

**Submission by the Government of Georgia for the report on Eliminating Intolerance and
Discrimination Based on Religion or Belief and the Achievement of Sustainable
Development Goal 16 (SDG 16)**

The effects of discrimination

- **Instances of communal violence against religious minorities, and incitement to such violence, and the adequacy of the responses.**

On January 2018, the Human Rights Protection Department was established under the Ministry of Internal Affairs of Georgia with the aim to ensure prompt response and quality of investigation on particular crimes, including religious hate crimes. Such decision expressed the Ministry's will to enhance fight against discrimination and hate crime on a policy level.

In 2019, the Department's mandate expanded and it was renamed to the Department of Human Rights Protection and Quality Monitoring. Currently the Department is responsible for monitoring the quality of investigation of domestic crime and violence against women, hate crimes, crimes committed by/against minors, human trafficking and crimes against human life and health, as well as other crimes based on crime trends and other priorities of criminal policy.

The Department receives information on incidents/reports from all police departments throughout the country. When the Department employees identify gaps in the investigation process they contact the case manager (investigator), provide legal consultations, discuss the issue with them and decide on the future course of action.

Along with the abovementioned, the Department serves as a consultative body for the police and stands as a contact point for civil society and various public agencies.

- **Disaggregated data showing the impact of instances of conflict and communal violence on religious communities and minorities;**

Under the decree of Prosecutor General of Georgia, the Division of Human Rights Protection of the Prosecutor's Office of Georgia is responsible to collect and analyze relevant data on discrimination grounds, including sexual orientation and gender identity. The statistical data is proactively published in the annual reports of Prosecutor General and is available on the official webpage.

The annual statistical data on prosecution of crimes committed specifically with religion-based intolerance motive is also notable: From 2013 till the end of 2018 for crimes committed with religion-based intolerance motive charges were brought against 38 individuals. Out of them, 34 individuals were prosecuted for crimes committed with intolerance motive against Jehovah's witnesses, 1 individual was prosecuted for crime

committed with intolerance motive against Muslims and 3 individuals were prosecuted for crimes committed with intolerance motive against other religious groups.

In 2019 for crimes committed with religion-based intolerance motive charges were brought against 14 individuals, 13 individuals were charged for the crimes committed with religion-based intolerance motive and 1 individual was charged for the crime committed with religion-based and gender-based intolerance motives.

Granting victim status: In total 30 individuals were granted victim status: 29 individuals – **religion-based intolerance** (including 3 legal persons); 1 individual - **religion-based intolerance and gender-based intolerance**. Out of those, **natural persons**: 23 Jehovah's witnesses, 1 atheist (in defendant's perception), 3 orthodox Christians; **religious organizations**: in 2 cases – "Organization of Jehovah's witnesses Georgia", in 1 case – St. Alexander Nevsky church (Russian orthodox church).

As concerns the analysis of religious hatred motivated crime statistics and its publication, the Division of Human Rights Protection constantly performs monitoring of procedural supervision conducted by prosecutors specialized on religious hatred motivated crimes. As the outcome of the examination of relevant cases, the Division identifies hatred motivation and in certain cases issues recommendation to modify legal qualification, to grant victim status and/or launch prosecution.

It should also be noted, that the Division of Human Rights Protection of the POG is determined as a representative of OSCE/ODIHR in Georgia and annually collects statistics on hate crimes on behalf of the State. On the annual conference held in Vienna in 2018, steps taken by the Prosecutor's Office of Georgia and increase of prosecution rate of hate crimes by 67% was positively appraised.

Since 2019, with the co-operation of the Prosecutor's Office of Georgia and the Ministry of Internal Affairs and the expert assistance of the Council of Europe, statistical module has been being improved. As a result, both agencies will be able to perfectly process segregated statistical data on investigation and prosecution of hate crimes.

Good Practices:

- **Examples of legislative, policy and institutional frameworks and measures protecting minority religious or belief communities against discrimination and violence.**
- The right to freedom of religion and belief is one of the fundamental rights enshrined in the Constitution of Georgia. According to Article 16 of the Constitution of Georgia everyone has freedom of belief, religion and conscience and these rights may be restricted only in accordance with law for ensuring public safety, or for protecting health or the rights of others, insofar as is necessary in a democratic society.

