37 and 38**

241. The principle of personal data confidentiality of all children receiving care in establishments is maintained on the basis of the guideline on the Protection of Personal Data of Children developed by the Personal Data Protection Agency of the Ministry of Justice.

### **Respect for home and the family (Article 23)**

#### **Points 39 and 40**

242. The draft law “On the Rights of Persons with Disabilities” stipulates provisions on the full realization of marriage and family relations of persons with disabilities. In accordance with the draft, persons with disabilities have the right to marry and found a family on the basis of free and full consent; obtain accessible information on reproductive health and family planning; guardianship, trusteeship, patronage and adoption of children; receive support in performing parental responsibilities, etc.

243. On 23 May 2019, the Government of Armenia adopted the decision on “Organization and conduct of the preparatory training course for persons willing to adopt”. A tender was announced to provide a grant for implementation of the course, as a result of which the winning NGO conducted training courses for about 60 people willing to adopt, which included topics on the care of children with health problems.

244. Awareness-raising activities are currently underway to promote the adoption of children with disabilities.

245. The draft law “On Making Amendments to the Family Code of the Republic of Armenia” has been developed by the MLSA and submitted to the Office of the Prime Minister. The draft has been brought into compliance with the main provisions of the UNCRPD, and the amendment seeks to eliminate any discrimination, exclusion or restriction due to disability or health conditions.

246. For the service of personal assistant see point 32 of Article 19.

### **Education (Article 24)**

#### **Points 41 and 42**

247. Pursuant to part 6 of Article 6 of the Law of the RA “On education”, “the State shall create necessary conditions for the purpose of receiving education in line with the peculiarities of development of citizens in need of special conditions for education and for ensuring social adaptation”.

248. The Law stipulates that education of children in need of special conditions for education may be provided upon the choice of parents both at common institutions of general education and special institutions through special programmes. With the view to implementing these provisions stipulated by the Law, in 2001, the Republic of Armenia introduced the inclusive education programme. In the Republic of Armenia, the inclusive education system operates alongside special general education schools.

249. The essence of inclusive education lies in assessment of the individual educational needs of every child and encouragement of active participation of the child in the learning process. A major component for organising inclusive education is creation of a team providing pedagogical-psychological support to all children, including children in need of

special conditions for education. An individual lesson plan is developed to organise the education of every child in need of special conditions for education.

250. A common state standard of general education for all learners was approved upon Decision of the Government of 11 July 2011. According to the standard, the content of the general education programme is adapted to the capacities of perception and thinking of children in need of special conditions for education.

251. Pursuant to Decision of the RA Government of 26 December 2002, in the Republic of Armenia there are special general education institutions designed for children with hearing impairment, visual impairment, locomotor disability, intellectual disability and children with anti-social behaviour. Pursuant to the exemplary statute for special general education institutions, these institutions may be boarding schools and after-school clubs.

252. On 1 December 2014, the National Assembly of Armenia adopted the Law “On making supplements and amendments to the Government of Armenia “On general education””, by which a transition was made from the general education system to the universal inclusive education system through the application of a tertiary system.

253. The newly established system provides the opportunity to organise the education and upbringing of children in need of special conditions for education without separating the child from the family, ensuring comprehensive social development of the child and enrolling him/her in the general education institution. It is envisaged to expand the opportunities of children in need of special conditions for education to receive quality education by creating an inclusive education system in all general education schools (children in need of special conditions for education learning at special general education schools will be transferred to a general education school located near their place of residence and live with their families).

254. As a result of enforcement of the Law, children in need of special conditions for education will receive pedagogical-psychological support at 3 levels, including general education school, as well as territorial and republican pedagogical-psychological support centres.

255. Taking as a basis the Law “On general education”, the “Action Plan and Timetable for Introduction of the Universal Inclusive Education System” was approved upon Protocol Decision of the Government of Armenia of 18 February 2016. The transition to the universal inclusive education system is being made through reorganisation of the pedagogical-psychological support centres of several RA special general education institutions. Currently, the system is in the transitional stage.

256. Pursuant to the approved timetable, the reorganisation of special schools began in 2016. The inclusive education system will be fully introduced by 2022, including in all marzes of Armenia.

