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**SUMMARY PREPARED BY THE OFFICE OF THE HIGH COMMISSIONER FOR
HUMAN RIGHTS, IN ACCORDANCE WITH PARAGRAPH 15 (C) OF
THE ANNEX TO HUMAN RIGHTS COUNCIL RESOLUTION 5/1**

Turkmenistan *

The present report is a summary of 14 stakeholders' submissions¹ to the universal periodic review. It follows the structure of the general guidelines adopted by the Human Rights Council. It does not contain any opinions, views or suggestions on the part of the Office of the High Commissioner for Human Rights (OHCHR), nor any judgement or determination in relation to specific claims. The information included herein has been systematically referenced in endnotes and, to the extent possible, the original texts have not been altered. Lack of information or focus on specific issues may be due to the absence of submissions by stakeholders regarding these particular issues. The full texts of all submissions received are available on the OHCHR website. The periodicity of the review for the first cycle being four years, the information reflected in this report mainly relates to events that occurred after 1 January 2004.

* The present document was not edited before being sent to the United Nations translation services.

I. BACKGROUND AND FRAMEWORK

A. Constitutional and legislative framework

1. Selon la Fédération Internationale des Droits de l'Homme et Turkmen Initiative for Human Rights (FIDH and TIHR), l'absence de lois ou l'existence d'une législation non conforme aux normes internationales conduisent à des violations massives des droits humains.² Reporters sans frontières (RSF) mentioned an announced overhaul of the constitution to be submitted to Parliament in September.³

B. Institutional and human rights infrastructure

2. Selon FIDH and TIHR, la soumission de toutes les branches du pouvoir au seul exécutif mène à une situation où toutes les structures « investies de la puissance publique » et le système judiciaire sont des outils idéologiques au service du régime.⁴

II. PROMOTION AND PROTECTION OF HUMAN RIGHTS ON THE GROUND

A. Implementation of international human rights obligations

1. Equality and non discrimination

3. According to the LGBT Organization Labrys and the Sexual Rights Initiative (SRI and Labrys), in a joint submission with others, arranged marriages are common in Turkmenistan and the choice of partner is mostly denied to women by the need for parental consent, ethnic or tribal recognition or socioeconomic status. Those women who are perceived to be having premarital sex are stigmatized, which affects their emotional and sexual health. It also affects men's attitudes towards young women and leads to violence against women. Many women in Turkmenistan fear divorce because society and employees do not welcome divorced women and their children. In the winter of 2008, the Minister of Transportation of Turkmenistan fired all divorced women in his institution as they fail to represent the morality and image of real Turkmen women. Men are socially permitted to have more than one family or sexual relationship with other female partners outside of marriage, though polygamy is not legal in Turkmenistan.⁵

4. AI reported that it has been a practice in Turkmenistan for many years to check the ethnic origin of relatives and ancestors of people applying for government posts, in particular senior positions. An ethnic minority background in most cases makes it impossible to be appointed to such posts. Article 2, part 3, of the August 2002 legislative act "On the Selection of Government Leaders and Officials for Government Service in Turkmenistan" states that the selection of government officials must not be affected by their ethnicity, but other parts of the law make the selection of individuals dependent on their relatives. Under Article 2, part 7, one of the principles guiding selection is the "continuity of high moral qualities over several generations" and under Article 12, part 5, citizens entering government service have to provide information about their close relatives. Reportedly, in practice candidates are required to provide information about the ethnic origin of three generations of their ancestors as well as criminal records of relatives.⁶

5. AI further indicated that people applying to institutions of higher education are reportedly also checked to ensure that for the last three generations there has been no non-ethnic Turkmen relative. It is reportedly practically impossible for anyone with a non-Turkmen relative in their family to be admitted to university unless they pay large bribes or are well-connected. As a result of reforms in the education sector, the number of schools teaching in languages of ethnic

minorities was severely reduced under the previous government. In 2000 schools that previously taught in Uzbek or Kazak reportedly stopped enrolling new pupils. Russian-language schools also switched the language of tuition to Turkmen, with very few exceptions in some cities. With reference to TIHR, AI noted that “children of non-titular nations (non-Turkmen nationals) suffered from the declining and virtually non-existent opportunities to study in their native language”.⁷