No one shall be persecuted because of his/her belief, religion or conscience, or be coerced into expressing his/her opinion thereon.

Article 11 of the Constitution of Georgia regulates the right to equality and prohibits any discrimination on any grounds including **religion**.

Along with freedom of belief and religion, the state shall recognize the outstanding role of the Apostolic Autocephalous Orthodox Church of Georgia in the history of Georgia.

- In addition to the Constitution of Georgia, on 2 May, 2014 the Parliament of Georgia adopted a separate **Law of Georgia on Elimination of All Forms of Discrimination** (*hereinafter* – Anti-Discrimination Law). The process of elaboration of the Anti-Discrimination Law was led by the Ministry of Justice and involved all line ministries, local and international organizations. The draft law was also submitted for the review to the CoE/ECRI, the OSCE/ODIHR and the UN/OHCHR to incorporate the best international human rights standards. The draft law was also examined by the Swedish expert with the assistance of the EU Delegation to Georgia. Most of the feedbacks and recommendations were reflected in the text of the law.

The purpose of the Anti-Discrimination Law is to eliminate all forms of discrimination, being direct, indirect or multiple, in public and private sector and ensure equal enjoyment of rights for everyone prescribed by law irrespective of **religion or belief**.

The Anti-Discrimination Law vests the authority to monitor its implementation with an independent body – the Public Defender of Georgia (Ombudsperson’s Office) who may issue recommendation to a relevant organization or natural person to restore the rights of a victim of discrimination and request its enforcement via courts.

Apart from the Public Defender’s Office of Georgia, regional (city) courts of Georgia consider cases of discrimination under criminal, civil and administrative proceedings.

Any person considering himself/herself to be a victim of discrimination, may bring a court action against the person/institution which he/she considers to have committed the discrimination and may claim for moral and/or material damages.

- On July 21, 2018, under the guidance of the Ministry of Justice of Georgia, the Parliament of Georgia adopted the **Law on State Inspectorate**. The law creates a new institutionally

independent investigating body of the State Inspectorate, which is charged with a responsibility to independently and effectively investigate specified categories of crimes, committed by law enforcement officers and civil servants. Among others, the following criminal acts are subjugated to the jurisdiction of the State Inspector: torture, the threat of torture, degrading or inhumane treatment, abuse of power and exceeding official powers, committed in aggravated circumstances, including but not limited to **discriminatory grounds such as religion** and etc.

- Article 53¹ of **Criminal Code of Georgia** regulates commission of crime on the basis of any ground of discrimination, including religion and belief with the reason of intolerance as an aggravating factor for liability for all respective crimes regulated under Criminal Code of Georgia. Apart from the mentioned general rule, there are also specific crimes with relevant sanctions aiming at ensuring the elimination of discrimination and intolerance based on religion and belief, such as violation of human equality based on religion or belief (Article 142 of the Criminal Code of Georgia), unlawful interference with the performance of divine services or other religious rites (Article 155), persecution of persons because of faith (Article 156), unlawful interference with the establishment of political, public or religious associations or with their activities (Article 166), Public incitement to acts of violence in order to cause a discord between certain groups based on their religious characteristics (Article 2391), taking a hostage in order to coerce a religious organization to perform or not to perform certain acts (Article 329)¹.
- Fighting against discrimination and hate crimes is an active topic for the **General Prosecutor's Office of Georgia**. In the beginning of 2016, the Division of Human Rights Protection of Prosecutor's Office of Georgia has elaborated the recommendation regarding the application of Article 53¹ of the Criminal Code of Georgia ("the CCG" - hereafter) that prescribes commission of crime with a bias motive (including the grounds of gender identity and sexual orientation) as an aggravating circumstance of criminal liability. The given recommendation concerns such issues as qualification of hate crimes, proper terminology, investigation process, collection of evidence and relevant statistical data. The mentioned recommendation has been considered and evaluated by the expert of the council of Europe and was disseminated among the employees of Prosecutor's Office.

