



## Standing Committee on Social and Cultural Affairs

Baku-Republic of Azerbaijan  
20-23 September 2023

# Final Report

The Meeting of Standing Committee on Social and Cultural Affairs was held on 21-22 September 2023 in Baku, Republic of Azerbaijan and parliamentary delegations from following member countries participated in the Meeting:

Azerbaijan, Bahrain, Cambodia, Indonesia, Iran, Iraq, Kazakhstan, Kuwait, Pakistan, Palestine, Qatar, Saudi Arabia, Syria, Tajikistan, Thailand, Turkiye ([Attachment I](#))

### Opening Session:

At the opening session, the following dignitaries presented their remarks:

- H.E. M.R. MAJIDI, APA Secretary General
- H.E. Prof. Dr. Sahiba GAFAROVA, Speaker of Milli Majlis of the Republic of Azerbaijan
- H.E. A.E. ONEN, Representative of the APA term President and Head of delegation of Turkiye to the APA

([Attachment II](#))

### 1. Adoption of the Agenda

The Member Parliaments unanimously adopted the Draft Agenda. ([Attachment III](#))

### 2. Election of Bureau

The committee approved the following parliamentarians as members of its Bureau:

- **H.E. Ms. G. PASHAYEVA**, Head of the delegation Azerbaijan, as **Chairperson**
- **H.E. Senator NISAR AHMED KHUHRO**, Head of delegation of Pakistan, as **Vice-Chair**
- **H.E. Mr. A. Al-Saloom**, Head of delegation of Bahrain, as **Rapporteur**

### **3. Opening remarks by the Chairperson**

H.E. PASHAYEVA, Chairperson of the meeting, presented her opening remarks and welcomed all participants. ([Attachment IV](#))

### **4. Report by APA Secretary General**

Dr. MAJIDI, APA Secretary General reported on the latest development and outstanding issues of the Standing Committee. ([Attachment V](#))

### **5. Situation of Women Parliamentarians in Asia:**

APA by /Res/2014/16, decided to establish Special Committee of APA women parliamentarians under the Standing Committee on Social and Cultural Affairs.

The following member parliaments presented their views on this agenda item: Bahrain, Cambodia, Iran, Iraq, Kazakhstan Pakistan and Syria. The statements covered issues such as: Empowering women in Judiciary, Governments and Legislative branches, Statistics on women employments and entrepreneur, Gender equality, percentage of women representation in parliament etc.

### **6. General Debate on Draft Resolutions:**

Participants were called upon to express their general views on the content of interested draft resolutions before addressing the specific amendments. The following topics of importance were raised:

- More attention should be given to Cultural cooperation in the frame work of smart young generation
- APA should benefit from idea of inter-faith dialogue and cultures
- Need to draft a Resolution on prevention of blasphemy against sacred values
- Avoiding redundancy in adopting same draft resolutions
- Considering emergency items as draft resolutions

- Offering new draft resolutions instead of considering already adopted ones

## 7. Consideration of Draft Resolutions:

At the beginning of the consideration of this item, Deputy Secretary General presented the rule of conduct for addressing draft resolutions and related amendments. He stressed on the following:

- There are 16 draft resolutions
- On each draft resolution we only address the amended Paragraphs
- The priority is given to the written amendments submitted before
- The Chair will call on authors of amendments to introduce them first
- The Chair will rule on the final outcome of debates
- Be brief when presenting your views (i.e. in dictation speed)
- The titles of draft resolutions are to stay intact

After extensive debates, exchange of views on amendments, the following draft resolutions were updated and adopted by consensus:

1. Draft Resolution on Measures to Promote Cultural Diversity and Protect Cultural Heritage in Asia: **(Adopted)**
2. Draft Resolution on Asian Integration through Information and Communication Technology: **(Adopted)**
3. Draft Resolution on Collaboration on Health Equity in Asia: **(Adopted)**
4. Draft Resolution on Asian Parliamentarians against Corruption: **(Adopted)**
5. Draft Resolution of APA Women Parliamentarians: **(Adopted)**
6. Draft Resolution on Promoting Dialogue and Harmony among Followers of World Religions: **(Adopted)**
7. Draft Resolution on Legal and Legislative Cooperation in Combating the Smuggling of Cultural Items in Asia: **(Adopted)**
8. Draft Resolution on Effective Cooperation in Combating Illicit Drug Trafficking in Asia: **(Adopted)**
9. Draft Resolution on Humanitarian Aid to Syria, Iraq, Yemen, Gaza and Myanmar on the Verge of the Humanitarian Catastrophe: **(Due to the controversial contents, this draft resolution has been deferred several**

- times. The Standing Committee decided to avoid consideration of any draft resolutions which is deferred twice, in its future meetings)**
10. Draft Resolution on Protection and Promotion of the Rights of Migrant Workers in Asia: **(Due to the controversial contents, this draft resolution has been deferred several times. The Standing Committee decided to avoid consideration of any draft resolutions which is deferred twice, in its future meetings)**
  11. Draft Resolution on the Promotion of Quality Child and Youth Development for Sustainable Society in Asia: **(Adopted)**
  12. Draft Resolution on Ageing Society in Asia: **(Adopted)**
  13. Draft Resolution on Human Development in Asia: **(Adopted)**
  14. Draft Resolution on Tourism Cooperation in Asia: **(This draft resolution was replaced by a merged draft resolution sponsored by Iran and Turkiye. The merged document will be considered during the next Standing committee meeting.)**
  15. Draft Resolution on Sustainable Tourism Cooperation in Asia: **(This draft resolution was replaced by a merged draft resolution sponsored by Iran and Turkiye. The merged document will be considered during the next Standing committee meeting.)**
  16. Draft Resolution on the Commission on Women; **(Adopted).**

This draft resolution was introduced by the Chairperson, H.E Ms. PASHAYEVA ([Attachment VI](#))

Delegation of Thailand stated that they confirmed the original version of this draft resolution.