257. At the end of the transition to universal inclusive education, it is envisaged to leave at least 6 institutions as special general education institutions (instead of the previous total of 23 special schools). As of 2019, out of the previous 23 special general education schools in the Republic of Armenia, there were 17 special general education schools, and there were nearly 1310 learners. As of January 2020, there were 9 special general education schools and nearly 600 learners. Through the transition to the universal inclusive education system, in 2020, there are nearly 5500 learners in need of special conditions for education in the inclusive education system.

258. As a result of introduction of the universal inclusive education system 17 territorial pedagogical-psychological support centres have been established in different marzes; the position of teacher’s assistant has been introduced in general education schools; as a result of reorganisation, learners of previous special general education schools have been transferred to general education schools; new standards for assessing the need of a child for special conditions of education have been introduced, etc.

259. In regard to the transition to universal inclusive education, in 2017, there were 1259 children receiving pedagogical-psychological support services, 3771 in 2018, 4300 in 2019 and 5700 in 2020.

260. In 2018–2019, the Republican Pedagogical-Psychological Centre held training courses for specialists of Territorial Pedagogical-Psychological Support Centres and general education institutions devoted to the following topics: preparing and implementing an individual plan for pedagogical-psychological support service; methodology for organizing pedagogical-psychological processes for children with an intellectual disability; psychological support to children with intellectual impairments, etc.

261. The State supports the development, publication and procurement of programmes, handbooks and other educational materials for organising education for children in need of special conditions for education; within the scope of this, methodical guides-handbooks, packages of educational materials for development and Braille notebooks have been obtained.

262. On 6 May 2020, the National Assembly of Armenia adopted the Law “On making an amendment to the Government of Armenia “On preschool education”. The Law is universally inclusive, the main principles are equal opportunities for learning and care, and it guarantees exercise of the right to preschool education that is equal, accessible and available for everyone by providing equal opportunities and ensuring quality inclusivity and accessibility with reasonable accommodations.

263. It is envisaged to improve the building conditions of general education schools, build ramps, as well as provide appropriate property and equipment. Within the scope of the grant programme “Strengthening the Inclusive Education System in Armenia” being carried out with the support of the USAID, it is envisaged to carry out activities for renovation, accommodation and ensuring of necessary property and equipment at 100 general education schools and 5 territorial pedagogical-psychological support centres by April 2021.

264. While planning renovation and reconstruction of general education schools, all criteria are taken into consideration in order to make sure the environment is as accessible and adapted as possible.

265. Within the scope of the programme “Vocational Education and Employment for Youth with Disabilities” implemented in 2016–2017 within the framework of co-operation with the “Save the Children” organisation, small grants were given to 5 Vocational Education and Training institutions (hereinafter referred to as “VET institutions”) in Yerevan and the marzes in order to establish innovative social enterprises and ensure ongoing vocational education and internship for youth with disabilities.

266. A number of activities are currently being implemented in the sector of primary and secondary vocational education for the purpose of ensuring access to education for persons with disabilities.

267. Persons of the 1st and 2nd disability groups and children with disability under the age of 18 are, in case of earning at least transitional points for the paid system, admitted to the system of free education, at the expense of the funds of the RA state budget.

268. Under the 2017–2021 Comprehensive Programme for Social Inclusion of Persons with Disabilities, it is envisaged to ensure accessibility of education for persons with disabilities at higher education institutions and primary and secondary vocational education institutions until 2021.

269. Article 22.1 of the Law of the Republic of Armenia “On urban development” prescribes that the requirements set under legal acts of Armenia and the requirements for preservation of urban development, historical and cultural monuments and environment, sanitary-hygienic, firefighting, civil defence and protection of persons with disabilities and groups with limited mobility of the population set under other regulatory acts are indicated in the architectural planning task.

270. Taking as a basis the aforementioned, the demands of persons in need of special conditions for education are taken into consideration while designing buildings, constructions and other premises, as well as while repairing existing buildings and constructions.

271. Activities for identifying the social and educational needs of students with disabilities are continuously carried out at universities.

272. In 2020–2022, trainings on the introduction of the universal inclusive education system will be conducted in the marzes, and there will be public awareness-raising activities regarding the process of introduction, successes and current problems of the universal inclusive education system.

