



Uzbekistan

**Submission to the UN Universal Periodic Review
44th Session of the UPR Working Group of the Human Rights Council**

Date: 5 April 2023

Joint Stakeholder Submission

Submitted by: Equality Now (the main submitting organisation), “NIHOL” Initiative’s Development and Supporting Center, NGO Civic Initiatives Support Center, Center for Scientific, Social and Humanitarian Initiatives Oila, Институт Демократии и Прав человека - The Institute for Democracy and Human Rights, NGO "Millennium", NGO “Istiqbolli Avlod”,

Introduction and Summary

1. **Equality Now** is an international human rights organisation with ECOSOC status working to protect and promote the rights of women and girls worldwide since 1992, including through our network of individuals and organisations in every region. Ending sexual violence, ending sexual exploitation, ending harmful practices and achieving legal equality are the main areas of Equality Now’s work. Contact Details: Equality Now, PO Box 560, Dartford, DA1 9WP, United Kingdom. Email ID: ukinfo@equalitynow.org Website: www.equalitynow.org
2. **“NIHOL” Initiative’s Development and Supporting Center** – is a non-governmental, non-commercial, public organisation, established by initiatives of women leaders in Tashkent and the Tashkent region and registered in 2003. The NIHOL Center conducts its

activity on the 4 following programs: Youth program; 2. Women' program; 3. Program on prevention trafficking in human beings; 4. Program of work with people with disabilities and their families.

The mission of “NIHOL” Center is comprehensive development and supporting citizen’s initiatives (especially youth, women and persons with disabilities) in rural areas on using their rights and freedoms in building up civil society and democratisation of public progress through providing them with education, information and consulting. Shirin Rashidova is the “NIHOL” Center’s Council Chairperson.

11, Furkat-Navoi street, Tashkent, 10018

Email: center.nihol@mail.ru

Website: <http://www.niholngo.uz>

3. **NGO Civic Initiatives Support Center**, an organisation with Special Consultative Status with ECOSOC since April 2016, was founded in 2004. Main activities of CISC include promotion of women's rights, increasing awareness level on gender equality, prevention of gender based violence. Head of the organisation: Dr Kabulova Dilovar Nasimovna.
Address: 7B, Abdulla Kodiry street, Shaykhotonkhur district, Tashkent, 100128, Uzbekistan.
Phone: + 998 97 137 12 12 + 998 97 722 01 02; +998 90 371 96 71
Email: cisc.2004@yandex.ru
Website: www.cisc.uz
4. **Centre for Scientific, Social and Humanitarian Initiatives Oila**. The centre was registered in 2021. The Center analyses and forecasts the situation of families in the republic and regions, identifying problems and conducting rapid monitoring, developing measures to support families in difficult situations and making managerial decisions on the basis of social partnership with state bodies at the level mahalla-region-republic. Head of the Center: Dildora Karimova Tel.: +998 903481963 Tashkent, Kichik Beshyogoch, 104/12a email: oila.uz.2021@gmail.com
5. **The Institute for Democracy and Human Rights** is a non-governmental non-profit organisation established in 2004 by well-known scientists, jurists, in order to develop democratic principles in state power, governance and society, propaganda protection and culture of human rights, promotion of observance of democratic principles in the management activities of state bodies and other organisations.
Address: 100165 Tashkent, Mirabad district, Bukhara street 16
Phone : +998971 2331469 Fax: +998 71 2330319 Email: info@dihi.uz
Social media:
<https://www.facebook.com/%D0%98%D0%BD%D1%81%D1%82%D0%B8%D1%82%D1%83%>
6. **NGO "Millennium"**. The Youth Social and Legal Rehabilitation Center for the Persons with Disabilities in Tashkent "Millennium", is a public association of young people with

disabilities from the age of 16, established in 2003. The goals of the NGO "Millennium" are to promote the independence of young people with disabilities in society and improve their quality of life. Tashkent, Chиланзар district, Gavkhar st., 122 Tel. 99 396-56-21 email: m.millennium@mail.ru