**8. Closing Session:** Following the consideration of all Agenda items, the meeting of Standing Committee was adjourned.

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Attachment I



**Asian Parliamentary Assembly  
Standing Committee on Social and Cultural issues**

**List of Participants**

*20-23 September, 2023  
Baku, Azerbaijan*

**Azerbaijan**

- |  |                                 |
|--|---------------------------------|
| 1. Ms. Sahiba Gafarova                             | Speaker of the Milli Majlis     |
| 2. Ms. Ganira Pashayeva<br>APA of the Milli Majlis | Head of the Delegation to the   |
| 3. Mr. Ilham Mammadov<br>APA                       | Member of the Delegation to the |
| 4. Mr. Aydın Huseynov<br>APA                       | Member of the Delegation to the |
| 5. Mr. Anar Mammadov<br>APA                        | Member of the Delegation to the |
| 6. Mr. Farid Hajiyev                               | Chief of Staff                  |
| 7. Mr. Teymur Taghiyev                             | Head of the Secretariat         |
| 8. Mr. İlkin Mammadov<br>relations department      | Head of the International       |
| 9. Mr. Elmar Huseynov                              | Assistant to the Speaker        |
| 10. Ms. Nafila Rahimova                            | Secretary of the Delegation     |

**Bahrain**

- |                           |                        |
|---------------------------|------------------------|
| 11. Mr. Ahmed Alsaloom    | Head of the Delegation |
| 12. Mr. Abdulaziz Abul    | Member of Parliament   |
| 13. Ms. Ebtessam Aldallal | Member of Parliament   |
| 14. Mr. Abdulla AlRomaihi | Member of Parliament   |
| 15. Mr. Ali Alaradi       | Staff                  |
| 16. Mr. Mohamed Bin Daina | Staff                  |

**Cambodia**

- |                  |                        |
|------------------|------------------------|
| 17. Mr. Sokun Ty | Head of the Delegation |
|------------------|------------------------|

18. Ms. Chanmatin Phav

Staff

### **Iran**

19. Mr. Mohammad Mehdi Zahedi

Head of the Delegation

20. Mr. Masumeh Pashaei Bahram

Member of Parliament

21. Mr. Ali Ali Zadeh

Member of Parliament

22. Mr. Reza Hassani

Staff

23. Mr. Leila Taati

Staff

24. Mr. Mohammad Javad Emamian

Staff of embassy

### **Indonesia**

25. Mr. Fadli Zon

Head of the Delegation

26. Mr. Sukamta Sukamta

Member of Parliament

27. Mr. Achmad Hafisz

Member of Parliament

28. Ms. Agustina Wilujeng Pramestuti

Member of Parliament

29. Ms. Puteri Anetta Komarudin

Member of Parliament

30. Mr. Didi Irawadi Syamsuddin

Member of Parliament

31. Ms. Warsiti Alfiah

Staff

32. Mr. Ahmadi

Staff

33. Ms. Rindias Mega Rahmawati

Staff

34. Ms. Made Fitri Maya Padmi

Staff

35. Ms. Merita Yenni

Counsellor of Ambassador

36. Ms. Wanda Widya

Staff of embassy

37. Ms. Parvana Karimova

Staff of embassy

38. Mr. Rashad Mardanov

Staff of embassy

### **Iraq**

39. Mr. Jabbar Al Chnani

Head of the Delegation

40. Mr. Haider Al Selami

Member of Parliament

41. Mr. Maki Rissan Abdulla Al-Mamori

Ambassador

42. Mr. Maadh Al Sudani

Staff

### **Kazakhstan**

43. Mr. Yerlan Sairov

Head of the Delegation

### **Kuwait**

44. Mr. Mohammad Alajmi

Head of the Delegation

45. Mr. Hamad Alobaid

Member of Parliament

46. Mr. Abdulaziz Nasrallah

Staff

47. Mr. Suad Alraqam

Staff

48. Mr. Saad Alajmi

Secretary of the Delegation

49. Mr. Elnur Abbasov

Photographer

## **Pakistan**

50. Senator Nisar Ahmed Khuhro	Head of the Delegation
51. Mr. Muhammad Salman	Staff
52. Mr. Nisar Ahmed Panhwar	Staff
53. Mr. Muhammad Imran Qureshi	Staff

## **Palestine**

54. Mr. Nasser Abdal Wahab	Ambassador
55. Ms. Miar Rantisi	Deputy Ambassador

## **Qatar**

56. Mr. Ahmad bin Hitmi Al-Hitmi	Head of the Delegation
57. Mr. Nasser bin Metrif Al-Hemeidi	Member of Parliament
58. Mr. Faisal Abdullah Al-Henzab	Ambassador
59. Mr. Mohammed bin Hamad Al-Hassan	Staff

## **Saudi Arabia**

60. Mr. Hani Khashoggi	Head of the Delegation
61. Mr. Saad Alangari	Staff

## **Syria**

62. Mr. Mefleh Al Nasrallah	Head of the Delegation
63. Mr. Mustafa Al Mustafa	Member of Parliament
64. Mr. Rami Saleh	Member of Parliament
65. Mr. Majd Saoud	Staff