## **Health (Article 25)**

### **Points 43 and 44**

273. At the initiative of the Ministry of Health of Armenia, in 2017–2019, courses entitled “Package of Minimum Preliminary Services for Reproductive Health in Emergency Situations” were jointly conducted by the National Platform for Disaster Risk Reduction Fund and the UNFPA Office in Armenia for fire-fighters, rescuers and medical workers.

274. The “HIV virus” course is continuously conducted for the ongoing professional development and improvement of medical workers dealing with HIV/AIDS. Actions for raising the level of awareness of wide layers of society, including women with disabilities about issues related to HIV are continuously carried out.

275. By Order of the Minister of Health of Armenia, the Human Immunodeficiency Virus/Acquired Immunodeficiency Virus (HIV/AIDS) is included in the list of diseases and conditions that require free and urgent medical aid guaranteed by the State, and medical aid is provided free-of-charge for the whole population, including persons with disabilities.

276. It should be mentioned that, among other training courses, it is also envisaged to conduct regular training courses on the peculiarities of medical aid and services for persons with disabilities for employees of medical institutions under the 2020–2022 Action Plan arising from the Strategy on Human Rights Protection. The Action Plan also envisages raising awareness about the right to health-care and medical aid, including for persons with disabilities.

277. Persons with disabilities (including children under the age of 18) are included in the list of socially disadvantaged and certain (special) groups of the population and benefit from privileges of receiving free inpatient medical aid and services and undergoing special and hardly affordable diagnostic check-ups.

278. Persons of first and second disability groups may also benefit from medical services provided through the latest and expensive technologies free-of-charge. Persons with disabilities also benefit from the privileges of receiving stomatological medical aid and services for free and under special conditions, guaranteed by the State.

279. The Ministry of Health has developed the “2020–2025 Five-Year Strategy for Development of the Healthcare System of the Republic of Armenia”, which enshrines provisions related to accessibility of healthcare services provided to all population groups, including persons with disabilities.

280. As far as the provision of reproductive and sexual health services to women with disabilities is concerned, they benefit from prenatal and postnatal outpatient-polyclinic medical aid, abortion, as well as the right to benefit from all types of medical aid for free prior to the 42nd day after birth, reserved for women with disabilities under Decision of the Government of Armenia No 318-N and other departmental regulatory acts arising from the Decision.

281. Women with disabilities also benefit from the privileges of undergoing inpatient check-ups for gynaecological diseases and receiving medical aid free-of-charge, as well as free medical aid in case of abortion.

282. Under Decision of the Government of Armenia “On establishing the procedure for medical aid and services through the application of assisted reproductive technologies free-of-charge or under special conditions and the requirements for beneficiaries”, starting from 2019, women with disabilities are, in case of infertility, entitled to benefit from the complex check-up and treatment, including assistive reproductive technologies, in vitro fertilisation and artificial insemination.

283. Depending on the nature of disability (deafness, blindness, movement limitations, mental conditions), while providing medical aid and services, medical organisations carry out individualised actions targeted at the need of the person with disability, engaging relatives, guardians, accompanying persons or other specialists.

## **Habilitation and rehabilitation (Article 26)**

### **Points 45 and 46**

284. For the purpose of making the provision of services to persons with disabilities more addressed and targeted, the MLSA regularly carries out activities to enhance and upgrade the mechanisms for the provision of services.

285. As stated above, currently, within the scope of state target programmes, state certificates are issued to persons with disabilities to obtain assistive means.

286. At the same time, as a result of introduction of a new functionality assessment system, an individualized service plan (hereinafter “ISP”) will be developed for each person. The ISP will be developed by a multi-professional team through assessment of the health and activity of the person, participation in public life and the impact of environmental factors and will include various services adequate to not only the assessed need for recovery, but also the assessed need for functionality that is required from the perspective of social inclusion of the person.

287. Starting from 2020, the MLSA has expanded the network of delegated daytime services, including 30 large settlements of the Republic of Armenia. The delegated organisations provide services to children in difficult life situations and their families, within the scope of which it is also envisaged to provide professional and personal rehabilitation services, in accordance with the developed personal rehabilitation plans. See point 12 of Article 7.

288. In a number of Armenian marzes, children with disabilities since childhood regularly receive rehabilitation treatments, persons with disabilities are provided with rehabilitation and technical means.