Combating discrimination and hate crimes has become one of the parts of 2017-2021 Action Plan of the POG. Positive steps taken in relation to the investigations of the crimes committed with religious intolerance are also worth mentioning. Namely, in 2017 the Division of Human Rights Protection of the POG elaborated a recommendation with the view to facilitate an effective prosecutorial supervision on crimes committed with the religious intolerance, which was studied by the expert of the Council of Europe. The

¹ Criminal Code of Georgia in English is available at: <https://matsne.gov.ge/en/document/view/16426?publication=209>

recommendation covers the interpretation of articles of the CCG related to religious intolerance, cases of damaging religious premises, legal qualification of verbal abuse and other pressing matters.

It is noteworthy that in October 2017, the representatives of the Council of Religions under the auspices of the Public Defender got acquainted with the mentioned recommendation during the meeting held at the POG. The representatives of religious confessions existing in Georgia were informed about the statistical data of prosecutions launched against religious intolerance crimes in 2013-2017. Information concerning the study events held for the POG employees on hate-motivated, including religious intolerance crimes was presented before the meeting participants. The purpose of the meeting was to introduce activities carried out by the POG to the representatives of religious confessions operating in Georgia, to discuss current challenges and to set the mechanisms for the future cooperation.

- Within the scope of the Governmental Action Plan, the LEPL Agency for Religious Issues (hereinafter referred to as the SARI) has studied international and foreign countries' experience on the elaboration and institutionalization of the standards of religious neutrality in the civil service, as well as the forms reflecting these standards. Also, the Agency was closely working with the National Bureau of Civil Service of Georgia.

Based on recommendation of the SARI, the Article 7 (Religious Neutrality) has been integrated into the "Ethics and General Rules of Conduct in Public Institution" approved by the Decree of the Government №200, of April 20, 2017.

The Interreligious Council has been established at the SARI, involving almost all religious associations in Georgia including the Georgian Orthodox Church, historical religions and other minor religions. The Council periodically gathers and discusses number of important issues.

- According to the second paragraph of Article 3 of the Law of Georgia on General Education, the State provides openness and equal access to general education for all throughout life, independence of public schools from religious and political associations and elimination of violence in general education institutions. Everyone has the opportunity to benefit from the offered educational services in Georgia.

Ministry of Education, Science, Culture and Sports of Georgia is actively involved in the elaboration and implementation process of Georgia's state strategy for civic equality and integration for 2015-2020 and its action plan.

The State Strategy is aimed at ensuring civil unity and equality and is focused on creating equal opportunities for all citizens, regardless of ethnic origin, religious or cultural identity.

In terms of reflecting gender issues, besides the country's 'gender equality strategy' document, the above State Strategy aims at protection of the women rights and facilitates the integration of women belonging to ethnic minorities.

Within the framework of the Georgia's state strategy for civic equality and integration and its action plan, the Ministry undertakes several measures in order to:

- ensure protection of the identity and culture of ethnic minorities,
- provide access to high quality education and improve knowledge of the state language,
- raise awareness of women's rights/gender equality.

- **Examples of state legislative, institutional and policy measures to address past injustices, including violence and discrimination, against religious or belief minorities and to provide redress and reparations (or examples of State failure to address such injustices).**

Although Georgia is not a successor of the Soviet regime, and therefore has no obligation to pay the damage caused during the Soviet totalitarian regime, in the framework of the Government Decree №117 dated January 27, 2014, four religious denominations – Islamic, Jewish, Roman Catholic and Armenian Apostolic Religious associations get partial compensation for the damage caused during the Soviet totalitarian regime, which is used for the development, unification and peaceful coexistence of the religious communities in the country.

In addition, religious associations get financial and property assistance from local budgets to satisfy religious needs of the community.

- **Special policies and initiatives promoting effective participation of religious or belief minorities in public life, including through responsive, inclusive and representative decision-making processes at all levels.**

Religious associations in Georgia are registered by the Legal Entity of Public Law (LEPL) – National Agency of Public Registry (NAPR) operating under the Ministry of Justice of Georgia.