## **Tajikistan**

66. Mr. Fozil Obidzoda	Head of the Delegation
67. Mr. Dzhaloliddin Burkhanov	Staff

## **Thailand**

68. Mr. Virasakdi Futrakul	Head of the Delegation
69. Mr. Worawit Baru	Member of Parliament
70. Mr. Russdy Khantanit	Secretary of the Delegation
71. Mr. Apirat Sugondhabhirom	Ambassador
72. Mr. Pipat Charoensuk	Staff

## **Turkiye**

73. Mr. Abdulkadir Emin Onen	Head of the Delegation
74. Mr. Omer Ozmen	Member of Parliament
75. Mr. Vecdi Gundoghdu	Member of Parliament

76. Mr. Osman Cenghiz Candar  
77. Mr. Ilyas Topsakal  
78. Mr. Cahit Bagchi  
79. Mr. Murat Hasturk  
80. Ms. Elif Esra Onal  
81. Mr. Levent Kizilbaghli

Member of Parliament  
Member of Parliament  
Ambassador  
Staff  
Staff  
Staff

**APA Secretariat**

82. Mr. Mohammad Reza Majidi  
83. Mr. Kia Tabatabaee  
84. Mr. Mehdi Ghashghavi  
85. Mr. Mehdi Mollahosseini

Secretary General  
Deputy Secretary General  
Executive Deputy of Secretariat  
APA Senior Expert



**Asian Parliamentary Assembly  
Standing Committee on Social and Cultural Affairs  
Baku- Republic of Azerbaijan  
20-23 September 2023**

**Opening Remarks by APA Secretary General**

**Excellencies,  
Distinguished Delegates,  
Ladies and Gentlemen,**

It is my pleasure and honor to address you at the meeting of the APA Standing Committee on Social and Cultural Affairs in the historical and magnificent city of Baku, the capital of the Republic of Azerbaijan .

On behalf of all the delegation present here, staff of the APA Secretariat and on behalf of myself, I would like to express my sincere and heartfelt gratitude to Prof. Dr. Sahiba GAFAROVA, Hon. Speaker of Milli Majlis of the Republic of Azerbaijan and other high ranking officials of the Government and Parliament for the organization of this meeting and their generous hospitality.

It is also an honor and privilege for the APA to have the Milli Majlis of the Republic of Azerbaijan as one of its most dedicated and active member of its community to Chair and host the meeting of the APA Standing Committee on Social and Cultural Affairs this year as the APA Vice-President.

**Excellencies,  
Distinguished Delegates,  
Ladies and Gentlemen,**

We have come a long way at various APA Meetings and achieved some of our goals based on all the efforts made by pervious Standing Committee chairs. We are confident that the Milli Majlis of Azerbaijan through its wisdom, commitment and professionalisms, poised to steer the Standing Committee leadership in such manner which will enable us to fulfill our duties and better serve the APA. We are obliged

to extend our full support in any way possible to make this period a success as we did in previous occasions.

I would also like to seize this opportunity to welcome the candidacy of the Republic of Azerbaijan for the next term of APA Presidency (2024-2026). I am confident that successful outcome of the Standing Committee on Social and Cultural Affairs under the professional leadership of Azerbaijan as Chair of the Meeting, will serve as a milestone in support of this candidacy.

In this context, I wish to stress that APA Secretariat shall deem itself committed to do its best for the promotion and realization of the objectives of our organization through full utilization of its human resources as well as its capabilities and potentials and will spare no effort to make the Milli Majlis of Azerbaijan Chairmanship a success.

I wish you all fruitful and constructive deliberations during the meeting of standing Committee on Social and Cultural Affairs in Baku.

Thank you very much for your attention.



**Asian Parliamentary Assembly**  
**Meeting of the Standing Committee on Social and Cultural Affairs**  
**21 September 2023**

**Speech of H.E. Prof. Dr. Sahiba GAFAROVA, Speaker of Milli  
Majlis of the Republic of Azerbaijan**

**Distinguished Secretary General,**

**Dear Committee members,**

**Dear guests,**

I am delighted to welcome you all to the Milli Majlis of the Republic of Azerbaijan!

The Milli Majlis of the Republic of Azerbaijan considers it crucial to strengthen and advance its cooperation with the Asian Parliamentary Assembly, the sole organization that unites Asian nations under a common umbrella at the Inter-Parliamentary level.

The Asian Parliamentary Assembly is a significant platform of parliamentary diplomacy that unites common efforts to address current issues and challenges in order to achieve strengthening of cooperation, peace, and stability in Asia and the world.

The activity of the organization aimed at promoting solidarity and fostering cooperation across various fields within the Asian continent deserves special attention.

Today, during the meeting of the Standing Committee on Social and Cultural Affairs draft resolutions on many current issues in the Asian region will be discussed. The subjects such as promotion of cultural diversity and protection of cultural heritage, Asian integration through information and communication technologies, advancement of interfaith dialogue among world religions, collaboration among the fields of law and legislation in the fight against smuggling of cultural resources and others, are of great importance for the region as a whole.

It is a momentous fact that the Draft Resolution "On the Commission on Women", initiated and authored by the Azerbaijani delegation, will be discussed here as well.

Despite the execution of certain measures and countless efforts towards women empowerment, serious problems still persist in this field. The aforementioned draft resolution proposes the establishment of a Commission on Women within the framework of the Asian Parliamentary Assembly for the purpose of solving related problems.

It is no coincidence that the initiative to establish the Commission on Women was put forward by the political and ideological successor of the Azerbaijan Democratic Republic, which was first in the Muslim East to give women the right to vote in 1918.

The presented document thoroughly outlines the reasons, goals, functions, and framework for the establishment of the Commission.

We believe that the establishment of the "Commission on Women" will guarantee that the protection of women's rights and the issue of ensuring gender equality are maintained in the foreground in the activities of the APA and will make a positive contribution to the elimination of discrimination against women in Asian countries.