289. For the purpose of early detection of children with special needs in the marzes of Armenia and making their rehabilitation treatment more available, the Institute of Child and Adolescent Health of Arabkir Medical Center has established Child Development and Rehabilitation Centres in the marzes with the support of the Ministry of Health.

290. For the purpose of restoring the mobility and functional capacities of children and teens, the educational institutions and competent bodies in the field of physical culture and sport of the RA marzes organise athletic training sessions.

## **Work and employment (Article 27)**

### **Points 47 and 48**

291. In regard to exclusion of discrimination against persons with disabilities in the employment sector, the principle of equality before the law is enshrined by the RA Constitution, as well as the Labour Code of the Republic of Armenia and the Law of the Republic of Armenia “On employment”. In particular, Article 29 of the Constitution of Armenia states that discrimination based on sex, race, skin colour, ethnic or social origin, genetic features, language, religion, world view, political or other views, belonging to a national minority, property status, birth, disability, age, or other personal or social circumstances shall be prohibited. At the same time, Article 83 of the Constitution of Armenia stipulates that everyone shall, in accordance with law, have the right to social security in cases of maternity, having many children, sickness, disability, accidents at work, need of care, loss of bread-winner, old-age, unemployment, loss of employment, and in other cases. See also Point 7 on Article 3.1 of the RA Labour Code.

292. Pursuant to Article 141 of the Labour Code, an incomplete working day or an incomplete working week is set upon request of the disabled person, based on medical conclusion. Pursuant to Article 144, disabled persons may be engaged in overtime work, where performance of such work is not forbidden by a medical conclusion.

293. Pursuant to Article 19 of the Law of the Republic of Armenia “On social protection of disabled persons”, a reduced amount of working hours not exceeding 36 hours a week shall be prescribed for persons with disabilities of 1st and 2nd groups.

294. The issue of integration of persons with disabilities in the labour market remains one of the pivotal issues in the employment policy. It was stressed in the 2013–2018 Strategy on Employment adopted in 2012, and later in the 2014 Law of the Republic of Armenia “On employment”. As a result of legislative amendments, since 2014, persons with disabilities receive the status of unemployed and benefit from all the social guarantees given to unemployed persons and are included in all state employment programmes. Point 2 of part 3 of Article 21 of the Law “On employment” prescribes that the unemployed person with disability shall, in case of job placement, also have the right to support for accommodation at the workplace. In addition, as a standard for determining the non-competitiveness of a person, Article 22 of the Law states the circumstance of a person having disability.

295. The rights of non-competitive persons in the employment sector are exercised through programmes regulating the employment sector. Certain actions being carried out in the employment sector are particularly aimed at providing persons with disabilities with jobs, particularly:

1. Provision of partial compensation of salary for the employer and monetary aid for a person accompanying the person with disability, in case of job placement for persons who are non-competitive in the labour market, have disability, as well as have the status of a “child with disability”;

2. In case of job placement of persons who are non-competitive in the labour market, lump-sum compensation is granted to the employer;

The following 2 sub-programmes are included in the programme:

1. Lump-sum compensation to the employer for acquisition of working skills and abilities by persons who are non-competitive in the labour market;

2. Lump-sum compensation to the employer for accommodation for persons with disabilities at the workplace.

296. The services provided to persons with disabilities have been reviewed and improved. At an employment centre, job seeker, including person with disability, is provided with consultancy, his/her labour needs are assessed and, based on those needs, a personal plan for ensuring employment is developed.

297. Under the Law “On employment”, until May 2017, regulation for mandatory provision of jobs (hereinafter “quota”) has been prescribed for organisations, irrespective of their form of ownership, for job placement of a person with disability, or the person who has the right to old age pension.

298. The studies on the processes of fulfilling the quota requirement by organisations subject to quoting showed that there were a number of objective obstacles with regard to introduction of quotas in the sense of full implementation of the requirement in certain sectors.

299. As a result, Decision of the Government of Armenia “On approving the procedure for partition and use of quota by an organisation in case of failure to fulfil the quota requirement” was repealed upon Decision of the Government of Armenia of 16 August 2018.

300. Several analyses have been conducted in this regard, discussions have been held with social partners, and currently, the issue of job placement for persons with disabilities is still regulated by improving the conditions for active programmes being carried out for persons specified by the State Employment Office and increasing their involvement in those programmes.

