

# **“A World Fit for Children”: Turkmenistan Report**

## **(Report on the results achieved in implementation of the Action Plan)**

### **Introduction**

Turkmenistan is a democratic, legal and secular state with a presidential form of government. It declared its independence on 27 October 1991.

In March 1992, Turkmenistan became a member of the United Nations Organization and Organization for Security and Cooperation in Europe (OSCE), and on 12 December 1995, Turkmenistan was granted a permanent neutral state status by the UN General Assembly.

Turkmenistan is divided into five provinces (velayats): Ahal, Balkan, Dashoguz, Lebap and Mary. Ashgabat is the capital of Turkmenistan. Other large cities are Balkanabat, Dashoguz, Mary, Turkmenabat and Turkmenbashi.

More than one hundred ethnic groups of people live in Turkmenistan. The World Humanitarian Association of Turkmen was established to promote the development of cultural ties and unification of Turkmen living in Turkmenistan and outside of their historical motherland.

Turkmenistan is one of the first Central Asian countries, which has determined its long-term perspectives and national development. The National Strategy of Socio-Economic Transformations of Turkmenistan for the Period until 2010 defines the country development goals emphasizing the following priority areas: economic independence, food security, social protection and ecological safety.

In 2003, the long-term National Program “The Strategy of Economic, Political and Cultural Development of Turkmenistan for the Period until 2020” was developed to ensure well-being of people, and meet the needs and best interests of all citizens of Turkmenistan.

Turkmenistan is a country of a great economic potential. Annually the economy of the country grows stronger and the appearance of the country changes. The new architecture of the capital and other cities and towns of the country amaze people and visitors of Turkmenistan.

Turkmenistan is a country of an ancient culture. Under independence, profound studies began to uncover the rich historical and cultural heritage of the Turkmen people, which have ancient and heroic roots. There are numerous ancient historical and architectural monuments in Turkmenistan, such as the capital of the Parthian State (Old Nissa), Sultan Sandjar Mausoleum, ancient ruins of palaces and temples excavated from under centuries-old cultural layers.

Significant economic and scientific potentials, cultural and spiritual values of Turkmenistan, its orientation to the open, mutually beneficial economic cooperation, lead to the country’s rapid integration into the world economic community.

### **General Review of the Political, Economic and Socio-Cultural Development of the Country**

From the first days of its independence, Turkmenistan began to develop its own model of the economic transformation of the country, the distinguishing feature of which is its social orientation.

Before the independence, the economy of Turkmenistan was based on raw materials production. The agrarian specialization determined the high proportion of the agriculture in the economy at

40 percent. At the same time, the agriculture had a vivid cotton-growing specialization. The proportion of industry in the Gross Domestic Product (GDP) structure was 17 percent, and more than 80 percent of it was mining industries.

In 2000-2006, the proportion of industry in the GDP was more than 34-37 percent, respectively. The proportional weight of the mining industries in the added industrial costs was reduced by the factor of two. The percentage of the light and food industries grew to 35 percent. In 2006, the proportional weight of the agriculture in the GDP was less than 20 percent, while services grew almost to 40 percent.

At the same time, the structure of the agricultural production radically changed. Although the cotton-growing remains prioritized in the agriculture of the country, the grain-growing has been practically re-established and livestock-breeding has been given rapid development. These measures ensured the food security of Turkmenistan. At present, approximately 97 percent of the foodstuff resources of the country are domestic products.

The textile industry has also rapidly developed. In the recent years, about 40 percent of the raw cotton is manufactured into the finished product, while in Soviet times it was only 3 percent. In different regions of the country, dozens of enterprises were built and put into operation to manufacture cotton yarn, jean cloth, poplin, sateen, stockinet and legwear goods.

Putting into operation new gas and electricity supply networks allowed addressing a major challenge of full gasification and electrification of urban and rural settlements.

During the years of independence, Turkmenistan has formed its national foreign economic policy and created an organizational and institutional basis for the external economic links. Turkmenistan maintains foreign trade relations with more than 60 countries in the world. In 2006, the country's foreign trade turnover was above 10 billion US dollars, with the significant increase of exports. Since 2000, Turkmenistan has a positive foreign trade balance. In 2006, the export-import ratio equaled to 2 (in 2000 – 1.4).

The economic growth has been facilitated by the effective investment policy. During the 1991-2006 periods, the total volume of the developed investments was above USD 40 billion, including about USD 26 billion in 2000-2006.

Due to the free provision of gas, electricity and water supply (introduced in 1993), government subsidies for municipal housing rents, and absence of a private dwelling tax, the costs of housing and communal services make up only 0.1 percent of the total family expenditures of households in Turkmenistan (while the figure is more than 30 percent in many countries). By the Presidential Decree “On Free Provision of Natural Gas, Electricity, Water and Salt to the Population of Turkmenistan” of 25.10.2006 (XVII Halk Maslahaty Resolution), free of charge use of gas, electricity, water and edible oil is extended till 2030.