### **Dear participants!**

The advancement of cooperation with Asian nations is regarded as a key focus for Azerbaijan, situated in a strategic crossroads where East meets West. Besides being the cradle of many ancient civilizations, Asia is presently acknowledged as one of the foremost hubs of global development.

Our parliament, in turn, places significant emphasis on enhancing bilateral and multilateral ties with the parliaments of Asian nations through the avenue of parliamentary diplomacy, exerting considerable effort in this direction. In this context, cooperation with the Asian Parliamentary Assembly is very important for Azerbaijan.

In pursuit of consolidating solidarity, cooperation, and parliamentary diplomacy across the Asian continent, Azerbaijan has formally submitted its candidacy for the Chairmanship of the Asian Parliamentary Assembly for the term 2024-2025.

In case Azerbaijan is elected as the chair of the organization, special importance will be placed on matters including enhancing the institutional structure of the Asian

Parliamentary Assembly and furthering collaboration with other inter-parliamentary entities.

In this regard, we hope that you will lend your support to Azerbaijan.

**Dear participants,**

Taking this opportunity, I would like to inform you on the situation currently taking place in the South Caucasus that affects peace and stability in the wider region.

After liberating its territories from 30-year long Armenian occupation in 2020, Azerbaijan has initiated normalization of relations and signing of a peace treaty with Armenia on the basis of norms and principles of international law.

You would agree that respect to sovereignty and territorial integrity are the foundations that underpin today's international order.

Despite Azerbaijan's strong will and consistent steps taken for the long-lasting peace and stability, Armenia has been doing right the opposite. Backtracking from agreements and introducing new pretexts, escaping from real negotiations, perpetrating military and political provocations, sustaining illegal separatist regime created in our territories through all possible means have been certain line of conduct by Armenia for the last two and half years.

Azerbaijan has repeatedly called for unconditional and complete withdrawal of Armenia's more than 10 thousand-strong armed forces from the Garabagh region of Azerbaijan and the dissolution of the puppet regime. This is a vital precondition for achieving peace and stability in the region.

On September 19, Armenian armed forces stationed in the Garabagh region of Azerbaijan resorted to a number of large-scale military provocations and terror attacks.

In response to these provocations, Azerbaijan has launched local counter-terrorism measures in the region. The aim of these measures were the disarmament and withdrawal of units of the armed forces of Armenia from the territories of Azerbaijan, neutralization of their military infrastructure, ensuring the safety of peaceful population and restoring the constitutional system of the Republic of Azerbaijan.

Considering the appeal by the representatives of the Armenian residents living in the Garabagh region of Azerbaijan, yesterday an agreement has been reached to stop the antiterror measures under aforementioned terms.

We do hope that dialogue with representatives of the Armenian residents that will restart today, will result in their reintegration into Azerbaijani society. And we also do hope that Armenia will act responsibly within the framework of the normalization process and will sign the peace agreement that will ensure long-term peace and stability in our region.

**Dear participants,**

In conclusion, I would like to extend my greetings to each of you once again and wish the Committee success in its endeavors. I am confident that this meeting will be fruitful and play a significant role in addressing the present challenges faced by the Asian region.

Thank you for your attention!

**SPEECH OF MR. EMİN ÖNEN**  
**(21 September 2023, Baku)**

Distinguished Chair, Mr.  
Secretary General, Dear  
Colleagues, Ladies and  
Gentlemen,

I am delighted to join you at the Standing Committee on Social and Cultural Affairs of the Asian Parliamentary Assembly (APA).

At the outset, I would like to express my pleasure to be in brotherly country of Azerbaijan.

Türkiye and Azerbaijan enjoy a unique and special bond based on our shared history, language and culture.

The expression “One nation, two states” by Haydar Aliyev and “Azerbaijan’s joy is our joy, grief is our grief” by Mustafa Kemal Atatürk define the unprecedented nature of these relations.

We have already clearly seen that these are not only words but the expression of reality on several occasions.

As two brotherly countries, we stand by each other.

We cried and mourned when Karabakh was occupied. After almost 30 years, right after the Second Karabah War, we celebrated its liberation together.

Through the vision of our Presidents, our relations continue to improve.

Today, cooperation between Türkiye and Azerbaijan constitutes a unique example for other friendly countries in our region.

Ladies and Gentlemen,

The Asian Parliamentary Assembly was born out of a collective desire to promote peace across the world in general and in Asia in particular.

Today we face enormous global challenges threatening peace stability and shared prosperity in the world.

These challenges require an effective international response.

The rise of Asia provides an important opportunity to take tangible steps.

Türkiye is committed to work together with Asian partners, at bilateral as well as regional levels, to enhance and solidify Asian solidarity and unity.

This is also in line with the primary objectives of Türkiye's Asia New Initiative.

The Initiative was announced four years ago to better capitalize on Türkiye's potential as a geopolitical center of regional and global cooperation.

Under the Initiative, we are prepared to explore opportunities in all areas of cooperation on the basis of shared interests and objectives.

We are also prepared to put forward our contributions to make the international relations more fair, inclusive and sustainable.

Ladies and Gentlemen,

Today we have important items on our agenda ranging from protecting our cultural heritage to promoting the right of women and children in our societies.

We should start by promoting dialogue on cultural and social issues if we would like to have an effective cooperation across Asia.

Migration is high on our agenda.

Türkiye is the number-one refugee-hosting country in the world.

However, I would like to remind you that the migration issue is not just one country's issue and cannot be overcome by the efforts of just one country.

For this reason, there is a need for real and solid cooperation on the migration.

Otherwise, this issue may negatively affect all countries.