## Adequate standard of living and social protection (Article 28)

### Points 49 and 50

301. In case of having service record prescribed by law in the Republic of Armenia, a person with disability shall be granted labour disability pension. The disability pension shall be granted for the entire period of disability.

302. The amount of the labour disability pension shall depend on the length of service record, the amount of the basic pension for calculating the labour pension, the value of one year of service record, the disability group. The amount of the basic pension, the value of one year of service record shall be determined by the Government of Armenia.

303. A supplement to the labour disability pension shall be provided:

- For the first group – 40% of the basic pension;
- For the second group – 20% of the basic pension.

304. In case of absence of service record required by law, a person recognised as disabled shall be granted a disability benefit.

305. From 1 January 2020, the amount of basic pension for calculating the labour pension, the value of one year of up to 10 years of service record have been increased. Accordingly, the average monthly amount of disability pension increased by 10.1 percent. From 1 January 2020, the minimum amount of labour pensions, as well as the amount of benefits for old age, disability and in case of loss of breadwinner have also been increased. From 1 September 2019, the honorarium of veterans of the Great Patriotic War, including people with disabilities, has been doubled.

306. In 2019, the activities of granting benefits (family or social benefits, or emergency assistance) provided by the system of assessment of the level of insecurity of families continued. There are also persons with disabilities in the families registered in the system of assessment of the level of insecurity of families and receiving family or social benefits or emergency assistance. Activities aimed at expansion of the scope of data received online on state benefits, including in the system of assessment of the level of insecurity of families, as well as those aimed at increase of targeting, continued. In 2019, by the Decision of the Prime Minister of Armenia, a working group was set up for the reforms aimed at raising the living standards of the family.

307. The 2020 Annual Programme for the protection of rights of a child envisages a number of measures which derive from the protection of the rights and interests of children for the purpose of creating favourable conditions for their care, treatment and upbringing, normal physical and mental development, psychological rehabilitation and effective socialisation.

308. A social housing fund has been established separately for persons (families) classified as socially vulnerable groups, in particular, children left without parental care, orphanage graduates, single pensioners, single-parent families. Persons with disabilities are included in the Programme if they meet the mentioned requirements.

309. An accommodation (“Veteran” housing accommodation) service for a certain category of persons assigned to special groups operates under the MLSA. The purpose of providing an accommodation is to provide temporary residential area to certain categories of persons assigned to special groups and, where necessary, to provide other social services to those persons to overcome/prevent difficult life situation.

310. The issue of combining social services and setting up comprehensive centres is a priority in the field of social protection forming a part of the state policy, and definite steps aimed whereof are being taken. Currently there are 27 regional centres of comprehensive social services in the Republic of Armenia, 20 of which are in the marzes and 7 in the capital. In these centres, receipt of social services for persons with disabilities is as accessible and inclusive as possible.

311. Marzpetarans provide financial assistance to persons with disabilities within their budget, too.



## Participation in political and public life (Article 29)

### Points 51 and 52

312. The following measures and processes have been carried out for the purpose of ensuring the suffrage rights of persons with disabilities, their access to information related to the election process, awareness raising, as well as participation in public and political life:

- The Medium-Term Expenditure Framework for 2020–2022 of the Central Electoral Commission (CEC) is targeted at making the electoral process more accessible for persons with disabilities, where it is mentioned that “The commission cooperates with non-governmental organisations in order to make the electoral process more accessible for persons with disabilities;
- For the purpose of ensuring additional opportunities and equal conditions for voters having difficulties in participating in the election, the CEC, since February 2019, has carried out activities aimed at reviewing the CEC Decision “On establishing additional opportunities aimed at making the election accessible for voters having difficulties in participating in the election” of 22 November 2016, within the framework whereof it applied to NGOs dealing with the issues of persons with disabilities and, in recent years, having been accredited in the CEC to carry out observation missions, requesting their proposals on ensuring additional opportunities and equal conditions for voters having difficulties in participating in the election;
- The link to the CEC official website “<http://res.elections.am/simple/index.htm>” allows persons with visual impairments to be informed about electoral processes, events in the electoral sphere, as well as electoral legislation. The needs of persons with colour vision problems (colour blindness) have also been taken into account;
- During the 2017 elections of the National Assembly of Armenia, a voter guide was published in Braille, which was delivered to beneficiaries;
- Special magnifying glasses were provided to precinct electoral commissions to ensure an opportunity for voters with visual impairments to participate in the election independently;
- The CEC manual for persons with visual impairment having difficulties in participating in the election is posted on the CEC official website;
- All video broadcasts on the clarification of the voting procedure were combined with sign language;
- Taking into account the peculiarities of participating in the election by the citizens not having an opportunity to fill in the ballot paper on their own due to visual impairment, the precinct electoral commissions were provided with appropriate cardboard templates, which allowed the persons with visual impairments to vote without outside help;
- The CEC prepared a video material on the promotion of voting and the inadmissibility and rejection of electoral bribes, wherein, for the first time, an inclusive element was used;
- Since 2018, within the framework of professional courses on holding elections and trainings of the members of electoral commissions, specialists working with persons with disabilities have been involved in trainings of trainers as trainers;
- A comprehensive survey of the polling stations’ accessibility across Armenia is being conducted.