7. **NGO "Istiqbolli Avlod"** was founded in 2001 in Tashkent as a Tashkent city youth centre. In 2018, the organisation was re-registered as the Republican Social Information Center by the Ministry of Justice, and today is one of the leading NGOs in Uzbekistan in the field of combating trafficking in persons and other types of violence. The organisation's Mission: to eliminate violence in society. The organisation currently has 13 regional branches in all provinces including the Republic of Karakalpakstan. Nodira Karimova, Chairperson of "ISTIQBOLLI AVLOD"
Tel +998946143585, e-mail: nkarimovaia@gmail.com , www.istiqbolliavlod.uz
8. **Jannat Rakhimova** - ecofeminist activist, journalist and civic activist from Tashkent. Tel: +998944225769 email: jannochka4225769@gmail.com
9. **Public Unity "Yuksak Salohiyat"** was registered in 2020. The main goal is to promote the development and support of citizens' initiatives in the use of rights and freedoms in the construction of civil society, the development of progress and democratisation, improving the quality of life of the population by maintaining health, raising the cultural and educational level, as well as promoting a healthy lifestyle. Sviridova Natalya Leonidovna - Director of NGO Bakhritdinova Fazilyat Oripovna - Chairman of the Board tel: + 99890 9733627 e-mail:sviridova_nata71@mail.ru yuksaka.2019@gmail.com
10. During the 3rd UPR cycle,¹ Uzbekistan received and accepted several recommendations on combating gender-based violence against women and girls. For example:
 - a. Take concrete measures to effectively combat gender-based violence, including sexual violence, early marriage and domestic violence, throughout the country, including in rural areas (101.181-101.184);
 - b. Adopt legislation on gender equality and gender-based violence against women that comply with international norms and standards, including the Convention on the Elimination of All Forms of Discrimination against Women (101.180, 101.186-101.189)
 - c. Accelerate the legislative reform envisaged to promote gender equality and punish gender-based violence, and ratify the Council of Europe Convention on Preventing and Combating Violence against Women and Domestic Violence and the Optional Protocol to the Convention on the Elimination of All Forms of Discrimination against Women (101.185).
11. However, as it will be demonstrated in the submission below, these recommendations remain largely unimplemented. Lack of appropriate legal and policy measures leaves

¹ Date of consideration: 9 May 2018; Report of the Working Group on the Universal Periodic Review of Uzbekistan (A/HRC/39/7)

women and girls in Uzbekistan vulnerable to gender-based violence, including domestic and sexual violence. This is the result of a set of reasons: 1) absence of comprehensive legislation protecting survivors of sexual and domestic violence and to ensure survivors' access to justice; 2) stereotyping and victim blaming of survivors by all actors in the justice system; 3) lack of effective awareness-raising programmes that promote an understanding of gender-based violence against women as unacceptable and harmful and that provide information about available legal recourses against it and encourage the reporting of such violence.

12. This submission outlines the challenges in the implementation of international norms and standards and the legislation of Uzbekistan in addressing gender-based violence against women and girls, particularly domestic and sexual violence. The submission also provides recommendations to the members of the Human Rights Council for consideration for its follow-up on the preceding review.

Absence of comprehensive legislation protecting survivors of domestic and sexual violence

13. After the 3rd cycle of the Universal Periodic Review, the CEDAW Committee adopted Concluding observations on the sixth periodic report of Uzbekistan (February 2022).² The CEDAW Committee again recommended Uzbekistan (para. 22):
 - a. ensure that domestic violence is specifically criminalised, can be prosecuted ex officio and is sanctioned with appropriate penalties commensurate with the gravity of the offence;
 - b. cover all forms of gender-based violence and take into account the special needs of disadvantaged and marginalised groups of women;
 - c. amend its legislation to base the definition of rape on lack of consent rather than the use or threat of force;
 - d. ensure the timely and effective issuance, enforcement and monitoring of protection orders;
 - e. ensure that all cases of gender-based violence against women and girls are effectively investigated and that perpetrators are prosecuted ex officio and punished with appropriate sanctions; give priority to criminal proceedings over reconciliation;
 - f. ensure women's and girls' access to justice and encourage reporting of gender-based violence to the law enforcement bodies, including through affordable and, if necessary, free legal assistance; and ensure that police officers who fail to take action or discourage victims from filing complaints are held accountable;
 - g. strengthen victim support services and protection, including 24 / 7 hotlines, adequate shelters, medical treatment, psychosocial counselling and economic support throughout the State party.
14. In January 2022, at the initiative of the Gender Commission under the Senate of the Republic of Uzbekistan, a working group was set up to work on a draft Law "On amendments and additions to certain legislative acts in connection with further

