



Economic and Social Council

Distr.: General
21 July 2011
English
Original: Russian

Committee on Economic, Social and Cultural Rights

Forty-seventh session

Geneva, 14 November–2 December 2011

Implementation of the International Covenant on Economic, Social and Cultural Rights

Consideration of reports submitted by States parties in accordance with articles 16 and 17 of the International Covenant on Economic, Social and Cultural Rights

Replies by the Government of Turkmenistan to the list of issues (E/C.12/TKM/Q/1) to be taken up in connection with the consideration of the initial report of Turkmenistan (E/C.12/TKM/1)*

[18 July 2011]

* In accordance with the information transmitted to States parties regarding the processing of their reports, the present document was not formally edited before being sent to the United Nations translation services.

**Further information from the Government of Turkmenistan to the
initial report on the implementation of the provisions of the
International Covenant on Economic, Social and Cultural Rights
(E/C.12/TKM/1)**

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General information

1. The following international agreements have been added to the list of international instruments to which Turkmenistan is party: International Convention against Doping in Sport (25 September 2010), International Labour Organization (ILO) Convention concerning the Prohibition and Immediate Action for the Elimination of the Worst Forms of Child Labour (No. 182) (25 September 2010), Optional Protocol to the Convention on the Rights of Persons with Disabilities (25 September 2010), World Health Organization (WHO) Framework Convention on Tobacco Control (26 March 2011). The Government of Turkmenistan is continuing to take all necessary practical and legislative steps to eliminate all forms of racial discrimination and to ensure that any attempted discrimination on racial or ethnic grounds, including by officials, individuals, groups or institutions, will be suppressed. As part of the recent reforms in Turkmenistan, a number of legislative acts have been passed concerning the defence and protection of human rights, and containing provisions to uphold the rights stipulated in the International Covenant on Economic, Social and Cultural Rights. These legislative acts include the Code of Criminal Procedure (18 April 2009), the Labour Code (18 April 2009), the Criminal Code (10 May 2010), the Penal Enforcement Code (26 March 2011), the Education Act (15 August 2009), the Courts Act (15 August 2009), the Procurator's Office Act (15 August 2009), the Bar and Advocacy Act (10 May 2010), the Local Authorities Act (10 May 2010), the Khalk Maslakhaty (people's councils) and Gengesh (local councils) Elections Act (25 September 2010) and the Legal Status of Foreign Nationals Act (26 March 2011). A decree has been signed on the holding of a comprehensive population and housing census in Turkmenistan in 2012, the results of which will be used in the world census carried out by the World Population and Housing Census Programme. The comprehensive census will provide precise data about the demographic composition of the population and the social and economic situation of all of the country's citizens.

2. With regard to the status of the Covenant in the domestic legal system, it should be noted that, in accordance with article 6 of the Constitution, "Turkmenistan recognizes the primacy of the universally accepted norms of international law. Where an international agreement concluded by Turkmenistan provides otherwise than domestic law, the provisions of the international agreement are adopted." Any international agreements ratified by Turkmenistan form part of the national legislation. This is reflected in special articles incorporated into the country's laws, specifying the precedence of international law. The practice of giving precedence to international legal norms, as proclaimed in the Constitution, facilitates the operation of general and specific domestic legislation designed to strengthen and extend the scope of article 6, paragraph 2, of the Constitution. These instruments include the International Treaties Act, the Civil Code, the Labour Code and procedural codes. The Constitution and domestic legislation guarantee to all citizens, without distinction of any kind, legal and judicial defence, and the protection and restoration of economic, social and cultural rights when they are violated. The State ensures the provision of necessary professional legal assistance to all. All individuals and legal entities on the territory of Turkmenistan are entitled to receive legal assistance as well as information on its nature and the procedure for obtaining it. The State guarantees free legal assistance and upholds the rights of individuals in cases provided for by law.

3. Information about the Covenant reaches the population through the mass media, radio, television, newspapers and magazines. With the aim of raising public awareness of the contents of the Covenant, seminars, training courses, round tables and conferences are organized on a regular basis, jointly with international organizations accredited in Turkmenistan, with international experts invited to take part and involving higher education teachers, representatives of Government ministries and departments, representatives of law

enforcement bodies, employees of organizations and businesses, and members of voluntary associations. Turkmenistan devotes great attention to the circulation of information about international and national legal texts on human rights and freedoms, including those of women. Ad hoc Parliamentary and Cabinet issuances, newspapers and magazines distributed by subscription or sold in retail outlets provide the general public with details in the State language and Russian of laws and other legislation relating to human rights and freedoms and also of the international agreements to which Turkmenistan accedes. Long-term humanitarian programmes are being conducted, in conjunction with the offices of international organizations and foreign embassies accredited to Turkmenistan, to heighten public awareness of the fundamental international agreements on human rights and freedoms, and in particular of the Covenant.

4. The National Institute for Democracy and Human Rights, established in the Office of the President on 23 October 1996, is responsible, inter alia, for the development of democratic processes and the promotion and protection of human rights. This Institute is a scientific and methodological centre which carries out research into democracy, the rights and freedoms of the individual and the working methods of State and public institutions, with a focus on applied scientific research into democracy, human and civil rights and freedoms; the development of State and public democratic institutions; and the elaboration of proposals for the further democratization of State and public life. One of the Institute's most important fields of activity is to organize reviews and analyses of the applications, complaints and petitions made by citizens and to submit regular proposals to the President. The Institute also works on raising the level of public awareness of political and legal affairs. It publishes the magazine *Democracy and the Law* in Turkmen, Russian and English. The Institute also coordinates the activity of the Interdepartmental Commission on Compliance with Turkmenistan's International Human Rights Obligations, which was created by a presidential decree of 24 August 2007. The aim of the Interdepartmental Commission is to bring about the effective realization of international standards at the national level and to incorporate them in domestic law, as well as to prepare national reports on the implementation of relevant United Nations human rights instruments. The Government is currently undertaking a joint project with the European Commission, the Office of the United Nations High Commissioner for Human Rights (OHCHR) and the United Nations Development Programme (UNDP) to enhance Turkmenistan's national capacity to promote and protect human rights for the period 2009–2012. As part of this project, the Human Rights Information Centre was opened on 2 May 2011 with the aim of promoting human rights in the country by raising public awareness of international standards and norms pertaining to human rights. The Information Centre has the following roles: to create and manage a human rights database providing visitors with the information that they require; to utilize a human rights library and a database of legislation; and to organize public briefings, lectures and round tables on human rights issues. A library has been created for visitors to the Centre, with OHCHR publications, relevant literature on scientific theory and methodology, and other reference materials. Visitors may also use human-rights-related Internet resources.

Article 2

5. Existing legislative, legal and regulatory instruments governing employment, labour relations, social security and social services, health care, education and housing provision help to safeguard the economic, social and cultural rights of Turkmen citizens, foreign nationals and stateless persons, without discrimination of any kind. On 26 March 2011, the Legal Status of Foreign Nationals Act was passed governing matters pertaining to the temporary or permanent residence of foreign nationals, and any labour, entrepreneurial or other activities which they may perform. Foreign nationals in Turkmenistan enjoy the same

rights and freedoms and have the same responsibilities as Turkmen citizens, unless otherwise specified in the Constitution, the aforementioned Act or other legislative instruments. They are equal before the law irrespective of their background, official status, wealth, race, ethnic origin, gender, education, language, religious beliefs or other circumstances. The provisions of the Act also apply to stateless persons temporarily or permanently residing in Turkmenistan, unless otherwise specified in legislation. Information on the protection provided equally to ethnic minorities and to the Turkmen ethnic group against discrimination in all areas of activities, including employment and education, is provided in the sections of the report on articles 7, 13 and 14. Article 7 of the Labour Code prohibits any restriction on labour rights or preferential treatment in their realization based on ethnic origin, race, gender, background, wealth, official status, place of residence, language, age, religious beliefs, political convictions, party affiliation or lack thereof, as well as other circumstances unrelated to the professional qualities of an employee or the results of his or her work. Article 4 of the Employment Act establishes that one of the fundamental principles of State employment policy is the provision of equal opportunities for all citizens in Turkmenistan, irrespective of race, gender, religious beliefs, age, political convictions, ethnic origin or social situation, to exercise their right to work and freely choose their employment.

6. The Refugees Act establishes that applicants for refugee status (whether or not they have identification documents) are entitled to: the services of an interpreter free-of-charge for questions relating to the granting of refugee status; temporary certification confirming that the refugee status application is under consideration; free travel and transport of luggage to their temporary address; living space in a temporary accommodation centre with food provided free-of-charge; medical care and social services; temporary employment or education; exemption from paying any duties, taxes and fees linked with the refugee status application procedure, and the transport of personal property. State administrative bodies and local authorities must observe these rights accordingly. An individual recognized as a refugee under the law and the regulations on the granting of refugee status in Turkmenistan shall enjoy the same rights and freedoms as citizens of Turkmenistan, excluding exemptions for foreign citizens and stateless persons listed in the legislation of Turkmenistan. A person with refugee status enjoys the right to: choose a place of residence in a list of proposed inhabited localities; choose to reside with his/her relatives, if they agree; be employed or self-employed; acquire property according to legal provisions on foreign nationals and stateless persons; education; draw benefit from cultural achievements; freedom of worship; obtain, with assistance of the competent bodies, information on relatives and property left in his country; take out of Turkmenistan any property that he/she brought into the country and any property acquired to another country which he/she has a right to enter in order to take up residence; return voluntarily to the country where he/she resided previously or travel to any third country; judicial protection from infringements affecting his/her honour, dignity, life, health, personal freedom, home, and property and non-property rights. Such persons cannot enjoy rights which under Turkmen law are provided solely to citizens of Turkmenistan. These include the right to elect and be elected in State elected bodies and the right to take part in referendums. Pursuant to a presidential decree of 4 August 2005, Turkmen citizenship was granted to 13,245 people, of whom the overwhelming majority (about 9,400 people) were refugees. In addition, Turkmen residency permits were granted to 3,053 people, with the majority again (about 1,800 people) being refugees. A total of 16,298 people (including about 11,200 refugees) were granted Turkmen citizenship or received residency permits. This humanitarian approach has led to citizens from neighbouring States obtaining second citizenship in Turkmenistan after being forced, for various reasons, to leave home and country. The Government of Turkmenistan has graciously welcomed these persons, respecting the universally recognized norms of international law, and above all the traditions of benevolence and hospitality passed on by the Turkmen people from generation to generation. The new

arrivals were given all the basics for a normal life, and specifically, were allocated apartments and hostels and offered employment in cities, and were allocated plots of land in rural localities. Schools, hospitals and other social facilities were also built.