6. Ethnic minorities are often required to learn Turkmen in order to keep their jobs or to find employment, according to AI. With reference to TIHR, AI noted that the state does not offer language instruction for ethnic minorities and many cannot afford private tutors. The Russian drama theatre A. S. Pushkin in Ashgabad is believed to be the only cultural institution relating to an ethnic minority in Turkmenistan. With reference to TIHR, AI stressed that other ethnic minorities do not have their own cultural institutions and the authorities have on several occasions refused to register ethnic minority organizations and have harassed and intimidated activists.⁸

2. Right to life, liberty and security of the person

7. Human Rights Watch (HRW) reported that there are several cases in which individuals detained in Turkmenistan reported that they had been subjected to torture and cruel treatment, and no investigation into these allegations took place.⁹ HRW highlighted that Ogulsapar Muradova, affiliated with the Turkmenistan Helsinki Foundation, who had been sentenced in a closed trial, together with two colleagues, to a prison term on false charges of “illegal weapons possession”, died in custody in September 2006 under suspicious circumstances and no reliable investigation of her death was conducted.¹⁰ Amnesty International (AI) recommended to the Government to eradicate impunity for torture or other ill-treatment and initiate thorough, impartial and independent investigations into all such allegations; to conduct thorough, impartial and independent investigations into the circumstances of all deaths in custody; and to publish the scope, methods and findings of these investigations and bring to justice those responsible.¹¹

8. According to AI, dozens of prisoners labelled as “traitors of the motherland” by the authorities in connection with the alleged armed attack on then President Niyazov in November 2002 have been subjected to enforced disappearance for over five years. AI reported that most of the prisoners are held in the Ovadan-depe prison, not far from Ashgabad, known for its particularly harsh conditions. However, the authorities have to date not disclosed the prisoners’ whereabouts. There have been countless rumours that some of these prisoners have died in recent years. The authorities have to date not responded to requests by relatives and the international community to disclose information about deaths in custody. No thorough, impartial and independent investigation has been opened into the deaths, which reportedly resulted from torture and other ill-treatment, harsh prison conditions and lack of appropriate medical treatment.¹² In this context, Jubilee Campaign (JC) called for access of independent NGOs to detention facilities.¹³

9. Global Initiative to End All Corporal Punishment of Children (GIEACPC) noted that Article 24 of the Rights of the Child (Guarantees) Act (2002) prohibits corporal punishment which is “harmful for the child’s mental and physical health”. This falls short of full prohibition because it suggests that there may be some degree or kind of corporal punishment which does not cause harm. Corporal punishment is reportedly unlawful in schools and alternative care settings under education legislation and article 24 of the Act.¹⁴

10. According to SRI and Labrys, there are many incidents of rape and forced sex within both premarital relationships and marriages. Rape, including in marriage, is illegal in Turkmenistan, however, often it is not reported due to the victimization, shame and blame survivors face. Although domestic violence is prohibited by law, instances of domestic violence are underreported due to the survivors' low awareness about this law, as well as the culture of silence and fear. Sex work is illegal in Turkmenistan. State agencies systematically monitor the sex industry, but do not assess existing sex work-related problems; statistical data is unavailable and no interventions are implemented to address this issue. Women are prohibited by law from travelling to other countries without an accompanying father, brother or husband in order to prevent sexual exploitation and human trafficking. There are no laws to protect survivors of human trafficking and/or to punish traffickers, despite reports of high number of women being trafficked abroad as sex workers.¹⁵

11. According to TIHR, the "Law on the guarantee of the right of young people to work", enacted in February 2005, put an end to the practice of mass summoning of school pupils to harvest cotton. However, in rural schools, the use of child labour continues for the production of silk cocoons. Children are drawn into work in the agricultural production by their parents – work in the fields, vegetable patches, gardens, cattle pasture, or in the preparation of fodder for cattle and birds. In towns and large villages there is high unemployment among the adult population, and children from families where the parents do not have work are forced to work in bazaars in the capacity of sellers or porters.¹⁶ Noting the wide prevalence of drug abuse, TIHR was also concerned about children being forced to help their drug-dealing parents. Parents involve their own children to be able to serve as many client-addicts as possible, and therefore increase their profit and hope that if their children are arrested by the police, they will not be punished, or at least only punished minimally. However, children fall into the hands of the police and are regularly convicted.¹⁷