² CEDAW Committee, 'Concluding observations on the sixth periodic report of Uzbekistan' (February 2022) (CEDAW/C/UZB/CO/6)

improvement of the system for the reliable protection of the rights, freedoms and legitimate interests of women and children”. The working group was made up of representatives of the Prosecutor’s General Office, the Investigative Committee, the Ministry of Justice, the Ministry of Internal Affairs, the Ombudsperson for Children’s Rights, UNICEF, CSOs, journalists and civil society activists. The working group met on a monthly basis throughout the year to discuss the draft.

15. Unexpectedly for civil society, the Ministry of Justice prepared its own draft law and submitted it to the Parliament. On 11 January 2023, the Ministry of Justice’s draft Law “On amendments and additions to certain legislative acts in connection with further improvement of the system for the reliable protection of the rights, freedoms and legitimate interests of women and children” (ID 75074) was published on the official portal for discussion of draft legislation and regulations.³ This draft law does not provide for criminalisation of domestic violence and contains many other gaps in protection.
16. On 26 January 2023, Equality Now, together with the Network of Uzbek NGOs Against Violence, prepared and submitted a number of recommendations to the draft law, including on the issue of sexual violence.⁴
17. On 23 March 2023, the Legislative Chamber of Parliament published on its website a statement that the Law “On amendments and additions to certain legislative acts in connection with further improvement of the system for the reliable protection of the rights, freedoms and legitimate interests of women and children” was adopted.⁵ The statement says that:
 - a. The adopted law provides for harsher sanctions for those who commit sexual violence crimes against minors;
 - b. Liability for committing crimes against sexual integrity and freedom of persons with disabilities, minors, as well as for committing these crimes by a person performing his/her duties of upbringing, professional training or caring for the victim, is strengthened;
 - c. The law introduces administrative and criminal responsibility for domestic, economic and psychological violence, sexual harassment and disclosure of information about a person’s private life.
18. However, as of 30 March 2023, the law has not yet been adopted by the Senate and been published. Therefore, it is not clear what it exactly provides for and it is not possible to properly comment on it. It is important to stress that international standards require Uzbekistan to criminalise all forms of gender-based violence.

Laws on sexual violence failing survivors

³ Available at: <https://regulation.gov.uz/ru/d/75074>

⁴ Annex 2

⁵ Available at: <https://parliament.gov.uz/ru/news/xotin-qizlar-va-bolalar-huquqlarini-himoya-qilish-tizimi-yanada-takomillashtirilmoqda>