In 1999, at the joint meeting of the State Council of Elders, Halk Maslahaty (People's Council) and National Galkynysh Movement, the National “Strategy of Socio-Economic Transformations in Turkmenistan for the Period until 2010” was adopted. This Program was aimed at the implementation of the second stage of the market economy model.

The first four years (2000-2003) of the 2010 Program implementation gave confidence to expect that the main socio-economic indicators of the country's development would be achieved before the scheduled time – by 2008. The successful beginning of the 2010 Program implementation made a solid basis for the acceleration of social and economic reforms in Turkmenistan and

necessitated the development of a new long-term program for the period up to 2020. It was also called forth by the fact that in September 2000 Turkmenistan – supporting the UN initiative – along with other 189 countries signed the Millennium Declaration (by now adopted by 191 countries) the goals and targets of which must be fulfilled by 2015. As a UN member state, Turkmenistan staunchly recognizes human rights and freedoms, cooperates and supports initiatives aimed at peace-making, unification of nations and people, and protection of humanism and democracy in social and political life.

The National “Strategy of Economic, Political and Cultural Development of Turkmenistan for the Period until 2020” was adopted by the joint session of the XIV State Council of Elders, Halk Maslahaty and Galkynysh National Movement in August 2003. The goal of the 2020 National Program is to significantly raise living standards and promote Turkmenistan to the level of economically developed countries with the high human development index.

The main indicator of the human development and a vivid indicator of the social and economic wellbeing of a nation is the indicator of the life expectancy of people. During the 2000-2006 period, the life expectancy of the Turkmen population grew from 68.3 to 69.4 years. The growth of the country population average life expectancy figures was conditioned by successful realization of economic and social programs and reduction of male and female mortality rates. At that rate, male life expectancy increased from 64.9 to 66.2 years and female life expectancy increased from 71.8 to 72.9 years.

In 2006, the National Institute of State Statistics and Information of Turkmenistan, in cooperation with UNICEF, conducted the Multiple Indicator Cluster Survey (MICS-3) in Turkmenistan. The survey provided valuable data on the situation of children and women in Turkmenistan and was mostly required for monitoring the progress towards the goals and targets set in the recent international covenants - the Millennium Declaration (2000) and the “World Fit for Children” Action Plan adopted by 189 UN member states at the Special Session for Children of the UN General Assembly in May 2002.

The MICS-3 estimates show reduction of the child mortality (including infant mortality) rates during the last 15 years. The most intensive reduction of the child mortality, by the MICS-3 estimates, was observed in the period of 1999-2004. Also, as the current statistics show, in Turkmenistan there is an increase in the child survival rates and reduction of mortality rates almost in all age groups irrespective of sex. All these have a positive effect on the growth of life expectancy of the people of Turkmenistan.

### **Role and Place of Education in the Context of the National Development**

Improvement of the education system is an indispensable condition for the successful mastering of the industrial processes, which become more and more complicated, by the workers. Achievements of the economically developed countries depend on the extent and level of education of their citizens as producers and consumers of goods and services manufacturing of which is based on new information technologies, as well as on the scientific and technological progress. Competitive capacities of countries will be increasingly dependent on their scientific and technological potentials as the basic source for the diversification and development of their economies. In accordance with the National Strategy of Economic, Political and Cultural Development of Turkmenistan until 2020, the educational policy up to 2020 will be realized based upon the priority of its development as an indispensable condition for the society modernization and provision for the needs of the Turkmen economy and its competitiveness at the world markets.

In the period till 2020, a favorable demographic situation will ensure high population and labor resource growths. Along with the development of an open market economy, the standard of well-being of the Turkmen population will be more dependent on the accrued human capital. Since education plays an important role in the human capital formation, provision of equal educational opportunities and free-of-charge basic (secondary) and professional (in the state standard framework) education will remain an important means for the increase of the living standard. The next challenge is to provide for the increasing demand for access to the higher education for all who wish it.

The MDG “Ensure universal primary education” has been achieved in Turkmenistan. Therefore, a new target was set to be achieved in Turkmenistan by 2015: “Expand access of people to quality education at all levels and to achieve world class standards in education”.

As the Multiple Indicator Cluster Survey (MICS-3) conducted in Turkmenistan in 2006 shows, of the total number of children of the primary school enrollment age (7 years), 97 percent attend the first grade of primary school. There are no differences between urban and rural areas. Female enrollment in primary education is at 98 percent and male enrollment is at 96 percent.

In Turkmenistan the net school attendance rate is high: 99 percent of primary school age children attend school. Only a small percentage of school age children (1 percent) do not attend school (because of their health status).