Religious associations may be registered as legal entities of public law. However, this shall not limit the right of religious associations to be registered as non-entrepreneurial (non-commercial) legal entities as well as to conduct activities as non-registered unions.

NAPR may register a religious denomination as a legal entity of public law having a historical link with Georgia or a religious denomination recognized as a religion by the legislation of the member states of the Council of Europe. The Law of Georgia on Legal Entity of Public Law does not apply to the religious associations registered as legal entities of public law.

The registration procedures for non-entrepreneurial (non-commercial) legal entities apply to the registration of the religious associations and their rights are defined by the procedures prescribed for non-entrepreneurial (non-commercial) legal entities.

If registration of a religious association is requested, the interested person shall submit to the registration authority the founders'/members' agreement and an application containing the necessary details required under the Law of Georgia on Entrepreneurs for registration of entrepreneurial legal persons.

The timeframe for registration of religious associations is 1 working day, and the service fee is 100 GEL, in case of expedited service, registration is done at the same day and the service fee is 200 GEL.

An interested person can apply for registration of a religious association to any territorial registration office of National Agency of Public Registry (NAPR), Public Service Hall (PSH), Community Center or authorized users of NAPR (notaries, banks, etc.). A religious association can be registered online as well via unified portal of e-services – <https://www.my.gov.ge>. E-registration increases accessibility and efficiency of the service, saves time and other resources and improves transparency of the system.

The extracts on religious associations are open and available on the NAPR official website (<https://napr.gov.ge/pol>), or unified portal of electronic services (<https://www.my.gov.ge/ka-ge/services/6/service/179>)

To date, there are 54 religious associations registered at NAPR.

- Aiming at empowering minorities and ensuring their engagement in policy making/implementation processes, the LEPL “Training Centre of Justice” offers minority groups free of charge Georgian and English language courses and trainings on the development of managerial skills. Since 2015, more than 250 representatives of ethnic minorities attended Georgian language course. In 2018, the course on management and disposal was attended by 20 representatives of Pankisi Gorge population. In 2019, training on project writing and management was held for 20 representatives of Pankisi Gorge population, also, the English language course was successfully completed by 12 participants.

Moreover, since the **adoption of anti-discrimination law and amendments to the legal acts following the ratification of the Istanbul Convention** extensive **public outreach campaign** on human rights, anti-discrimination and anti-violence mechanisms was carried out by the Ministry of Justice and LEPL “Training Centre of Justice of Georgia” throughout Georgia, including in the regions densely populated by minority groups. In 2016-2020 (As

of February) trainings on discrimination and on violence against women and gender equality were held for any interested persons, including minorities respectively for 734 and 1294 participants. The trainings for minorities were conducted into Armenian and Azeri languages, and Armenian and Azeri representatives were engaged as co-trainers.

Moreover, 76 Community Centers are operating across the country, including eight in the regions populated by national minorities, enabling access of local and rural population to public and private services without leaving their local whereabouts. Community Centers have become a hub of gravity for locals, by offering free libraries, e-books, computers, free Wi-Fi, spaces for trainings, awareness raising campaigns etc., thus, endorsed an important social and educational mission as well.

- In 2019, the State Agency for Religious Issues initiated a new Project “State Language for the Clergymen”. The idea of creating the Project was due to a series of workshops “Human Rights and Religious Tolerance” held by the Agency throughout Georgia within the framework of the Governmental Action Plan on Human Rights Protection for 2018-2020, during of which it was clearly observed that due to lack of knowledge of the state language, some participant clergymen representing the religious minorities proved to face the difficulty in comprehending the topic/concept. In addition to learning the state language, the project also aimed at encouraging the public participation in all sectors of society regardless of their religious affiliation. Thus, it was decided to implement a project of state importance, entitled: “State Language for the Clergymen”, within the framework of which a Memorandum of Cooperation was signed with Zurab Zhvania School of Public Administration.

Within the first three-months first phase of the project was ended, in which the Muslim community of Georgia participated. During the second phase, the clergy of the Armenian Apostolic Church and the Evangelical Lutheran Church joined the Muslims. The parishioners of these churches, who will join the third phase of the project, also expressed their willingness to participate in the project.