313. The municipal and regional authorities have also carried out various activities to ensure participation of persons with disabilities in public and political life (including on the right to vote and elect).

## Participation in cultural life, recreation, leisure and sport (Article 30)

### Points 53 and 54

314. For the purpose of promoting the participation of persons with disabilities in sports and cultural life, a number of measures are envisaged by the “2017–2021 Comprehensive Program on Social Inclusion of Persons with Disabilities”: adjustment of buildings and facilities of cultural and sports nature for persons with disabilities, as well as provision of appropriate equipment, ensuring the provision of information and services for persons with disabilities in buildings and facilities of cultural significance in an accessible format, ensuring the participation of persons with disabilities in sports events.

315. Support was provided to NGOs dealing with the issues of persons with disabilities for carrying out various cultural events, including charity concerts and inclusive performances. The children enrolled in the Information Bank of Gifted Children with Disabilities of Armenia have been represented in a number of cultural projects and festivals.

316. Inclusive cultural programs were implemented throughout the country, in particular, aesthetic and handicraft training for children with disabilities, exhibitions of creative works of persons with mental health problems, events dedicated to the International Day of Persons with Disabilities. The program “Audio-Guide Service for Visually Impaired Visitors in Museums” was implemented in the museums.

317. During 2017–2019, inclusive handicraft programs for persons with disabilities were implemented with the support of the Ministry of Education, Science, Culture and Sports, on the initiative of the “Pyunic” Association for the Disabled.

318. A number of continuing education programs were implemented with the participation of and for children with autism, and an interactive educational program was implemented for children with cerebral palsy.

319. Continuing educational and cultural programs and events, in particular, cultural-educational concert-lessons, theatrical performances, exhibition of works, visits to museums and libraries, museum educational program with the help of sign language interpreters, were organised with the participation of and for persons with mobility, hearing and visual impairments.

320. Protocol Decision “On approving the concept of development of sports for the disabled in the Republic of Armenia” was adopted on 7 September 2017.

321. During 2017–2019, within the framework of the “Services related to the sports for the disabled” program, 19 events were implemented by NGOs engaged in sports for the disabled within the state budget funds.

322. In 2017–2019, about 67 families from RA marzes and the city of Yerevan having a wheelchair user in the family, participated in the competition “Best Sports Family”.

323. About 900 people with hearing, visual, mobility and mental impairments from 10 marzes and the city of Yerevan, participated in the competition “Best Athlete with Disabilities” held in 2017–2019.

324. The participation of Armenian sports delegations in a number of international tournaments was ensured. The athletes and the coaches received nominal pensions for the results shown at the tournaments.

325. According to Decision of the Government of Armenia of 5 November 2015, in 2017–2019, athletes with disabilities received awards for registering good results in various tournaments.

326. Work has been carried out to adapt sports facilities for persons with disabilities (accessible entrance/exit, free movement, access to bathrooms).

327. See point 16 of Article 9 for information on ensuring access to buildings and services for persons with disabilities.

## **Statistics and data collection (Article 31)**

### **Points 55 and 56**

328. As of 1 January 2020, 192013 persons with disabilities are registered in Armenia, 92076 of which are women, 3807 persons (1658 women) have disability of 1st group, 21465 persons (10164 women) have disability of 2nd group, 29763 persons (15132 women) have disability of 3rd group, 2555 persons (786 girls) have a child with disability status.

