



PERMANENT MISSION OF TURKMENISTAN TO THE UNITED NATIONS

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**Statement by Mr. Esen Aydogdyev
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Mr. Chairman,

Let me congratulate you on the election to this important post and express our confidence that your skilful and professional guidance will greatly contribute to the timely and efficient work of the Committee.

Mr. Chairman,

Ensuring full respect of fundamental freedoms and human rights is one of the main priorities of Turkmenistan's Government. It is not an empty declaration. During the past year Turkmenistan took many concrete and substantive steps which ensured significant advancement in the area of human rights. Let me briefly inform you about key developments in this area during the past year.

A few days ago, on 24-25 October 2005 the People's Council, the supreme representative body of the country, met for its XVI session and adopted a number of laws which qualitatively advance electoral system in the country, encompassing elections to the highest and local representative bodies.

In a gesture of compassion and humanism professed by our Government over 8,000 people have been amnestied before the end of the Holy Month of Ramadan and will be able to join their families for Eid al-Fitr.

Mr. Chairman,
Distinguished colleagues,

You know how important is a problem of protection and respect of human rights of refugees, the most vulnerable group of persons. This summer Turkmenistan by the decree of the President has granted citizenship for more that 16,000 refugees from neighboring countries that were residing in Turkmenistan for a number of years and almost 4 thousand received their residence permits.

The past year was marked by active efforts of the Government, national legislative branch in preparation of national reports on the implementation of international human rights instruments.

Turkmenistan has submitted national reports on three UN conventions in the area of human rights: Convention on eliminations of all forms of discrimination against women; Convention on elimination of all forms of racial discriminations; Convention of the Rights of Child.

Last August the Committee on elimination of racial discrimination considered the initial to fifth periodic reports of Turkmenistan. The reports were presented by the Minister of Foreign Affairs of Turkmenistan. The delegation responded to all questions posed by the Committee. We have received concluding observations of the Committee and are very carefully studying them with the view to respond to them.

Other reports, including on implementation of International Statute on political and civil rights and International Statute on economic, social and cultural rights, are in the process of preparation and will be submitted soon to the relevant committees.

It is very important to emphasize that the objectives of these treaties are not accomplished just by submission of a relevant report. It is specific actions to implement them that are important.

I would like to make an illustration of this point. As a party to the Convention on elimination of all forms of discrimination against women Turkmenistan consistently pursues policy of maintaining full and equal rights of participation of women in political, social, economic and cultural life of the country which is considered a major condition of building democratic and economically prospering State with a high level of social protection of the population.

The Women's Union of Turkmenistan, that renders comprehensive assistance to women in realization of their social and civil rights, has devised a National plan of action on implementation of Beijing Plan of Action. The basic priorities of this program are aimed at strengthening of the social status of women and developing mechanisms of interaction between the governmental structures and relevant international organizations for the benefit of promotion of status of women in the society.

For a few years now the National Institute for Democracy and Human Rights is actively functioning in the country. In addition to academic research, it also takes active role in advising various governmental agencies on Turkmenistan's international obligations arising from the various conventions and statutes which our country is a party to. Where applicable it has also forwarded individual complaints to relevant authorities for consideration and action. The Institute serves as an important bridge between the State and the civil society in the country in important work of promotion and respect of human rights.

Earlier this year the National Parliament has established its Committee on Human Rights which takes the lead in drafting legislative acts aimed at further enhancement of fundamental freedoms and rights of people.

In February 2005 the Parliament adopted the law that prohibits use of child labor. As was mentioned above Turkmenistan has also submitted its national report on implementation of the Convention on Rights of Child in March 2005.

We are pleased to inform you and the distinguished members of this Committee about the adoption of comprehensive legislative act and follow-up specific and far-reaching steps in the area of ensuring religious rights of citizens. All religious groups, that duly applied for registration, including Baptists, Adventists of the seventh day, Bahai, consciousness of Krishna, church of the Christ, Christian Church, evangelic belief «Light of the East», Christian Church of the Full Gospel and New Apostolic Church, have been registered.

In April 2005 by the decree of the President four persons who refused military service for religious reasons were pardoned.

In addition, to further facilitate the implementation of this law, the Ministry of Justice has held a one day seminar last October for registered and unregistered religious organizations to clarify issues of registration, opening new branches in the regions of the country, dissemination of literature etc. Such meetings would be organized in the future if needed.

Turkmenistan has engaged in active dialogue with the Office of the High Commissioner for Human Rights. At the invitation of our Government an expert team from the OHCHR has visited our country last year and the two sides have started work on elaborating the technical assistance project. As we have been informed the project has now been approved by the OHCHR. Turkmenistan welcomes the approval of the project and looks forward to start its implementation as soon as possible.

During the past year Turkmenistan made sincere efforts and turned a qualitative page in the area of human rights. By concrete action our country demonstrated its openness and readiness to cooperate in this area with interested parties, to be transparent, to respond to concerns and take specific steps where necessary.

The report of the Secretary-General on human rights situation in my country has clearly recognized the progress made by the Government of Turkmenistan in this area as well as its readiness to continue its cooperation with the Office of the High Commissioner for Human Rights and other interested international organizations in advancing the human rights.

Regrettably, our concrete and far-reaching steps were not recognized and our clear achievements in the area of human rights were ignored by others.

Some Member-States have decided to initiate another draft resolution. It is deeply discouraging and disappointing. This step is contrasting with our achievements in the area of human rights and firm commitment of the Government of Turkmenistan to cooperate with our international partners.

It is our firm belief that human rights cannot be imposed from outside and that country specific resolutions only undermine trust among potential partners and politicize the human rights machinery of the United Nations.

Building democratic society and ensuring human rights is a political choice of our Government and in its implementation we would welcome support and assistance but would reject any imposition and pressure.

We believe that only through dialogue, cooperation and engagement we would be able to advance human rights locally and globally.

Thank you.