

## **Statement by the Women’s Council under the Prime Minister of the Republic of Armenia**

The Women’s Council under the Prime Minister of the Republic of Armenia expresses concern at the current tension in society generated by the recent misinterpretation of the terms “gender,” “gender equality,” and “gender identity”. These misinterpretations are being articulated by some non-governmental organizations, leaders of political movements, as well as political figures. The Women’s Council under the Prime Minister of the Republic of Armenia finds it necessary to make certain clarifications concerning the meaning of the above-mentioned terms and in relation to their usage in the context of international commitments by the Republic of Armenia.

In 1993 the Republic of Armenia assumed certain commitments aimed at eliminating all types of discrimination against women by ratifying a legally binding document, namely the UN Convention on the Elimination of All Types of Discrimination against Women (CEDAW). Article 2 of the Convention, in particular, refers to the problems related to the elimination of discrimination against women, to which the UN Committee on Elimination of Discrimination against Women provided the following clarification<sup>1</sup>: “the Convention includes not only discrimination against women in terms of ‘sex’ but also in terms of ‘gender identity.’ In particular, if ‘sex’ means the biological difference between men and women, then the meaning of ‘gender identity’ refers to the socially conditioned situation, which is defined for men and women in the social structure and which is the reason for hierarchic relations between them. In particular, political, economic, religious and other factors can influence the social classification between women and men. The application of the Convention with regards to the exclusion of gender- based discrimination derives from the definition of discrimination in the Article 1.”

In order to ensure the implementation of the provisions of Article 2 of the Convention, as well as Point 13 of the Committee’s recommendations (CEDAW/C/ARM/4/Rev.1) relating to Armenia, that is, accelerating the adoption of the law on gender equality, the RA law “On Provision of Equal Rights and Equal Opportunities for Women and Men” was elaborated and adopted by the

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<sup>1</sup> See the general recommendation #28, which refers to the CEDAW Article 2.

National Assembly of the Republic of Armenia on 20 May 2013. The adoption of the law and its further implementation will represent serious progress in terms of ensuring equality between women and men in Armenia.

Being faithful to its commitments to respect, protect and promote women's rights, to ensure the development of women, their progress and actual and legal equality with men, the Republic of Armenia will continue realizing programs aimed at solving the abovementioned problems, including the 2011-2015 strategic programs on gender policy and against gender-based violence. The Republic of Armenia will continue cooperation with international organizations, through preparing and presenting to the UN the 5<sup>th</sup> and 6<sup>th</sup> joint reports as required by CEDAW, and the 2<sup>nd</sup> report on the Universal Periodic Review process. The Republic of Armenia will also proceed with the implementation of the 2014-2017 Strategy on Gender Equality and other important documents recently approved by the Committee of Ministers of the Council of Europe.

At the same time, being concerned by the fact that representatives of women NGOs [sic] are intimidated and harassed in social networks, and offensive articles are published by some media outlets, we advocate for an end to such behavior. We also urge the law enforcement bodies of the Republic of Armenia to be more vigilant in order to prevent such cases and, if needed, to punish the intruders.

The Women's Council finds it appropriate to attract more attention to the coverage of women's rights and gender equality in the future, in cooperation with NGOs and international organizations.

On 25 November, on the eve of the International Day for the Elimination of Violence against Women, the Women's Council reiterates its determination to continue efforts towards prevention and elimination of violence against women.