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**COMPREHENSIVE REFORMS IN COMBATING DRUG ABUSE
IN THE REPUBLIC OF AZERBAIJAN AS AN INSTRUMENT
TO ENSURE SUSTAINABLE DEVELOPMENT OF THE COUNTRY**

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This article provides a careful analysis of all the major actions, taken in the field of combating drug abuse in the Republic of Azerbaijan since its independence. The foundations of Azerbaijan's constructive and sustainable policy against drug abuse were established by the National Leader of the Azerbaijani people Heydar Aliyev, who formulated the policy after the destructive Nagorno-Karabakh war in a severe humanitarian, social, economic and political context. The establishment of the State Commission on Combatting Drug Abuse and Illicit Drug Trafficking in 1996 and the adoption of national law on the "Control of Illicit Trafficking in Narcotic Drugs, Psychotropic Substances and Precursors" in 1999 are among the most visible steps, taken during the presidency of the National Leader Heydar Aliyev to combat drug abuse through sustainably constructed policies. A throughout information on the different objectives of the SCAD Programme is provided in the article. After conducting a careful review on the systematic actions, like adoption of new national law, regulating all aspects of drug-trafficking, and state programs on combating drug-abuse, taken since the beginning of the presidency of Ilham Aliyev, the valuable statistical information is provided about the growing number of drug-addicted people, willing to receive treatment.

Key words: sustainable development, drug abuse, illicit drug trafficking, United Nations, State Commission of the Republic of Azerbaijan on Combatting Drug Abuse and Illicit Drug Trafficking, UNDP, UN Conventions, SCAD Programme, institutional building.

Fighting with narcotic drugs, illicit drug trafficking, and the consequences of drug abuse are among the major challenges that the international community has been dealing with for the decades. Despite the adoption of various international legal documents and existence of national tools across the countries to address the afore-mentioned challenges, the problems related to the drug abuse remain actual

The United Nations with its three fundamental conventions, which are the Single Convention on Narcotic Drugs of 1961 (amended by the 1972 Protocol), the Convention on Psychotropic Substances of 1971 and the UN Convention against Illicit Traffic in Narcotic Drugs and Psychotropic Substances of 1988, and with the Commission on Narcotic Drugs (CND), established in 1946 under the auspices of Economic and Social Council (ECOSOC) to assist the latter in supervising the application of the afore-mentioned international drug control treaties, is the principal international organization, responsible for the coordination of global fight against drug abuse and support to national governments in the implementation of national and regional projects in their fights with related problems [1].

One of the most crucial factors that highlights the importance of taking decisive actions in combating drug abuse is that people, who use drugs are extremely vulnerable to transmissible diseases such as HIV, tuberculosis, hepatitis and other health issues related to the drug use [2, p. 4]. This situation, in its turn, creates significant obstacles to the achievement of Sustainable

Development Goal 3, which aims to ensure good health and well-being for all at all ages. Thus, taking inclusive actions against drug abuse will also facilitate the process of the realization of 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development.

After regaining its independence in 1991, the Republic of Azerbaijan went through a challenging period of state-building, which was characterized with severe humanitarian, social, economic and political problems [3, p. 240]. The foundations of Azerbaijan's sustainable development were instituted after the National Leader of the Azerbaijani people Heydar Aliyev had been elected as the President of the Republic of Azerbaijan as a result of nationwide voting. Driven by enormous experience in policy-making, President Heydar Aliyev constructed a policy that would ensure sustainable development in all the vital spheres for the country, including combating drug abuse and other drug related problems.

Within a short period, Azerbaijan joined the above-mentioned three UN Conventions and signed bilateral and multilateral agreements with a number of countries on conducting fight against drugs and drug-related problems [4]. Azerbaijan's fight against drugs has been particularly challenged by its crucial geographic location as a transit country at the crossroads of Europe and Asia. According to the researches, Azerbaijan is exposed to the following transnational drug trafficking routes, which take their origins from Afghanistan [5]:

- Afghanistan – Iran – Azerbaijan – Europe
- Afghanistan – Central Asia – Caspian Sea - Azerbaijan – Europe

Moreover, as a result of the Nagorno-Karabakh war, which led to the occupation of 20 percent of Azerbaijani territory by Armenian aggressors, state border of 132 kilometers with Iran is uncontrolled where flood of drugs from European and other regional countries is very high [6, p. 10]. Furthermore, the high rates of drug production by Armenians in the occupied Azerbaijani territories and consequent large amount of revenues, received from the sales of those drugs, go to financing of Armenian terrorist groups, which represents a significant threat to the security of the Republic of Azerbaijan.