12. Conscience and Peace Tax International (CPTI) noted reports of conscripts being hired out as labour to private employers without being paid.¹⁸ CPTI was also concerned that despite a Presidential Decree issued in March 2007, which reintroduced the ten-year period of education seventeen-year-old "volunteers" were still accepted as of the autumn call-up of 2007, in accordance with the Conscription and Military Service Act of 2002 reducing the recruitment age to 17, for those who apply in writing.¹⁹

3. Administration of justice and the rule of law

13. HRW noted that after two decades of intolerance to dissent and widespread abuse of the criminal justice system for governmental purges, hundreds and possibly thousands of people have either served or continue to serve lengthy prison terms as a result of closed, unfair trials. Berdymukhamedov's government has released approximately two dozen people believed to have been imprisoned for political reasons, but has not proposed a process for reviewing all such cases. Until such a process is established, and until independent human rights monitoring is possible in Turkmenistan, it will remain exceedingly difficult to estimate the numbers of political prisoners, past or present.²⁰ RSF added that political prisoners were pardoned in August 2007 but, contrary to hopes, this was not followed by any large-scale release of political prisoners, estimated to number several thousand.²¹ HRW recommended to the government to launch a nationwide, transparent review of all political cases of past years in order to establish an accurate number of political prisoners and begin providing them with justice;²² and to immediately disclose the whereabouts, and if relevant information on the fate, of all the defendants of the 2002 alleged assassination attempt on former president Niazov, and release their imprisoned

relatives; afford those in detention full due process including visits from their family members and conduct a review of their convictions.²³

14. Regarding the right to a fair trial, AI recommended to the government to fundamentally reform the judiciary to strengthen the rule of law; to bring laws and practices in line with international human rights standards regarding fair trial, in particular Articles 14 and 15 of the International Covenant on Civil and Political Rights; and to reform the *Khalk Maslakhaty* to ensure that it does not perform functions which, under international human rights law, should be performed by independent, impartial and competent courts.²⁴

4. Right to privacy, marriage and family life

15. SRI and Labrys noted that homosexuality is criminalized and considered a mental disorder. There is a prison sentence of 2 years for homosexual conduct and people are sent for “cures” in psychiatric institutions. These punishments are also applicable to the situations of perceived homosexual behaviour. The anti-homosexuality law does not specifically mention women who have sex with women. Mainstream societal attitudes are openly homophobic, including medical educational resources and health providers’ performance. Lesbian, gay men, bisexual and transgender people are culturally invisible, stigmatized and rarely unite.²⁵

5. Freedom of movement

16. AI was concerned that the application of the system of registration of permanent residence, referred to as *propiska*, leads to a number of human rights violations affecting scores of people in Turkmenistan. The *propiska* system has also become a breeding ground for corruption as many of its regulations can be overcome by paying bribes. According to Article 45 of the Law on Migration, one of the purposes of the *propiska* system is the regulation of internal migration. The Regulation on the Passport System of Turkmenistan states that in order to obtain a *propiska*, citizens must present proof of entitlement to accommodation. Although Article 46 of the Law on Migration states that “the lack of [...] a *propiska* [...] cannot serve as a reason to restrict citizens’ rights and freedoms”, non-governmental sources report that the *propiska* system severely restricts people’s rights to access to housing, employment, social benefits, free health care and access to education for children. Requirements under the *propiska* make it virtually impossible for citizens to legally live and work in parts of the country other than where they are registered. The *propiska* system also puts obstacles in the way of married couples and families who wish to live together.²⁶

17. HRW reported that, while some individuals have been permitted to travel abroad, the system of restrictions on foreign travel inherited from the Niyazov era remains in place, and people continue to be arbitrarily forbidden from travelling.²⁷ AI added that many religious believers are included in a “black list” banning them from travelling abroad and many religious communities in Turkmenistan have been unable to invite representatives of their faith from abroad.²⁸ Forum 18 News Service (F18) added that only 188 pilgrims are allowed to travel on each year’s haj pilgrimage to Mecca. This represents less than 5 percent of the quota allocated to Turkmenistan by the Saudi authorities.²⁹ HRW recommended to the government to fully respect the right of everyone to be free to leave and return to their own country.