19. After the 3rd cycle of the Universal Periodic Review, the CEDAW Committee adopted Concluding observations on the sixth periodic report of Uzbekistan (February 2022). The CEDAW Committee recommended Uzbekistan (para. 22):
- a. amend its legislation to base the definition of rape on lack of consent rather than the use or threat of force.
20. However, Uzbekistan has not implemented this recommendation. In January 2023, Equality Now published a report examining legal provisions relating to sexual violence in Uzbekistan which identified shortfalls in ways that sexual violence crimes are defined under the law and highlights how existing laws are being poorly enacted throughout these criminal justice systems.⁶ It can be summarised as follows:
- a. The constituent elements of the definitions of rape in the Criminal Codes Uzbekistan are violence, threat of violence, or abusing the helpless condition of the victim.
 - i. “Violence” is primarily interpreted as the use of physical force;
 - ii. In practice, the definition of a ‘threat’ is limited to threats of murder or inflicting a serious bodily harm;
 - iii. “Abusing the helpless state of the victim/survivor” provisions overlook many other reasons a victim might not have been able to resist.
 - b. The crime of compulsion or coercion into sexual intercourse or other acts of a sexual nature involves any of the types of behaviour criminalised by the offences of rape and assault of a sexual nature, but that have been committed where the victim was in official, material or other dependence on the perpetrator (Article 121). This offence is classified as a “less serious crime” and carries lower penalties, despite being classified as rape under regional and international standards.
 - c. There is no explicit recognition or criminalisation of rape committed against a current or former spouse or current or former partner.
 - d. Compulsion/coercion into committing acts against a third person is not criminalised as well.
21. Therefore, commenting on the above-mentioned draft law prepared by the Ministry of Justice, Equality Now, together with the Network of Uzbek NGOs Against Violence, prepared and submitted a number of recommendations, including on the issue of sexual violence:⁷
- a. Material law
 - i. The definition of sexual violence should be based on lack of consent and not on the use or threat of force or taking advantage of the helpless state of the victim(s).
 - ii. The offence under Article 121 of the Criminal Code (forcing a woman to have sexual intercourse), currently formulated as a minor crime with lenient penalties, should be incorporated in the article on rape as it constitutes an act equivalent to rape;

⁶ Available at: <https://www.equalitynow.org/resource/sexual-violence-laws-in-eurasia-towards-a-consent-based-definition/>

⁷ Annex 2

- iii. Forcing another person, without his or her consent, to perform an act of a sexual nature with a third person, as well as rape committed against a current or former spouse or current or former partner, should be explicitly criminalised.
- b. Procedural law
 - i. Article 325 of the Uzbekistani Criminal Procedure Code should provide that all crimes of gender-based violence against women and girls are investigated/prosecuted ex officio by the state and that the onus of investigation/prosecution should not be on the victim or her legal representative.
 - ii. Section Five of the Criminal Code should be amended to ensure that exemption from liability and punishment provisions are not applied either formally or informally to evade liability for crimes of sexual violence at any stage of the proceedings.
 - iii. The Criminal Code should be amended to ensure that all crimes of sexual violence carry penalties that are commensurate with their gravity. Eliminate 'compulsory community service', 'corrective work', 'restriction of liberty' and suspended sentences as penalties for sexual violence, and introduce custodial restraints.
- c. Protection of girls victims of sexual violence
 - i. The Criminal Code should be amended to ensure that sexual acts committed by a person over the age of 18 against children under 16 are categorised as rape and carry penalties commensurate with the seriousness of the offence.
 - ii. Article 64 of the Criminal Code and 84 of the CPC should be amended to ensure that cases of sexual offences against minors, as well as cases of forced marriage, are not subject to termination due to the expiry of the limitation period for bringing a person to justice.

22. Apparently, these issues have not been addressed by the law adopted on 23 March 2023.

Lack of victim support services and protection

- 23. There is a lack of coordinated inter-agency collaboration between all bodies involved in the protection of women and girls from violence to ensure a comprehensive and appropriate approach to preventing and addressing cases of gender-based violence against women and girls, as these mechanisms are not regulated at the legislative level. Standards of operating procedures have been developed but are not publicly available, published or known to victims of violence so that they are aware of which body is responsible and how to act when they seek protection and that state authorities are aware of their procedures.
- 24. There is a lack of accessible and free or low-cost legal aid for victims of gender-based violence against women and girls in Uzbekistan, denying them access to justice and effective protection of their rights in bringing perpetrators to administrative or criminal justice. Free legal aid in Uzbekistan is provided only to those accused of committing a crime, but not to victims of crime. In addition, NGOs (as entities) do not have the right to represent victims in the judicial proceedings. The Law on Free Legal Aid has not been

adopted, although it was drafted by the Ministry of Justice in cooperation with the Bar Association of Uzbekistan in 2019.