Humanitarian and development assistance are necessary, while ensuring peace, stability and sustainable development in the long term is essential.

On the other hand, legal channels for migration should also be a part of comprehensive migration policies.

As parliamentary diplomacy has been gaining significance to address the regional challenges, we deem a discussion on the institutional steps for increasing APA's effectiveness very timely and important.

Parliamentary diplomacy is one of the most promising instruments of soft power.

From this viewpoint, watching the regional and global developments and problems a distance is not an option for us.

It is our main responsibility to strengthen interparliamentary cooperation in the areas of peace, welfare, economic and social relations in the Asian region.

Human-centered development, good governance and enhanced institutional capacity will continue to be at the heart of our efforts.

That is why Antalya Declaration, adopted at the 13th APA Plenary session in Antalya underscored the importance of strengthening of multilateralism, making international organizations more efficient and transparent, global governance and the international rule-based order.

Therefore by being here today, we once more underline the utmost importance of interparliamentary relations and parliamentary diplomacy to promote our common interests and values.

Ladies and Gentleman,

On the occasion of this meeting, I sincerely congratulate brotherly country of Azerbaijan's term presidency. I am sure that this period will make significant contributions to the activities of the Asian Parliamentary Assembly.

Last but not least, I am confident that our meeting today will contribute further to our efforts in this regard.

Thank you for your attention.

# Asian Parliamentary Assembly

## Standing Committee on Social and Cultural Affairs



**Baku, Republic of Azerbaijan  
20-23 September 2023**



## Draft Agenda

(7/31/2023 by APA Secretariat)

- 1- Adoption of the Agenda
- 2- Election of Bureau
- 3- Opening Remarks by Chairperson
- 4- Report by APA Secretary General
- 5- Situation of Women Parliamentarians in Asia
- 6- General Debate on Draft Resolutions
- 7- Consideration of Draft Resolutions:
  1. Resolution on Measures to Promote Cultural Diversity and Protect Cultural Heritage in Asia
  2. Resolution on Asian Integration through Information and Communication Technology
  3. Resolution on Collaboration on Health Equity in Asia
  4. Resolution on Asian Parliamentarians Against Corruption
  5. Resolution on APA Women Parliamentarians
  6. Resolution on Promoting Dialogue and Harmony among Followers of World Religions
  7. Resolution on Legal and Legislative Cooperation in Combating the Smuggling of Cultural Items in Asia
  8. Resolution on Effective Cooperation in Combating Illicit Drug Trafficking in Asia
  9. Draft Resolution on Humanitarian Aid to Syria, Iraq, Yemen, Gaza and Myanmar on the Verge of the Humanitarian Catastrophe (Deferred)
  10. Draft Resolution on Protection and Promotion of the Rights of Migrant Workers in Asia (Deferred)
  11. Resolution on the Promotion of Quality Child and Youth Development for Sustainable Society in Asia
  12. Resolution on Ageing Society in Asia
  13. Resolution on Human Development in Asia
  14. Draft Resolution on Tourism Cooperation in Asia (New)
  15. Draft Resolution on Sustainable Tourism Cooperation in Asia (New)
  16. Draft Resolution on the Commission on Women (New)
- 8- Closing Session
- 9- Any other Matters

## **Opening remarks by the Chairperson**

**Dear colleagues, dear guests!**

The Asian Parliamentary Assembly (APA) and its respective committee are holding a meeting in Azerbaijan for the first time. I am very glad to welcome all our colleagues to Azerbaijan, the first country that established the first Democratic Republic in the Muslim East in 1918 and gave women the right to elect-to be elected in this great geography.

I am particularly proud that the meeting of the APA Standing Committee on socio-cultural issues is being held on the eve of the 3rd anniversary of the liberation of the city of Shusha which is the cultural capital of Azerbaijan and beautiful Karabakh from Armenian occupation.

When Azerbaijan liberated its lands from the 30-year occupation of Armenia, we witnessed unprecedented vandalism against cultural and religious monuments there. Uzeyir Hajibeyli, whose monument was shelled and the house museum was destroyed, is the genius of Art who wrote the first opera in the East; Khurshidbanu Natavan, whose monument was shelled and the House Museum and grave were destroyed, was an outstanding female poet of the East, a kind statesman who ruled Karabakh in the XIX century. The name of another luminary artist, whose monument was shelled and the house museum was destroyed, will also be familiar to you: this is the world-famous opera singer Bulbul... The fate of all three of them, many more artists, cultural and art figures, was connected with the cultural capital of Shusha. It is no coincidence that Shusha was called The “Conservatory of the Caucasus”; again, it is no coincidence that Shusha is the “cultural capital of the Turkic world”for 2023. After the completion of the repair and reconstruction works carried out in Shusha, we will hold a meeting of the APA and its Committee on socio-cultural issues there, and you will get acquainted with the sad and proud history of the cultural capital, which has brought up geniuses.

I am sure that the socio-cultural construction work carried out in Shusha will please you, and it will appear before you as an example and model of the transition from the lack of culture during occupation to culture of freedom, from freedom to improvement.

Azerbaijan is a country that has the function of not only a geographical, but also a cultural and spiritual bridge between Europe and Asia. Azerbaijan with rich cultural traditions and ancient history has been a hotbed of friendship,

brotherhood, trust, hospitality, peacefulness, tolerance and kindness for hundreds of years.

Having regained its state independence in 1991, Azerbaijan began to play a specific cultural, spiritual, as well as economic and commercial role between Europe and Asia as a result of the wise policy of national leader Heydar Aliyev, whose 100th anniversary we celebrated this year. The national leader's strategy is currently being successfully continued and developed by President Ilham Aliyev. At present, Azerbaijan is a transit or start-up country of major energy projects between Asia and Europe, as well as a country that initiates and, despite all the difficulties, implements important international energy, transport and economic projects.