Article 3

7. Turkmenistan reaffirms that the comprehensive protection of women's rights by the State and society is its most important political, social and economic goal. Turkmenistan is establishing favourable conditions for the implementation of women's rights and freedoms on an equal basis with men. The State is pursuing its efforts to elaborate a strategy and programmes aimed at accelerating the realization of women's de facto equality. An analysis of the basic indicators of women's status and gender discrepancies in development shows that progress has been made in a number of areas and that the process of promoting gender policy is continuing. The legal and institutional foundation has been cast for ensuring a decent life for all sectors of the population, including women, on the basis of the principles of equality and justice. The high quality of the legislation adopted and the many areas in which the details and effectiveness of its implementation are regulated create the necessary conditions for an ongoing, more dynamic development and improvement of a national legislative framework that is in line with international legal norms and takes the gender perspective into account.

8. Turkmenistan has gained experience in addressing questions of gender equality. The principal transformations carried out by independent Turkmenistan in the economic, social and other spheres of public life have also been significantly reflected in the standards of the statistical system. Pursuant to the national plan of action to implement the Beijing Declaration and Platform for Action, in recent years Turkmenistan's statistical system has been reforming its records of gender-based indicators. The State Statistics Committee has classified existing indicators and has drawn up a system of gender-based statistical indicators, taking into account ethnic and religious particularities. Since 1998 there has been a database for gender statistics for Turkmenistan and the regions (Genstat) and for the regions, subregions and districts (Genstat Region). The database includes 1,537 indicators in seven database areas. Regional data concern the period 1995–2009, and district and urban data cover 2000–2009. The Genstat Region database can be used to monitor basic indicators of gender development. The database is unlike any other in post-Soviet countries or even in many developed countries, as confirmed by international experts, including those of the United Nations Population Fund (UNFPA). To assess gender development in the country, 1,537 indicators have been introduced in seven areas: population, health care, physical education and sports, education and science, social welfare, work and employment, and households. The system was built on principles drawn from international practice in the area of record-keeping and statistics and on the basis of the methodological recommendations and classifications of the United Nations, the United Nations Educational, Scientific and Cultural Organization (UNESCO), WHO and ILO. The principal source of information on gender statistics is the State Statistics Committee. In May 2010, Gurbanguly Berdimuhamedov, the President of Turkmenistan, signed the State programme on the transition of Turkmenistan's statistical system to international standards, 2010–2012. Given the importance of the assessment and analysis of the impact of demographic processes on effective socio-economic policymaking, it is essential to improve the quality of statistical data in light of the realization of the United Nations Millennium Development Goals (MDGs). Bearing in mind that most of these indicators concern data on sociodemographic statistics, whereas the MDG 3 goal — to promote gender equality and empower women — is directly related to gender statistics, efforts will continue to be made to improve the methods used for their calculation at both State and regional levels. Turkmenistan is taking all appropriate measures to modify the social and

cultural patterns of conduct of men and women, with a view to achieving the elimination of prejudices and customary and all other practices which are based on the idea of the inferiority or the superiority of either of the sexes or on stereotyped roles for men and women. Demonstrating special concern for future generations, Turkmenistan ensures that family education includes a proper understanding of maternity as a social function and the recognition of the common responsibility of men and women in the upbringing and development of their children, it being understood that the interest of the children is the primordial consideration in all cases. Turkmenistan is making significant progress in overcoming gender stereotypes and achieving gender equality. The course embarked upon by the President aims to ensure equal opportunities for all citizens. One of the most important goals of Turkmenistan's gender policy is the creation of a public awareness among young people that is in keeping with a new understanding of roles and gender relations.

9. The integration of women into the social and political life of society is one of the fundamental elements of democratization. Women account for 50.2 per cent of the population of Turkmenistan and have a commendable representation in elected State and administrative bodies. A significant number of women hold office in the higher echelons of executive and administrative bodies: the Deputy Prime Minister, ministers, deputy ministers, deputy regional, urban and district administrative heads, as well as editors-in-chief of media. Currently 25 women hold senior positions in the country, including at the level of ministers and their deputies. The Government continues to promote the advancement of women in the public and political life of the country. In 2009 multicandidate elections were held for the local councils, to which 1,047 (16.84 per cent) women and 5,173 (83.16 per cent) men were elected. In the elections held on 5 December 2010, female representatives of various professions were elected to the local representative bodies of popular power, the people's councils. Women account for 16.67 per cent and men for 83.33 per cent of the total membership of the people's councils for the regions and for the city of Ashkhabad; the figures for the district and municipal people's councils are 20.21 per cent women and 79.79 per cent men. Of the 847 persons working for the judicial authorities, 388 are men (45.8 per cent) and 459 are women (54.2 per cent). Of those 459 women, 322 (70 per cent) work in cities and 137 (30 per cent) in districts. There are 41 female judges in district, municipal and regional courts and the Supreme Court, 7 women hold leading positions in the judicial system, and 30 women are department heads. Legislation does not contain any obstacles to women becoming lawyers or judges, to their giving testimony as witnesses or to their engaging in any activity not prohibited by law, on an equal basis with men. Of the six Presidiums of the Bar Association of Turkmenistan, five are headed by women. All told, there are 218 lawyers in Turkmenistan, of whom 130 (59.7 per cent) are women. The Government employs women, and guarantees the protection of their labour rights and legitimate interests on an equal footing with men, and also creates the conditions for them to hold managerial roles in companies. The level of participation of women in employment and their opportunities for finding work reflect the extent to which they are economically active.

Table 1
Level of economic activity of women, %

<i>Years</i>	<i>2005</i>	<i>2006</i>	<i>2007</i>	<i>2008</i>	<i>2009</i>
Women as a proportion of the economically active population	42.9	43.1	43.6	43.8	43.9
Women as a proportion of the working population	44.5	44.9	45.3	45.2	45.3

Indicators for the economic activity of women in Turkmenistan testify to the fact that, over the period under consideration, the proportion of women in the economically active and the working population is on the rise. From 2005 to 2008, the proportion of women in the economically active and the working population grew by 0.9 and 0.7 per cent, respectively. That shows, in turn, that women have not been forced out of the sphere of social production. The high level of education and participation of women testifies to the large proportion of women in all spheres of the economic life of the country, and especially in education, culture and the arts, health care, physical education and social welfare.

Table 2

Distribution of male and female students in secondary vocational schools broken down by specialization for 2010/11 academic year (per cent)

	<i>Men</i>	<i>Women</i>
Industry	70.9	29.1
Construction	65.1	34.9
Agriculture	56.0	44.0
Education	14.3	85.7
Health Care	13.6	86.4
Economics	32.8	67.2
Arts and culture	51.2	48.8

Table 3

Distribution of male and female students in higher education broken down by specialization for 2010/11 academic year (per cent)

	<i>Men</i>	<i>Women</i>
Humanities	42.6	57.4
Medical sciences	40.4	59.6
Natural sciences	64.4	35.6
Engineering and technical sciences	81.6	18.4
Social sciences	77.6	22.4

In cooperation with the UNFPA Office in Tajikistan, a plan of action is being prepared to introduce national legislative acts compliant with international requirements and gender-sensitive principles. The Government has taken note of general recommendation No. 25 on temporary special measures. It should be pointed out that national legislation makes no provision for temporary special measures for the achievement of women's real de facto equality with men in the enjoyment of their basic rights and freedoms. The Government is taking additional steps to create a favourable environment in which women enjoy the same rights as men.

Article 6

10. Article 33 of the Constitution states that all citizens have the right to work and choose an occupation, type of employment and place of work, and are entitled to safe and healthy working conditions. Citizens living in Turkmenistan, including members of ethnic minorities, are assured protection from any form of discrimination, and all citizens are guaranteed equal opportunities in learning an occupation, finding work and in their choice

of terms of employment and working conditions. More details are given about this in the sections of the report on articles 2, 6, 7, 13 and 14. Disciplinary, administrative and criminal liability apply to violations of Turkmen labour laws. It should be noted that this provision also applies to persons working in the informal sector, since the Labour Code governs labour relations for persons working in businesses, organizations and establishments, regardless of their organizational or legal status or form of ownership, as well as for individuals under the conditions of an employment contract.