6. Freedom of religion or belief, expression, association and peaceful assembly, and right to participate in public and political life

18. In violation of its international obligations and contrary to the country's Constitution, religious freedom is severely restricted in Turkmenistan, as noted by AI.³⁰ From early 1997, when re-registration of religious communities was made compulsory, until 2004, only two religious communities - the Russian Orthodox Church and Sunni Muslims - obtained registration. All other religious groups were effectively denied registration making them more vulnerable to government pressure including imprisonment, deportation, internal exile, house eviction and harassment. Despite their long-standing privileged status, the Russian Orthodox Church and the Sunni Muslim communities have also been under strict state control and members of these groups have also been targeted and punished when daring to express dissent.³¹ Institute on Religion and Public Policy (IRPP) added that the government successfully controls the country's mosques and Islamic clergy through appointment and constant oversight, ensuring that their theology is in line with the ideology of the country's rulers.³² F18 explained that, although the government allows Sunni Islam to operate within tightly controlled limits, this is not the case for Shia Islam, which is mainly professed by the ethnic Azeri and Iranian minorities in the west of the country who are traditionally more devout than ethnic Turkmen. Such official intolerance of Shia Islam may be linked to former President Niyazov's racially-motivated policy of promoting an ethnically homogenous Turkmen-speaking, Turkmen cultural national identity of which Sunni Islam was seen as a part.³³

19. According to IRPP, in 2004 criminal penalties for practicing with an unregistered religious group were abolished.³⁴ However, as noted by F18, unregistered religious activity remains an offence under Article 205 of the Code of Administrative Offences and state agencies have continued to behave as if unregistered religious activity was still a criminal offence.³⁵ The European Association of Jehovah's Christian Witnesses (JW) added that Jehovah's Witnesses are not registered either although they have shown their willingness to cooperate with the authorities.³⁶

20. AI reported that since 2004, as a result of international pressure, several religious communities have gained registration. However, harassment and intimidation of members both of registered as well as unregistered religious groups continue to be reported. Religious gatherings in homes have been raided in many cases; often the participants were temporarily detained, given large fines, dismissed from their work places, and communities have been warned that their religious activities could lead to them losing their registration. In some cases police beat religious believers or threatened them with violence.³⁷ According to F18, unregistered religious communities face regular raids by Ministry of State Security (MSS) secret police officers, backed up by ordinary police officers, officials of the local administration and local religious affairs officials, who work closely together in suppressing and punishing as criminal all unregistered religious activity. The MSS secret police and the ordinary police also try to recruit spies in unregistered religious groups.³⁸

21. F18 noted that places of worship have been confiscated and destroyed in recent years. Those still being open are tightly restricted, with many faiths not being allowed any place of worship. Formal religious education is impossible, except from a small Muslim theological section in the History Faculty of Magtymguly Turkmen State University. Although Muslims are not allowed to travel abroad for religious education, Russian Orthodox men from Turkmenistan are allowed to study for the priesthood outside the country.³⁹ According to IRPP, the country refuses to allow the publication of religious works, significantly hampering the ability of

minority religious groups to worship.⁴⁰ F18 added that religious literature found by police or the secret police in raids on religious meetings in private homes is routinely confiscated.⁴¹

22. AI continued to be concerned about the lack of a civilian alternative to military service for those objecting to serve in the armed forces on the basis of conscientiously-held beliefs, including religion.⁴² CPTI explained that legislation does not provide for a permission to those with a conscientious objection to military service to be excused if called up, nor is there any means of opting to perform that service in an unarmed capacity, nor an alternative service of a civilian nature.⁴³ IRPP added that conscientious objectors who refuse to serve in the armed forces can receive a maximum penalty of two years' imprisonment.⁴⁴