In the face of national and transnational obstacles, President Heydar Aliyev with its Decree dated on August 26, 1996 created the State Commission on Combatting Drug Abuse and Illicit Drug Trafficking, responsible for the implementation of national programs on combating drug abuse and illicit drug trafficking and for the coordination of interagency cooperation in this fight [7, p. 55]. In 2001, Azerbaijan acceded to the Pompidou Group of the Council of Europe, aiming to contribute to the development of multidisciplinary, innovative, effective and evidence-based drug policies in its Member States [8].

Despite the considerable steps in combating drug abuse in Azerbaijan, such as the adoption of national law on the "Control of Illicit Trafficking in Narcotic Drugs, Psychotropic Substances and Precursors" in 1999, establishment of the above-mentioned State Commission, and other similar steps, taken under the leadership of the National Leader Heydar Aliyev during the first decade of Azerbaijan's independence, there was still a need for the application of comprehensive approach, including bringing international experience, to combating drug abuse and illicit drug trafficking in the territory of the Republic of Azerbaijan [9]. An obvious evidence of Azerbaijan's commitment to enhancing global partnership and bringing international experience to advance Azerbaijan's sustainable development and its capacity to address various national development challenges is the signing by President Heydar Aliyev the UN Millennium Declaration and consequent commitment to the realization of eight Millennium Development Goals (MDGs) [10].

In the light of all the above-mentioned challenges and developments, the United Nations Development Program (UNDP), which was the first and leading UN agency, assisting

the Government of the Republic of Azerbaijan since the first days of its independence in dealing with the challenges of state-building, launched a new regional project called Southern Caucasus Anti-Drug (SCAD) Programme in three states of the South Caucasus.

This was a comprehensive project, financed by the UNDP and EU to achieve the following aims: to improve the national legislative frameworks, governing legal issues in anti-drug actions in the territories of the Southern Caucasian States; to establish inter-state database for regular exchange of information on the developments in combating drugs abuse and illicit drug trafficking; to conduct systematic anti-drug awareness campaigns, especially among the vulnerable groups of population, like young people and school kids; to assist Southern Caucasian states in constructing vital infrastructural basis, required for the fight against drug abuse and illicit drug-trafficking, especially providing relevant national agencies with modern equipments and vehicles; to support the Penitentiary Service of the Ministry of Justice of the Republic of Azerbaijan in developing a mechanism for providing treatment and rehabilitation to people, suffering from drug-abuse; and fostering a regional and global partnership in the fight against drug abuse and other drug-related problems. As a result of the international experience, brought to Azerbaijani state agencies through the SCAD Programme, the institutional capacity of many state agencies has been significantly strengthened, which contributes to the sustainable development of the country.

Furthermore, within the framework of the SCAD Programme, the National Drug Prevention Office (Public Union) was established with a primary goal to implement anti-drug awareness raising activities in the territory of the Republic of Azerbaijan [11, p. 48]. Since 2012, the National Drug Prevention Office is a full member of Civil Society Network of the United Nations Office on Drugs and Crime (UNODC) as well as of Vienna International Center for NGOs on Drugs, linking NGOs functioning in the field of drugs all around the world with the UNODC [12, p. 51].

Since the first days of his presidency, President Ilham Aliyev has been continuing the implementation of policies to ensure sustainable development of the Republic of Azerbaijan, launched by the National Leader Heydar Aliyev, and maintaining a strong emphasis on organized and inclusive fight against drug abuse and illicit drug trafficking. Considering constantly changing environment and demands in the fight against drugs, there was a need in the improvement of national legislation, governing legal issues in anti-drug actions.

Therefore, on June 28, 2005 a new national law on “Trafficking in Narcotic Drugs, Psychotropic Substances and Their Precursors” was adopted. This new law is different from the one adopted in 1999 by a number of indicators, particularly by regulating not only issues, concerning illicit drug trafficking, but generally all social aspects, related to trafficking of narcotics drugs, psychotropic substances and their precursors [12, p. 54]. In order to meet changing demands and increase the effectiveness of anti-drug actions, this law is amended on a regular basis. Furthermore, so as to ensure the integration of drug addicted individuals to the society and prevent their marginalization, which is an integral component for inclusive and sustainable development, the Government of the Azerbaijani Republic has created all the necessary conditions for their treatment [12, p. 61].

Based on the law on Narcological Service and Control, signed by President Ilham Aliyev on October 29, 2014, the Government provides narcological service to every person, suffering from drug addiction. According to the data, provided by the State Commission on Combatting Drug Abuse and Illicit Drug Trafficking in their annual report on drug control for 2016, the number of drug-addicted people, wishing to receive treatment grows year by year, which clearly demonstrates the significance of opportunities, granted by the Government of the Azerbaijani Republic (Figure 1).