25. There is a serious lack of victim support services and protection, including 24 / 7 hotlines, adequate shelters, medical treatment, psychosocial counselling and economic support throughout Uzbekistan. The funds allocated by the state to support rehabilitation and adaptation centres for victims of violence are insufficient. The number of centres has been drastically reduced: while in 2019 such centres were open across the country and numbered 197, now there are 29, one national, 14 regional and 14 inter-district centres.⁸ Many specialists are engaged on a voluntary basis. Funding is provided by the Women's Support Fund of the State Committee for Family and Women under the Ministry of Employment and Poverty Reduction. Wages are low, making the work unattractive for professionals. There is a high turnover of staff at the centres.
26. In 2016, the Ministry of Labour and Social Protection was transformed into the Ministry of Labour. Social protection functions have been transferred to the Ministry of Health. Social protection work has been reduced to the provision of medical and social assistance to the disabled, elderly living alone and other vulnerable segments of the population.⁹ In recent years, social work to lift families out of difficult life situations has been entrusted to citizens' self-governance bodies - mahallas - with the involvement of people who do not have higher education and special qualifications as social workers.
27. Very unhelpfully, one of the set indicators of the effectiveness of the mahalla is the number of families reconciled to stay together. Therefore, mahalla officials and other local government authorities continue to pressure women to reconcile with aggressors and remain in abusive relationships without acknowledging the further harm this may cause. By doing so, they fail to address the real harm being done to the victims of domestic violence and do not act on the principle that domestic violence is a criminal offence.
28. There is little economic support for women victims of domestic violence, with the exception of organisations and NGOs defending women's rights. This is an additional factor why victims do not leave aggressors - they have no guarantees of economic stability, often nowhere to go, or means to find a job and the state has no mechanism to solve the problem: there are no social workers who can lead a family out of a difficult life situation.
29. Even when a victim decides to report an abuse and leave a perpetrator, authorities do not ensure the timely and effective issuance, enforcement and monitoring of protection orders, including, where appropriate, expulsion orders, in cases of domestic violence, and do not impose adequate deterrent penalties for non-compliance with such orders. According to one of the authors of this submission, authorities responsible for issuing protection orders themselves are not interested in issuing them. For example, one of the authors of the submission reports that a woman filed a complaint to the police about systematic beating by her spouse and bullying by her mother-in-law. The complaint was registered, but the

⁸ Available at: <https://www.gazeta.uz/ru/2021/05/21/shelters/>

⁹ Available at: <https://podrobno.uz/cat/politic/mintrudsotszashchity-uzbekistana-preobrazovano-v-mintruda/?ysclid=lfeb64ng2f288733183>

next day the district police officer went to the mahalla and transferred her complaint to the mahalla committee for reconciliation of the spouses. Accordingly, no action was taken against the victim's husband. Protection orders are rarely issued in time, most often in cases of systematic severe violence.

Stereotyping and victim blaming of survivors by all actors in the justice system in domestic and sexual violence cases

30. If a woman decides to apply to the police to bring the perpetrator of domestic violence to justice, she will be persuaded to withdraw her complaint. Police officers and judges often see domestic violence as a private family matter and are not interested in prosecuting the perpetrators.
31. As examined above, there is an established practice of doing everything possible to reconcile the parties in domestic violence cases instead of bringing the perpetrators to justice. If the case does go to court, frequently the court will also make every effort to reconcile the parties and end the case without holding the aggressor criminally responsible. Neither the law enforcement agencies, the court, nor the mahalla are interested in recording increased statistics of domestic violence and try to end the case by reconciling the parties.
32. For example, Lailo Gaidoiboeva from Syrdarya province went to the police department twice in one month after she was beaten by her husband - he also threatened to kill her. The head of the police department even did not listen to her and told her: "A person who threatens to kill you will never actually do it. Go home, make peace with your husband and get on with your life", says a relative of the deceased Lailo.¹⁰ When the district office ignored her complaints, she wrote four more - to the district prosecutor's office, the deputy city governor, the chairman of the mahalla committee and the chairman of the Women's Committee. What happened to these appeals is unknown because a few days later, her husband beat Lailo again and strangled her, putting his threat into action.
33. If a woman has been raped, she has to undergo a forensic medical examination, where, as a rule, male experts by their attitude and treatment of the victim also lead to her re-victimisation. Neither police officers nor judges are specially trained in the investigation and handling of this category of cases and the treatment of victims. On the contrary, the common practice by law enforcement is discouraging the victim to pursue a prosecution for rape and blaming the victim for the violence done to her.¹¹
34. These practices lead to victims either withdrawing their report or choosing not to contact the police at all, knowing that they will be re-traumatised and not achieve justice.