23. Virtually all media outlets are controlled by the state and editors and senior managers are appointed by the President, as noted by AI, the only exception being the independent newspaper *Reklama i biznes* (Advertising and Business), owned by a Turkish businessman. Journalists collaborating with international media risk repercussions by the authorities, including harassment, intimidation and arbitrary detention. Many journalists report that the authorities often intentionally disconnect their telephone lines and the relatively small number with private internet access report frequent severe disruptions to the service. Journalists who cooperate with foreign media outlets in many cases use pseudonyms for security reasons. The authorities have in many cases attempted to silence correspondents of Radio Free Europe/Radio Liberty, which has often been critical of the authorities in its reporting and has broadcast human rights concerns.⁴⁵

24. TIHR noted that there is one official body carrying out preliminary censorship of all mass media information, resulting in complete absence of critical material in the mass media. Only material praising the president and his work is published. As a result the content of all the newspapers and magazines is similar and doesn't find popularity with the country's inhabitants. Due to this, there is obligatory subscription to the publications. At the same time, subscription to foreign newspapers and journals by the general public is forbidden.⁴⁶

25. Despite repeated declarations by the Turkmen authorities on the introduction of the internet to the country, as reported by TIHR, access is still not available for the overwhelming majority of the citizens, with only one internet service provider, the state company Turkmentelecom. The secret services block all sites that carry critical material and censor emails targeting those corresponding with foreign media or human rights organisations.⁴⁷ RSF reported that, according to Turkmentelecom, there are about 4 000 Internet users in Turkmenistan, far less than in 1996-99, when some private providers were allowed to operate in the country. RSF added that it is mandatory to present an ID to be allowed to use a computer in any of the ten existing Internet cafés, allowing State Security Services to know which sites have been visited by each Internet user. Connection fees are also very high compared with the average monthly income, and quality of the connection is also of great concern.⁴⁸ TIHR recommended to the government to allow citizens a real right to free speech and self-expression and the freedom to receive and disseminate information, as set out in the Constitution; to cease the practice of censorship of electronic communication and cease the practice of blocking internet sites, making the internet available to all that desire it; and to devise and adopt laws regulating the activity of the media which allows an independent press to be created, recreating editions of newspapers and magazines in local minority languages.⁴⁹

26. CIVICUS was concerned that the Provisions on the Procedure of Organisation and Carrying out of Assemblies, Meetings, Street Processions and Demonstrations (1988) unduly restrict the freedom of assembly, in particular the requirement to submit an application ten days prior to holding an event, as this constitutes an impediment to holding spontaneous

demonstrations on matters of urgent public interest. Furthermore on the receipt of an application, the authorities can alter the place, time and other conditions of the assembly, meeting, street procession or demonstration in view of public order requirements and requirements relating to the regular work of enterprises, institutions and organisations, and the rights and legal interests of citizens. CIVICUS was also concerned that the Law on Public [Non-governmental] Associations prohibits interference by public associations in the activities of governmental bodies and officials, which restricts the possibility of offering legitimate criticism to official policies as it may be construed as illegal interference.⁵⁰

27. In recent years AI received credible reports of harassment, torture and other ill-treatment, arbitrary detention and imprisonment after unfair trials of human rights defenders and other activists, independent journalists, other individuals critical of the authorities, and former government officials.⁵¹ According to HRW, NGOs are legally banned from carrying out any work unless they are registered, yet no independent NGO has obtained registration under President Berdymukhamedov. Following a high-level European Union meeting in Ashgabat in April 2008 pressure on Turkmen activists and dissidents intensified, including those in exile. Activists in exile were approached by Turkmen officials who proposed that they stop their work in return for favours for their families. Radio Free Europe/Radio Liberty and Institute for War and Peace Reporting reported that authorities constantly pressure their contributors inside Turkmenistan to stop cooperating with international media.⁵² TIHR highlighted difficulties regarding NGOs applying for registration of grants (foreign aid). Even grants awarded under international and foreign programs, endorsed by the Turkmenistan Ministry of Foreign Affairs, cannot be issued because of various obstacles created by local authorities.⁵³