11. Under article 18 of Turkmenistan's Labour Code of 18 April 2009, a fixed-term contract may be concluded with individuals looking to work for employers in small businesses, as well as with natural persons. Special features governing the employment of domestic workers working for natural persons are enshrined in Chapter 9 of the Labour Code. Employment contracts with domestic workers are concluded in writing and may be either fixed-term or indefinite. No contract is concluded if the work is short-term (for a total of up to 10 days in a month). The employment history of a domestic worker employed by an individual is recorded in the worker's State Tax Service employment card as at the employer's registered tax address and in accordance with the procedure prescribed by law. The working hours required under an employment contract are included in the calculation of length of service, in accordance with the procedure prescribed by law. Remuneration for domestic labour is in line with the procedure and rate defined in the employment contract but shall be no less than the statutory minimum wage. The wages of domestic workers are liable to taxation as prescribed by the law. The amount of work and leisure time for workers is regulated in an agreement between the parties to the employment contract, although the length of the working week may not exceed the legally-defined limit. Specific days off are decided by the parties to the employment contract. Workers are entitled to paid annual leave of no less than 30 calendar days, in accordance with the procedure and under the conditions established in labour legislation. An employment contract may be terminated (rescinded) by either party, without any reasons being given, at any time, except when a worker is on sick leave, in which case the employer may terminate the employment contract only two weeks exactly after the day the worker lost the ability to work. State social security is deducted from the wages of domestic workers in the amount and according to the procedure established by law. Special features governing persons in temporary employment are enshrined in chapter 11 of the Labour Code. Persons hired for up to two months are defined as being in temporary employment. No probation period is included under employment contracts concluded with temporary workers. Temporary workers who have an employment contract for up to two months are not entitled to paid leave. During the period of their temporary work and on condition of their written consent, temporary workers may be asked to work on weekends, public holidays and memorial days, for which they will receive double pay. Compensation is paid to the amount of two weeks' wages to temporary workers who are conscripted or enlist for military service.

Article 7

12. Turkmenistan's legislation and regulatory instruments pertaining to labour relations (inter alia, the Labour Code, the Employment Act, the Refugee Act, the Women's Equality (State Guarantees) Act, the Young People's Right to Work (Guarantees) Act, the Act extending the employment rights of citizens who have attained the age of 16) correspond to the norms contained in the ILO Discrimination (Employment and Occupation) Convention, 1958 (No. 111), the ILO Forced Labour Convention, 1930 (No. 29) and the ILO Abolition of Forced Labour Convention, 1957 (No. 105), which were ratified by the Majlis (parliament) on 20 December 1996.

13. The existing employment agencies attached to the Ministry of Labour and Social Welfare regulate labour supply and demand in the regions, maintain records of the non-

working population and provide assistance in searching for employment. In 2010, 110,700 people were registered at employment agencies, a figure 1.2 times higher than in 2005. The proportion of citizens finding work through labour exchanges increased from 48 per cent in 2005 to 67.2 per cent in 2010. To improve the employment situation and increase the number of job placements, new jobs are being created, employment is being maintained in businesses with good prospects and the system of vocational training and retraining, both for workers re-entering production and for those being released from it, is being improved.

14. Under article 33 of the Constitution, hired workers have the right to remuneration commensurate with the quantity and quality of their work. This remuneration may not be lower than the cost of living as established by the State. The wage guaranteed by the employer may be no lower than the minimum wage under the law. Presidential decrees have established that, at the next salary increase, an average salary level would be set for businesses, organizations and establishments, irrespective of their organizational or legal status or form of ownership, and employers would face administrative penalties for undercutting that level. In accordance with a presidential decree, as of 1 January 2011, the minimum salary level is set in relation to the cost of living. Under article 110 of the Labour Code, the minimum wage is defined as the lowest level of remuneration guaranteed by law for work of normal intensity carried out by a person able to cope with the requirements of the work and perform the simplest jobs under normal labour conditions for the given position. Article 130 of the Labour Code establishes that pay for a partial working day or a partial working week shall be proportionate to the time worked or conditional on the achievement of output standards. The procedure outlined in articles 110 and 130 also applies to temporary workers.

15. In Turkmenistan there is no upper limit to workers' wages. At present there are no regular statistics on wages disaggregated by sex. The law prohibits the employment of women in difficult and harmful working conditions, and there are restrictions on working time, missions, overtime work and night work. Women are more attracted to part-time employment than men are. Salaries are also usually influenced by the structural distribution of men and women by branch and occupation (horizontal segregation) and by position (vertical segregation). The highest proportion of working women is to be found in light industry, the food industry and the services sector: health care, education, culture and the arts, and social welfare. Women in other branches are also employed to a large extent in services (office work, customer assistance, etc.). Men are more often employed in the fuel and energy industry, the metal and glass industry, construction and transport, i.e. by and large in branches in which salaries are high because of round-the-clock operations and difficult and harmful working conditions.

Table 4

Breakdown of workers employed in sectors of the economy, per cent

	2005			2009		
	Total	Of which:		Total	Of which:	
		Men	Women		Men	Women
Total employment in the economy	100	100	100	100	100	100
Including:						
Goods-producing sectors	69.4	70.5	67.7	68.9	71.1	66.8
Of which:						
Industry	14.5	15.8	12.8	14.5	15.5	13.3
Agriculture, forestry and fisheries	49.1	46.7	51.9	46.6	43.8	50.4

	2005			2009		
	<i>Total</i>	<i>Of which:</i>		<i>Total</i>	<i>Of which:</i>	
		<i>Men</i>	<i>Women</i>		<i>Men</i>	<i>Women</i>
Construction	5.8	8.0	3.0	7.8	11.8	3.1
Service sectors	30.6	29.5	32.3	31.1	28.9	33.2
Of which:						
Transport and communications	5.1	6.5	3.4	5.5	7.1	3.6
Trade and catering	6.4	6.9	5.8	6.8	7.4	6.2
Health care, physical culture, social welfare	3.9	2.3	5.9	3.8	2.0	6.0
Education and culture	8.5	5.7	11.9	8.1	5.1	11.6
Other	6.7	8.1	5.3	6.9	7.3	5.8

The pay gap is therefore due to differences in the average level of wages in “masculine” and “feminine” forms of employment. Chapter 18 of the Criminal Code establishes liability for sexual crimes. Article 137 of the Criminal Code establishes that it is a criminal offence to compel a person to engage in sexual relations, sodomy or other actions of a sexual nature through blackmail, by threatening to destroy property or by taking advantage of material or any other dependence. No such offences were reported in Turkmenistan for the period 2008–2010. In order to protect the rights of women in labour relations and in particular to prevent sexual harassment in the workplace, in accordance with the Procurator’s Office Act, the procuratorial authorities shall perform checks and consider statements made, and wherever a violation is detected, the procurator may have recourse to relevant reactive legislation to prevent or combat it. As there are no reports of cases of sexual harassment of women working in businesses and organizations of various forms of ownership, there is no information on court hearings for this kind of offence.

Article 8

16. Turkmenistan’s National Centre of Trade Unions currently comprises 6,588 primary organizations, 58 district and municipal associations, 5 regional associations and 15 sectoral organizations, and has a total membership of 1,066,462. Chapter 17 of the Labour Code governs the procedure for settling labour disputes arising during employment. Applications by workers are submitted to the labour dispute committees created within various organizations and businesses and then must be recorded by the committee. The labour dispute committee is required to examine the individual labour dispute within 10 calendar days from the day the application is submitted by the worker. The labour dispute is examined in the presence of the worker who submitted the application or his or her authorized representative. The dispute may be examined in the absence of the worker or the authorized representative only with written notification from the worker. Should the worker or the authorized representative fail to attend the session of the committee, the review of the labour dispute shall be deferred. If the worker or authorized representative fails to appear a second time without good reason, the committee may rule to remove the issue from the review process, but this does not deny the worker the right to apply again for the labour dispute to be reviewed, provided that it is within the time frame established by the current Labour Code. The labour dispute committee has the right to call witnesses to the meeting and to invite representatives of trade unions and other voluntary associations. The manager of the business is required to submit any documents requested by the committee by a set deadline. The labour dispute committee is considered to be quorate if no less than half of

the members representing the workers, and no less than half the members representing the employer are present. A record of the meeting of the labour dispute committee is drawn up and signed by the chair or the deputy chair of the committee and certified by the committee's stamp. Labour disputes dealing with the application of labour legislation, collective treaties and agreements are considered by labour dispute committees; the trade union bodies of companies and their subsidiaries; and the courts. Labour disputes concerning specific categories of workers (i.e. civil servants, staff of the procuratorial authorities, military personnel) are examined by higher-ranking bodies. These are governed by the Civil Service Act, the Procurator's Office Act, and the Military Service Act. The employer and the relevant trade union body may use all available means to settle labour disputes regarding the introduction of new working conditions for workers or the alteration of existing ones. A labour dispute is subject to review in the labour dispute committee if the worker has not managed, with or without the participation of the trade union body representing his or her interests, to settle any disagreements through direct negotiations with the employer. If the individual labour dispute is not examined by the labour dispute committee within a ten-day period, the worker has the right to take the matter to court. Unless otherwise provided by law, if the employees or employer do not agree with the decision of the labour dispute committee in respect of the application submitted, the trade union committee of the company or its subsidiary examines the labour dispute. There have been cases in Turkmenistan of workers contesting the decision of the labour dispute committee and applying to trade union bodies. In 2010–2011, legal labour inspections by trade union bodies have proved helpful in the preparation and submission of claims to judicial bodies. Furthermore, legal inspectors participate in the court review of labour disputes as representatives of the defence or by offering the results of an expert appraisal. The trade union committee of a company or its subsidiary may invite representatives of voluntary associations of employees and employers, if the applicant is a member of such an association. Individual labour disputes are examined directly in court on an application from:

(a) A worker – in respect of reinstatement in employment, regardless of the grounds for termination of the employment contract; changes to the date and wording of the grounds for termination of the employment contract; remuneration for time spent in enforced idleness or carrying out lower-paid work; compensation from the employer for loss or damages caused to the health or the property of a worker in carrying out their work-related duties; or refusal to hire the worker;

(b) An employer – in respect of compensation by the worker for material damages incurred by the employer.