- **Adequacy and effectiveness of law enforcement training in monitoring, combatting, reporting and responding to discrimination and hate crimes involving religion or belief**

In the fight against hate crime, the capacity building of professionals working in the field is crucial. For this purpose, the Ministry of Internal Affairs has implemented a number of important measures in recent years.

The Human Rights Protection and Quality Monitoring Department of the Ministry of Internal Affairs has elaborated recommendation for effective investigation of crimes committed on the grounds of discrimination (including religion and belief). The recommendation covers various important subjects and while envisaging the special questionnaire to interview (potential) victims, defendants and witnesses it plays an important role in effective response of law enforcement on hate crimes.

Since 2018, various trainings and ToTs on hate crimes have been held for the staff of the Ministry. About 200 officers of the Ministry of Internal Affairs, including managers, were trained on the issues related to the discrimination, hate crimes and anti-hate speech activities.

The Prosecutor's Office of Georgia pays considerable attention to the educational and awareness raising activities on crimes against vulnerable groups.

On August 17, 2016, a Memorandum on Mutual Cooperation was concluded for three-year term between the General Prosecutor's Office and OSCE Office for Democratic Institutions and Human Rights. Within the framework of this Memorandum since 2017 a so-called PAHCT (Prosecutors and Hate Crimes Training) was held at the Prosecutor's Office of Georgia ("the POG" - hereafter) with assistance of the Democratic Institutes of OSCE. Implementation of this program raised the qualification of the POG employees in term of investigating hate crimes

In 2016-2017 3 training visits on hate crimes were conducted with the support of the Council of Europe and ODIHR. An intensive training course has continued in 2018-2019.

Since 2019 with the support of the Council of Europe, a new course of HELP program on the hate-motivated crime was launched for representatives of the Prosecutor's Office of Georgia, the Ministry of Internal Affairs and the Judicial System. The purpose of the course is to improve the skills of prosecutors, judges and investigators in the fight against hate-motivated crimes, in order for them to be better able to respond effectively, to detect the motive of hatred, to prosecute and to convict.

The State Agency for Religious Issues (SARI) held trainings for representatives of MIA during 2016-2017. The trainings had covered topics: Secularism and Religious Neutrality, Religious Policy of the State, Review of the Religious Denominations in Georgia, Freedom of Religion or Belief according to national and international legislation, Inadmissibility of Discrimination and Peculiarities of investigation of crimes committed on religious grounds, Review of cases of the European Court of Human Rights, Positive and Negative Obligations of the State. The trainings were attended by territorial authorities of the MIA, criminal police, patrol police, border police and detective-investigators. More than 200 employees of MIA were trained in total.

6 trainings have been organized by the SARI for public servants in relation to "Secularism and Religious Neutrality". Each of the trainings lasted for two consecutive days and consisted of four seminars. Noticeably, the considerable number of public servants totaling 200, attended the trainings across the country.

The guideline - "Secularism and Religious Neutrality in Public Service" was prepared in 2016 by the Agency, with the support of Conrad Adenauer Foundation South Caucasus Brunch². This publication represents a practical guide for the local administrations and municipalities. The objective of the textbook is to support the secular governance and to strengthen the principles of religious neutrality in the public service within the united religious policy of the state.

Since January 2019, the LEPL "Training Centre of Justice" of the Ministry of Justice of Georgia has been conducting an "Escort Officer Orientation Course" for the Escort Officers of the Special Penitentiary Service. Aimed at ensuring a human rights-based approach within the penitentiary system, for the first time the course introduces human rights standards, principles of equality and non-discrimination to the Escort Officers of the Special Penitentiary Service. Eight-hour course on equality and non-discrimination covers historical background and basic principles of non-discrimination and equality, forms and expressions of discrimination, international and national legal framework, and is aimed at improving both theoretical and practical knowledge of the Escort Officers, as well as the development of the sensitivity on the matters of discrimination. Since January 2019, the "Escort Officer Orientation Course" was carried out for 5 groups attended by 130 participants in total. Within the same course, the 130 Escort officers were also trained on violence against women and domestic violence aiming at raising the sensitivity of participants towards gender equality.