The net secondary education attendance rate is over 95 percent.

In Turkmenistan, practically all children (99.9 percent) who entered grade 1 completed grade 5.

The ratio of boys to girls attending primary and secondary school is more known as the gender parity ratio. In Turkmenistan, the gender parity ratio both for primary and secondary education is 1.0, which is an evidence of the equality and absence of gender disparities in male and female school attendance.

The MDG “Ensure equality between men and women and enable women” – “Eliminate gender disparity in primary and secondary education preferably by 2005 and at all levels of education by 2015” has been achieved for the 1-2 stages of education in Turkmenistan.

Any form of discrimination against women related to education, free choice of occupation and equal conditions for entering educational institutions do not exist in the country.

### **Education Policy:**

#### **Constitution and educational legislation focused on compulsory and free education.**

The education reform has been developed in the context of an independent and neutral state on the grounds of the new education policy declared by the first president of Turkmenistan Saparmurat Turkmenbashy on May (Magtymguly) 3, 1993.

From the first days of its independence, Turkmenistan, as a secular democratic state, has intended to achieve the goals which were prioritized in Turkmenistan same as they were prioritized at the international arena: observance of the constitutional civil rights, observance of human rights (including child rights), prevention of ethnic and religious conflicts, protection of peace and civil security, social stability, protection and national harmony, revival of national cultural, historical, spiritual and moral traditions, successful reforms in education aimed at provision of compulsory secondary education, increase of the effectiveness and quality of

education, creation of conditions for the educational and intellectual development of the society capacities, etc.

Implementation of the goals and objectives related to children, including girls, is legislated by the current state normative and legal acts adopted under the independence:

- Constitution of Turkmenistan (1992)
- The Law of Turkmenistan “On Education in Turkmenistan” (1993)
- The Law of Turkmenistan “On Guarantees of the Rights of the Child” (2002)
- Resolution of the President of Turkmenistan “On Improvement of the Education System” (2007)
- Resolution of the President of Turkmenistan “On Improvement of Work of the Educational Institutions” (2007)
- The program of the first President of Turkmenistan Saparmurat Turkmenbashy “Strategy of Socio-Economic Transformations in Turkmenistan for the Period until 2010” (1999)
- National Strategy of Economic, Political and Cultural Development of Turkmenistan for the Period until 2020” (2003)
- Regulations of preschool child institutions in Turkmenistan (1998)
- Regulations of state secondary schools in Turkmenistan (1998)
- Regulations of state higher educational institutions in Turkmenistan (1998)

and other legislative acts of the Mejlis and Cabinet of Ministers of Turkmenistan, and guidelines and standard instructions of the Ministry of Education of Turkmenistan.

The above listed documents guarantee that all children have equal rights, opportunities and conditions, irrespective of their nationality, race, sex, language, religion, ethnicity, social origin, property status, and residence, to exercise all their rights, freedoms and benefits to receive education, including free compulsory secondary education, and realize their abilities, interests, needs, etc. Turkmenistan also takes part in the international cooperation for protection of the rights and legitimate interests of the child/female child, mother-and-child protection, and ensures implementation of its commitments in these issues.

One of the conditions for the personality development, in accordance with the Convention on the Rights of the Child adopted by the UN General Assembly (New York, 20.11.1989), Universal Declaration of Human Rights (10.12.1948), Millennium Development Goals (MDGs) and Education for All goals (EFA), including National EFA Program, is education.

Turkmenistan education system functions in compliance with all children’s rights stipulated in the Convention on the Rights of the Child, Declaration of Human Rights and Turkmen Law “On Guarantees of the Rights of the Child”, and ensures free-of-charge compulsory secondary education for all children, including girls, and personal development of every child taking into consideration their talents, mental and physical abilities, desires, needs, inclinations and possibilities.

The right to education is secured in Article 35 of the Constitution of Turkmenistan:

*“Every citizen has the right to education. General secondary education is compulsory; everyone is entitled to receive it free of charge in the state educational institutions.*

*The State ensures accessibility of the professional, secondary special and higher education for all in accordance with their abilities.*

*Organizations and citizens have the right to establish paid educational institutions on the basis and in the order established by law”.*

The Law “On Education in Turkmenistan”:

Article 2. Objectives of the Education Legislation

*“Objectives of the Turkmen legislation on education include:*

- *provision and protection of the constitutional civil rights to education;*
- *creation of the legal guarantees for free functioning and development of the education system in Turkmenistan”.*

#### Article 3. Basic Principles of Education

*“In Turkmenistan, the basic principles of education are the following:*

- *accessibility of all forms and types of educational services provided by the state for every individual;*
- *equality of rights to fully realize his/her abilities and talents for every individual;*
- *free-of-charge educational services in the state educational institutions”.*

