



Consultation on Human Rights in the HIV Response

Remarks

**by Marziyya Vakilova-Mardaliyeva, Second Secretary of the Permanent Mission of the Republic of Azerbaijan to the UN Office and other International Organizations in Geneva
12 February 2019**

Madame Chair,

At the outset, let me express my gratitude to the Office of the High Commissioner for Human Rights for organizing these consultations on a topic which has become a truly global emergency. My thanks also go to the panellists for their insightful presentations.

The SDGs include an ambitious global target to leave no one behind and to end HIV by 2030 but this target also requires states to stand up against stigma and discrimination and other legal, human rights, social and gender-related barriers that make people vulnerable to HIV and hinder their access to HIV prevention, treatment, care and support services. Roughly one in eight living with HIV is being denied health services due to stigma and discrimination. We strongly believe a human rights-based approach should be at the center if we are genuine in our aspiration to end HIV.

Azerbaijan is fully committed to the effective HIV response at national level. Although Azerbaijan is classified as a country with low HIV infection rates, a number of necessary and important measures have been put in place to cope with this scourge, such as adoption of the Law on the prevention of HIV/AIDS and approval of the National HIV Action Plan for 2016-2020. One of the goals of the HIV Action Plan is to strengthen civil society organizations to ensure access to HIV testing, prevention and treatment services. Currently, there are 50 voluntary counselling and inspection networks operational throughout the country to facilitate such access. The national response to HIV/AIDS has also been considerably strengthened over the past years with the establishment of the National Center for Combating HIV/AIDS. In recent years Azerbaijan has made significant increases in health expenditure. All of these measures have contributed to a big progress in providing better HIV prevention, testing, treatment and care services.

At the same time, special emphasis is placed on awareness-raising programs, in particular among persons belonging to vulnerable groups such as adolescents, young women and drug users.

Recent example is an awareness-raising campaign launched last year by the State Agency for Public Service and Social Innovations under the President of the Republic of Azerbaijan (ASAN Service), Therapeutic Diagnostic Center of Azerbaijan and volunteers, titled “Don’t let your happiness end soon”. The aim of the project is to hold trainings to educate young people about the disease. Projects are also being implemented to provide awareness-raising among migrant workers, as migration appears to be key factor influencing HIV risk behavior, and the considerable percentage of HIV positive Azerbaijani citizens were infected outside the country during migration. The Office of the Human Rights Commissioner also holds regular meetings aiming at promoting integration of the people living with HIV into society and assisting them in overcoming challenges affecting their lives.

The international community has made great progress in the fight to end HIV/AIDS but there remain great challenges ahead and important work to be done. For this, human rights obligations and political commitments as expressed in the Political Declaration of 2016 and SDGs need to be translated into concrete strategies, programmes and actions at all levels. We reiterate Azerbaijan will continue supporting all efforts to this end.

Thank you for your attention.