

Speaking points at the Inauguration meeting of the CAREC Regional Gender Experts Group (RGEG) by Okoeva G.K. - Head of the department of gender policy of the Ministry of labor, social security and migration of the Kyrgyz Republic

Date: **August 9 2022**

Venue: Istanbul (Turkish Republic)

Dear Ms. Lyaziza Sabyrova,

Dear colleagues! Participants of the meeting!

I would like to welcome all participants of the meeting of the Regional gender experts group and extend my gratitude to the organizers for the invitation to take part in this event.

Last year Kyrgyzstan celebrated 30 years of independence. Our country has been through a lot, and has achieved a lot too.

In April 2021 at the national referendum we adopted the new Constitution of the Kyrgyz Republic which came as a result of the new course that the country had embarked on in October 2020 after the civil uprising of October 6 2020 caused by violations of the elections legislation during the parliamentary elections. The country is now aiming at multifaceted positive transformation of all spheres of public life in the interests of the people of Kyrgyzstan.

It is noteworthy that our international commitments that we had accepted as a result of ratification of the fundamental conventions in the area of human rights, including the Convention on elimination of all forms of discrimination against women, remain immutable and vital guiding principles on the path of further development of the country towards progress and democracy. Testimony to this includes special constitutional provisions and the development of the state gender policy.

In 2021 an inclusive process with broad-based participation of all stakeholders, civil society organizations and development partners resulted in the development of the regular National gender equality strategy 2020 which includes 5 strategic areas:

- economic empowerment of women;
- cultural policy and functional education;
- protection from gender discrimination, and equitable justice, women's political participation;
- regulatory policy.

At present the draft is under consideration by the Cabinet of ministers of the Kyrgyz Republic and it should be approved soon.

Monitoring of implementation of the previous National gender equality strategy 2020, which was implemented through three-year national actions plans, demonstrated significant improvements in the execution of planned measures. Whereas based on the results of the NAP 2012-2014 only 16% of measures had been successfully implemented, 61% - partially implemented and 23% of measures remained unimplemented, the most recent NAP 2018-2020 reached 73% of

successfully implemented measures with 13% of measures partially implemented and 14% unimplemented, to a large degree due to the COVID-19 restrictions.

In 2020 Kyrgyzstan submitted the country's national report as part of the Beijing+25 process to the UN, and the National voluntary report on the country's progress in the implementation of the Sustainable Development Goals, including Goal 5. Gender equality, and other goals intertwined with it.

The National strategy of the Kyrgyz Republic 2040 includes gender-related aims, tasks and measures. Chapter 1 "Picture of the future" envisages, among strategic development goals, that by 2040 *"Kyrgyzstan will have ensured full-fledged and equal participation of women in governance at all levels of decision making in the political, economic and public life of the country. State programs aimed at achieving gender equality and eliminating imbalances between the opportunities of women and men will have been implemented"*.

The elections to the local self-governance bodies (ayil keneshs) in 2021 demonstrated vividly that one of the important achievements of women's participation in the political life of the country was the inclusion of a norm in 2019 in the law on local elections whereby no less than 30% of mandates were to be reserved for women in each constituency. Based on the results of the elections the number of female deputies at the local level increased by 4 times compared to the previous period (2012 - 9%, 2021 - 37.8%).

Kyrgyzstan is an active participant of the promotion of the gender agenda in the Shanghai Cooperation Organization. In particular, at the Second women's forum of the SCO which took place in Bishkek on May 15 2019 the country initiated the development of a joint vision for the improvement of women's participation and gender mainstreaming in the SCO strategy and projects, to achieve equal results of regional cooperation for both men and women in the SCO member states.

The following is testimony to the fact that the agenda related to the implementation of the Convention on elimination of all forms of discrimination against women is firmly followed despite existing global and regional challenges:

- during the coronavirus pandemic urgent measures were taken to offer emergency and mid-term targeted assistance to the population taking into account the needs of the most vulnerable groups: women, children, elderly, people with special needs;

- The election to local self-governance bodies (ayil keneshs) this year demonstrated vividly that one of the important achievements of women's participation in the political life of the country was the inclusion of a norm in 2019 in the law on local elections whereby no less than 30% of mandates were to be reserved for women in each constituency.