The Law of Turkmenistan “On Guarantees of the Rights of the Child”:

#### Article 3. Equal Rights of the Child

1. *“All children residing in Turkmenistan have equal rights irrespective of their or their parents’ or legal guardians’ nationality, race, sex, language, religion, social origin, property, education, birth, health or other status.”*
2. *“Equal rights of the child are guaranteed by the laws and other normative and legal acts of Turkmenistan, and universally recognized principles and norms of international law.”*

#### Article 13. Right to Education

*“The child has the right to education which would be conducive to his/her general cultural development, intellectual development, development of his/her capacities and formation of beliefs, and moral and social responsibilities.”*

#### Article 25. Protection of the Child Right to Education

1. *“The State provides for the conditions necessary for the child to receive education in accordance with the Constitution of Turkmenistan and the Law of Turkmenistan “On Education”;*
2. *“The child’s education must promote his/her mental and physical abilities, development of the child’s personality, creativeness and talents, aesthetic upbringing and cultural development...  
The child should be prepared for an independent life and reared in the spirit of respect of parents, compatriots, and other people, official language, national culture and traditions, languages and cultures of other people, protection of natural environment, and learn to observe the rules of conduct in family and community.”*

In accordance with the above documents, the Regulations of the child pre-school institutions of Turkmenistan provide for the state-guaranteed equal rights and opportunities for all pre-school age children, irrespective of their sex and ethnic identity, to attend under supervision child pre-school institutions to receive education; the Regulations of the state secondary schools of Turkmenistan provide for the state-guaranteed equal rights and opportunities for all school age children, irrespective of their sex and ethnic identity, to receive free compulsory secondary education.

According to Article 20 ‘The Rights of the Students’ of the Turkmen Law “On Education in Turkmenistan”, *students and pre-school attendees are provided with test-books, school books, and other necessary learning printed materials free of charge and are entitled to free use of training and practical facilities, research, cultural and sports facilities of the educational institutions while in the educational process.*

#### **Structure of Education:**

#### **Establishment and Development of the Existing Structure of the Education System**

In accordance with the Turkmen Law “On Education in Turkmenistan” adopted on May 3, 1993, the following structure of the education system was established and currently functions:

- pre-school education;
- general secondary education;
- professional (vocational) education;
- higher education;
- advanced training and re-training;
- extracurricular (out-of-school) education and upbringing.

*The **pre-school education** is provided by families and pre-school institutions in cooperation with families.*

*The family is responsible for the harmonious development of the child’s personality and his/her introduction into national and global spiritual values of the mankind.*

*The State promotes rearing and education of children, arranges for them to learn Turkmen, English and Russian languages in the pre-school institutions, and provides financial and material support to these institutions.*

*The educational authorities provide methodological guidance to all pre-school institutions, irrespective of their agency subordination.*

*In accordance with the Early Childhood Development Program, by now, the work for school readiness is strengthened in the pre-school institutions. Parents’ information and education centers (Parents’ centers) are established for the children who do not attend pre-school institutions and their parents in all provinces (velayats) and Ashgabat city (totally, 56 family centers and 296 branches).*

*The **general secondary education** is the basic level of education which allows Turkmen citizens to receive the basics of the scientific knowledge, develop their creative abilities, cultural level and physical capacities and is provided in the general 10-year educational schools.*

*The government and local executive authorities ensure that all necessary conditions are provided for the students to master Turkmen, Russian and other foreign languages.*

*The **professional education** provides for the Turkmen citizens to obtain professions (occupations) in accordance with their vocations, interests and abilities.*

*The professional education is provided in the vocational educational institutions of different types on the basis of the general secondary education.*

*The **higher education** gives fundamental scientific and practical training to the Turkmen citizens enabling them to obtain professions in accordance with their vocations, interests and abilities; to raise their qualifications, improve professional skills, re-train them and train research and pedagogical human resources.*

*The higher educated specialists are trained on the grounds of the general secondary education on the free competitive basis.*

*The higher education is provided on the full-time basis.*

*In Turkmenistan, the higher educational institutions include: an academy, university, (educational) institutes, conservatory and others.*

*The higher educational institutions may associate into educational complexes and associations of various types.*

*The **advanced training and re-training** of staff is carried out to provide more profound professional knowledge and skills, upgrade and update professional knowledge to the global standards of practices and experience, obtain new professions, occupations and qualifications. The advanced training and re-training of workers and specialists are provided by the educational institutions at the government expenses and on the contract basis.*

*The **extracurricular education and upbringing** is an integral part of the education system and is aimed at developing children's and young people's talents and abilities, as well as meeting their interests and spiritual needs.*

*In order to develop various interests and abilities of children and young people, a whole network of the extracurricular educational institutions is created to include cultural and aesthetic, natural-scientific, technical, sports and other facilities.*

*Out-of-school work is carried out with the joint efforts of the educational institutions, families, community organizations and creative collectives, and is based on the principle of free choice of the kinds of institutions and types of activities in accordance with the individual interests.*

In Turkmenistan, there is a network of **special educational institutions** for the pre-school and school age children with mental and physical disabilities and developmental disorders and orphaned children who are fully supported by the state.