In 2019 with the involvement of the POG and campaign "I choose equality", launched under the aegis of the European Council project "Fight against discrimination, hate crime and hate speech in Georgia", a variety of activities were held aiming at raising public awareness on discrimination, hate speech and hate crime.

In order to inform society on the hate crime offences proactively and raise public awareness, in 2016-2018, information on prosecution and conviction of perpetrators committing crimes against sexual and religious minorities was actively published on the official webpage and social network page of the Prosecutor's Office of Georgia. This practice is being carried out actively in 2019.

² See the link of the electronic version of the guideline:

<https://religion.gov.ge/en/publikaciebi/saxelmzrvanelo-sekularizmi-da-religiuri-neutraliteti-sajaro-samsaxursi>

In 2019 the Human Rights Division of the General Prosecutor's Office studied hate-motivated and gender-based crimes. According to the analysis of the criminal cases studied, the quality and effectiveness of the measures taken by specialized prosecutors to detect the motive of hatred in criminal cases have increased. As a result, two discriminatory motives (among others, Gender and religious intolerance) were identified simultaneously in the prosecution resolutions by the prosecutors in 2019. Also, a discriminatory motive has been identified in different categories of crimes. The number of criminal prosecutions initiated on grounds of religious intolerance and the number of legal entities known as victims has improved (<http://pog.gov.ge/en/news/adamianis-uflebaTa-dacvis-sammarTvelom-siZulviliT-motivirebul-danashaulebze-angarishi-moamzada>; <http://pog.gov.ge/news/adamianis-uflebaTa-dacvis-sammarTvelom-genderuli-diskriminaciis-motiviT-qalTa-mimarT-da-ojaxshi-Zala>).

- **Remedies provided by states to victims of religious hate crimes**

Alongside with enhancing the quality of investigation, one of the priorities for the Ministry of Internal Affairs is to conduct investigations tailored to the victim's interests. With this particular aim, a Witness and Victim Coordinator Service was established in 2019.

The main purpose of the Service is to support witnesses and victims in the process of investigation, reduce crime-related stress, avoid re-victimization and secondary victimization, ensure their awareness at the investigative stage and help them identify relevant services.

There are number of priority areas the Victim and Witness Coordinators work on. In particular, they mainly focus on the victims and witnesses of the following crimes: hate crimes (including religiously motivated), domestic violence and crimes against women, human trafficking, sexual abuse, as well as minors and disabled victims/witnesses.

- **Specific measure to promote interfaith dialogue and religious pluralism in school curricula**

Interfaith dialogue and religious pluralism are supported by the *National Curriculum of Georgia*, namely, standards of the Social Sciences: “Me and Society”, “Our Georgia”, “Citizenship”, “History”. These issues are covered within the following learning outcomes:

The student should be able to:

- ✓ Relate values (adherence to ethical behavior norms, justice, responsibility, understand and appreciate the cultural diversity of the country) to the real situations;

- ✓ Tolerance towards people of different cultures, nationalities and abilities;
- ✓ Find peaceful ways to solve problems in conflict situations;
- ✓ Understand the ethnic, cultural and religious diversity of Georgia and Reveal a positive attitude;
- ✓ Evaluate and correct one's own views, behaviors, manage emotions (self-reflection);

Besides the above mentioned issues, the Ministry of Education, Science, Culture and Sport of Georgia implements the sub-program, which provides access to general education for minors seeking asylum, with international protection and placed in the migration Department of the Ministry of Internal Affairs in Georgia. There are two components under the subprogram: 1. Service of one-year Georgian language courses for 6 to 18 year-old asylum seekers and with international protection in public schools. 2. Access to general education for minors placed in the migration department of the MIA.

In addition, from October 2015 to the end of 2017, the Ministry of Education, Science, Culture and Sport of Georgia (then, Ministry of Education and Science of Georgia) was implementing a "Parent Education and Engagement Subprogram", which aimed at raising parents' awareness and increasing their engagement in student life. The program was supported by the United Nations Population Fund.