28. Earth Justice (EJ) reported that Turkmenistan's Law on Public Associations regulates the creation, registration, activity and liquidation of NGOs, and greatly limits the ability of organizations and individuals to participate in the government's decision-making.⁵⁴ TIHR explained that civil society in general, and NGOs in particular, are poorly developed. Of 89 NGOs which are presently registered, only seven are regarded by international organisations as independent. The remainder are created by the government; all these governmental NGOs (GONGOs) are part of a nationwide movements "Galkinish" (Revival).⁵⁵ TIHR highlighted that in November 2007, a decree was signed by the President concerning the increase in salaries of workers in budgetary organisations, self supporting organisations and NGOs. Naturally this means only those NGOs created and supported by the government.⁵⁶

29. HRW added that the post-Niyazov era has seen an unprecedented number of international delegation visits to Turkmenistan, some of which have included policy discussions with the government about human rights. However, no independent organization has been permitted to carry out research on human rights abuses inside the country, and no agency - governmental or nongovernmental - has had access to detention facilities.⁵⁷ In this context, TIHR noted that on the day before the arrival in Ashkhabad of delegations of international or foreign organisations, whose program includes meetings with social activists; such activists receive warnings from the intelligence services not to leave their home during the stay of the delegations.⁵⁸

30. Finally, AI highlighted that the 3 February 2003 Decree of the *Khalk Maslakhaty* (People's Council), entitled "On declaring different illegal acts as high treason and about measures of punishment for traitors", gives broad and vague definitions of "high treason" that could be used to punish people for peacefully exercising their right to freedom of expression. The future of the Decree is currently unknown.⁵⁹ HRW recommended to the government to allow domestic non-governmental organizations to register and function without undue interference and cease imposing pressure on activists, both in Turkmenistan and in exile; and to

allow national and international organizations to conduct independent human rights monitoring, including through effective access to places of detention.⁶⁰

7. Right to work and to just and favourable conditions of work

31. Selon FIDH and TIHR, le Turkménistan a signé toutes les Conventions principales de l'Organisation internationale du travail, toutefois, l'unique syndicat national existant, hérité de l'Union soviétique, est intégralement contrôlé et dirigé par l'État et ne défend en aucune manière les droits des travailleurs. Toutes les tentatives visant à organiser des syndicats indépendants se sont heurtées à la résistance obstinée des autorités. L'absence de syndicats indépendants conduit à de nombreuses violations des droits des travailleurs. Par exemple, les fonctionnaires sont forcés, une fois par semaine, de participer à des travaux collectifs non rémunérés, sous peine de licenciement immédiat. Etant donné le chômage massif, ce système est particulièrement néfaste. Les employés locaux de compagnies étrangères actives au Turkménistan sont particulièrement mal protégés. Leurs droits sont bafoués en permanence, autant en matière de rétribution que de sécurité au travail, de protection sociale et d'assurance.⁶¹

8. Right to social security and to an adequate standard of living

32. Health care services have deteriorated in recent years, because of the dated professional training, the dismissal of 15000 health workers in 2004, and lack of medical equipment, supplies and drugs. Maternal mortality rate stood at 16.77 per 100,000 live births in 2004 as registered by the government, while United Nations organizations showed statistics of 31 per 100,000.⁶² Pregnant women fear to give birth at hospitals due to the high prevalence of hospital acquired infections, child mortality and lack of qualified doctors. Turkmenistan's demographic politics of population control discourage contraception and promote maternity. Regarding sexual health, SRI and Labrys indicated that the choice of contraceptives is limited. Condoms are the most challenging to access. Abortion is legal, however, it is mostly understood and used as a contraceptive method due to low awareness and unavailability of contraception. Unmarried women are discouraged by cultural taboos to visit gynaecologists. Often health care providers question their clients' ethics, especially young women who have premarital sex. Most services are not youth friendly. There is a socially acceptable practice of virginity proof to be obtained from a gynaecologist..