During the years of independence, the education system of Turkmenistan has been systematically and purposefully developed and improved along with the socio-economic development of the society and the state by way of overcoming new challenges and achieving the set goals and objectives which are in full compliance with the EFA and MDG goals at the international scale.

It is widely known that education is the factor which determines the fate of a nation. An economic, political and spiritual upsurge of any country and any society depends on the civil and professional efforts of every generation. If a generation is educated and broad-minded, energetic, deeply patriotic and morally pure, then the society is prosperous and the state climbs to new heights.

The reform currently conducted in the field of education under the supervision of President Gurbanguly Berdymuhammedov is a logical continuation of the education policy of the first Turkmen President Saparmurat Turkmenbashy aimed at comprehensive improvement of the education system of the country. From the first years of independence, concern for the education and upbringing of the young generation has been a priority of the government policy and, as President Gurbanguly Berdymuhammedov declared in one of his statements, it will be given special emphasis in the future.

It is quite natural that today, when Turkmenistan is at the new turn of its history, reforms in the fields of education; science and culture are launched for their radical quality renovation, along with the social and economic transformations.

Today, education rises to a principally new level in Turkmenistan. This is evident in the documents among the first signed by the President of Turkmenistan Gurbanguly Berdymuhammedov. The Resolutions "On Improvement of the Education System" (No. PP-4610 of 15.02.2007) and "On Improvement of Work of the Educational Institutions" (No. 8465 of 04.03.2007) identify specific measures for the education reform in Turkmenistan. These documents are called upon to lay foundation for the future progressive development of the national education and bringing it to the level of the developed countries of the world. The main task of the Turkmenistan education reform is to reorganize and improve the country's education system so that it would be able to provide opportunities for the maximum realization of the intellectual potential of the young generation which is the future of the Motherland.

Thus, it can be stated with full confidence that the new documents on education adopted by the Head of State are intended to be one of the fundamental programs for the comprehensive country development and ensure a solid humanitarian and manpower basis for further progress taking

into consideration new realities and great challenges faced by the nation in the third millennium. In this connection, one of the main goals of the new educational policy is to create a perfect country system for training national personnel whose level will meet the highest international standards. The young people will receive an opportunity to receive education and professional training at the level of the world standards, including in the best foreign educational institutions. The timeliness of these objectives is evident. Only high educational attainments of the young people, their endowment with necessary knowledge and practical skills, as well as high moral and ethical standards, will allow realization of the enormous country potential to its full extent.

The reform covers practically all stages of the national education system. Radical changes take place in the timeframes and contents of the school and higher education. In compliance with the above mentioned documents, effective September (Ruhnama) 1 of the 2007-2008 academic year, the full term of education will be ten years in secondary schools, five years in higher schools and six years for medical and some art education. School students finishing grade 9 in the 2006-2007 academic year will continue their secondary education in grade 10 in the next 2007-2008 academic year.

Adopting the best national and world practices, new curricula have been developed and approved for the secondary and higher educational institutions, general schools and pre-school child institutions; training programs and, on their basis, textbooks and manuals are developed for all educational disciplines.

Taking into account the experience of the developed countries, the new curricula are more focused on the study of the laws of social development and basics of the legal, moral, economic, political and ecological culture, and lessons of social sciences and physical culture.

To ensure high quality of educating and upbringing of the young generation, the weekly workload of teachers in all types of secondary, professional and vocational schools has been reduced from 30 to 24 hours; annual workload of the teaching staff in higher educational institutions has been reduced from 1250 to 850 hours. Effective September 1, 2007, average class occupancy in secondary schools has been reduced to 25 students; and where the number of students in grades 1-3 is more than 30 and in grades 4-10 more than 34, additional classes are to be opened. In pre-schools, the nursery (1-3 age) group occupancy should not exceed 15-20 children and 3-7 age group – 20-25 children (in the past, the group occupancy was regulated not to be below 20 and 25 children, respectively, without any limitation of the maximum number of children in a group). This will allow teachers to adopt new educational technologies, pay more attention to each child, adolescent and student, and provides conditions for full realization of their abilities, talents and timely determination of their inclinations.

Special emphasis is given to children living in remote rural areas. For them, in the new 2007-2008 academic year, boarding schools will be opened in velayats so that they will have an opportunity to continue their studies in the senior grades and receive high quality secondary education.

