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**COMMENTS OF THE GOVERNMENT OF THE REPUBLIC OF ARMENIA
ON THE REPORT OF THE COMMISSIONER FOR HUMAN RIGHTS OF THE COUNCIL OF EUROPE
FOLLOWING HER VISIT TO ARMENIA**

Adoption of comprehensive anti-discrimination law

The Draft Law on Ensuring Equality has been developed and put for public discussions on the official e-draft platform. This comprehensive Draft Law envisages guarantee of equal opportunities for each person to exercise their rights and freedoms in Armenia, to improve the anti-discrimination legislation, to ensure the legal basis for the prevention of discrimination, as well as the legal and judicial protection from discrimination. The Draft Law ensures the creation of a specialized body within the Human Rights Defender Office, which will create mechanisms for assistance to victims of discrimination, launching examination in alleged cases of discrimination etc.

The legislative process of adopting a comprehensive anti-discrimination law was stalled due to political developments and elections in the country. Nonetheless, the Government of Armenia has confirmed that the adoption of the Draft Law on Ensuring Equality remains high on its agenda.

Fight against domestic violence

On 13 December 2017 the National Assembly of Armenia adopted the Law “On the prevention of domestic violence, the protection of victims of domestic violence and the restoration of family solidarity”. The Law ensures effective preventive and protective mechanisms for the victims of domestic violence, as well as guarantees for state assistance to the victims of violence. The law fully entered into force as of 1 January 2019.

In February 2018, the Government approved the action plan for the implementation of the law, and in June set up the Council on Prevention of Violence in the Family, the coordination body for policies on prevention of domestic violence. Government also drafted relevant decrees regulating requirements for shelter staff members, and for establishing a centralized record on domestic violence cases. During this year the Government will increase the number of shelter spaces and establish state-run shelters, and will conduct campaigns to educate the public about the new law, how to file complaints, and the availability of services.

The issue of the ratification of the Council of Europe Convention on Preventing and Combating Violence Against Women and Domestic Violence (Istanbul Convention) is high on the agenda of the Government of Armenia.

Fight against hate speech

New draft amendments to the Criminal Code were put for public discussion in January 2019, which envisage criminal responsibility for insulting or showing a disrespectful attitude towards a notary or a lawyer in his/her professional activities, causing harm to his/her health and for destruction or damage to property. Moreover, the draft legal amendments also define criminal responsibility for slandering a lawyer. The legal package will be submitted to the National Assembly in the near future.

Human rights of older persons

According to the Armenian legislation a person with a disability is entitled either to a right of disability pension or to a right of disability benefit (in case of absence of required length of service).

By the decision of the Government of Armenia, starting from 1 January 2019 the size of old age benefit, disability benefit and benefit in case of losing the breadwinner has been set at 25 500 AMD. After adopting the draft law on minimum size of pension, the Government will also set the minimum pension size at 25 500 AMD. Moreover, regardless of the date on which the law enters into force, starting from January 1, 2019 the pensions below 25 500 AMD will be recalculated (increased).