Labour disputes are considered directly in court if no trade union body or labour dispute committee has been established at the worker's workplace. The decision to reinstate a worker who has been unlawfully dismissed or assigned to a different, lower-paid position is taken by the body considering the labour dispute and is immediately enforceable. If the employer delays in carrying out the court's decision to reinstate a worker who was unlawfully dismissed or assigned to a different, lower-paid position, then from the day that the decision is adopted until the day that it is executed, the worker is paid the average wage or the difference in earnings. More precise statistics on the issue are kept by judicial bodies. However, trade union bodies receive each year, on average, about 600 complaints and petitions on issues regarding violations of labour laws, of which about 30 per cent are examined by judicial bodies. A decision by a higher-ranking body to reinstate an unlawfully dismissed worker in his or her previous role, as well as the payment of earnings for enforced idleness or of the difference in earnings for performing lower-paid work is immediately enforceable under the law. If the decision is taken by a higher-ranking body to reinstate a worker in his or her previous role, the worker is paid for the period of enforced idleness from the day he or she was dismissed, or for the period of time he or she carried

out lower-paid work, for a period of no longer than one year. The worker's requests for monetary compensation are met in full, provided that the body examining the individual labour dispute acknowledges that they are well founded. Labour disputes regarding the application of Turkmenistan's labour laws, and of obligations in the employment contract concerning the introduction of new working conditions or the alteration of existing ones, are considered either in the labour dispute committee or in court, at the worker's discretion. Labour disputes arising between employer and employees regarding the introduction of new working conditions or the alteration of existing ones and which are not covered by labour legislation, are considered by the employer with the agreement of the enterprise's trade union. If the trade union does not agree, the dispute is settled jointly with its highest-ranking bodies. Under article 29 of the Constitution, Turkmen citizens are guaranteed the freedom to hold assemblies, rallies and demonstrations in the manner prescribed by law. There are no special laws in Turkmenistan on the procedure for organizing strike action. Since the independence of Turkmenistan, there have been no recorded cases of strike action. In accordance with labour legislation, trade unions conclude a general agreement with the Cabinet of Ministers (article 332 of the Labour Code), and also sectoral collective agreements within the framework of social partnership. The organization of strike action is not addressed by Turkmen legislation. There are various ways of protecting the collective rights of workers:

- (a) Group discussions of issues at industrial and trade union meetings (with the employer, at the employee's workplace);
- (b) Collective bargaining to conclude a collective treaty or agreement;
- (c) Issuing orders to eliminate infractions to labour legislation;
- (d) A request by a trade union body of district level or higher to dismiss a manager for violation of labour legislation (Labour Code, art. 46);
- (e) In court, through the filing of a collective labour dispute.

Article 9

17. In accordance with the Social Security Code adopted in March 2007, social security in Turkmenistan is the provision by the State system of material and social services for citizens who are unfit to work, the disabled, families with children and other persons, through the payment of pensions and State allowances and the provision of social benefits. Pensions are provided by the State through social security and voluntary pension insurance. Distributive and cumulative pension schemes form the basis of pension provision in Turkmenistan. The distributive pension scheme is based on deductions for State social security, while the cumulative pension scheme is based on voluntary pension contributions by citizens with insurance. The report contains extensive information about this topic (paras. 151–170).

Pension provision indicators¹

<i>Indicators</i>	<i>2007</i>	<i>2008</i>	<i>2009</i>
Number of pensioners	246 339	253 709	262 702
Average monthly pension, manat	183.58	183.53	204.57
Of which:			
Women	156 326	163 222	170 512
As a percentage	63.5	64.3	64.9

<i>Indicators</i>	<i>2007</i>	<i>2008</i>	<i>2009</i>
Average monthly pension, manat	148.21	147.22	166.77
Number receiving disability allowance	76 271	79 983	86 019
Average monthly allowance, manat	84.50	92.91	133.86
Of which:			
Women	41 954	44 068	45 610
As a percentage	55.0	55.1	53.0
Average monthly allowance, manat	88.25	87.58	108.80

Main social protection indicators¹

<i>Indicators</i>	<i>2007</i>	<i>2008</i>	<i>2009</i>
Number of persons receiving allowance as widows of Second World War veterans	3 905	3 885	3 541
Average monthly allowance, manat	155.37	170.15	186.64
Number of persons paid a lump sum after the birth of a child	30 956	108 457	127 504
Average monthly allowance paid, manat	154.56	156.34	183.75
Of which:			
Women	30 956	108 457	127 504
As a percentage	100	100	100
Average monthly allowance paid, manat	154.56	156.34	183.75
Number receiving childcare allowance	110 053	133 280	268 483
Average monthly allowance, manat	50	50	71.5
Of which:			
Women	109 998	133 191	267 741
As a percentage	100.0	99.9	99.7
Average monthly allowance, manat	50	50	71.5
Number receiving social assistance allowance	9 485	10 378	11 761
Average monthly allowance, manat	60	60	66
Of which:			
Women	8 370	9 723	10 877
As a percentage	88.2	93.7	92.5
Average monthly allowance, manat	60	60	66

¹ As at 1 July 2010 there were 87,559 persons receiving disability allowance, of which 9,892 were children under the age of 16.

Number of disabled children under the age of 16 receiving benefits¹

<i>Province</i>	<i>Total number of persons receiving disability allowance</i>	<i>Of which children up to the age of 16</i>
Ashgabat	6 923	717
Ahal province	15 581	1 493
Balkan province	8 259	880
Dashoguz province	16 976	2 244

<i>Province</i>	<i>Total number of persons receiving disability allowance</i>	<i>Of which children up to the age of 16</i>
Lebap province	18 941	2 169
Mary province	20 879	2 389
Country total	87 559	9 892

When employed in the informal sector of the economy, citizens do not make contributions to State social security, and so any such periods are not included in the old-age pension calculations under the distributive pension scheme. If, when they were employed in the informal sector, citizens had signed a voluntary pension insurance agreement with labour and social protection bodies, then when they reach pensionable age, they are paid an old-age pension for that period under the cumulative pension scheme. If a citizen employed in the informal sector of the economy becomes disabled, then he or she is awarded disability allowance irrespective of whether any contributions have been made to State social security. If an individual employed in the informal sector of the economy dies, any family members dependent on him or her at that time are allocated an allowance for the loss of the breadwinner, also irrespective of contributions to State social security. Citizens employed on smallholdings, in households and for other non-contractual activities, as well as self-employed citizens, are entitled to join the cumulative pension system by signing an agreement on voluntary pension insurance with the social welfare bodies. Since pensions and State allowances are allocated and disbursed to citizens irrespective of ethnicity, statistics on the beneficiaries of pensions and allowances are not broken down by ethnic minority. Social assistance for disabled persons, in the form of both State allowances and the benefits stipulated in the Social Security Code, is dispensed through medical and social services, vocational rehabilitation and domestic assistance. Drugs and medicines, wheelchairs for disabled persons, and prosthetic, orthopaedic and other such appliances are available free-of-charge or on preferential terms, as stipulated by the Cabinet of Ministers. In accordance with Order No. 359 of the Ministry of Health and the Medical Industry, since 2009 all disabled persons in health centres receive free outpatient treatment, medicines and medical supplies. Citizens who have voluntary medical insurance pay a set premium amounting to about 2 per cent of their salary, pensions and allowances, and enjoy substantive benefits: a 50 per cent discount on medical examinations, treatment, and sanatorium and spa services, a 90 per cent discount on prescribed drugs and the right to choose a family doctor. A list of illnesses for which the medicines continue to be provided either free-of-charge or on preferential terms has been compiled and approved. The adoption of the Penal Enforcement Code on 26 March 2011 led to amendments being made to the Social Security Code on 21 May of the same year. In line with the adopted changes, as of 1 July 2011, pensioners and persons receiving disability allowance who are serving a prison sentence, receive their pension or disability allowance payments on a monthly basis. Women serving a prison sentence who have recently given birth are allocated and paid a maternity allowance as a single payment on the birth of the child, and thereafter as childcare allowance. If individuals serving a prison sentence who are working in prison fall ill during their period of work, they receive an allowance for temporary incapacity to work. The labour and social protection agencies pay pensions and allowances by transfers to the private accounts of the persons receiving the benefits, the accounts having been opened in the correctional facility where the individual is serving his or her sentence.

18. Foreign companies which hire workers from the local population on employment contracts make State social security contributions, thereby entitling the workers to an old-age retirement pension under the distributive pension scheme. In addition, the workers may sign an agreement with the social welfare agencies on voluntary pension insurance, under which they make pension contributions to their personal account, thus giving them the right

to receive a pension under the cumulative system. If the worker falls ill, the foreign company is required by law to pay a temporary incapacity allowance. Should the worker be left disabled, the social welfare agencies allocate a disability allowance, regardless of whether or not the individual is covered by social insurance. If the worker dies, any dependent family members are allocated an allowance for the loss of their breadwinner by the social welfare agencies, regardless of whether the worker was covered by social insurance.

19. State support is provided to the least well-off Turkmen citizens, and to foreign nationals and stateless persons, on the condition that they have an average income of less than the minimum consumer budget, have been living on a permanent basis in Turkmenistan and are not entitled to a pension or a State allowance. The support is channelled through local (district or municipal) authorities in the form of free or preferential terms for use of social services. The district and municipal commissions dealing with applications from such persons (the chairman of which is the deputy governor of the district or town), have the right to ask businesses, organizations or institutions to fund this use of services for free or on preferential terms.