Azerbaijan actively participates in Asian organizations, as it does in European organizations, and is an active member of the Non-Aligned Movement, which brings together many Asian countries, and does not spare its contribution. This, in its turn, serves the promotion and implementation of international law, peace, development, social welfare, protection of cultural heritage, in other words, the welfare.

Cooperation with the Asian Parliamentary Assembly, built on these values, is of great importance for Azerbaijan. The organization puts efforts to solve the common problems facing the Asian states, and we should all do our best in this direction. The purpose of our meeting here is to adequately respond to the challenges and problems existing in the region by combining our trust and strengthening cooperation.

The first meeting of the APA Standing Committee on socio-cultural issues in Azerbaijan is a significant event for us. We believe that the decisions to be made in Baku, the initiatives to be put forward, the ideas will serve the interests and common values of the people, without allowing double standards in our common home, the Asian geography. We believe that Azerbaijan will contribute more to the work of APA and the development of our common home in this context.

Our Sufi grandfathers used to say: “the world is our home.” If there is a fire in this house, we will all suffer from that fire one day. Everyone should mobilize to extinguish the fire. We must also proceed from common interests and the principles of humanism in resolving issues that concern Asia today. I hope that this meeting will be held in the spirit of cooperation.

Strengthening the role of APA in this direction serves universal interests.

**Dear Committee members,**

We are waiting for the discussion of 16 important draft resolutions, 3 of which are new. These new drafts are also very important, I ask you to pay special attention to these draft resolutions.

The draft resolution put forward by Turkey and Iran is associated with sustainable tourism cooperation in Asia. Naturally, this is an important issue, the sound discussions we will hold here will benefit the common cause.

Another draft resolution is related to the creation of a new Commission on women in APA. I would like to thank the secretariat very much that this proposal put forward by Azerbaijan at the meeting held in Turkey was met with high respect. In this regard, we have worked hard on the relevant draft and submitted it to the secretariat, and you also got acquainted with this document.

Our country, whose first vice-president and speaker of the parliament is a woman, has always put efforts to contribute to this issue at the international level by creating a relevant State Committee on women's Affairs and a special committee in the parliament, which attaches great importance to expanding the opportunities for women's participation in socio-cultural life, including public administration.

We want successful practices in the APA member countries to be mutually studied, the best models to be appreciated and disseminated. We consider the establishment of this Commission important and believe that the establishment of the APA Commission on women will be very important and useful for all of us, for all member countries.

**Dear friends,**

As you know, Azerbaijan has officially put forward its candidacy for the presidency of the APA for 2024-2025. We will do our best to achieve the overall goals of the organization, to further strengthen cooperation between Asian states and to increase the role of the organization.

I hope that our candidacy will be supported by the members of the organization, and together we will achieve even greater success.

I know that many of you came to our country for the first time, but I have no doubt that this will not be your last visit, we will see you in Azerbaijan again and we will be able to hold new discussions. I am glad that during your stay in Baku you have the opportunity to see the sights of our city, to get acquainted with the rich Azerbaijani culture, and I believe that you will leave here with great sentiments.

Once again I express my gratitude to all of you for accepting our invitation and participating in this event.

I would like to express my deep gratitude to the chairman of the Milli Majlis of Azerbaijan Sahiba Gafarova, APA secretary general and all employees of the Secretariat who contributed to the high level organization of our meeting. We work in the spirit of cooperation with the APA Secretariat at a very high level, and I would like to thank them for their support.

I wish success to the work of our committee and I am sure that the meeting will be very fruitful.



**Asian Parliamentary Assembly**

**Standing Committee on Social and Cultural Affairs**

**Baku- Republic of Azerbaijan**

**20-23 September 2023**

**Report of the Secretary General**

**Madam Chairperson,  
Distinguished Delegates,  
Dear Colleagues,**

It is my great pleasure and honor to welcome you all to the third APA Standing Committee meetings being held in year 2023. I welcome and appreciate all APA member parliaments participating at this important meeting. Let me also seize this opportunity to thank the Milli Majlis of the Republic of Azerbaijan for organization this meeting and generous hospitality extended to us.

**Dear Colleagues,**

As you may recall, at its virtual meeting of 14 July 2021 in Tehran, the Standing Committee on Social and Cultural Affairs had thirteen draft resolutions in its Agenda. Two new draft resolutions on tourism were also submitted by the delegations of Iran and Turkiye. The Meeting adopted 11 draft resolutions and consideration of the two new drafts —and the ones on “Humanitarian Aid” and “Rights of Migrant Workers” were deferred to the next Standing Committee meeting.

At this meeting, we also have a new draft resolution on the “Commission of Women” proposed by the Republic of Azerbaijan.

The proposed draft resolution is a timely one and as a matter of fact expands the scope of the Special Committee on APA Women Parliamentarian and the Resolution on APA Women Parliamentarians. Approval of this draft resolution by

the SC, also prepares the ground for the establishment of the “APA Commission on Women” as proposed by Azerbaijan.

My today’s report consists of two separate parts with an enlightening focus on two categories of “outstanding” and “challenging” issues of the Standing Committee on Social and Cultural Affairs.

