*The relevant information on human rights challenges in addressing and countering all aspects of the world drug problem provided by the Office of the Commissioner for Human Rights (Ombudsman) of the Republic of Azerbaijan*

In respect of preventive measures against drug addiction significant steps are taken to strengthen social and legal basis in Azerbaijan. The strengthening of the fight against substance abuse is an urgent issue in order to achieve Goal 3, "Ensure healthy lives and promote well-being for all at all ages," of the sustainable development goals adopted by the UN General Assembly.

It should be noted that, a State Commission for the Fight against Drug Addiction and Illicit Trafficking of Drugs has been created by the Presidential Decree dated August 26, 1996. Furthermore, in Azerbaijan, a legal framework for combating substance dependency has been formed with the adoption of the Law on "Trafficking of Drugs, Psychotropic Substances, and Their Precursors" on June 28, 2005.

Within the past few years, by the Presidential Order of July 22, 2019, the fifth "National State Program for the Fight against Illicit Trafficking of Drugs, Psychotropic Substances, and Their Precursors for 2019-2024" has been implemented.

One of the concerns related to the illegal trade of drugs in Azerbaijan is the involvement of adolescents and women in harmful activities such as drug addiction and substance trade. Although countermeasures have been carried out, today's increased tendency to substance dependency among women, children, and young people, while causing great concern, requires, in general, the study and application of more effective preventive methods. The Ombudsman Institution held a range of public awareness events as a part of the Action Plan for the fight against illicit trafficking of drugs, psychiatric substances and their precursors, and drug addiction.

In the annual reports the Ombudsman the proposals on strengthening the efficiency of public health, developing and enforcing projects and programs for the promotion of healthy lifestyles among women, children, and young people to protect them from drug addiction and other similar harmful habits, and running the relevant projects for extending health, sport, and other measures based on good experiences have been put forward. In addition, it was also recommended to strengthen the control over fulfilling the requirements for the diagnosis of diseases and medical examination and treatment by physicians and specialists employed in private clinics when providing medical services to patients.

The Ombudsman considers it necessary to conduct joint monitoring by the corresponding state authorities in strengthening the control over illegal activities of persons participating in the illicit trafficking of powerful substances, as well as preventing the trade of narcotic drugs without prescription, with a view to preventing situations that cause addiction in teens and young people, harm their physical and psychological health and morale, affect them, and cause the disintegration of families.

The issue of combating drug addiction and HIV/AIDS is given ample space during the awareness events organized during the month-long campaigns such as "Human Rights Month", and "Child Rights Month" annually initiated by the Ombudsman at the national level.