33. After the AIDS program had been cancelled from 2003 to 2005 due to official data showing that HIV did not exist, it has been re-established in the meantime. According to SRI and Labrys, the government, arguing that there were only two "imported" incidents of HIV/AIDS, claims that anti-AIDS state programs are successful in preventing HIV/AIDS and that the only goal is to prevent HIV entering the country. The official data on HIV is often questioned by international human rights and public health communities in view of existing high STI prevalence, widespread injecting drug users, sex work and the larger context of HIV occurrence in Central Asia.⁶³

9. Right to education and to participate in the cultural life of the community

34. According to SRY and Labrys, *Ruhnama*, the spiritual guidance book written by the First President of Independent Turkmenistan, is often referred to as the moral document on the basis of which to judge people; it has replaced Turkmenistan's Constitution. *Ruhnama* includes values and traditions that manifest sexist and insensitive attitudes.⁶⁴ SRI and Labrys further noted that since independence, the Turkmenistan government has been enforcing politics of ethnic and cultural revival that significantly contribute to strengthening the traditional values, inter alia

virginity, repressed female sexuality, and encouragement for male sexual activity at early adolescence. In Turkmenistan, no official school curriculum, at any academic level includes health, reproductive health or HIV prevention components.⁶⁵

10. Minorities and indigenous peoples

35. According to AI, government policies vis-à-vis ethnic minorities since the break-up of the Soviet Union led to tens of thousands of members of ethnic minorities leaving Turkmenistan. With reference to TIHR, AI noted that only half or even only a third of ethnic Russians who lived in Turkmenistan when the country became independent in 1991 remain in Turkmenistan. The group estimates that ethnic minorities currently make up some 20 per cent of the population. Uzbeks, Russians and Kazaks form the largest ethnic minority groups. Discrimination against ethnic minorities manifests itself, for example, through restricted access to work and higher education.⁶⁶

III. ACHIEVEMENTS, BEST PRACTICES, CHALLENGES AND CONSTRAINTS

36. HRW reported that the country is rich in natural gas, but most of the population lives in grinding poverty. The new government has begun to reverse some of the most ruinous social policies and reinstated pensions and social allowances, restored the tenth year of secondary education and the five-year course of university-level education, and increased enrolment in universities. These measures are welcome but have not changed Turkmenistan's abysmal human rights record. There is no indication for example that the government is proposing comprehensive reform needed to restore the public health, social welfare, and education systems to levels that would ensure access to basic health care, food, housing, and education is available to all, or that full enjoyment of such rights will be progressively realized. While serious institutional reform is needed in every aspect of human rights practices in Turkmenistan, releasing political prisoners, abolishing governmental impediments for travel abroad, and allowing non-governmental organizations (NGOs) and independent media to function freely in Turkmenistan can and should be accomplished promptly.⁶⁷

IV. KEY NATIONAL PRIORITIES, INITIATIVES AND COMMITMENTS

N/A.

V. CAPACITY-BUILDING AND TECHNICAL ASSISTANCE

N/A.

Notes

¹ The stakeholders listed below have contributed information for this summary; the full texts of all original submissions are available at: www.ohchr.org. (An asterisk denotes a non-governmental organization in consultative status with the Economic and Social Council.)

Civil society

AI	Amnesty International*, London, UK.
CIVICUS	CIVICUS: World Alliance for Citizen Participation*, Johannesburg, South Africa.
CPTI	Conscience and Peace Tax International*, Thonex, Switzerland.

EJ	Earth Justice*, California, USA.
F18	Forum 18 News Service, Oslo, Norway.
FIDH and THRI	Fédération Internationale des Droits de l'Homme* and Turkmen Initiative for Human Rights, Geneva, Switzerland (joint submission).
GIEACPC	Global Initiative to End All Corporal Punishment of Children, London, UK.
HRW	Human Rights Watch*, Geneva, Switzerland.
IRPP	Institute on Religion and Public Policy, Washington DC, USA.
JC	Jubilee Campaign, Washington DC, USA.
JW	The European Association of Jehovah's Christian Witnesses, Kraainem, Belgium.
RSF	Reporters sans frontières*, Paris, France.
SRI and Labrys	LGBT Organization Labrys, Bishkek, Kyrgyzstan and the Sexual Rights Initiative, jointly with Action Canada for Population and Development*, Creating Resources for Empowerment and Action – CREA- India, Mulabi, Latin American Space for Sexualities and Rights and others, Buenos Aires, Argentina (joint submission).
TIHR	Turkmen Initiative for Human Rights, Vienna, Austria.