Article 10

20. In order to ensure the country's continued stable economic development, to regulate labour issues and the level of employment, to promote working rights and guarantees, and also to improve social protection, a presidential decree of 8 April 2011 abolished the Ministry of Social Welfare, and established the Ministry of Labour and Social Welfare. Among the important tasks assigned to the new Ministry were the implementation of the State policy on employment, demographic security and social protection for the population. The Ministry of Labour and Social Welfare has under its stewardship six social service centres for elderly and disabled citizens living alone (located in each provincial capital and in the capital city, Ashgabat). These provide social amenities and health and social services, and also facilitate the social integration of elderly citizens and persons with disabilities who live alone and other citizens living alone who are unfit to work. The roles of the centres include:

- (a) Identifying specific forms of assistance and the frequency with which they are to be accorded, depending on the health of a citizen and their ability to look after themselves;
- (b) Providing assistance in terms of social, household, commercial, medical, advisory and other long- and short-term services;
- (c) Introducing new forms of social services according to the extent of the citizen's needs for social support and the socio-economic conditions in the area.

The centres have three departments:

- (a) The department for social services in the home (including health and social services). Social services are provided to citizens who have partially lost the ability to look after themselves and need additional care and help with household chores;
- (b) The day-care department – partial inpatient care during the daytime. This is intended to assist citizens who are still active and able to look after themselves with their everyday needs, to provide them with medical services, arrange their meals and leisure, and encourage them to carry out any feasible physical work and maintain an active lifestyle;
- (c) The residential department – full inpatient care day and night. This department offers assistance with everyday tasks for citizens who have partially or

completely lost the ability to look after themselves and have health needs such that they require permanent care and supervision.

Citizens of retirement age have the right to sign an agreement on State voluntary medical insurance. Disabled persons receive free medical assistance in State health-care facilities. Both persons with disabilities who live alone and need additional care, and persons with chronic mental illness have the right to stay in specialized institutions. Persons with disabilities, including those disabled since birth and disabled children, receive medical and social assistance, and rehabilitation of every kind, and are provided with medicines and medical products on preferential terms. The procedure for providing medical assistance to the disabled and also the list of benefits available to them is defined in Turkmen law. Local authorities may, within their competence, provide disabled persons with additional benefits (Health Protection Act, arts. 19 and 20). In the event of illness, loss of capacity to work and other cases, citizens are accorded medical and social assistance, including preventive and curative treatment and diagnosis, rehabilitation and prosthetic, orthopaedic and other forms of assistance, as well as social measures to provide care for those who are ill, unfit for work or disabled, including the payment of an allowance for temporary incapacity for work and for disability. Minors, students, disabled persons and pensioners who practise physical culture and sport are entitled to free medical examinations. Veterans of the Second World War and persons with equivalent status are also granted preferential terms for medical and social assistance, in accordance with national legislation.

21. Turkmenistan does not have a special law on domestic violence, including conjugal violence. The Criminal Code stipulates that unlawful actions of a violent nature, in particular towards women and girls, are indictable. Under chapter 16 of the Criminal Code, it is an offence to “commit crimes against life and health”. In 2008, the proportion of crimes committed against women under article 101, on murder, of the Criminal Code, was 0.7 per cent of all crimes reported, in 2009 it was 0.5 per cent, and in 2010 it was 0.6 per cent. In 2008, there were no crimes reported against women under article 102, on manslaughter committed under a loss of self-control. In 2009 this category represented 0.03 per cent of all crimes reported, and in 2010, no crimes of this category were reported. In 2008, the proportion of crimes committed against women under article 107 of the Criminal Code, on the deliberate infliction of grievous bodily harm, was 0.3 per cent of the total number of reported crimes; in 2009 it was 0.3 per cent and in 2010 it was 0.5 per cent. In 2008, the proportion of crimes committed against women under article 113 of the Criminal Code, on torture, was 0.1 per cent of the total number of reported crimes, in 2009 it was 0.1 per cent and in 2010 it was 0.1 per cent. For the period 2008–2010 there were no crimes reported against women under article 114, on the ill-treatment of persons in a position of dependence or a helpless state. Offences against minors, the family and morality are indictable under chapter 20 of the Criminal Code. For the period 2008–2010 there were no crimes reported against women under article 162 of the Criminal Code, on compelling women to enter into marriage or placing obstacles to their entering into marriage. The competent authorities are working to prevent and combat crimes in the aforementioned categories. When they do occur, investigations are carried out in accordance with current legislation.

22. In order to prevent and combat trafficking in persons, on 14 December 2007, the Parliament adopted the suppression of Trafficking in Persons Act, to harmonize Turkmen law with important international and regional instruments and to provide State guarantees for the freedom of the individual and protect society from trafficking in persons. In combating human trafficking, Turkmenistan adheres to the norms and principles of international law, working with foreign States, their competent authorities, and international organizations engaged in combating trafficking in persons and promoting the protection of the rights and legitimate interests of trafficking victims. The Suppression of Trafficking in

Persons Act provides a clear definition of illegal actions that constitute the exploitation of trafficking victims:

- (a) Physical coercion with the use of violence and/or narcotic or psychotropic substances, alcohol or other potent substances;
- (b) Economic coercion in the form of debt bondage or other financial dependence, including slavery or slavery-like conditions;
- (c) Psychological coercion by means of blackmail, deceit, deception or threat of the use of violence;
- (d) Legal dependence as a result of adoption, guardianship or marriage not for the purpose of starting a family.

Exploitation of trafficking victims may take the following forms:

- (a) Exploitation of a person's organs or tissue for the purpose of transplantation;
- (b) Exploitation of a woman as a surrogate mother;
- (c) Exploitation of human labour in daily economic activities (household and daily services), production or agricultural work or in a criminal enterprise (involvement in armed groups or the production of illicit goods);
- (d) Sexual exploitation;
- (e) Exploitation of a person in armed conflicts or military actions.

The consent of a trafficking victim to a specific act of trafficking must be disregarded if any form of coercion was used.

Measures taken by State bodies to prevent trafficking in persons include:

- (a) Monitoring efforts to address the problem;
- (b) Elaborating and implementing prevention programmes;
- (c) Raising public awareness about dangerous situations that potential trafficking victims may encounter, the protection provided by the State and specialized institutions, and action taken by the State to initiate criminal prosecution and impose administrative penalties;
- (d) Developing and implementing educational programmes designed to prevent trafficking in persons and reduce the risk of an individual becoming a trafficking victim;
- (e) Collaborating with voluntary organizations working to combat the phenomenon.

The Cabinet of Ministers oversees the work of State bodies active in the area. National and local authorities, voluntary associations, officials and private individuals assist State bodies in their efforts. Specialized institutions may be set up to protect, support and assist trafficking victims. The procedure for doing so and funding for their activities are determined by the Cabinet of Ministers. Voluntary associations active in combating trafficking in persons may be involved in establishing these bodies, whose main functions are:

- (a) Providing trafficking victims with easily understood information about legal and organizational measures designed to protect their interests;
- (b) Making medical, psychological, legal and other types of assistance available to trafficking victims;

- (c) Helping trafficking victims to become reintegrated in their families and society;
- (d) Providing trafficking victims with temporary shelter.

Temporary shelter in specialized institutions is made available to trafficking victims for up to one month upon their request. Child victims given temporary shelter in specialized institutions must be kept separate from adults. If there is a need for the victim to give testimony against human traffickers, shelter may be prolonged for the duration of the proceedings at the request of the investigating body, the procurator or the court if the victim agrees to give testimony or makes a reasonable request. Social rehabilitation of trafficking victims, which aims to help them return to a normal way of life, includes legal assistance, medical, psychological and occupational rehabilitation, and job placement. When information about a child victim comes to the attention of the competent State bodies or specialized institutions, they must notify the child welfare authorities without delay in order to protect the rights of the child. It is prohibited to disclose information about trafficking victims or the specific circumstances of a case of trafficking that may pose a threat to the life or health of the victim or the victim's family members, as well as information about anyone helping to combat trafficking in persons. In the event of a genuine danger to the life and health of a trafficking victim, that person has the right to change his or her first, last and patronymic names in accordance with the law. It is prohibited to reveal security measures or to disclose confidential information about trafficking victims, or the results of preliminary investigations and security measures taken with regard to parties to criminal proceedings. Officials of national and local authorities and the staff of voluntary associations active in combating trafficking in persons may be held accountable, in accordance with the law, for disclosing confidential information about trafficking victims or denying assistance to such persons. The inquiry officer, investigator, procurator and court must take measures to protect a trafficking victim who is willing to cooperate with the investigation and inquiry agencies in identifying suspected traffickers. Following a substantiated request by an inquiry officer, investigator, procurator or court, a foreign national or a stateless person who is recognized as a trafficking victim in accordance with the Code of Criminal Procedure, is a witness in criminal proceedings or is providing assistance to the law enforcement agencies may not be deported until the trial of accused traffickers is concluded and a final judgement delivered. A victim of trafficking must be granted temporary residence in Turkmenistan, irrespective of how he or she entered the country. A trafficking victim may not be held accountable for any act regarded as an administrative offence if the act was committed due to circumstances provoked by human traffickers. Diplomatic missions and consular services of Turkmenistan in other countries safeguard the rights and interests of Turkmen nationals who become victims of trafficking in another State, and help them return to Turkmenistan. If it is not possible to recover documents from human traffickers proving that trafficking victims are Turkmen nationals or if such documents are lost, the diplomatic missions and consular services of Turkmenistan issue documents so that the victims can return to Turkmenistan. In accordance with the legislation of Turkmenistan and the other State, the diplomatic missions and consular services of Turkmenistan must inform the authorities of the other State about Turkmenistan's legislation on trafficking and disseminate information about the rights of trafficking victims among the persons concerned. Individuals and legal entities implicated in crimes of trafficking in persons are held accountable in accordance with the law. In the past trafficking in persons was not punishable under the Criminal Code; however, the act of 14 May 2010 amending and confirming the new wording of the Criminal Code led to the incorporation of article 129, on trafficking in persons. This reads as follows:

- “(1) Trafficking in persons, that is, the purchase or sale of human beings or their recruitment, transportation, harbouring or transfer to another person for the purpose

of their exploitation, is punishable by deprivation of liberty for a term of 4 to 10 years.

