**THE RESPONSE OF THE GOVERNMENT OF THE REPUBLIC OF ARMENIA TO THE QUESTIONNAIRE PROVIDED BY THE UN SPECIAL RAPPORTEUR ON THE NEGATIVE IMPACT OF THE UNILATERAL COERCIVE MEASURES ON THE ENJOYMENT OF HUMAN RIGHTS AMID COVID-19 PANDEMIC**

***1. Do sanctions introduced by individual States or regional organizations without or beyond authorization of the UN Security Council targeting States and/ or non-state actors have an impact on enjoyment of human rights by the citizens of targeted States in the situation of natural and man-made emergency, including COVID-19 pandemic? Please, elaborate in details.***

The COVID-19 pandemic is a global health emergency and at this decisive juncture the pandemic is also confronting the whole system of human rights, including such fundamental rights as the right to life and right to health thus targeting the most vulnerable parts of our societies.  The application of unilateral coercive measures will undoubtedly have a negative impact on the capacity of States to respond efficiently to this global challenge. The Republic of Armenia strongly condemns the imposition of the unilateral economic measures as instruments of political and economic coercion against countries.

In the context of the enjoyment of human rights in Armenia during the COVID-19 pandemic, the unilateral coercive measures are specifically detrimental for the vulnerable groups of the population such as women, children, elderly, socially disadvantaged families, unemployed persons, unregistered employees, refugees, persons in refugee-like situation, as well as people residing in the borderline settlements. Particularly, it is a matter of concern that taking advantage of the situation conditioned by the COVID-19 pandemic, when the whole world is struggling against the COVID-19, Azerbaijan started military operation on the state border of Armenia deliberately targeting civilian infrastructures and population of border villages.

The imposition of the unilateral coercive measures against Armenia by Turkey and Azerbaijan since 1993, in particular, to the fact of the unilateral closure of the land border of the country, is a violation of UN Charter, the international law, including the Convention on Transit Trade of Land-locked States. Today 82% of land border of Armenia remains closed, including all roads, railways and pipelines connecting Turkey and Azerbaijan with Armenia. This all affects the economy, in particular, the growth of export of goods, pricing policy of imported goods, as well as has a direct negative impact on the exercise of human rights, including effectiveness of the right to development, the implementation of Sustainable Development Goals and freedom of movement.

***2. What specific aspects of human rights are affected by unilateral sanctions in targeted States during the pandemic? Can you give examples of particular rights most affected by unilateral sanctions and in what way? What steps were taken by the sanctioning States on one hand and in the targeted States on the other hand to address those human rights violations and remedy the situation?***

***4. Do unilateral sanctions have an impact on the ability of States to react to emergency situations and to protect human rights especially of the most vulnerable categories of population? If yes, what areas/ spheres / types of activity/ vital infrastructure appeared to be the most affected in the course of COVID-19 pandemic? What groups of population are affected the most?***

The unilateral sanctions have a negative impact on the ability of Armenia to react to emergency situations.

In the context of the COVID-19 pandemic, land blockade and the subsequent actions are detrimental for the enjoyment of such important rights as the right to life, freedom of movement as well as the right to health. These rights are threatened due to the acts of aggression against Armenia, particularly close borders and economic sanctions affect the purchase and transfer of medicine, medical equipment, protective kits, food and other essential goods. Women, children, elderly, socially disadvantaged families, unemployed persons, unregistered employees, refugees, persons in refugee like situation, as well as people residing in the borderline settlements are mostly endangered.

Despite scarcity of financial resources, the Government of Armenia took consistent actions to remedy the situation (see Appendix).

***3. Do sanctions have an impact on non-targeted third States and their citizens in the course of emergency, including the pandemic? Can you provide examples of this impact?***

Following the shelling towards the borderline settlements of the Tavush region, the proxy conflicts broke through in Russia where the largest diasporas of both Armenians and Azerbaijanis live. However, here the weapon of choice was apricots. The fruit fight began when Azerbaijanis bought pallets of apricots (Armenia’s largest export and treasured national symbol) and filmed themselves destroying the crops by stomping on them. Later on, an estimated 50 drivers from Armenia, who had arrived in Moscow carrying tons of apricots, were refused entry by market managers to sell their product at the Food City (a large wholesale market in Moscow, owned by the businessman of an Azerbaijani origin).

***5. What types of sanctions have the most negative impact over the enjoyment of human rights in the course of COVID-19 pandemic? Please provide detailed information about obstacles, which were caused by the sanctions, in the implementation of the national health care system’s preparedness and response plan to combat COVID-19 pandemic.***

As it is stated above, the type of sanctions that has been lifted against the Republic of Armenia is a land blockade imposed by Turkey as a mean to express its solidarity with Azerbaijan. Thus, during the COVID-19 pandemic this situation was exacerbated and had a completely negative impact on the enjoyment of human rights as concrete actions were committed to de-escalate the status quo in the region.

Transfer, shipment and availability of humanitarian assistance have become much more difficult because of the close borders and land blockade and that is the reason why Armenia in the beginning registered so many cases of persons diagnosed with the COVID-19 and death cases.