Lack of effective education and awareness-raising for justice actors and public

¹⁰ Available at: <https://old.hook.report/2021/04/bey-osujday/>

¹¹ Available at: <https://www.equalitynow.org/resource/a-culture-of-shame-sexual-violence-and-access-to-justice-in-uzbekistan/>

35. In its Concluding observations on the sixth periodic report of Uzbekistan the CEDAW Committee recommended Uzbekistan (para. 22):
- a. encourage reporting of all forms of gender-based violence against women and girls, including domestic and sexual violence
 - b. intensify awareness-raising for the general public on the criminal nature of all forms of gender-based violence, including domestic and sexual violence, and the need for women to be able to report such cases to law enforcement authorities without fear of reprisals, stigmatisation or revictimisation.
36. The above recommendations are poorly implemented in practice. The Government carries out certain activities as a matter of formality only. Without strengthening awareness-raising, including in rural areas, and intensifying awareness-raising for the general public on the criminal nature of all forms of gender-based violence, in reality social acceptance and tolerance of violence against women still persists. More often there is a normalisation of violence, i.e. the majority of the population perceives violence is a way of training the daughter-in-law/spouse and there are cases of “beaten - it’s your fault”.
37. The most widespread and persistent stereotypes are: “It is your own fault”; “You provoked violence”; “It is not Muslim to contradict your husband”; “You must have been bad yourself, that is why your husband beat you up”; “He raped you, he is your husband and he is doing what he wants”; “Maybe you do not cook well, that is why he is angry”; “Who needs you as a divorcee?”; “If you get divorced, what will people say? You will go mad and become a prostitute!”; “Don’t you think about the future of fatherless children?”; “You are filing a complaint against your husband! What will the neighbours say about you?”.
38. For example, a survey conducted in 2023 by the UNICEF Children’s Fund found that stereotypes make girls victims of domestic violence customised to the abuse: 37% of adolescent girls aged 18-19 think it is normal for a wife to be beaten for arguing with her husband over burnt food or for going outside without permission.¹²
39. The CEDAW Committee also recommended that Uzbekistan continue to provide training to judges, prosecutors, police and other law enforcement officials on gender-sensitive investigative and interrogation techniques. This is extremely important as, as stated above, they are prone to believing negative stereotypes and fail to understand and apply in their practice international standards on gender-based violence against women and girls. To date, all state bodies involved in the process have not received specific training on cases of gender-based violence. There are also no protocols for dealing with survivors and perpetrators of violence.

Ratification of International and Regional Human Rights Instruments

40. Uzbekistan has not yet accepted individual complaints procedures before the Committee against Torture, Committee on Enforced Disappearances, Committee on the Elimination of Discrimination against Women, Committee on Economic, Social and Cultural Rights,

¹² Available at: <https://t.me/unicefuzbekistan/4060>

Committee on the Rights of the Child, Committee on the Rights of Persons with disabilities.

41. During the 3rd cycle, Russia received multiple recommendations to ratify the human rights instruments to which it is not yet a party (e.g., 101.1-101.26). Most of these recommendations Uzbekistan accepted, including the recommendation to Ratify the Optional Protocol to the Convention on the Elimination of All Forms of Discrimination against Women (101.5 and 101.185). However, these recommendations have not been implemented.
42. At the same time, it is important for women and girls to have additional avenues for bringing complaints of human rights violations against Uzbekistan.