- (2) The same act committed:
- (a) against two or more persons;
 - (b) against a person whom the perpetrator knows to be a minor;
 - (c) with the use of official powers;
 - (d) in connection with the illegal removal of the abducted person beyond the State borders or the illegal detention of that person outside the State borders;
 - (e) with the use or threat of violence;
 - (f) for the purpose of extracting organs or tissue from the abducted person for transplantation;

is punishable by deprivation of liberty for between 8 and 15 years.

- (3) The acts referred to in paragraphs 1 and 2 of this article if they:
- (a) resulted in the victim's death by negligence, caused grave bodily harm to the victim or had other serious consequences;
 - (b) were committed in a manner endangering the lives and health of several persons;
 - (c) were committed by a criminal group or criminal organization;

are punishable by deprivation of liberty for a term of 15 to 25 years.

Note

1. Persons who have committed the acts referred to in paragraph 1 and in paragraph 2 (a) of this article, and who voluntarily free the victim and offer assistance in the detection of the crime, are exonerated if they have not committed any other crime.

2. In this article, exploitation of a person means his or her use by other persons for the purpose of prostitution or other forms of sexual exploitation, slave labour and services, and servitude.”

The Ministry of Internal Affairs is working on preventing, detecting and suppressing crimes related to human trafficking, and also on collecting, analysing, summarizing and exchanging information on the scale, situation and trends in this area. It also detects and suppresses networks of individuals and organized criminal groups involved in human trafficking in Turkmenistan. The Ministry of Internal Affairs is taking specific action in this area and, as at 1 December 2010, two criminal cases have been instituted and investigated under article 129 of the Criminal Code.

Article 11

23. There have been positive changes recently in the structure of family income and expenditure in the country: despite an absolute increase in spending on food, its share in family expenditure has declined somewhat, indicating a growth in prosperity; compared to previous data, there has been an increase in the share of social assistance in the income structure of large families as a result of State policy that prioritizes support for the most needy families with children. The President has approved a national programme to improve social and living conditions in villages, communities, towns and district centres for the

period to 2020. With a total investment of US\$ 4 billion, the aim of the programme is to improve living conditions in villages and small towns, and to promote social development and infrastructure regeneration there and in towns and district centres throughout the country. Another national programme, on socio-economic development between 2011 and 2030, approved by the President in 2010, is intended to promote economic development, economic diversification, a real rise in living standards and further market and institutional changes, and to achieve similar levels of development in the different regions of the country. The aim of the programme is: to achieve innovative economic development and to establish high-productivity branches and industries that will create more jobs and help to reduce imports. Moreover, it will help to expand the country's export possibilities through the development of the oil, energy, chemical, textile and agro-industry sectors. It will ensure: a high level of moral development as a result of a qualitative improvement in social services; the country's development and more rapid integration into international economic systems; and the creation of developed market economy institutions. It will also achieve real transformations in socio-economic development as a result of the rational use of productive capacity. In accordance with State social and economic development programmes, national legislation and the generally recognized norms of international law, Turkmenistan guarantees the right of citizens to healthy and wholesome food by:

- (a) Formulating and implementing legal, economic, organizational, technological and other measures to ensure the production of essential raw and processed foods;
- (b) Ensuring the uninterrupted delivery of food to places of consumption in sufficient quantities to meet the requirements of the population;
- (c) Ensuring that food is readily available, including on preferential terms, under the existing consumption pattern, pricing system and level of incomes;
- (d) Creating, renewing and replenishing a State food reserve consisting of an irreducible operative reserve of food products;
- (e) Monitoring compliance with the State quality standards system for raw and processed food products produced and sold to citizens (article 4 of the Food Security Act of 15 July 2000).

The Foodstuffs Quality Act of 18 April 2009 sets out the main features of the Government's policy on food quality and safety in the interests of public health and regulates food trade relations. To stimulate market development in the agrarian sector, incentives have been introduced, relieving peasant farms of taxes on land, water and livestock, among others. A broad range of preferential lending is also planned in the area of agricultural production, including of food products. The Land Code of 25 October 2004 provides for the conditions to be established for the rational use and protection of land, conservation and improvement of the environment, the development of agricultural production, the adoption of various forms of land management and incentives to encourage free enterprise in the country. Specifically, citizens of Turkmenistan may own plots of land in the following forms:

- (a) Individual ownership in rural areas – household plots;
- (b) Individual housing construction in towns and communities;
- (c) Agricultural production and food production.

The Drinking Water Act, adopted by Parliament on 25 September 2010, establishes State guarantees for the provision of drinking water; sets out State requirements for monitoring the quality and safety of drinking water for human consumption, and for protecting drinking water sources and their use; and establishes the legal, economic and organizational basis for the rational use and environmental protection of those sources from pollution,

fouling and depletion, the functioning of the drinking water supply system and relations between those involved in drinking water supplies. Article 14 of the Act guarantees every person in the country drinking water of a quality and in quantities provided for in the relevant norms. In residential areas, drinking water needs are met by developing the centralized drinking water supply systems, setting up reserve drinking water supply systems, providing State support, and regulating the monitoring of drinking water supplies. Drinking water is provided free of charge to individuals in public places (railway stations, beaches and elsewhere) or on means of transport for more than three hours, by the proprietors of the public place or means of transport in question. The General Programme for Clean Drinking Water in Residential Areas was adopted on 10 January 2011 in implementation of the national programme for the period to 2020 and to further raise living standards in the country, systematically improve water supplies and to ensure full provision of clean drinking water in line with international standards to the public. The General Programme, which runs to 2020, includes the construction of 50 water purification plants with a capacity of 1,520 m³ of water per day; 13 of the plants should be operational by the end of 2012. Construction of the plants is funded by the State, to provide the population with clean drinking water in line with the applicable standards and norms. In 2009, a total of 17,772 million m³ of water was used in the country. Of that, 89 per cent was used for irrigation, watering and agricultural water supply, 8 per cent for production (other than agricultural production) and 3 per cent for fresh water. In 2009, the volume of fresh water used in the provinces and the city of Ashgabat was as follows: city of Ashgabat: 188.9 million m³; Ahal province: 83.5 million m³; Balkan province: 47.1 million m³; Dashoguz province: 23.9 million m³; Lebap province: 49.1 million m³; and Mary province: 65.1 million m³. The Garagum canal is of particular importance in meeting the water needs of the provinces. This man-made river created to irrigate the agricultural fields and pastures, and to meet water supply and drinking water needs, runs for 1,100 km, supplying fresh water to such large industrial towns as Ashgabat and Mary. It is especially important to the development of the country's industrial infrastructure, bringing together the Amudarya, Tejen and Murgap rivers. There are 15 reservoirs in the country. The first stage of construction of the Altyn Asyr Turkmen lake, in the Garagum desert, has been completed and is now in operation. The programme includes the construction of new drinking water installations using modern techniques and technology. The population will thus be fully supplied with high quality drinking water that meets international standards. Government policy on employment aims to ensure equal opportunities for all citizens, irrespective of race, gender, religious beliefs, age, political convictions, ethnic origin or social status, to exercise the right to work and freely choose their employment, and the voluntary nature of work, in line with which employment is based on the free will of the citizen. The national programme for socio-economic development, 2011–2030, is one of the administration's tools in the area of employment and labour market processes. Citizens of working age who are capable of working but require social protection and cannot compete in the labour market on equal terms are afforded extra employment guarantees, as stipulated in article 12 of the Employment Act of 12 November 1991. These guarantees take the form of specially created jobs and specialized businesses, including businesses that employ persons with disabilities, rehabilitation centres and special training programmes. To improve the employment situation and increase the number of job placements, new positions are being created, employment is being maintained at enterprises with good prospects, and the system of vocational training and retraining for workers is being improved. The average wage level is safeguarded by regular Government decisions on increases in order to maintain the necessary living standards and support the purchasing power of real wages, as a social protection measure. Large families, orphans, war veterans and persons who have health problems as a result of protecting State or public interests are provided with additional support and benefits from State and public resources.