² FIDH and TIHR, p.1.

³ RSF, p.2.

⁴ FIDH and TIHR, p.1.

⁵ SRI and Labrys, p.1-2.

⁶ AI, p.7.

⁷ AI, p.7 ; see also FIDH and TIHR, p.5.

⁸ AI, p.7.

⁹ HRW, p.3.

¹⁰ HRW, p.2; see also RSF, p.3; TIHR, p.6.

¹¹ AI, p.8.

¹² AI, p.5 ; see also HRW, p.3-4.

¹³ JC, p.3.

¹⁴ GIEACPC, p.2.

¹⁵ SRI and Labrys, p.5-6.

¹⁶ TIHR, p.4, 7; see also for information on individual cases.

¹⁷ TIHR, p.5-8; see also for information on individual case.

¹⁸ CPTI, p.5.

¹⁹ CPTI, p.5.

²⁰ HRW, p.2 -3; see also for information on individual cases.

²¹ RSF, p.2; see also JC, p.2.

²² HRW, p.5.

²³ HRW, p.6.

²⁴ AI, p.8.

²⁵ SRI and Labrys, p.6.

²⁶ AI, p.3-4.

²⁷ HRW, p.4; see also for information on individual cases. See also AI, p.5; and FIDH and TIHR, p.5-6, including for information on individual cases.

²⁸ AI, p.6.

²⁹ F18, p.3.

³⁰ AI, p.5; see also IRPP, p.2; F18, p.1.

³¹ AI, p.5.

³² IRPP, p.1.

³³ F18, p.1.

³⁴ IRPP, p.3.

³⁵ F18, p.4.

³⁶ JW, p.2.

³⁷ AI, p.6. See also F18, p.1; IRPP, p.3-5; JW, p.2-3, also for information on individual cases.

- ³⁸ F18, p.2-3.
³⁹ F18, p.2, 3.
⁴⁰ IRPP, p.1.
⁴¹ F18, p.4; see also AI, p.6.
⁴² AI, p.6.
⁴³ CPTI, p.1.
⁴⁴ IRPP, p.2. See also AI, p.6; CPTI, p.2-3 for information on individual cases.
⁴⁵ AI, p.4. See also TIHR, p.3; FIDH and TIHR, p.2.
⁴⁶ TIHR, p.4; see also FIDH and TIHR, p.2.
⁴⁷ TIHR, p.4.
⁴⁸ RSF, p.1-2; see also FIDH and TIHR, p.2-3.
⁴⁹ TIHR, p.5.
⁵⁰ CIVICUS, p.1-3; see also EJ, p.2-3.
⁵¹ AI, p.4. See also for information on individual cases HRW, p.2; TIHR, p.6.
⁵² HRW, p.5; see also FIDH and TIHR, p.4.
⁵³ TIHR, p.2.
⁵⁴ EJ, p.1.
⁵⁵ TIHR, p.1, see also EJ, p.1.
⁵⁶ TIHR, p.2.
⁵⁷ HRW, p.4-5; see also FIDH and TIHR, p.4.
⁵⁸ TIHR, p.2.
⁵⁹ AI, p.3. See also FIDH and TIHR, p.3.
⁶⁰ HRW, p.6.
⁶¹ FIDH and TIHR, p.4.
⁶² SRI and Labrys, p.3-4.
⁶³ SRI and Labrys, p.4-5.
⁶⁴ SRI and Labrys, p.1 ; see also IRPP, p.2.
⁶⁵ SRI and Labrys, p.2.
⁶⁶ AI, p.6 ; see also FIDH and TIHR, p.5.
⁶⁷ HRW, p.1. See also F18, p.1; FIDH and TIHR, p.1; JC, p.1.
