

SUMMARY OF THE MAIN ACHIEVEMENTS IN 2019-2020

In 2019-2020 period Azerbaijan has consistently experienced political stability and improved security, recording substantial gains in indicators concerning state fragility, the security situation as well as the strength of state institutions. Under the decisive political will and leadership of the head of the state, a strong fight against corruption is conducted in our country.

As we know, the coronavirus (COVID-19) crisis has brought about unprecedented challenges of human suffering, uncertainty and major economic disruption on a global scale. In addition, COVID-19 crisis posed new challenges to law enforcement agencies in their activities linked with the fight against corruption. However, COVID-19 could not suspend the activity of law enforcement agencies altogether, they continued to carry out their direct duties in a limited manner. It is worth noting that despite the recessional outcomes caused by the crisis, global government agencies, in partnership with international organizations, are developing new mechanisms to prevent, detect and prosecute corruption and bribery.

In spite of challenges posed by COVID-19, the Azerbaijan Prosecutor's Office continued to fulfill its main statutory functions during the pandemic. Thus, The Anti-Corruption Directorate with the Prosecutor General of the Republic of Azerbaijan (ACD), in joint co-operation with other law enforcement agencies, has investigated a number of corruption crimes that posed a threat to the stability of economy and well-being of country. Most of these cases involved the illegal activities of high-ranking officials. The perpetrators were subsequently identified and detained on charges of abuse of power, bribery and forgery.

Also, it should be noted that Prosecutors Office of Azerbaijan in co-operation with other state bodies took effective measures against officials embezzled payments considered for citizens in order to improve their well-being during COVID-19 pandemic. Complaints addressed to the Prosecutor's Office about mentioned unlawful acts of officials were taken into consideration seriously. Officials who violate the rights of citizens were identified as a result of well-organized operational search activities by the ACD and appropriate legal measures were taken against the perpetrators. (More than 20 operation and investigative actions implemented by ACD). Moreover, during the pandemic outbreak, citizens' complaints about healthcare system, labor and employment were in most cases satisfied and the violated rights of citizens were immediately restored. In addition, law enforcement agencies have initiated criminal cases linked with mentioned complaints.

It should be emphasized that ACD took measures about officials embezzled payments considered for citizens in order to improve their well-being during pandemic. Complaints addressed ACD about mentioned unlawful acts of officials were taken into consideration seriously. Officials violating the rights of citizens were identified through well-organized operations and investigative actions by the ACD staff, and appropriate legal action was taken against the perpetrators.

Moreover, despite the specific obstacles posed by the pandemic, every complaint addressed to the “161 Hotline” call center is carefully reviewed by the relevant ACD authorities. Complaints about health, labour and employment are specially kept in spotlight during pandemic, in order to reduce negative effect of pandemic experienced by citizens. Significant part of complaints accepted by “161 Hotline” were granted and infringed right of citizens were restored immediately.

On June 10, 2020, by the ordinance of the President of the Republic of Azerbaijan, a new structure of the General Prosecutor's Office was established. The main goal of these changes is aimed at ensuring a more transparent activity of prosecutors, the formation of a new corps of prosecutors and the creation of units for the effective investigation of global challenges.

Hence, these changes have provided additional transparency and accountability in the activities of prosecutors, increased the flexibility and efficiency of systemic mechanisms, and formed professionals who meet modern requirements. To add to it the number of departments and divisions was increased from 15 to 18. It is necessary to note that in frame of this structural changes have been established the Department on Coordination of special confiscation issues, inter alia, Department of non-prosecution proceedings. The main tasks and functions of the Department on Coordination of special confiscation issues are to coordinate the activities of the structural units of the Prosecutor General's Office to compensate for material damage and ensure special confiscation, to assist in the detection and tracking of assets, to control the movement of property subject to special confiscation. Besides, to ensure regulation of certain areas, such as organizational management, execution and discipline, personnel work, document circulation and other areas of prosecutor's office activities, new "Rules of Procedure" of the General Prosecutor's Office were developed and adopted.

One of the most recent and important measures taken in Azerbaijan is the changes made to the members board of the Commission on Combatting Corruption. Thus, composition of Commission (chairman, secretary and etc.) renewed by the President of Republic of Azerbaijan and the first meeting of Commission was held in 15 th of September 2020. The Commission functions with the structure composed of 15 members.

Since 2004, Azerbaijan has adopted a number of national action plans on open government and anti-corruption (National Strategy on Increasing Transparency and Combating Corruption, Action Plan on Combating Corruption 2012-2015, Action Plan on Open Government Partnership 2012-2015, Action Plan on Open Government Partnership 2016-2018 and etc.) which have become an important milestone in preventing corruption and strengthening integrity of the country. The logical sequence of success was the adoption of the National Action Plan for the Open Government Partnership on February 27, 2020. It is worth noting that this action plan is aimed at defining a methodology for assessing and managing corruption risks, promoting integrity in both the public and private sectors, strengthens participation of the NGOs and civil society in the activity of the state bodies.

While talking about innovation, transparency and accountability, it is necessary to emphasize the role of ASAN (Azerbaijani Service and Assessment Network) services, recognized as Azerbaijan's brand, in the public services delivery. Thus, in 2019-2020, ASAN service centers received about 8 million applications. (39 million applications received since 2012 totally) Moreover, 5 new branches of service were put into operation in different regions of Azerbaijan. Currently, ASAN provides 19 branches for citizens and it is foreseen to increase the numbers of branches in order to ensure the efficiency of rendered services.

Besides, one of the progressive actions taken by government in mentioned period of time is establishment of the DOST Agency (Agency for Sustainable and Operative Social Provision) under the Ministry of Labor and Social Protection of Population of the Republic of Azerbaijan. The main task of the platform is to improve the quality of services provided to citizens in the areas of employment, labor, and social security. Additionally, the agency is working to expand the share of innovative social security solutions and accelerate the transition to e-services.