Article 12

24. In 2011, the State budget allocated 20.7 per cent more to the public-health system than in 2010. Public health is also supported and protected through the 1995 State Health Programme, the President's national programme to improve social and living conditions in villages, communities, towns and district centres for the period to 2020, the national programme for socio-economic development, 2011–2030, the framework for socio-economic development of the provinces and Ashgabat for the period to 2012, and others. There have been significant changes in the health system since the adoption of the State Health Programme. Reforms have aimed to improve the effectiveness, accessibility and quality of preventive medical services. The Programme has included activities in the following areas: the priority development of primary health care with the establishment of the Institute of Family Medicine; the optimization of hospital services; the introduction of market mechanisms into the system; maternal and child health care; improved organizational structure and management; reform of the disease control service; further public-health staff capacity development; improved physical infrastructure; a solution to the pharmaceutical supply problems; and the further development of health information systems. A family-doctor-based primary health-care system has been introduced throughout the country. Large-scale structural changes have been made to the system of health care provision. Village and community hospitals, village outpatient units and feldsher-midwife stations have been set up in primary health-care institutions — village centres and health centres — and within village district hospitals. Legislation has been drafted and introduced to set out the principle of family-based public health services and define the functional responsibilities of family doctors and family nurses in providing treatment and preventive care. Students at medical institutes have begun studying for the specialization of “family doctor”, a faculty of family medicine has been set up, and the list of medical specializations and responsibilities includes that of “family doctor”. The structure of medical institutes at all levels has been improved. Large multidisciplinary hospitals have been established by consolidating the smaller inefficient clinics. Multidisciplinary, specialized and mother-and-child hospitals have been set up to provide specialized medical care to the population in the provinces. Research institutes have been reorganized as clinical research centres. The network of day-care centres has been expanded, the number of hospital beds has been rationalized, and self-funding beds have been added alongside those funded from the budget. A full examination of patients at the pre-hospital stage has reduced the proportion hospitalized and the duration of inpatient treatment from an average of 15 days to 7 days. Voluntary medical insurance has been introduced. Improvements are being made to the information system with the transition to international statistics, a new classification of medical institutions has been developed and approved, duplication of work by medical institutions has been eliminated, and there have been cuts to the administrative and managerial staff. An information system has been set up to promote healthy living. Along with the structural changes to optimize the system, there has also been consistent regular work on the prevention and control of specific diseases and conditions.

25. Maternal and child health is a Government priority. One of the main lines of presidential policy puts particular importance on women's right to health care, including reproductive health care. This ties in with MDG 5 on improving maternal health. The State grants women equal and free access to health care and family planning resources and addresses their special health-care needs. In dealing with issues related to women's health, the Ministry of Health takes account of gender issues in all its strategies and programmes, and gives full support to mother-and-child welfare services, particularly those that focus on women's interests, as it considers them to be important in reducing maternal morbidity and mortality, the number of abortions and extragenital pathologies, and the incidence of sexually transmitted infections. Ene Myakhri perinatal centres have been set up by presidential decision in Ashgabat and in all the provinces to meet the need for services of

the highest quality, using modern equipment and new technologies. The centres have the equipment and medicine to care for premature newborns weighing as little as 500 g. With the help of advanced technology, high quality assistance can be provided to women who have had repeated unsuccessful pregnancies, increasing the chance of survival for newborns and of a happy motherhood for the women. To assure the reproductive rights of women and their spouses, the Ene Myakhri centre in Ashgabad has introduced various reproductive technologies, an in vitro fertilization laboratory and a genetic laboratory that can perform early diagnosis for hereditary diseases. Work has begun under a joint Turkmen-German project on preserving the fertility of cancer patients, with the establishment of a biomaterial bank (for egg cells and sperm). A joint project on gestational diabetes includes screening for early detection of anomalies in carbohydrate metabolism in pregnant women, and to prevent complications during pregnancy, childbirth and the period of adaptation in newborns; the development of a system to monitor maternal and child health up to six weeks after delivery and to check for the onset of type 2 diabetes. Between 2005 and 2010, State obstetric facilities (obstetric wards of district hospitals, maternal-and-child health-care centres, and the Ene Myzhri perinatal centres) providing qualified prenatal, perinatal and post-natal services increased the number of beds for women during pregnancy and labour. Over the same period, the birth rate increased by 35 per cent, the number of home births was less than 0.2 per cent of all births, and thus 99.8 per cent of births took place in medical facilities attended by medical staff. The percentage of caesarean sections did not exceed WHO indicators, at 5.4 per cent in 2010. The decline in maternal mortality is attributable to the overall development of the country (improved social and economic well-being, greater promotion of women's rights and social status). The maternal mortality ratio fell from 15.5 in 2005 to 6.9 in 2010. Factors that have a direct impact on the maternal mortality ratio include medical progress, comprehensive medical care at work and in the post-natal period, universal access to prenatal care, and the automatic investigation by specialists of every case of maternal mortality. Turkmenistan has met the Millennium Declaration Goal for reducing maternal mortality. With the establishment of reproductive health services, efforts to prevent abortions have resulted in a decline by 50 per cent in the number performed, an increase in the interval between successive births to an average of 2.5 years, and a decrease in morbidity among women of childbearing age. A significant success has been achieved with the free availability of information on the choice of medical services during pregnancy and childbirth.

26. All citizens, irrespective of ethnic origin, race, gender or social status, are guaranteed certain free medical services. In rural areas, the citizens have access to primary medical care in 1,643 health centres and 64 district hospitals, which have Tiz Komek first aid units with vehicles and the necessary equipment. Primary health care is the basic form of medical care available to all citizens; it is provided for free by medical establishments in the State health system, and covers: treatment for the most common diseases and injuries; immunization and protection campaigns for some communicable diseases; information on health problems, available treatment and disease prevention; and maternal and child health care, including in respect of family reproductive health issues. The Women of Turkmenistan Reproductive Health Strategy, 2000–2010, contributes to successful family planning with its aim of guaranteeing reduced health risks during pregnancy, safe motherhood, fewer complications during pregnancy and fewer extragenital pathologies in women of childbearing age. The effectiveness of family reproductive health care depends on whether people are informed about contraceptive methods, and the availability of such methods to meet the needs of a wide circle of potential users. That availability in turn depends on the quality and quantity of the services providing them. These include a reproductive health-care service in the mother-and-child health centres in every province, in addition to well equipped reproductive health units in each district, supported by UNFPA, and 402 women's consultation centres (obstetrics and gynaecology offices). These services are all coordinated by the National Reproductive Health Care Centre at the Maternal and

Child Health Care Clinical Research Centre. The Reproductive Health Care Service provides all family planning services, including free consultation on sexual and reproductive health, and free distribution of contraceptives and pregnancy tests. The specialists working in the Service conduct training courses and seminars, equip consulting rooms, and distribute information to the public on women's reproductive health rights. Family planning services are accessible to all, through convenient opening hours and the inclusion of family doctors in the work of the Reproductive Health Care Service. The essential drug list includes 10 named contraceptives. The Channel logistics management programme was introduced in 2009 with the support of UNFPA to ensure proper monitoring of storage and distribution of contraceptives. Contraceptive coverage of women of childbearing age was 45 per cent in 2005 and 33 per cent in 2009. The decline in this indicator is related to the more active work by the Reproductive Health Care Service offices and the evidence-based approach to the increase in the birth rate, with contraceptives used to improve women's health and allow them to observe an interval between successive births. There is a similar system for adolescent reproductive health centres in the country. The health information centre, together with the Ministry of Education, has devised teaching aids and programmes for the new subject of "Life Skills", which was introduced in schools in 2008 for pupils in all classes. A number of publications have also been produced and distributed: brochures entitled *Motherhood needs special care*, *Let the family be healthy*, *Let's have a healthy family*, and *Reproductive health*; and booklets called *How to stay healthy*, *Breastfeeding* and *Life-protecting facts*. These publications have all been distributed through health centres and clinics, institutes of further education, the Turkmenhowayollary airline, in trains and through other public organizations. The Ministry of Health and the Medical Industry draws up the list of State primary health-care facilities and the scope of care and procedure for its provision. Together with other social programmes, the President's national programme to improve social and living conditions in villages, communities, towns and district centres for the period to 2020 is helping to improve the quality of medical services in rural areas. Three new hospitals and 24 rural health centres are being built, and seven district hospitals are being modernized in the newly created districts; they are all being fitted out with the most modern medical equipment produced by leading European manufacturers, as well as supplies and medicines. As the construction, reconstruction and fitting out continues, all district hospitals and village health centres and units will have been rebuilt and fully equipped with modern apparatus by 2020. Citizens who have taken out voluntary State medical insurance pay a premium of 2 per cent of their salary, pension and allowances. Those who are insured, as well as children under the age of 16 and dependents, have benefits such as a 50 per cent discount on the cost of examinations, treatment and sanatorium and spa services, a 90 per cent discount on the cost of prescribed medicines and the right to choose a family doctor. The list of diseases for which medicines are provided either free of charge or on preferential terms has been approved. Citizens are provided with medicines in line with the Pharmaceuticals and Medical Supplies Act.

Articles 13 and 14

27. Article 10 of the Education Act states that curricula may be followed in educational institutions, through self-learning, in the form of external studies or using distance learning technologies, depending on the needs and capacities of the students. One of the main ways of improving the higher education system is by increasing the number of students, particularly women and girls, and changing to five- and six-year courses of study. Students have the right to enter institutes of further education immediately after completion of general secondary education. The time allocated to theoretical training has been increased and that spent on industrial experience reduced. At the beginning of the 2009/10 academic year, women accounted for 33.8 per cent of the students, 50.4 per cent of the workers and

37 per cent of the teaching staff in further education. The figures for women in secondary vocational training institutes were 58.2 per cent of students, 51.2 per cent of workers and 50.6 per cent of teaching staff.

28. Since secondary education is a basic part of a citizen's education, providing a thorough understanding of basic general knowledge, developing mental and creative capacities and offering an appropriate level of culture and physical training, attendance rates are high. This is also because general secondary education is compulsory for all citizens of Turkmenistan and free in State educational establishments. Students may be excluded from school, in exceptional cases, when they reach the age of 16, if correctional measures have not produced the desired results and further presence in the institution would have a detrimental effect on the other students, violate their rights or those of the workers, or affect the normal functioning of the establishment.