Thus, the new education policy is based on the principles combining both national spiritual values and domestic experience, and worldwide achievements in this field.

In recent years, in the context of its foreign policy development, Turkmenistan has become an arena for various international events, both of political nature and those related to education, culture, and sports (contests, competitions, festivals, conferences, symposia, etc.), including child and youth activities, which have a positive impact on the development and quality of education.

## **Hierarchy of the Structures Responsible for Education Management and Supervision**

In Turkmenistan, all secondary schools, pre-school institutions and out-of-school facilities under the education system are directly administered and supervised by the educational departments of etraps and cities which, in their turn, are subordinate to the Central educational departments of velayats and the city of Ashgabat. The activities of the central educational departments of velayats and Ashgabat are managed, supervised and coordinated by the Ministry of Education of Turkmenistan. The work of the higher educational institutions and secondary special educational institutions is directly coordinated and supervised by the Ministry of Education. In Turkmenistan, there are several educational institutions (secondary, professional, vocational and higher) which are under the jurisdiction of sectoral ministries, agencies and velayat local authorities (Hakimliks). Methodological provisions for such educational institutions are made by the educational authorities.

## **Modern Trends of Education Development, Including Information and Communication Technologies (ICT) in Education and Innovated Training Methods**

From the first days of its independence, Turkmenistan demonstrates its responsible attitude to provision of favorable conditions for life, health, education and development of children and young people, whose well-being is one of the main objectives of the country development. Today, the concern about the growing generation, remaining a priority direction of the state policy and general public, has wide dimensions and accelerated tempos. It is foreseen to build many new pre-schools, schools and higher educational institutions, child playgrounds and sports grounds, stadiums and sports facilities, child recreational centers of modern architecture and equipped with the newest equipment and devices everywhere, including remote areas of the country. Only in 2007-2008, more than 20 new schools and kindergartens are planned to be built and put into operation, including those at the expense of different ministries and agencies. The President of Turkmenistan Gurbanguly Berdimuhammedov, having thoroughly considered each of the project designs of nearly 20 schools and about the same number of kindergartens which would be built in Ashgabat and velayats in the closest future, emphasized that all of these projects should meet the highest international standards. In every school and kindergarten, all necessary conditions should be provided for full and harmonious development of children, including computer classes, sports facilities (gymnasiums), equipped playgrounds, etc.

Under the program of development of modern infrastructure for rest and recreation of the young generation, in Gokdere resort area located in the mountain gorge near Ashgabat, 14 modern child recreational centers well-equipped in the latest technical fashion are under construction by request of different ministries and agencies of the country. Already in summer 2007, some of them accommodated first groups of children. Conditions in these recreational centers will allow accommodating children the whole year round; and school students will be able not only rest and restore their health but also continue their studies if necessary. All these major positive transformations demonstrate special care and concern about upbringing and education of the growing generation and commitment to their improvement not only on the part of the government but of the whole society. This may also be confirmed by the historical resolutions of the nation-wide forum of the XX Halk Maslahaty aimed at agricultural reforms, socio-economic development of rural areas, and acceleration of the education reform. In accordance with the Resolution of President Gurbanguly Berdimuhammedov, the new large-scale program the development of which has been started by the special Government Commission together with the ministries, sectoral agencies and velayat authorities (Hakimliks), will be oriented in this direction. Under this program, integrated plans for the social and economic development practically of all districts (etraps) of the country are to be worked out and the list of prioritized

objects of socio-cultural and communal and economic nature which need to be built or reconstructed in towns and villages, including the most far-flung, is to be made.

The education system widely uses radio, television, telephone, and video; there is an e-mail service between the Ministry of Education and central educational departments in velayats.

In the context of the current reforms and systematic improvement of the Turkmenistan education system and bringing it to the level of the developed countries, it is foreseen to continue equipment of educational institutions with computers in accordance with the National Strategy of Economic, Political and Cultural Development of Turkmenistan for the Period up to 2020 and increase the number of computer classes already in 2007/2008 academic year, as well as arrange for the training of appropriate specialists on a free-of-charge basis. An important step towards introducing ICT technologies into the lives of the Turkmen people, including the education system, is the President Gurbanguly Berdymuhamedov's initiative to open Internet-cafes throughout the country the services of which will be available to customers.

By the beginning of the next academic year, more than 12 thousand computers will be supplied to general secondary schools which would allow significant raising of training level of the informatics and basic computer technologies subjects. In the closest future many schools will get access to the world information network in Turkmenistan.

In the course of the education system reform, high emphasis is placed on raising the quality of education through the adoption of innovative interactive methods of training and teaching, and learning and disseminating of the best practices in this area, including through the mass media. Numerous activities conducted in Turkmenistan contribute to this purpose: various professional contests ("Teacher of the Year", "Educator of the Year", "The Best Methodologist", Open house days, educational exhibitions, contest shows of teaching aids, etc.), advanced training courses for educational institutions' managers, teachers and caregivers, training workshops (including those with foreign instructors), and work carried out by methodological centers of velayats and Ashgabat, methodological associations of etraps, towns, schools, and preschools.