***6. Are humanitarian exemptions sufficient, effective and efficient to protect the life of people and to guarantee human rights especially of the most vulnerable groups in the course of natural and man-made disasters including COVID-19 pandemic?***

***7. Does the mechanism of getting licenses for purchase of medical equipment, its component parts and software, medicines, protective kits, food and other essential goods provide for the possibility to guarantee vital needs of the population? Has it been eased by the sanctioning States in the course of pandemic?***

The humanitarian exemptions, the mechanism of getting licenses for purchase of medical equipment are of utmost significance for the countries to overcome such obstacles as pandemic. However, it should be stated that the humanitarian exemptions are not enough and each state itself should make efforts whether it will be through healthcare system or emergency services to overcome the COVID-19. The Republic of Armenia received humanitarian aid from different countries and international organizations**.** However, it should be noted that the significant obstacles have been registered during the shipments of humanitarian assistance which have often been endangered by close borders and the land blockade as well as the purchase and transfer of the medicine, medical equipment, protective kits, food and other essential goods have also been seriously affected. Moreover, the transfer of the Armenian citizens to their homeland was one of the vital problems, as some of them were situated in the sanctioning state when the pandemic erupted. Thus, the humanitarian assistance is not sufficient for Armenia especially because of the land blockade thus generating transportation, transfer and availability issues.

***8. Have you faced any problems in delivery of humanitarian aid in the course of COVID-19 pandemic. If yes, please, specify.***

On August 8, 2020, the Republic of Armenia has sent the first planeload of humanitarian aid to Lebanon following a massive explosion amid COVID-19 in Beirut which killed at least 158 people and injured thousands of others earlier that week. Approximately, 12 tons of medication, foodstuffs and other vital supplies in boxes with an inscription “From Armenia’s Heart to Beirut” were delivered to the Lebanese capital on board of a chartered cargo aircraft. The second and third planeloads of supplies were delivered to Lebanon on August 9 and 11.

***9. Please, indicate, what steps have been taken by the sanctioning States on one hand and in the targeted States on the other hand to alleviate possible human suffering caused by unilateral sanctions in the course of pandemic. What were the main obstacles created by sanctions to guarantee vital human needs and save lives in the course of pandemic?***

Armenia undertook the consistent efforts to organize the return of its citizens from Turkey. In this context, 73 of our citizens upon their request already returned from Turkey to Armenia. For this purpose, the Ministry of Foreign Affairs of the Republic of Armenia through its representatives interacted with the relevant authorities of Turkey and Georgia. The cooperation with the Turkish side occurred exclusively within this framework, and out of this framework Armenia has not asked for any other assistance.

***10. What measures of international community do you consider to be vital to urgently enhance the ability of targeted States to resist pandemic?***

The most vital measure taken by the international community will be the ability to develop the comprehensive and enhanced rapid response mechanisms which will be able to resist the emergency situations including pandemics. Moreover, the international community should take consistent efforts and develop system of sanctions thus penalizing the States which are taking advantage of the situation of the pandemic and applying pressure or even worse applying military forces during the emergency situation

# **Appendix**

***ACTIONS TAKEN BY THE GOVERNMENT OF THE REPUBLIC OF ARMENIA***

The following Actions have been taken to mitigate the harm caused to the most vulnerable groups of the society (children, women, unemployed, extremely poor people):

The [Action 4](https://www.gov.am/u_files/file/Covid-19/4-en.pdf) is targeted to support the family with a child under the age of 14, where the parents or one of the parents has lost his/her registered work in the period from March 13 to 25 and none of the parents has a job as of March 25, 2020.

The [Action 6](https://www.gov.am/u_files/file/Covid-19/6-en.pdf) is targeted to support those citizens who lost their jobs on March 13-30, 2020.

The [Action 7](https://www.gov.am/u_files/file/Covid-19/7en.pdf)is targeted to support the pregnant woman who does not have a job as of March 30, 2020 and whose husband lost his job on March 13-30, 2020 or the pregnant woman who does not have a husband.

The [Action 8](https://www.gov.am/u_files/file/Covid-19/8-en.pdf)is targeted to support those individuals who were employed in the spheres of leisure activities or who were self-employed on March 13-30, 2020.

The [Action 9](https://www.gov.am/u_files/file/Covid-19/9-en.pdf) is targeted to support the family with a child aged 0-18, where both parents do not have a registered job.

The [Action 13](https://www.gov.am/en/covid-19-cragrer./v)is targeted to support the socially disadvantaged families.

The [Action 14](https://www.gov.am/en/covid-19-cragrer./v)is targeted to support the students of educational institutions involved in graduate, postgraduate academic programs.

The [Action 15](https://www.gov.am/en/covid-19-cragrer./v) is targeted to support those citizens of the Republic of Armenia or stateless persons residing in the Republic of Armenia who may wish to participate in the construction of riverbanks in the highlands of the Republic of Armenia.

The [Action 20](https://www.gov.am/en/covid-19-cragrer./v) is targeted to support the persons who from March 1 to June 15 were employed in the spheres of hotel and hostel services; public catering services; tourism services; pre-school education (private kindergartens); sporting activities (sports clubs, swimming pools); entertainment and other leisure activities; cinema houses and cinematographic activities; activities in the field of photography; rental of cars and other items; educational activities in the field of culture, music, sports, dance; activities in organizing creative, artistic and ceremonial performances; casino activities; providing social services with accommodation to persons in need of health care.

And, the [Action 22](https://www.gov.am/en/covid-19-cragrer./v) is targeted to support those who lost their jobs and did not find another in the period from March 31 through June 1, 2020.