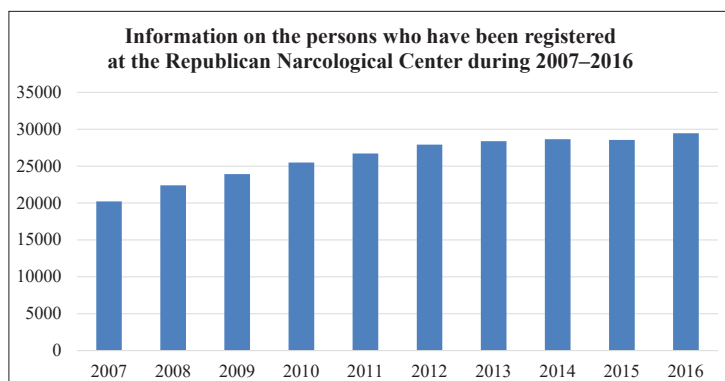


Fig. 1. Information on the persons, who have been registered at the Republican Narcological Center during 2007–2016. Source: The State Commission on Combatting Drug Abuse and Illicit Drug Trafficking [13, p. 32].

It is also worthy to mention that strategic directions of Azerbaijan's fight against drug abuse and illicit drug trafficking are outlined in the National Program on "Control of Trafficking in Narcotic Drugs, Psychotropic Substances and Their Precursors and Prevention of Drug Addiction", with the current one for 2013–2018 years, confirmed with the Decree 2966 of the President Ilham Aliyev, dated on 24 June, 2013 [13, p. 9]. One of most beneficial features of this strategy is the participation of various state agencies in it, such as Ministry of Defence, Ministry of Youth and Sports, Ministry of Labour and Social Protection of Population and many others, with their own resources that ensures the comprehensiveness and sustainability of this fight.

As a result of systematic and successful policies to combat drug-abuse and other drug related problems in the territory of the Republic of Azerbaijan, which were initiated by the National Leader of the Azerbaijani people Heydar Aliyev and successfully continued by his true successor President Ilham Aliyev as a part of general vision to ensure sustainable development of Azerbaijan, a lot of achievements and significant progress have been accomplished. All in all, the fight against drugs and their illicit trafficking in the territory of Azerbaijan is regulated within the framework, consisting of 29 Laws, 13 Decrees of the President of the Republic of Azerbaijan, 40 Orders, 22 Decisions of the Cabinet of the Ministers, 5 Orders and Decisions of the Supreme Court, and other acts of various state agencies [13, p. 10].

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ВСЕБІЧНІ РЕФОРМИ В БОРОТБІ З НАРКОМАНІЄЮ ЯК ЗАСІБ ЗАБЕЗПЕЧЕННЯ СТАЛОГО РОЗВИТКУ АЗЕРБАЙДЖАНСЬКОЇ РЕСПУБЛІКИ

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У цій статті міститься аналіз всіх основних заходів, вжитих в області боротьби зі зловживанням наркотиками в Азербайджанській Республіці з моменту її незалежності. Основи конструктивної і стійкої політики Азербайджану в боротьбі зі зловживанням наркотиками були встановлені загальнонаціональним лідером Гейдаром Алієвим, який сформулював політику після руйнівної Нагірно-Карабахської війни в складних гуманітарних, соціально-економічних і політичних умовах. Створення в 1999 р. Державної Комісії по боротьбі з наркоманією і незаконним обігом наркотичних засобів і прийняття в 1999 р. національного закону про контроль за незаконним обігом наркотичних засобів, психотропних речовин та їх прекурсорів є найбільш помітними заходами, вжитими в процесі боротьби зі зловживанням наркотиками за допомогою стійко побудованої політики в період президентства загальнонаціонального лідера Гейдара Алієва. У статті представлені докладні відомості про різні цілі Програми SCAD. Після проведення ретельного аналізу систематичних дій, як-от прийняття нового національного законодавства, що регулює всі аспекти торгівлі наркотиками, і державних програм боротьби з наркоманією, прийнятих із початку президентства Ільхама Алієва, отримана цінна статистична інформація про зростання кількості наркозалежних людей, які бажають отримати лікування.

Ключові слова: сталий розвиток, зловживання наркотиками, незаконний обіг наркотичних засобів, Організація Об'єднаних Націй, Державна Комісія Азербайджанської Республіки по боротьбі з наркоманією і незаконним обігом наркотичних засобів, ПРООН, Конвенції ООН, Програма SCAD, інституційне будівництво.