Widespread and active involvement of relatives in the fate of a child orphan is a characteristic feature of the Turkmen mentality. Everywhere a child who has lost his/her parents finds shelter with the close and other relatives. In cases when the child does not have any close relatives, or due to various reasons, they cannot take the orphan in their family, the State comes to their rescue. Turkmenistan implements multiple-aspect programs of creating the most favorable conditions for the lives and development of children deprived of parental environment. According to Para 4 Article 24 of the Turkmen Law "On Guarantees of the Rights of the Child", the State provides the child deprived of parental care with the family-type upbringing: adoption, guardianship, tutorship or placement in appropriate residential child care institution on full government support.

In Turkmenistan, there are children homes (orphanages) which perform child-rearing, carry out pre-school and school educational programs, and provide care and healthcare of the children. Serious educational work is done by the boarding schools where children live and study during the workweek because their parents experience heavy work pressure.

In the orphanages and boarding schools the children are fully supported by the State, and a home-like environment is created for them. With this, the right of every child is guaranteed to have living conditions necessary for his/her full physical, mental, spiritual, moral and social development. Local governing authorities provide additional support to the orphanages and boarding houses.

In the country, there are 18 specialized pre-school institutions and 14 specialized boarding schools for children with mental and physical developmental disorders. In such institutions, the children receive education by the curricular different from the curriculum of the general secondary schools. Special dactyl Turkmen alphabet has been developed and the Braille alphabet specifically adapted to the Turkmen language is used. The process of education, upbringing and restoration of health is carried out under close supervision of the health professionals. The curricula include some vocational training of the children, and care leavers are placed in the jobs in accordance with the received profession.

In Turkmenistan, establishment of family-type children's homes, which are a new advanced form of placement of orphaned children and children deprived of parental care, began in 1994. To strengthen State support of the orphaned children and children left without parental care and to provide them with the better combined social, collective and family forms of upbringing, the President of Turkmenistan issued a Resolution "On the Family-Type Children's Homes" on October 3, 1994. The family-type children's homes provide children with the living conditions which are most similar to the home-like environment and healthy moral and psychological atmosphere of a family.

In accordance with the law, children in care of the family-type children's homes or substitute families are paid for their subsistence. An amount paid for each child is equal to the costs spent for a child on full government support.

When a decision is taken about organizing a family-type children's home, the persons appointed caregivers of the children are out of turn provided with an individual house or a spacious multi-room apartment (Article 41 of the Housing Code of Turkmenistan).

Children residing in orphanages, children's homes and boarding houses are provided with timely health care services. Conditions for their regular rest are also arranged. Every year, child orphans enjoy rest in the out-of-town recreational camps, health resorts, summer houses, and in-town school camps at the budget expenses and sponsors' donations.

Placement of children deprived of parental care is the responsibility of the guardianship and tutorship bodies. Any activities of other legal entities or natural persons related to placement of children deprived of parental care are not permitted.

According to Para 2 Article 16 of Turkmenistan Law "On Guarantees of the Rights of the Child", a child residing in Turkmenistan has the right, in accordance with his/her ethnicity, use his/her native language and follow cultural and ethnic customs and traditions. Therefore, when placement of children deprived of parental care is considered the factors that are taken into account include: the child's ethnic origin, his/her religious and cultural affiliation, native language and a possibility to provide continuity of education and upbringing. Children deprived of parental care are, as a rule, placed in families or residential institutions within the place of their birth and usual residence.

The State policy of Turkmenistan for children provides for the legislated guarantees of the child rights and legitimate interests, non-discrimination, inadmissibility of rough treatment, and a system of restoration of rights in case of their violation. Child-rearing in a family environment is recognized as a priority form of upbringing children which ensures comprehensive development of the child's personality. In Turkmenistan, the family and marriage, civil, labor and criminal legislations contain norms guaranteeing preemptive rights of minors and prohibiting any forms of physical or mental violence and exploitation of children in the family, government, private or penitentiary institutions, pre-schools and educational institutions.

In order to punctually and steadily implement the UN Convention on the Rights of the Child and in addition to the existing normative and legal acts on the child protection, the Mejlis of Turkmenistan adopted a special law “On Guarantees of the Rights of the Child” on July 5, 2002. It implements the provisions of the Convention and sets prohibition of all forms of physical or mental violence of children. Thus, in accordance with Para 3 Article 24 of this Law, “Any disparagement of the child, intimidation, corporal punishment or any other hurting of the child causing harm to his/her physical or mental health are inadmissible.”