## **A. Outstanding Issues**

Certain SC resolutions contain some outstanding features that due to its importance, we have to consider them carefully at this session and come out with a positive suggestion on them:

### **1- Establishing an award to promote cultural diversity**

In APA Resolution on “*Measures to Promote Cultural Diversity and Protect Cultural Heritage in Asia*”, Member Parliaments are called to support *establishing an award* to be presented annually to outstanding Asian artists, authors, poets, film makers, painters, who best convey the APA’s commitment to cultural diversity in Asia. After several years passing, we have not yet reached any decision on this call. I wish to propose that one of the participating parliaments at this meeting be volunteered to deliver this award annually to promote cultural diversity in our continent.

### **2- Creating Asian Virtual Parliament**

APA Resolution on “*Asian Integration through Information and Communication Technology*”, underlining that the creation of Asian Virtual Parliament will pave the way for sharing information, harmonizing legislation and raising people’s awareness about the activities of the legislative body and ensure more profound feedback between society, power and individuals, and thus contribute to strengthening peace in Asia. It calls also on APA Member Parliaments to volunteer for providing knowledge and know-how, technical assistance, financial support, human resources in creating a “Virtual Asian Parliament”.

There is no doubt that in today’s world and in particular with the valuable experiences that we have earned during the Covid -19 outbreak, we have to accelerate the process of creation of the Asian virtual parliament.

### **3. Establishing W.G to consider APA Plan of Action on Combating Corruption**

The Resolution on “*Asian Parliamentarians against Corruption*” decides to set up a working group under the auspices of the Standing Committee on Social and

Cultural Affairs to further consider the “APA Plan of Action on Combating Corruption”.

To this end, we should prepare the ground for the implementation of this decision and establish the working group as soon as possible to consider the APA Plan of Action on Combating Corruption. It is expected that the member parliaments particularly delegations with more interest and experience in anti-corruption efforts to step forward and offer their assistance to establish the working group.

#### **4. Formation of a separate Corps Unit**

The Resolution on “*Legal and Legislative Cooperation in Combating the Smuggling of Cultural Items in Asia*”, expresses support for the formation of a separate Corps Unit from APA Member Parliaments to protect and safeguard historical cultural properties from the perils of unlawful excavations, theft and smuggling.

We had not yet made any progress or show of interest on the implementation of this proposal and I hope at this meeting we could reach to a conclusion on this matter.

#### **5. creating a technical and professional training centre**

APA Resolution on “*Human Development in Asia*” Suggests creating a technical and professional training center under the umbrella of the APA to provide joint efforts to push sustainable development forward. Regarding this suggestion we have not done anything so far, and we should take care of it at this meeting too.

#### **6. Assign part of APA website to women parliamentarian**

Under the Resolution on “*APA Women Parliamentarians*”, it is requested that the APA Secretariat assigns one part of its website to women parliamentarians of Asia. As I informed you in my previous report to the Committee, a part of the APA website is allocated to the activities of the women parliamentarians of Asia and I wish to encourage all women parliamentarians to use this page for their networking activities.

#### **Dear Colleagues,**

I raised above some of the outstanding issues left unnoticed in the Agenda of committee for several years. There is no doubt that progress on and implementation of such issues require the will and interests of all APA member parliaments and their commitments to the APA noble goals and mission.

#### **B. Challenges and innovative ideas**

I would like to touch on certain challenges facing us and raise some innovative ideas to encourage more active participation and contribution on the part of all APA member parliaments:

- There are 16 draft resolutions before this Committee which mostly need to be reconsidered, updated, merged, modified or even placed with its relevant context on the agenda of the other three Standing Committees to keep up effectively conducive to the currently ongoing global issues.
- Likewise the other three Standing Committees, there are several draft resolutions before this Committee which have remained for long time with no substantial changes in the absence of an established rules of procedure to take them off the agenda.
- Just like other international and regional organizations after COVID-19 pandemic period, APA should try hard to get actively and lively engage in all matters relevant to the regional and international affairs. The APA Member Parliaments are expected to actively contribute and share their innovative ideas, plans and projects in the framework of the Standing Committees.
- During the past years, I, in my capacity as Secretary General and as an academician, have devotedly tried to introduce and raise innovative ideas and plans in my reports and statements in all APA gatherings with the aim of keeping track of social, cultural, political, economic and legal discourses at regional and international arena.

**Dear Colleagues,**

Finally, I would like to once again underline the need of reform and revitalization of the work of the APA in order to overcome the challenges and make best use of our organization. We at the Secretariat believe that at present and until the time that the APA restructuring process comes to its conclusion, the APA Bureau constitute a well versed entity to shoulder the tasks enumerated above and decides accordingly at its meetings.

Finally, I wish you a very lively, constructive and fruitful deliberation at this SC session.

Thank you very much for your attention

**ASIAN PARLIAMENTARY ASSEMBLY (APA)**

**Presentation of the draft resolution on the establishment of the "Commission on Women".**

**Dear colleagues,**

I would like to bring to your attention the draft resolution on the establishment of the "Commission on Women" proposed by the Azerbaijani delegation at the 13th Plenary Session of the Asian Parliamentary Assembly held in Antalya, Turkey, on January 10, 2023.

But I would first like to share some thoughts with you.

It is a fact that I personally have always demanded more rights for women. Not because I too am a woman. But because as a woman, I know very well what women have to go through. I am aware that it is not an easy task to present the draft resolution on the establishment of the "Commission on Women" in a meeting with mostly male participants. But I believe that you will approach this topic in light of the words of the Prophet of Islam, Hazrat Muhammad, who said "heaven lies beneath the feet of mothers".

The founder of the Republic of Turkey, Mustafa Kemal Atatürk, who signed off on the biggest achievements related to women's rights in the country, said: "We must believe that everything we see in the world is the work of women."