Obstacles to civil society development

43. During the 3rd cycle, Uzbekistan accepted many recommendations on interaction with civil society organisations, the work of NGOs and freedom of human rights defenders. In particular, Uzbekistan accepted such recommendations as:
 - a. Ensure that all civil society and human rights organisations can work without hindrance by lifting prohibitive registration requirements, burdensome programme approval regulations and censorship of printed materials (101.116);
 - b. Provide greater support to facilitate the work of civil society (101.117, 101.120);
 - c. Make the registration process and requirements for independent NGOs working in the human rights sector more flexible (101.125, 101.127).
44. However, on 13 June 2022, the Cabinet of Ministers adopted Resolution No. 328 “On Approval of the Regulation on Mutual Cooperation of Local NGOs in Implementing International Grant Projects with State Authorities”, which created additional bureaucratic difficulties in obtaining funding for NGO project activities from foreign donors. Initiative group of NGOs appealed to the Office of the President of the Republic of Uzbekistan, the Cabinet of Ministers, the Ministry of Justice, the Committee of the Legislative Chamber of the Oliy Majlis on democratic institutions, NGOs and citizens’ self-government bodies, the National Association of Non-Governmental Non-Profit Organisations of Uzbekistan, arguing that national legislation and international standards had been violated by adoption of this Regulation and asking for it to be abolished.
2. The practice of the implementation of this Regulation demonstrates that it has created obstacles in obtaining funding and implementation of NGO projects and has become a mechanism of state interference in the internal activities of NGOs. This situation has affected the ability to implement socially important projects for vulnerable groups, including women, children, persons with disabilities, etc.

We respectfully urge the members of the Council to recommend to Uzbekistan with regard to violations addressed here:

1. Ensure that all forms of gender-based violence, including domestic violence are specifically criminalised, allow for *ex officio* prosecution and provide for appropriate penalties commensurate with the gravity of the act;
2. Ensure that the definitions of sexual violence crimes are based on lack of consent and not on the use or threat of force;
3. Ensure that the issue of “consent” of a minor under 16 is immaterial and not examined in practice with regard to sexual acts committed by adults against minors and that these are treated as rape and entail sentences commensurate to the gravity of the crime;
4. Ensure the timely and effective issuance, enforcement and monitoring of protection orders;
5. Ensure that victims of violence have access to justice through accessible and, if necessary, free legal assistance; The law on Free legal aid must be adopted.
6. Strengthen the provision of State-funded victim support services and protection, including 24 / 7 hotlines, adequate shelters, medical treatment, psychosocial counselling and economic support throughout the country;
7. Ratify the Optional Protocol to the Convention on the Elimination of All Forms of Discrimination against Women on the individual complaints procedure before the CEDAW Committee;
8. Develop protocols for dealing with cases of sexual and other forms of gender-based violence against women and girls and train judges, prosecutors, police, other law enforcement officials, medical staff, social workers and other people involved in work with victims of gender-based violence and aggressors on gender-sensitivity;
9. Abolish Resolution by the Cabinet of Ministers adopted No. 328 of 13 June 2022 “On Approval of the Regulation on Mutual Cooperation of Local NGOs in Implementing International Grant Projects with State Authorities”.
10. The Family Code should provide for a provision on the dissolution of marriage without providing a period for reconciliation of spouses in the case of systematic domestic violence.
11. Standards of Operational Procedures should be adopted and published to the general public so that civil servants and victims know their rights in cases of gender-based violence.
12. NGOs should be given the right by law to represent the interests and protect the rights of victims of violence at the investigation and in court.
13. The State should carry out awareness-raising work to change people's consciousness, eliminate gender stereotypes and create an atmosphere of zero tolerance towards violence against women and children.
14. Gender-disaggregated statistics should be collected and maintained by every government department, enterprise of any form of ownership and public organisation, which should be submitted to the State Statistics Committee, and this should be as transparent as possible.