329. The data of persons with disabilities are entered into the information system “Registration of persons with disabilities”. The information system summarizes disaggregated data by groups, gender, age, place of residence, degree of activity limitation of persons with disabilities. The information system enables performing the necessary analysis by all the listed criteria.

330. At the same time, the registration of assistive devices provided to persons with disabilities is carried out in the information system “Prosthetic and orthopaedic and rehabilitation equipment provision”.

331. Within the framework of the preparation of the next census of the Republic of Armenia, questions on disability and participation restriction of a person, according to The Washington Group Short Set on Functioning, have been introduced in the census questionnaire. It has already been tested during the pilot census conducted in October 2019. As a result, it is expected to receive statistical data on persons with vision, hearing, walking or climbing, memory, communication, and self-care problems among population that can be cross-checked by gender, age, educational level, marital status, nationality, employment, and other data collected during the census.

332. The introduction of a system for assessing the functionality of a person will allow to have an enlarged data system on the functionality of persons with disabilities, the need for services, which will enable developing a data-based policy.

## **National implementation and monitoring (Article 33)**

### **Points 57 and 58**

333. The protection of the rights of persons with disabilities is always under the attention of the state and the Human Rights Defender (HRD). There is a separate chapter on the rights and issues of persons with disabilities and the recommendations on the issues of persons with disabilities in the HRD annual reports.

334. On 16 December 2016, following the amendments to the Constitution of Armenia of 2015, the RA Constitutional Law “On the Human Rights Defender” was adopted. In line with the amendments to the Constitution, the powers of the HRD of Armenia, the mechanisms and safeguards for the implementation thereof were stipulated in the Constitutional Law. The HRD shall be entrusted with the mandate of the National Preventive Mechanism provided by the Optional Protocol of the UN Convention “Against Torture and Other Cruel, Inhuman or Degrading Treatment or Punishment”. The HRD shall conduct monitoring of the implementation of the provisions of the UN Convention “On the Rights of the Child”, as well as carry out prevention of violations of the rights of the child and the protection thereof.

335. From the point of view of effective protection of the rights of persons with disabilities, the study of a large number of individual complaints about alleged rights violations, as well as the effective solution of systemic problems and preventive functions, the need for direct stipulation of legal grounds for exercising certain powers of the HRD has been raised.

336. Thus, with the legislative amendments of 2018, the HRD was entrusted with monitoring of application of the provisions of the UNCRPD, as well as prevention of violations of the rights of persons with disabilities and the protection thereof (RA Constitutional Law “On the Human Rights Defender”, Article 2, part 4). Article 33 of the Convention, which provides for the reservation of that status to an independent body, served as a ground for this amendment.

337. Accordingly, Article 30.1 of the above-mentioned law defines the powers of the HRD as an independent body in the field of protection of the rights of persons with disabilities. Specifically:

338. The HRD is authorised to:

- Conduct monitoring of compliance of the legislation with the UNCRPD provisions;
- Carry out regular, as well as ad hoc unimpeded visits to institutions where persons with disabilities stay. The Defender shall not be obliged to notify about the time and purpose of the visit in advance;
- Present ad hoc public reports related to the rights of persons with disabilities;
- Present recommendations to the competent bodies in relation to the improvement of legal acts related to the rights of persons with disabilities or the drafts thereof or practice;
- Carry out other powers prescribed by this law.

339. For the purpose of implementing the above-mentioned authority, in 2019, a Department for the Protection of the Rights of Persons with Disabilities was established in the HRD's Office. The Department provides protection of the violated rights and freedoms of persons with disabilities by state and local authorities and officials on the basis of individual complaints, unannounced visits, as well as the implementation of functions of monitoring (carried out by the HRD) of the provisions of the UNCRPD. For the purpose of establishing the Department, financial resources were allocated from the reserve fund of the Government of Armenia for 9 months of 2019, and by the Law HO-277-N "On the State Budget of the Republic of Armenia for 2020" of 6 December 2019, the financial resources required for ensuring the normal functioning of the Department, ensuring equal rights and equal opportunities for persons with disabilities, as well as for implementation of monitoring of application of the provisions of the UNCRPD, were included in the state budget as an ongoing expenditure.