In the framework of the sub-program parents were provided with the information on the risks of early marriage (legal, health and continuous education-related risks). Information meetings/ public lectures for parents were regularly held in the regions of Georgia in which cases of early marriage were frequently recorded. A representative of the Ministry, a psychologist, a local law enforcement representative and a local social worker participated in the meetings. The Program contributed to the reduction of drop-out rate among students by reason of marriage.

- **Examples of the State Efforts to Protect against Religious Communities' Infringement of the Human Rights of Women and Girls**

The Government of Georgia prioritizes ensuring gender equality and protection of women and girls from any kind of infringement in their human rights, including from religious communities. To address the issue of the infringement of human rights of women and girls by religious communities, in 2014 and 2017 the new crimes such as female genital mutilation, forced sterilization and forced marriage were criminalized.

Within the framework of the Interreligious Dialogue Initiative, the National Agency for Religious Issues (SARI) organized a Joint Declaration on Religious Associations "Woman-Peace Envoy". The Declaration is a joint reaction of religious organizations of Georgia on

the topic of increased facts of violence against women. Signatory religious associations unanimously declare that they will support the recognition and protection of women's rights in accordance with their own opinions and religious doctrines, condemn and continue to condemn all forms of discrimination on the grounds of gender, will provide all necessary conditions and especially care for socially vulnerable women, pregnant women, mothers, women in shelters and medical institutions, women with disabilities, in penitentiary establishments and probationer women, encourage the spirit of recognition and solidarity of the human dignity in society. Taking into account their religious and moral teachings, the Religious associations state to promote equality between men and women before the law. The Declaration is signed by the 13 Religious associations.

- **Specific measures and initiatives promoting understanding and cooperation between different religious or belief communities in public life, including in the conflict and post-conflict contexts as well as part of transitional justice processes, and the role of faith actors and religious leaders in this regard (e.g. training and awareness-raising programmes; local interfaith institutions and dispute settlement mechanisms).**
- With the initiative of the **State Agency for Religious Issues of Georgia (SARI)** „Interreligious Dialogue for Peace“ has been held annually since 2016. The idea of the, annual conference addresses and responds to the challenges of the modern world. The specific topics are being discussed by the representatives of religious organizations and academic sector. At the 4th Conference in 2019 a declaration was signed, in which the religions in Georgia, expressed their support for a historical choice announced by the universal plebiscite – an European course by maintaining and protecting fundamental values of national traditions, family and faith, condemned the abduction and killing of civilians in the occupied territories of Georgia; as well as all facts of gross alteration, closure, or destruction of religious buildings with a purpose of erasing ethnic-historical traces. The materials of the Interreligious Conference “Interreligious Dialogue for Peace” are published annually.
- Since 2014, the interreligious calendar has been created annually. The project aims at demonstrating of all religious holidays of different religious communities in one calendar. The main goal of the project is to raise awareness between different religious groups (11 religious denominations) and to promote development of interreligious culture. Furthermore, the calendar is distributed not only among religious communities, but also among all public agencies, which, in turn, contributes to raise the awareness of public servants in the field of religious diversity and tolerance. The new format of interreligious calendar is printed with braille script as well.
- Regarding the Day for Tolerance, the SARI since 2016 has established a tradition according to which one of the religious communities in Georgia hosts leaders and parishioners of

other religious organizations. Traditional meetings on the International Day for Tolerance became a manifestation of the Georgian culture of religious tolerance and would be continued in the following years.

- With the aim to raise awareness of the representatives of religious communities at the clerical level on freedom of religion and other fundamental human rights, as well as to foster religious tolerance and generally the culture of tolerance, the SARI arranged the relevant trainings across Georgia. The significant number of representatives of almost all religious organizations represented in Georgia were trained, equaling to 770 clergymen.
- In 2018, the SARI together with the National Museum of Georgia organized an exhibition – “Religions in Georgia”. The exhibition aimed at promoting an environment of religious diversity, tolerance and mutual respect in Georgia, as well as raising public awareness. Within the scope of the exhibition the various religious garments, literature and ritual inventory were presented.