29. The State guarantees access for every person to vocational training appropriate to his or her capacities. In line with legal procedure, governmental and non-governmental organizations and citizens may engage in remunerated educational activities. The State sets compulsory educational standards applicable to all educational establishments. Turkmenistan has 27 secondary vocational schools. In 2010, seven secondary vocational schools and one new Turkmen State secondary vocational school for culture and art were opened on the premises of primary vocational schools; they will provide training for secondary level specialists in 5 areas and 54 specializations. In the 2010/11 academic year, 3,600 students were admitted to, and 1,600 graduated from, secondary vocational schools. There are 21 institutes of further education in the country, 2 of which were opened in 2010. The country has 4 universities, 3 academies, 12 institutes, 1 conservatory and 1 branch of the Gubkin Russian State University of Oil and Gas. In 2010/11, 5,400 students were admitted to, and 3,500 students graduated from, these institutions.

30. Turkmenistan has a broad network of educational establishments providing the conditions for preschool, secondary and vocational training and education. These include preschools; general education schools; primary, secondary and further vocational training establishments; establishments providing postgraduate vocational education; further training and retraining establishments for officials; special educational establishments for pupils and students with special needs; special educational establishments for orphan children and children without parental care; extra-curricular educational establishments; and other establishments providing educational activities. The State helps with the education and upbringing of children, and organizes the teaching of the Turkmen, English and Russian languages in preschool educational establishments, providing funding and equipment. The Education Act guarantees social services in respect of education, upbringing, moral development, vocational training, ensures that all forms and types of education provided by the State are universally accessible and free, and offers the right to choose an educational establishment, the language of study and the field of study and form of education. Young citizens, the young men and women of Turkmenistan, studying in State educational establishments have the right to meals and health care at preferential rates, free use of textbooks and educational supplies, free use during instruction of the educational establishment's technological, scientific, cultural and sports teaching facilities, and the right to receive bursaries, grants and benefits, and to participate in the educational establishment's administrative bodies. Students and pupils in need of material assistance are given the necessary support from the social assistance funds set up in educational establishments. Local administrations and authorities set their budgets independently within the limits of their budget resources and the subsidies and grants they receive; they put priority on funding for education, which increases every year. Regional budget allocations are coordinated by the Cabinet of Ministers, which ensures that there is no disproportion in this regard (Budgetary System Act, art. 12). Budget spending in the social sphere increases

every year, including through growth in personal incomes and regular increases in teachers' pay and students' bursaries.

31. Article 4 of the Education Act guarantees citizens' rights in the area of education. They are guaranteed the possibility of receiving an education, irrespective of their gender, race, ethnic background, language, origin, place of residence, religion, beliefs, age, state of health, wealth and social or official status. In order to realize the right to education, the Government covers the expenditure of those citizens in need of social support during their period of education. There are special educational establishments, fully funded by the Government, for orphan children and children without parental care. The State ensures that citizens with special needs enjoy the necessary conditions to receive education, treatment for developmental defects and social adaptation using special teaching approaches. The State guarantees persons with disabilities the necessary conditions to receive education and vocational training. Education is guaranteed for persons with disabilities in general educational establishments unless it is not possible for them to attend such establishments, in which case specialized educational establishments are created. Specialized educational establishments are created for children requiring lengthy treatment, or who have physical or mental developmental defects. There is a network of special preschool establishments and schools in the country for individuals with physical or mental developmental defects. Under articles 156 to 160 of the Social Security Code, the State guarantees education for persons with disabilities in preschool educational establishments, secondary schools and vocational training institutes. Persons with category 1 or category 2 disabilities, for whom the medical and social commission of experts finds no contraindication to education in higher and secondary vocational training establishments, are accepted into such establishments without taking an examination. Persons with category 3 disabilities, under equal conditions, have priority in admission to higher or secondary vocational educational establishments. During the period of study, persons with disabilities in higher or secondary vocational educational establishments receive full State grants and bursaries. The educational bodies and other State agencies ensure the necessary conditions to make extra-curricular activities available to children with disabilities. The educational bodies organize study for children with disabilities undergoing treatment in hospitals, clinics or rehabilitation institutions.

Article 15

32. State policy sets importance on creating favourable conditions for the preservation, development and dissemination of the history, culture, language, traditions and customs of all national and ethnic groups living in Turkmenistan. The country has a policy of mutual understanding between peoples, and of not allowing any differences, exceptions, restrictions or preferences based on national or ethnic origin. In article 5 of the Culture Act of 12 March 2010, the State guarantees all citizens, irrespective of ethnic background, race, gender or origin, wealth or official status, place of residence or language, the right to participate in cultural activities, to use cultural organizations and to have access to cultural property in State culture organizations. The principle of equal rights and opportunities for citizens in the creation, restoration, preservation, development, dissemination and use of cultural property, laid out in article 4, paragraph 5, of the Culture Act, guarantees the multiplicity of cultures and enables the dissemination of knowledge of the cultural heritage of the different ethnic groups and the creation of favourable conditions for the preservation, development and dissemination of their history, culture, language, traditions and customs. The task of preserving, developing and disseminating the history, culture, language, traditions and customs of all the nationalities and ethnic groups living in Turkmenistan is undertaken by 753 cultural centres (palaces and houses of culture, arts centres) and an extensive network of culture and arts educational establishments in the country, where representatives of various nationalities and ethnic groups work alongside representatives of

indigenous ethnic groups. Currently there are 3 higher educational establishments, 7 specialized secondary educational establishments, 1 music boarding school, 12 children's art schools and 80 arts schools, with 13,539 students and pupils and more than 3,500 teaching staff. The State guarantees citizens, including representatives of all ethnic groups, the right to all forms of creative activity in accordance with their interests and capacities, free choice of moral, aesthetic and other values, and protection of their cultural identity. To encourage the creative activities of culture and arts workers, a competition is held every year, by presidential decision, for workers in culture, the arts and literature, young performers and gifted children, in which representatives of the ethnic minorities living in Turkmenistan play an active part. Each year, by presidential decree, honorary titles and the title of winner of the presidential "Turkmenin Altyn sayry" competition are awarded to individuals involved in literature, culture and the arts for their contribution to the development of national culture. Those who have received such honorary awards include representatives of ethnic groups. Weeks of friendship with the peoples of other countries are held to promote the further development of cultural links and the strengthening of friendship and brotherhood between the fraternal peoples of Turkmenistan and the peoples of other countries. The Days of Saudi Arabian Culture were held from 19 to 22 January, and the Days of Culture of Ukraine and Turkmenistan were held from 10 to 13 April 2011.

33. The network of libraries in the country gives free access to information sources that allow the preservation, development and dissemination of knowledge concerning history, culture, language, traditions and customs. There are 242 working libraries in Turkmenistan, of which: 1 national library, 1 central State children's library, 1 library for the blind and deaf, 9 provincial libraries (5 for adults and 4 for children), 15 central municipal libraries, 36 branches of municipal libraries, 50 central district libraries, 117 branches of district libraries (in villages) and 12 libraries in educational institutions, belonging to the Ministry of Culture. The number of libraries increased from 100 to 242 after the presidential decision of 24 February 2010 on the establishment of central provincial, district and municipal libraries and branches. Turkmenistan's museums play a huge role in promoting the historical and cultural heritage of the country and the world. Currently there are 32 museums, with (in 2010) 245,700 valuable exhibits and a staff of 849. In 2010, 361,000 people visited the museums. Eight theatres, three museums, one library, one philharmonic hall and one academy of arts have been built over the past few years, in implementation of the country's cultural policy. Secondary schools and institutes of further education have been equipped with modern multimedia and computer technology through which information can be found on other cultures and the most recent achievements of world science and learning. The achievements of world art and culture are broadly publicized in the media. There are five television channels in the country (Altyn asyr: Türkmenistan; Türkmenistan; Miras; Ýaşlyk; and Türkmen owazy) and four radio channels (Çar tarapdan; Owaz; Miras; and Watan). A presidential decision of 18 February 2011 established the Ashgabat television channel. The Turkmenistan channel broadcasts programmes in seven languages. The following periodicals are published in the State language, English and Russian: *Democratia y pravo* (Democracy and the Law), *Vneshnyaya politika y diplomatiya Turkmenistana* (Turkmenistan's Foreign Policy and Diplomacy), *Miras, Diyar, Ekonomika Zolotogo veka* (Golden Age Economics), and *Turkmenistan: Sobytiya nedelya* (Turkmenistan: the Week's Events); the magazine *Turkmenistan* is issued in Russian and English, which significantly increases its distribution in the population. The country's Russian-speaking population has the magazine *Vozrozhdenie* (Renaissance), the newspaper *Neitralnyi Turkmenistan* (Neutral Turkmenistan) and the private magazine "Rysgal" in Turkmen and Russian. There is the Pushkin State Russian Drama Theatre in Turkmenistan. Internet services are accessible sources of information for all the citizens of this multi-ethnic country. Higher, secondary specialized and secondary educational establishments have access to the Internet global network. In the capital city and the provinces there are Internet cafes for general use. The number of Internet users increases each year. The

procedure for Internet service provision is governed by the Communications Act of 12 March 2010. Turkmenistan has recently signed a number of agreements, accords, protocols and cooperation programmes in the cultural, arts and humanitarian spheres with various countries, to help establish favourable conditions for the preservation, development and dissemination of knowledge about their history, culture, languages, traditions and customs. They include a programme of cooperation in the cultural and humanitarian spheres between the Government of Turkmenistan and the Government of Uzbekistan for the period 2008–2010, a protocol on collaboration in the area of television and radio broadcasting between the Ministry of Culture and Television and Radio Broadcasting of Turkmenistan and the Radio and Television Organization of Turkey, an agreement on culture and art between the Government of Turkmenistan and the Government of Tajikistan, and a programme of collaboration between the Government of Turkmenistan and the Government of India on culture, the arts, science, education, the media and sport for the period 2008–2010.