340. In relation with the above-mentioned, it should be noted that the Constitution and the RA Constitutional Law "On the Human Rights Defender" adopted on the basis thereof, stipulate significant safeguards of financial independence of the HRD. According to Part 4 of Article 193 of the Constitution, the State shall ensure due financing of the activities of the HRD. It should be specifically noted that the institution of the HRD is the only one in the Constitution for which such a requirement is stipulated.

341. Thus, pursuant to the Law of the Republic of Armenia "On the Human Rights Defender", the amount of allocation for funding provided from the state budget to the Defender and the Staff thereto as well as to the Defender as the National Preventative Mechanism cannot be less than the amount provided the year before. There is a requirement in the Law for specific funding of activities of the HRD as the National Preventive Mechanism. The remuneration of independent experts of the Preventive Mechanism is carried out at the expense of the state budget, from the funds allocated to the HRD staff for that purpose. So, guarantees of financial independence are necessary also for ensuring the activities of the HRD, including the continued effective conduct of the power regarding the implementation of monitoring the application of the provisions of the UNCRPD.

342. Due to the mentioned status, the HRD carries out regular monitoring of application of the provisions of the UNCRPD, as well as implements ad hoc unimpeded visits to institutions where persons with disabilities stay.

343. For example, in May–June 2018, the representatives of the HRD Office conducted monitoring visits to more than 200 educational institutions in Yerevan and marzes, 80 of which were pre-school educational institutions. During the visits, the availability of water supply and sanitation services in pre-school and general educational and child care institutions was examined, the bathrooms, water and sanitation conditions in the institutions were inspected, special attention was paid to the institutions providing services to children with disabilities and special groups.

344. Guided by the principles of the Convention, the HRD, in the implementation of his activities, has constantly co-operated and co-operates with the relevant state bodies, non-governmental organisations, media, other representatives of civil society carrying out activity in the field of protection of the rights of persons with disabilities in order to support the formation and strengthening of the environment of equal opportunities and rights. Working jointly with civil society is extremely important, which greatly contributes to the process of restoring the rights of citizens.

345. Accordingly, the HRD and the staff representatives regularly hold working meetings with representatives of state bodies, the media, non-governmental organisations and international organisations involved in the protection of the rights of persons with disabilities. Moreover, the discussions are organised not only in Yerevan, but also in the marzes. During the meetings, the issues of persons with disabilities and possible directions of cooperation aimed at solving the existing problems in the field, are discussed.

346. With regard to ensuring the full participation of persons with disabilities in the monitoring process, it should be noted that the procedure for forming a Public Council under the HRD Office in the field of protection of the rights of persons with disabilities and the operations procedure thereof is being developed.

347. In February 2020, a meeting-discussion was held with non-governmental organisations carrying out activity in the field of protection of the rights of persons with disabilities, during which the mission of the Department for the Protection of the Rights of Persons with Disabilities of the HRD Office, spheres of activity thereof, the procedure for forming a Public Council, the function of the HRD regarding the monitoring of implementation of provisions of the Convention, were presented.

## **II. Follow-up and dissemination**

### **Dissemination of information**

#### **Points 59, 60, 61 and 62**

348. In 2018, the Republic of Armenia provided information on the implementation of the recommendations made in paragraphs 12 and 32 of the Final Observations of the Committee on the Initial Report on the Implementation of the Provisions of the Convention.

349. The Final Observations of the Committee have been submitted to the relevant agencies and organisations to take them into account in the scope of their activities and functions, and take appropriate steps.

350. The draft report was submitted to the opinion of 70 non-governmental organisations dealing with the issues of persons with disabilities in the Republic of Armenia. Awareness-raising activities on the launch of the report development, as well as the possibility of participation of organisations and individuals in its development work, were carried out in advance.

351. The Final Observations of the Committee were presented to the non-governmental organisations dealing with the issues of persons with disabilities in the Republic of Armenia, including the organisations of national minorities.

## **Next report**

### **Point 63**

352. According to the Decision of the Prime Minister of Armenia No 359-A of 17 March 2020, an Inter-agency Working Group was established to develop a draft of the Second and Third Joint Periodic Report of the Republic of Armenia on the Implementation of the Convention. The Report has been developed taking into account the scope of questions raised by the Committee on the Initial Report of the Republic of Armenia on the Implementation of the Convention, as well as the guidelines and recommendations defined by the Committee.

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