**SR on slavery-HRC report on contemporary forms of slavery as affecting ethnic, religious and linguistic minority communities**

**Submission from Turkmenistan**

Key issues and types of requested materials

1. Is there evidence that minorities are subjected to contemporary forms of slavery (e.g. forced labor, bonded labor, forced/child marriage, descent/caste slavery and related practices) in your country/community? If yes, please provide information on the characteristics of victims and the nature and extent of their exploitation and abuse. What additional traits and characteristics, including gender, age, sexual orientation, and disability, made them more vulnerable?

No, there are not. A system of legal and organizational measures is in place to ensure that such situations do not arise. There is no discrimination against ethnic minorities in Turkmenistan; no one is harassed. According to article 1. UNESCO Declaration of Principles on Tolerance "Tolerance means respect, acceptance and appreciation of the rich variety of our world's cultures and ways of expressing and displaying human individuality". Ensuring tolerance in society is a rather subtle category, which neutral Turkmenistan certainly adheres to.

2. What personal, situational, and structural factors push minorities toward contemporary forms of slavery in your country/community?

Such factors do not manifest themselves in everyday life practices. Comprehensive surveys and research are needed to identify such factors.

3. Are there broader political, economic, social, religious, and cultural factors that make persons belonging to minorities vulnerable to these practices?

No, there are not. State socio-economic development programs of Turkmenistan include measures aimed at the moral, social promotion of tolerance and inclusiveness. The Constitution of Turkmenistan and other legislative acts guarantee equal rights for all, regardless of race, nationality and religion.

4. What has your government done at the local, national, or regional level to protect minorities from modern forms of slavery in your country? Please share examples.

(1) On 15 October 2016, the Parliament of Turkmenistan adopted the Human Trafficking Act, which defines the legal and organizational basis for combating human trafficking in Turkmenistan and is aimed at ensuring State guarantees of individual freedom and the protection of society against human trafficking. Changes and additions have been made to the Criminal Code and the Code of Administrative Offences on the basis of the Act's provisions.

(2) State policy on combating trafficking in persons is aimed at: creating an effective mechanism for combating trafficking in persons; improving legislation on combating trafficking in persons; improving the knowledge and skills of specialists in preventing trafficking in persons, identifying and assisting victims of trafficking and prosecuting traffickers; compiling and analyzing information on the state of trafficking in persons, changing trends in the phenomenon and making proposals for

3) On December 6, 2019, the National Action Plan on Combating Trafficking in Human Beings for 2020-2022 was approved by the Decree of the President of Turkmenistan. This document was developed with the technical assistance of the Mission of the International Organization for Migration in Turkmenistan. Currently, practical work is being carried out to implement the measures set out in the national plan of action. Seminars and working meetings are held, including regional ones for law enforcement officers, judges, representatives of public associations and local executive authorities with the involvement of international experts.

(4) Turkmenistan, in accordance with international law, cooperates with the competent authorities of foreign States as well as with international organizations engaged in combating trafficking in persons and promoting the protection of the rights and legitimate interests of trafficking victims.

5. What have non-governmental organizations, including businesses and educational institutions, done to ensure equal access to decent work and quality education in your country? Please share some examples.

The Institute does not have such information.

6. What is the role of civil society organizations, religious organizations, trade unions and human rights defenders in protecting minorities from contemporary forms of slavery? Please share examples.

1. There is a systematic effort to improve the protection of human rights by independent institutions in Turkmenistan.

2. The Law of Turkmenistan "On the Ombudsman" (23.11.2016) regulates the principles and guarantees of the Ombudsman, as well as his powers and main functions. The Ombudsman in Turkmenistan has a broad legal status, and his activities cover the most important areas of public relations. In accordance with the law, the Ombudsman has broad powers: to freely and without prior notice visit public authorities, local self-government bodies, enterprises, institutions and organizations regardless of their organizational and legal forms and forms of ownership, correctional and other specialized institutions, places of preliminary detention, places of detention, the Armed Forces of Turkmenistan, and to inspect their activities; to request and receive from officials of state bodies

Representatives of the Office of the Ombudsman regularly participate in national and international events related to minority rights. The Office of the Ombudsman, together with the UN offices in Turkmenistan, holds annual seminars in all velayats of the country to raise awareness of human rights, where responsible government officials are invited to participate in the seminars.

The National Red Crescent Society, the principal aim of which is charity. It provides assistance to disabled people in need, elderly people living alone, orphans and children without parental care.

4. The National Center of Trade Unions, Women's Union, Youth Union of Turkmenistan conducts various cultural events, scientific and practical conferences, as well as thematic meetings, seminars among students, including with the participation of persons with disabilities. Participates in elaboration of the National programs on human rights, preparation of the National reports to the UN treaty bodies on human rights.

5. Public Association Center for Support of Disabled People of Turkmenistan, the main direction of work is support and protection of the rights and interests of people with disabilities. Social, physical and labour rehabilitation of the disabled through job creation.

6. Public organization "Keyik Okara" carries out activities to ensure gender equality.

7. Public organization "Yenme" (Overcoming) within the framework of project activities with IOM implemented projects on information campaign to combat human trafficking. These projects were aimed at raising public awareness about combating human trafficking. Within the framework of cooperation with IOM, the Yenme NGO implemented the project "Shelter for victims of human trafficking".

8. The Yenme (Trust) Club in Ashgabat, the NGO's main line of activity, promotes awareness-raising among people going abroad through its telephone hotline, as well as providing face-to-face counselling and the dissemination of information.

7. What has been the impact of the COVID-19 pandemic on minorities, including the corresponding measures taken and its social or economic impact on contemporary forms of slavery? What actions has your government taken to protect them?

The Institute has no such information.

8. What are the remaining obstacles/challenges in preventing minorities from being subjected to contemporary forms of slavery?

The Institute has no such information.

9. What mechanisms are in place in your country to report cases of contemporary forms of slavery affecting members of minorities? How much use is made of such mechanisms by members of minorities and to what extent have they been able to access justice and remedies? What are the main obstacles/challenges in this regard?

The question relates to law enforcement and ombudsman activities.

10. What recommendations would you like to offer to effectively address these current issues and protect minorities from modern forms of slavery?

 1) Undertake programmatic activities, including with international organizations, aimed at increasing human rights awareness.

 2) Develop existing mechanisms for consultation with representatives of national minorities and vulnerable groups.

 3) Hold a series of meetings with representatives of national minorities to discuss new mechanisms of cooperation.