At the elections to the Jogorku Kenesh of the Kyrgyz Republic in November 2021 out of 1046 running candidates 377 were women. Based on the results of the elections and taking into account the 30% gender quota, out of 90 members of parliament 19 women, or 21%, received the mandate.

Thanks to the active participation of women's non-governmental

organizations and women's business groupings the country started to pay more attention to supporting women entrepreneurship. In 2019 the first National conference was organized on the topic of women entrepreneurship, which resulted in the government declaring its intention to develop and adopt a relevant targeted state program. In 2021 the country adopted the Program for supporting and developing women entrepreneurship in the Kyrgyz Republic 2022-2026.

Cabinet of ministers of the Kyrgyz Republic organizes annual Days of women entrepreneurship on the namesake day (October 19). Thus the development of women entrepreneurship in Kyrgyzstan is a strategically important objective, especially in the conditions of an economic downturn caused by the coronavirus pandemic;

In November 2021 an official delegation of the Kyrgyz Republic successfully defended the Fifth periodic report on elimination of all forms of discrimination against women at the 90th sessions of the UN committee.

In December 2021 the Ministry received recommendations of the UN Committee on the elimination of all forms of discrimination against women (CEDAW) adopted based on the consideration of the Fifth periodic report in November 2021.

The concluding recommendations of the Committee contain both positive feedback on the measures taken by the Cabinet of ministers of the Kyrgyz Republic to ensure gender equality, and concerns of the Committee about the facts of discrimination of women and girls in the country.

At the moment the Ministry is working on the preparation of the Plan of actions to implement the UN Committee's recommendations.

It is also noteworthy that our country has formed a comprehensive system of national mechanisms, which includes: National council on gender development under the Cabinet of ministers, Council on the rights of women, children, and gender development under the Speaker of the Parliament of the Kyrgyz Republic. The ministry of labor, social security and migration of the Kyrgyz Republic is the authorized body on the issues of gender policy. The ministry has a Department of gender policy and coordination of the protection from domestic violence, and each ministry and agency, including local self-governance bodies, has focal points to coordinate the work on the implementation of the state gender policy.

Civil society organizations are important and active participants of the gender policy. To a large degree it is thanks to the initiatives and expert support from women's and gender NGOs that the legislation includes gender-significant norms: gender quotas for the elections to the Parliament and local keneshs, new version of the law "On protection from domestic violence", stricter liability for gender crimes (forced and early marriages, criminalization of domestic violence) etc. NGOs are members of the National council on gender development under Cabinet of ministers, Council on the right of women, children, and gender development under the Speaker of the Parliament of the Kyrgyz Republic. The law of the KR "On public councils of state bodies" which have been established and are functioning under ministries

and agencies, requires that there can be no more than 70% of representatives of one sex in the membership of these public councils.

I would like to emphasize that despite new challenges and threats, including those related to the growth of violence against women during the restrictions aimed at stopping the spread of the coronavirus infection, which was recorded all over the world, our country is taking the necessary response measures.

There is constant monitoring of the execution of the law “On protection from domestic violence” adopted in 2016. In light of this there have been recent legislative proposals to strengthen liability both for offenses related to domestic violence, and for crimes related to gender-based violence against women. This applies to negative practices which are a criminal offense in our country. Such practices include bride kidnapping, early and forced marriages. Unfortunately, such deeds are far from complete eradication, but the public conscience demonstrates visible condemnation and heightened attention towards such facts, and whenever a fact of this kind is established, the law enforcement agencies take disciplinary measures (alongside detection and prevention) in cases when the lack of proper follow-up leads to grave consequences.

A major challenge both for the country and for the targeted efforts under the “Women, peace and security” agenda was presented by the consequences of an armed attack in May 2021 against the peaceful population of a number of districts in Batken province bordering Tajikistan. As a result of the conflict 36 people lost their lives and 190 people were wounded. The deceased included children, including a 12-year old girl. A lot of work has been conducted to offer assistance, including humanitarian and psychological aid for the affected women and children. A Law was passed “On the special status of Batken province” and in April 2022 year another, 4th national Plan of actions was adopted on the UN Security Council resolution 1325 and the agenda “Women, peace and security”.

I wish us fruitful work at this meeting.

Thank you for your attention!