"No nation can rise to the height of glory unless your women are side by side with you. It is a crime against humanity that our women are shut up within the four walls of the houses as prisoners. There is no sanction anywhere for the deplorable condition in which our women have to live" - these wise words belong to Muhammad Ali Jinnah, an outstanding socio-political and statesman who created a great transformation regarding women's rights in Pakistan. Declaring the expansion of the role of women in the society as one of the priorities of the state, the National leader of Azerbaijan Heydar Aliyev said: "Women in the society always have great responsibilities, their work is always difficult. However, they fulfill these duties with honor and, as always, play a leading role in society." Thus, I believe that each of you will support this document by following the example of historical figures in your country who gave great importance to women's rights, their place and role in society and took important steps.

"Being a woman is a terribly difficult task, since it consists principally in dealing with men," said Joseph Conrad, and we want to tell men with this draft document

that the problem of women is not to fight with men, but the problem of women is to build a more beautiful and livable world together with them. With this document, we want to convey the message "To all the little girls watching this gathering, never doubt that you are valuable and strong, and that you deserve every opportunity in the world to realize and achieve your dreams." – Without distinguishing between men and women, with a strong spirit of unity!

Think about it, is it acceptable that the principles of human rights contained in UN documents do not cover at least 1 in 4 people of the world today?

Yes, a country's economy rests on its human capital. Indeed, if you do not provide women with adequate health, education and employment opportunities, you are missing half of your potential. Gender equality and women's rights are the foundation of economic development.

Gender equality is not just a goal. Gender equality is fundamental to poverty reduction, sustainable development and good governance.

**Dear friends,**

You had the opportunity to get acquainted with the discussed draft resolution and the related conceptual document as it was distributed by the APA Secretariat to the members of the organization.

The factors determining the relevance of the creation of the "Commission on Women" are widely reflected in the mentioned documents.

Despite the implementation of certain measures and many efforts to protect women's rights and eliminate gender discrimination in the Asian region, there undoubtedly are serious problems in this area.

Unfortunately, Asia has now become one of the most unstable regions in the world, and cases of violence occurring during regional conflicts and armed conflicts in the area are being implemented against civilians as well. During armed conflicts, women and children become the most vulnerable social group. They experience the consequences of violence, violations of rights, and suffer from becoming refugees, loss of residences, loss of close relatives, poverty, and family breakdown.

Conflict exacerbates pre-existing forms of discrimination against girls, and women in general, and puts them at greater risk of human rights violations.

Trafficking of women, violence against women, domestic violence, exclusion of girls from education, existence of early marriages, sexual selection (abortions based on sex selection) are also widespread in the Asian region.

In the concept paper we present to your attention, we discuss relevant statistics based on official reports of UN specialized agencies on violations of women's rights and violence against women in the Asian region.

It goes without saying that the violation of women's rights and the existence of gender discrimination are among the biggest problems in the field of human rights in modern times.

We are sure that if the states and international organizations do not take urgent measures to solve the mentioned problems, the risk of worsening the current situation will increase.

We, as APA members, must do our best to solve existing problems, realizing that the violation of women's rights and gender discrimination is a serious enough problem in Asian countries. In this context, we consider it appropriate to establish a "Commission on Women" within the APA.

The new institution to be created can act as an effective mechanism for systematically keeping issues related to women's rights and gender equality on the agenda.

I am sure that the creation of the "Commission on Women" will help to mobilize the efforts and resources of parliamentarians who are members of the APA to draw attention to the problems related to women's rights and gender equality, to increase systematic awareness on this issue, to increase the political, economic, social, and cultural rights of women. and will serve to create conditions for them to fully exercise their civil rights. It will also facilitate projects and measures aimed at increasing awareness of the situation of women in member states, strengthening the legal framework for the protection of women and girls, and improving their situation in order to end violence and gender discrimination. We believe that thanks to the creation and organization of this commission, national institutions will be strengthened to improve the status of women, and gender equality issues will be taken into account within the framework of the APA's activities.

Regarding the Commission's functions and action mechanisms, the Commission can act as a mechanism for collecting information on the situation of women's rights and gender equality in the member states. Also, we believe that the new institution will contribute to the process of discussing issues related to women's rights and gender equality, listening to reports, accepting draft resolutions, recommendations, and solving existing problems within the framework of APA. The Commission may encourage the preparation of annual reports on the situation

of women in the member states of the Assembly, and ensure the presentation of a report on women's rights and gender equality in the member states in its plenary sessions. The activity of the Commission can be effective in terms of supporting the implementation of gender quotas regarding the composition of delegations in the APA, organizing a support mechanism for women deputies, promoting the establishment of relations between the committees on women's issues existing in national parliaments and the APA, holding relevant seminars and consultations.

The draft resolution also contains a provision dedicated to the structure of the newly established Commission. Thus, it is suggested that the Commission should consist of one representative of each parliament that is a member of APA. It is planned to elect the chairman, vice-chairman and speaker in the commission, taking into account the fair geographical distribution. The chairman, vice-chairman and speaker will be elected for a two-year term of office on the basis of consensus among APA members. The Commission's annual meeting is expected to be convened by the member parliament that hosted the last Plenary Session. Based on the mutual consent of the Chairman and the Permanent Secretariat, it is also possible to hold the Commission meeting in another member parliament (the provision on holding the annual meeting of the Commission is based on provision 15.3 of the Rules of the Plenary Session of the Asian Parliamentary Assembly). I would like to note that the provision related to the structure of the draft resolution was formed as a result of consultation with the APA Secretariat.

I think that all of us understand the importance of establishing the Commission. The new structure will really revive the activity of the organization, increase its effectiveness, and make a significant contribution to the elimination of discrimination against women in Asian countries. This depends on us. I believe that you will support us in this work.

Thank you all in advance!