The State protects the child from all forms of exploitation at the work place through legal, economic, social, medical and educational measures. It is prohibited to use the child to do the jobs which are harmful to his/her health or hinder his/her physical, mental or moral development (Article 27 of the Law “On Guarantees of the Rights of the Child”; Articles 181 and 183 of the Labor Code of Turkmenistan). Parents, who evade their parental responsibilities, abuse their parental rights, maltreat their children, make unfavorable effect on the children by their immoral conduct, may have their parental rights withdrawn by the court decision (Article 70 of the Marriage and Family Code of Turkmenistan).

The Criminal Code of Turkmenistan contains a special chapter defining the responsibility for the infringement on minors, families and morals. It stipulates the criminal responsibility for the persistent neglect of childcare on the part of parents, guardians, teachers and workers of educational institutions; abuse of guardian’s rights; and engagement of minors in antisocial activity.

On February 1, 2005, the Law of Turkmenistan “On Guarantees of the Rights of Young People to Work” was adopted. This Law stipulates measures to protect the child from economic exploitation through violence, to prevent situations which are potentially dangerous for his health or impedimental to receiving education, or are harmful to his health, physical, mental and spiritual development, and infringing to exercising the principle of freedom of conscience. In particular, the Law prohibits parents (caregivers, guardians, tutors) to use a child for works related to a permanent labor activity and removal from studies, which is considered as a violation of the child’s rights guaranteed by the normative and legal acts of Turkmenistan and universal standards of the international law.

As noted, a touching concern and care of children is one of the distinguishing features of the Turkmen social mentality. Violent forms of upbringing are alien to the cultural traditions and customs of Turkmen people; they are practically non-existent in families, educational, caregiving and other institutions. However, the right to make a complaint about improper treatment to the state or judicial authority is provided to a minor, who can do it personally or through his/her representative (the Law of Turkmenistan “On Appeals of Citizens and the Order of their Examination” of January 14, 1999).

The State and public organizations (Youth Union, Women’s Union and others) of Turkmenistan, together with the international organizations (OSCE, UNICEF, UNHCR, ION, etc.) active in our country, conduct a wide-scale awareness work on the rights of children, including international standards of child treatment and protection. International and national normative and legal acts on child issues are regularly published, meeting, seminars, round table discussions and other activities are held to promote public awareness and strengthen law and order.

Special emphasis is placed on implementation of the State programs (“Education”, “Health”, etc.) supported by the UN agencies in Turkmenistan and aimed at comprehensive development and healthcare of children. These programs include issues of physical and psychological

rehabilitation of children and their social re-integration, if any isolated individual instances occur.

The Constitution of Turkmenistan states that Turkmenistan grants the right to refuge to the foreign citizens persecuted in their countries for their political, ethnic and religious beliefs. In addition to this constitutional provision, the following Laws of Turkmenistan were adopted: “On Refugees” (June 12, 1997), “On Legal Status of Foreigners in Turkmenistan” (October 8, 1993) with subsequent amendments, and “On Citizenship of Turkmenistan” (September 13, 1992) with subsequent amendments and addenda.

On June 12, 1997, the Mejlis of Turkmenistan ratified the Convention on the refugees of 1951 and the Protocol of 1967 on the refugee status. The essential provisions of these international instruments are implemented in the Law of Turkmenistan “On Refugees” adopted on June 12, 1997, which regulates the whole set of issues related to refugees, including refugee children.

According to Article 22 of the Law of Turkmenistan “On Guarantees of the Rights of the Child”, a non-Turkmen citizen child, specifically a refugee child, who stays in Turkmenistan, has the same rights and responsibilities as the Turkmen citizen children, if not provided otherwise by the legislation and international agreements of Turkmenistan.

The law of Turkmenistan “On Guarantees of the Rights of Young People to Work” of February 1, 2005, is aimed at, as stated, strict implementation of the UN Convention on the Rights of the Child and conventional provisions that “regulate child protection from economic exploitation through violence, prevention of situations which are potentially dangerous for his health or impedimental to receiving education, or are harmful to his health, physical, mental and spiritual development, and infringing to exercising the principle of freedom of conscience.” Violation of the provisions of this law implies responsibility stipulated in the legislation of Turkmenistan.

Children of ethnic minorities of Turkmenistan enjoy equal rights irrespective of their birth, sex, race, ethnical origin, language and religion. In accordance with the Law of Turkmenistan “On the Language”, children of ethnic or language minorities have the right to education, press and information in their native language, and to follow their ethnic culture (Article 19 Para 1, Articles 25, 27, 34 and 35 of the Law).

These provisions of the Constitution and Laws are strictly observed in the country. As noted, in Turkmenistan there are schools and classes where instructions are provided in the Russian, Uzbek, and Kazakh languages.